Distribution Agreement

In presenting this thesis or dissertation as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for an advanced degree from Emory University, I hereby grant to Emory University and its agents the non-exclusive license to archive, make accessible, and display my thesis or dissertation in whole or in part in all forms of media, now or hereafter known, including display on the world wide web. I understand that I may select some access restrictions as part of the online submission of this thesis or dissertation. I retain all ownership rights to the copyright of the thesis or dissertation. I also retain the right to use in future works (such as articles or books) all or part of this thesis or dissertation.

Signature:

_____   _____

                                                                    Date

A Muslim Humanist of the Ottoman Empire:
Ismail Hakki Bursevi and His Doctrine of the Perfect Man

By

Hamilton Cook
Doctor of Philosophy

Islamic Civilizations Studies

_____
Professor Vincent J. Cornell
Advisor

_____
Professor Ruby Lal
Committee Member

_____
Professor Devin J. Stewart
Committee Member

Accepted:

_____
Lisa A. Tedesco, Ph.D.
Dean of the James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies

_____
Date

A Muslim Humanist of the Ottoman Empire:
Ismail Hakki Bursevi and His Doctrine of the Perfect Man

By

Hamilton Cook
M.A. Brandeis University, 2013
B.A., Brandeis University, 2012

Advisor: Vincent J. Cornell, Ph.D.

An abstract of
A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the
James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies of Emory University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in Islamic Civilizations Studies
2019

Abstract

A Muslim Humanist of the Ottoman Empire:
Ismail Hakki Bursevi and His Doctrine of the Perfect Man
By Hamilton Cook

This dissertation explores the Sufi anthropology (the Sufi doctrine of the identity and purpose of the human being) of the Ottoman shaykh Ismail Hakki Bursevi (1063-1137/1653-1725). In his theological writings, Bursevi focused on the metaphysical and worldly nature of the human being in a radically holistic manner. Because of his rather unprecedented Sufi anthropology, it is the primary contention of this dissertation that Bursevi can be considered a Muslim humanist before the modern concept of Humanism. Bursevi's Sufi anthropology, as a version of pre-modern, Islamic Humanism, challenges current conceptions of secular as well as religious Humanism as inherently Western, modern, and Judeo-Christian.

This dissertation also investigates the ways in which elements of Bursevi's Sufi anthropological writings are contrastingly elitist, exclusivistic, and misogynistic. The secondary argument of this dissertation is that Bursevi also articulated a kind of Anti-Humanism, which can be understood as the reverse or "flip-side" of his Humanism. The reason for Bursevi's "anti-humanistic turn" can be found in his rigidly idealistic application of his Sufi anthropology to theoretical politics. I call this application Bursevi's "politicization of the concept of the Perfect Man (Ar. *al-insān al-kamil*)." Bursevi's politics were based on a kind of utopian ideal, what I call his "Society of Perfect Men." He likewise conceived of a political system—his "Despotism of the Perfect Man"—meant to facilitate the creation of this Society. All in all, Bursevi's politics were an attempt to refashion human society in the image of his Sufi anthropology.

A Muslim Humanist of the Ottoman Empire:
Ismail Hakki Bursevi and His Doctrine of the Perfect Man

By

Hamilton Cook
M.A. Brandeis University, 2013
B.A., Brandeis University, 2012

Advisor: Vincent J. Cornell, Ph.D.

A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the
James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies of Emory University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in Islamic Civilizations Studies
2019

Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

List of Figures

Introduction

The subject of this dissertation is the Sufi anthropology (that is, the Sufi doctrine of the identity

and purpose of the human being) of the Ottoman shaykh Ismail Hakki Bursevi (1063-1137/1653-

1725). In his Sufi anthropology that he developed in several of his Arabic, Turkish, and Persian

theological writings, Bursevi focused on the metaphysical and worldly nature of the human being

in a radically holistic manner. Because of this trend in his writings, I will argue in the following

chapters that Bursevi's Sufi anthropology can be considered a form of Humanism. To do so, I

draw on the work of scholars of Sufism Vincent J. Cornell, Scott Kugle, and Sa'adiya Shaikh.[1]

They have argued that Sufism is a discourse that conceives of humanity in fundamentally

positive terms. For most versions of Sufism, all human beings are, at the very least, potentially

good. Components of Bursevi's Sufi anthropology typify this aspect of Sufism as Cornell, Kugle,

and Shaikh have defined it. Bursevi's writings illustrate Sufism's concern with human potential to

the extent that I argue that his Sufi anthropology can be considered a "Humanism before

'Humanism,'" to make use of scholar of Humanism Tony Davies' definition.[2] In making this

argument, I propose that Bursevi's Humanism challenges the current conception of Humanism as

inherently Western, secular, and modern. It is also my contention that Bursevi's Humanism

disputes the notion of Religious Humanism as exclusively Judeo-Christian.

This dissertation will also explore the ways in which elements of Bursevi's Sufi

anthropological writings are contrastingly elitist, exclusivistic, and misogynistic. To make sense

of these equivocations, I make use of the theories of Michel Foucault, Władysław Tatarkiewicz,

---

[1] Vincent J. Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*: *Power and Authority in Moroccan Sufism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998), 213; Scott Kugle, *Sufis & Saints' Bodies*: *Mysticism*, *Corporeality*, *& Sacred Power in Islam* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007) 26-41, 292-294; Sadiyya Shaykh, *Sufi Narratives of Intimacy*: *Ibn 'Arabi*, *Gender*, *and Sexuality* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 24-28, 81.
[2] Tony Davies, *Humanism* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 68.

Thomas Hurka, Tony Davies, Sa'diyya Shaikh, and Richard H. Jones.[3] Their works have exposed how Humanist discourse can be used for very anti-humanist ends. There is an aspect of Bursevi's Sufi anthropology that is clearly anti-humanist, despite being articulated in humanistic terms. Ultimately, Bursevi's Anti-Humanism is, in a sense, the reverse or "flip-side" of his Humanism.

The reason for Bursevi's "anti-humanist turn" can be found in his application of his Sufi anthropology to theoretical politics. This is what I call Bursevi's "politicization of the concept of the Perfect Man (Ar. *al-insān al-kamil*)" that he also developed in his works of Sufi theology. His political theory was based on a kind of utopian ideal, what I call his "Society of Perfect Men." This Society was to be engendered by means of a political system that I consider Bursevi's "Despotism of the Perfect Man." The political aspect of Bursevi's Humanism is an attempt to make the world in the image of Bursevi's rigidly idealist Sufi anthropology.

Outline of Chapters

This dissertation explores Bursevi's Humanism, Anti-Humanism, and his politicization of the concept of the Perfect Man in five chapters:

Chapter 1: Sufi Anthropology and the Study of Humanism introduces Bursevi's Sufi anthropology in general. It also presents his metaphysical conception of Adam as the Perfect Human Being, what I call his "Adamology." This chapter details this dissertation's primary argument for Bursevi's Sufi anthropology as a version of Islamic Humanism. To contextualize

---

[3] Béatrice Han-Pile, "'The 'Death of Man:' Foucault and Anti Humanism," in *Focault and Philosophy*, Timothy O'Leary and Christopher Falzon Eds. (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell Publishing, 2010), 118-142; Soper, *Humanism and Anti-Humanism*, 132-142; Władysław Tatarkiewicz, *On Perfection,* Janusz Kuczyński Ed., Christopher Kasparek Trans. (Warsaw: Warsaw University Press, 1992), 12-13; Thomas Hurka, *Perfectionism* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 3-4, 55-58; Davies, *Humanism*, 131; Sa'diyya Shaikh, *In Search of "Al-Insān:"* Sufism, Islamic Law, and Gender, in *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 77 (2009): 785; Richard H. Jones, *Philosophy of Mysticism*: *Raids on the Ineffable* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2016), 289-293, 303-305.

this central argument, this chapter situates Bursevi's discourses in the framework of theoretical studies of Humanism and Islamic Humanism. Likewise, it positions Bursevi's doctrines in the history of the development of Sufi anthropology.

This chapter also presents the ways in which a great deal of Bursevi's Sufi anthropological discourses are contradictorily elitist, exclusivist, and misogynist. Examining the work of theorists of Humanism who expose contradictory aspects of humanist discourse, this chapter argues that Bursevi's anti-humanist turn is not unprecedented. Despite espousing a radically universalist Humanism theoretically, Bursevi's Sufi anthropology was exceedingly idealistic to the extent that only a very select few could exemplify its ideals in practice.

Chapter 2: "Ismail Hakki Bursevi: His Life, Times, and Works" explores Bursevi's biography based on his autobiography and contemporaneous accounts of his life. The bulk of the chapter draws from Ali Namlı's critical and well-researched biographical work, *İsmail Hakkı Bursevi*: *Hayatı*, *eserleri, tarikat anlayışı* ("Ismail Hakki Bursevi: His Life, Writings, and Conception of the Sufi Path," 2001).[4] Beyond Namlı's work, I utilize Mehmet Ali Ayni's underappreciated French biography, *Ismaïl Hakki: philosophe mystique 1653-1725* ("Ismail Hakki: Philosophical Mystic 1653-1725").[5] In the field of what might be called "Bursevi Studies," Aini is the only scholar to suggest that Bursevi's Sufi anthropology might be considered humanistic. In addition, he foregrounds Bursevi's radical political beliefs, even comparing him with certain Enlightenment activists in Europe, most notably Jean-Jacques Rousseau (d. 1778). Aini's analyses were the inspiration for this dissertation's arguments concerning Bursevi's Humanism and Utopia.

After a literature review of contemporary works on Bursevi, I situate his life in the

---

[4] Ali Namlı, *İsmail Hakkı Bursevi*: *Hayatı*, *Eserleri*, *Tarikat Anlayışı* (Istanbul: İnsan Yayınları, 2001).
[5] Mehemmed-Ali Aïni, *Ismaïl Hakki: philosophe mystique 1653-1725* (Paris: Geuthner, 1933).

context of social, cultural, and political trends in Ottoman history. To characterize Bursevi's

place in the history of Sufism, I compare his life and teachings with those of his near

contemporary Sufis in the Ottoman Empire, most notably Niyaz-i Misri, Sun'ullah Gaybi, and

Selami Ali (1103/1691), Bursevi's rival in the Celvetiyye. Following a summary of Bursevi's

written works, I discuss the manuscript archive for this dissertation, which is comprised of two

unedited autographic manuscripts (that is, from Bursevi's own hand), and four critically edited

works.

Chapter 3: "Every Human Being is Adam:" Bursevi's Humanism discusses Bursevi's

"Humanism before 'Humanism.'" This chapter commences with a critical examination of his Sufi

anthropology. In this section, I focus on Bursevi's Adamology—the notion of the theomorphic

nature of Adam as the first human being and the relationship between the theomorphic Adam

and his progeny. This discussion centers on Bursevi's arguments for the uniqueness of the human

condition, the metaphysics of anthropocentrism, the nature of human theomorphism, and the

meaning of the concept of *al-insān al-kāmil*.

Chapter 4: Bursevi's Anti-Humanism explores Bursevi's discourses that contradict his

Humanism. It begins by investigating the ways in which Bursevi distinguishes between those

who can actualize human perfection and those who are only potentially perfect. It highlights the

criteria by which he distinguishes "true" (i.e., actualized and perfected) Adamites from those

who have the potential to be perfect but cannot fulfill the ultimate *telos* of human creation. These

criteria are intimately bound up with Bursevi's conception of Sufism as "the Adamic science."

One's level of achievement on the Sufi path distinguishes the "true human" from the person who

is only potentially "truly human." This chapter also foregrounds Bursevi's conception of those

who cannot activate their potentials as "inhuman humans" and "sub-human women." By

detailing this insidious side of Bursevi's Sufi anthropology, I demonstrate that although it is a form of "Humanism before 'Humanism,'" it is in the final analysis anti-humanistic when put into practice. Because of his jaundiced view of actual "Adamites," Bursevi's "Humanism," which seems to embrace all human beings as equally theomorphic, applies in practice only to Perfect Men rather than to all human beings. To make sense of the relationship between Bursevi's Humanism and Anti-Humanism, this chapter draws on philosophers and scholars who have foregrounded the ways in which "humanists" have advanced exclusivism, elitism, and misogyny in the name of Humanist values.

Chapter 5: Bursevi's Politicization of the "Perfect Man" explores the ways in which Bursevi applied his Sufi anthropology Ottoman society. This chapter discusses Bursevi's Politicization of the Perfect Man in the context of his utopian Society of Perfect Men, and the utopianistic Despotism of the Perfect Man. In this portion of the dissertation, I draw on Kamelia Atanasova's political analysis of Bursevi's history, *tuhfe* ("dedicatory treatises"), which were directed to key officials of the Ottoman Sultanate, and his cosmological works detailing his reformation of the Ottoman Sultanate with him at the center.[6] This chapter adds to Atanasova's analysis by connecting Bursevi's political ideas conceptually to his Sufi anthropology in both its humanist and anti-humanist elements.

---

[6] Kamelia Atanasova, "The Sufi as the Axis of the World: Representations of Religious Authority in the Works if Ismail Hakki Bursevi (1653-1725)," Doctoral Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, 2016.

Chapter 1: Sufi Anthropology and the Study of Humanism

Despite the diversity of their subject matter, the more than one hundred works of Ismail Hakki Bursevi share all a concern with human nature, the relationship between God and the human being, and the role of the human being on Earth from the standpoint of Sufi doctrine. Sufi anthropology captivated Bursevi perhaps more than any other subject. In many of his works, he sought to formulate a Sufi anthropology that would surpass the concepts of his predecessors. To craft these doctrines, he drew on Turkish, Arabic, and Persian Sufi theological sources, oral and written teachings from his Celveti Sufi masters, and what he deemed direct, God-given inspirations. Bursevi considered the human being as the *telos* of creation, God's "esoteric aspect" (Ar. *bāṭin Allāh*), and the being through which God "sealed" the last chapter of the Qur'an (called *Sūrat al-Nās*, "Humankind") and the world of creation.[1] Central to his Sufi anthropology was the famous *ḥadīth*, "God created Adam in His image."[2] He contended that most Sufis before him had transmitted a deficient version of this Prophetic saying. Claiming to have heard the correct version of the *ḥadīth* in a vision from the Prophet himself, he asserted that the true wording was, "God created Adam in His image and then manifested Himself in him (Ar. *khalaqa Allāhu Ādama ʿalā ṣūratihi wa-tajallā fī-hi*)."[3] Because Adam was made in God's image and was a vessel for divine self-manifestation, he was also the first and hence archetypal Perfect Human Being, and the *rasion d'être* of creation. Because of the human being's metaphysical significance, Bursevi's view of creation is fundamentally anthropocentric. All of creation is centered on the

---

[1] See: İsmail Hakkı Bursevi, *Varlığın Dili: İbn Meşiş Salavatı ve şerhi*, Nedim Tan Ed. (Istanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 2014), 206-207; and Idem., *Rūḥ al-bayān fī tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, Bursa: Bursa Eski Eserler Kütüphanesi (BEYBEK), Genel (GE), ms. no. 12-27. 27.199-200. Unless otherwise noted, all Transliterations of Arabic, Persian, and Turkish words and phrases are in accord with the standards set by The International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies (IJMES).

[2] See: Christopher Melchert, "God Created Adam in His Image," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 13 (2011): 113-124; *Ṣaḥīḥ Bukharī*, 79 *Kitāb al-istiʾdhān* (*The Book of Asking Permission*), 1.

[3] İsmail Hakkı Bursevi, *Kitâbü'l-izzi'l-âdemî*, Istanbul: Süleymaniyye Kütüphanesi, 34 Atif Ef., no. 1420/8, 148b.

human being. Although Adam as the first man is now deceased, all of his descendants are born

as potential Perfect Human Beings. For this reason, each person must strive to embody his or her

Adamic potential to the fullest. The Prophet Muḥammad, the "Best of Humankind," is superior

the other human beings because he best actualized the theomorphic potential of his inborn

Adamic nature.[4]

The metaphysical concept of Adam as the Perfect Human Being is the key to Bursevi's

Sufi anthropology. I call this concept Bursevi's "Adamology." In this Adamology, the

descendants of Adam are not ontologically inferior to their progenitor. Because of this, all human

beings have the potential (Ar. *istiᶜdād*) to actualize the theomorphism of Adam. This turn of

phrase represents a profound realization for Bursevi.[5] Because of their Adamic heritage, all

members of the human species have the potential to reflect God's image, to be the bearers of

God's self-manifestation, and to become Perfect Human Beings. By thus becoming fully

"Adamic," human beings can fulfill the metaphysical purpose of their creation and fully realize

their *telos* as "God's representatives on Earth" (*khulafāʾ Allāh fī-l-ʾarḍ*).[6]

In light of his belief in the perfectibility of human beings on the basis of their

theomorphic nature, the Adamological aspect of Bursevi's Sufi anthropology is arguably

humanistic, at least in the conventional sense of the term. This impression becomes even stronger

when Bursevi's Adamology is compared with certain contemporary theories of Humanism, such

as that of Tzvetan Todorov, who advocates an anthropocentric doctrine that stresses the

---

[4] Bursevi, *Varlığın Dili*, 187-188.
[5] See: Sir James W. Redhouse, *A Turkish and English Lexicon*: *Shewing in English the Significations of the Turkish Terms* (Beirut: Librarie du Liban, 1987), s.v.. "Ādam," pg. 51; Süleyman Hayri Bolay, s.v. "Âdem," *İslam Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul: Türk Diyanet Vakfı, İslam Araştırmalar Merkezi, 1988), 1:358.
[6] Abdullah Kargılı, "İsmail Hakkı Bursevi'nin Kitabü'l-Hucceti'l Baliǧa Adlı Eseri: İnceleme-Metin," M.A. Thesis, Istanbul University, Istanbul, 2011, 88.

"autonomy of the 'I,'" the "finality of the you," and the "universality of the they." [7] Bursevi's

theory might also be said to resemble those of noted religious humanists, such as his

contemporary, the German philosopher Gottfried Leibniz (d. 1716).[8] Given such

correspondences, it might be said that Bursevi formulated an Islamic humanism that was

comparable in significant ways to various Western theories of Humanism. However some might

call such a claim anachronistic. Can we in fact speak of Bursevi as a "Muslim humanist?"

In this dissertation, I argue that a historical tradition of Islamic Humanism did in fact

exist and that Ismail Hakki Bursevi was an exemplary Muslim humanist. The key to Bursevi's

Islamic Humanism was his Sufi anthropology and in particular his Adamology. His

anthropocentric doctrines provide a positive appraisal of human identity to such a degree that it

is difficult not to call them "humanistic." This is the case despite the fact that Bursevi had no

discernable connection to works or scholars considered emblematic of the development of

Humanism in the West. Bursevi's Islamic Humanism was formulated entirely from Islamic

sources. As a way of dealing with this paradox, I draw on Tony Davies' concept of a "humanist

before 'Humanism.'"[9] Davies reasons that if a pre-modern, non-Western, and non-Christian

thinker espouses a doctrine that resembles those of Western and/or Christian Humanism, it

makes no sense *not* to call him a humanist. It is a major contention of this work that Bursevi fits

Davies' definition of a "humanist before 'Humanism.'"

However, although Bursevi's Sufi anthropology can be considered a form of Humanism

in general, some of his doctrines seem to go against the humanistic spirit. For example, some of

---

[7] Tzvetan Todorov, *Imperfect Garden*: *The Legacy of Humanism*, Carol Cosman Trans.. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 6.
[8] Joseph M. Shaw, R.W. Franklin, Harris Kaasa, and Charles W. Buzicky Eds., *Readings in Christian Humanism* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1982; 2009), 360, 398-402; see also, Kundan Misra, *Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, the Humanist Agenda and Scientific Method*: *The Unity of Humanism*, *Theism and Science* (Sydney, Australia: Kundan Misra, 2012).
[9] Tony Davies, *Humanism* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 68.

his works, such as "Book of the Glorification of the Adamic State" (*Kitāb al-ᶜizz al-ādamī*), seem to vacillate between a humanistic point of view and one that is misanthropic. Despite Bursevi's attempt to universalize the theomorphism of Adam, he distinguishes between those who only have the potential to be like Adam and those who become perfected, and hence truly human. The potential to become theomorphic does not necessarily mean that all human beings can actualize this potential. For Bursevi, only those few people who become aware of their true identity and then actualize it are truly human. Although all human beings are theoretically a part of the same, blessed species, Bursevi states that those who do not cultivate their God-given, human character (Ar. *al-sīra al-insānīya*) are human only in form (Ar. *fī-l-ṣūra al-insānīya*). Since they can never become perfect, such persons are not "real *men*" (Pers. *mard-i haqīqī*).[10] As Bursevi summarizes:

> Do not suppose that every Adamite in the world is a real human being.
> > If there is a real human being (*kimisi insan*) among the Adamites, then there is a devil among them as well (*kimisi şeytan*).[11]

Bursevi considered Sufism to be the quintessential "Adamic science." The study of Sufi theology and the practice of Sufi ritual were the means by which potential Adamites could best attain to their full humanity. Although Bursevi believed that all varieties of "orthodox" Sufism could actualize the adamic potential of the human being, he believed that the Celvetiyye Sufi order, and more specifically the Hakkiyye sub branch that he led, were the most effective means by which human beings could fulfill their *raison d'être*.[12]

If Sufism was the only way that a potential Adamite could become truly human, then only a very limited part of the population could participate in this endeavor. Only Muslim males under the guidance of a true human Sufi shaykh could become perfect. To be a Perfect Human

---

[10] Bursevi, *Varlığın Dili*, 88-89, 135.
[11] Ibid., 197.
[12] Kargılı, "İsmail Hakkı Bursevi'nin Kitabü'l-Hucceti'l Baliğa Adlı Eseri," 105-120.

Being meant to be a Perfect Man. Hypothetically, all humans are endowed with the potential to

become The Perfect Man (*al-insān al-kāmil*) as inheritors of Adam, their "made-in-the-image-of-

God" progenitor. However, for Bursevi, Muslim males who neglect Sufism, non-Muslims, and

almost all women were incapable of actualizing this potential.[13] Despite being the progeny of

Adam, these imperfect members of the human species must remain" inhuman humans." Women

occupied a liminal zone between "true humans" and "inhuman humans." If they rendered service

to Perfect Men, then Bursevi considered them "sub-human humans," who were "exemplars of

female perfection."[14] If they did not do so they were "inhuman humans." Bursevi's beliefs

concerning the "inhumanity" of certain humans beings is summarized well in the following

verses:

> For one who has realized that all the realities of creation are found in his essence,
>   Such a one is a man (Tur. *mert*) who has transcended his fellow humans.
> He is a gazelle that secretes musk, in a society of gazelles that could do, but do not.
>   Such a man is desired by all the creatures of the world.[15]

How does one make sense of this dichotomy between humanistic universalism and the

anti-humanistic exclusivism of his view of actual human beings? How does Bursevi present two

entirely contradictory visions of humanity? Do the inconsistencies in his discourse result from a

failure of logic? Or is there a better reason for Bursevi's equivocation?

In my opinion there is indeed an underlying logic in the apparent dichotomy between

Humanism and Anti-Humanism in Bursevi's Sufi anthropology. To make sense of this

incongruity, it is crucial to frame Bursevi's distinction between "potential" and "actualized"

Adamites in terms of a philosophical distinction between idealism and realism. In the final

analysis, Bursevi's argument for the theomorphic nature of all human beings is exclusively

---

[13] Bursevi, *Rūḥ al-bayān*, 12.76; 14.56-57; 27.153; Idem., *Kitâbü'l-izzi'l-âdemî*, 240b.
[14] Bursevi, *Rūḥ al-bayān*, 14.57; Idem., *Kitâbü'l-Izzi'l-âdemî*, 229b.
[15] Bursevi, *Varlığın Dili*, 186. The Turkish quatrain is as follows: *Kimin ki ola zatında hakayık, Olur akran içinde merd-i faik, Olupdur nafe-i müşk ile ahu, Göre alemde mergub-ı halayık.*

idealistic, even hypothetical. In real terms, he believed that only a select cadre of the human race could actually become "human" in the fullest sense of the term. While the majority of human beings *theoretically* may have access to their theomorphic potential, most of them can never actualize it in reality.

Tony Davies has noted a trend in certain Humanist discourses that very much resembles this anti-humanist contradiction in Bursevi's writings. For example, T.E. Hulme (d. 1917), Ezra Pound (d. 1972), and (at some points in his career) Martin Heidegger (d. 1976) conceived of Fascism as a type of Humanism because of its perfectionism, despite manifestly anti-humanistic aspects. Similarly, the Humanist theoretician György Lukács (d. 1971) argued vehemently for Stalinism as a kind of Humanism because it was meant to enlighten all of humankind.[16] In addition, Julian Huxley (d. 1975), the first president of the British Humanist Association, argued that "evolutionary Humanism," in which eugenic social engineering played a central role, was the only way to allow human beings to reach their full potential.[17] The self-described humanist Hastings Rashdall (d. 1924) considered white, Western European, and heterosexual men "true humans" while all other races constituted "lower races," meant to be sacrificed for the sake of the ideal human being.[18] As Davies explains, despite their appeals to humanistic universalism, all of these individuals spoke "of the human in the accents and the interests of a class, a sex, [or] a 'race.' Their embrace suffocates those whom it does not ignore."[19]

In a similar way, Bursevi espoused an idealistic Humanism but one that could be actualized only by a select few. In particular, Bursevi considered himself not only as a human being who had transcended the epistemological level of his fellow humans, but also as one of the

---

[16] Davies, *Humanism*, 51-52, 66-68.
[17] Ibid., 3.
[18] See: Hastings Rashdall, *Theory of Good and Evil*: *A Treatise on Moral Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907) 1.238-239.
[19] Davies, *Humanism*, 131.

few who understood the metaphysical potential of all human beings. Consequently, he articulated his Sufi anthropology in order guide a select few to his own exalted spiritual station.

I. What is Humanism?

a.) *Conceptions of Humanism*

Because Bursevi's Humanism was formulated from Islamic sources, it was distinct from current notions of the concept. Humanism is often traced in the West to the universalistic and altruistic notion of ethics promoted by the Latin rhetorician Cicero (d. 43 BCE). Renaissance notions of the study of the "humanities" also are a part of its history. Eventually, Humanism came to connote a secular and anthropocentric worldview. Given these different conceptions, it would not be farfetched to maintain that there are as many definitions of Humanism as there are humanists and scholars of the subject.[20] The German romantic scholar Friedrich Immanuel Niethammer (d. 1848) first coined the term "Humanism" to signify something akin to the current notion of the Humanities in academia. Following Niethammer, Georg Voigt (d. 1891), Jakob Burckhardt (d. 1897), and others employed it to signify such varied concepts as philosophical or metaphysical anthropocentrism, scholasticism, or classicism in the Renaissances of Europe.[21]

Today the concept of Humanism is predominately considered Western, secular, and modern.[22] The association of Humanism with secularism is due in large part to the efforts of the French father of Positivism, Auguste Comte (d. 1857).[23] Comte endeavored to create a post-theistic and non-superstitious religious ideology that was suited for the modern "positive" stage

---

[20] Davies, *Humanism*, 125; David E. Cooper, *The Measure of Things*: *Humanism*, *Humility*, *and Mystery* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 7-8.
[21] See: Cooper, *The Measure of Things*, 1-17, 21-23.
[22] See: Mark Vernon, *Understand Humanism* (Blacklick: McGraw Hill, 2010), XV, 148; A.C. Grayling, *The God Argument*: *The Case against Religion and for Humanism* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 140.
[23] Ibid., 26-29, 31.

of human social development.[24] He formulated his concept of Humanism as a central tenet of his

positivistic philosophy and his "Positivist Church."[25] After Comte, the concept of Humanism

became inextricably linked with the secular anthropocentrism of Western society. Influential

theorists of secular Humanism such as Friedrich Nietzsche (d. 1900), Martin Heidegger (d. 1976),

Jean-Paul Sartre (d. 1980), and Michel Foucault (d. 1984), discoursed on the subject in diverse

ways. However, all of them considered Comte's conception authoritative.[26]

The trend begun by Comte has persisted until the present day among most scholars of the

concept. For example, the three versions of "The Humanist Manifesto of the American Humanist

Association" reaffirm the notion that Humanism is exclusively Western, secular, and modern.[27]

Leading scholars of Humanism, even those working to study the concept beyond the writ of

those associated with this worldview, still resort to a Comtean notion of the concept. The

definition that noted scholars of humanism Andrew Copson and A.C. Grayling have suggested in

the *Wiley Blackwell Handbook of Humanism* (2015) is emblematic of the prevailing view. These

authors maintain that throughout its 2,500 year history, the concept of Humanism has denoted "a

non-religious, human-centered approach to life." Moreover, this concept is aligned with

naturalism, "reliance on reason and evidence," denial of the afterlife, and a decidedly "this-

worldly" approach to ethics.[28] Most importantly, for most contemporary humanists, "all religions

and all ideas about gods are outmoded attempts by human beings to make sense of the universe

---

[24] See: Andrew Wernick, *Auguste Comte and the Religion of Humanity*: *The Post-Theistic Program of French Social Theory* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001; 2003), 153-155.
[25] Ibid., 2-5.
[26] Kate Soper, *Humanism and Anti-Humanism* (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1986), 34-39, 88, 92; Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism*, Carol Macomber Trans., (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980); Martin Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism (1946)," Frank A. Capuzzi Trans., *Pathmarks* [Wegmarken], William McNeill Ed. (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 239-277.
[27] See: "Humanism and Its Aspirations: Humanist Manifesto III, a Successor to the Humanist Manifesto of 1933," American Humanist Association, January 1, 2003, accessed January 24, 2018, https://americanhumanist.org/what-is-humanism/manifesto3/.
[28] Andrew Copson, "What is Humanism?" in *The Wiley Blackwell Handbook of Humanism*, Andrew Copson and A.C. Grayling Eds. (Malden: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 3-4.

and give meaning and purpose to human life."[29] Labeling a religious figure as a humanist, or

conceiving of some kind of "Religious Humanism," as some scholars do, is oxymoronic for

Copson and Grayling.[30]

Copson and Grayling are to be commended for trying to articulate a doctrine of

Humanism that is in accord with those who have adopted this concept as a secular philosophy of

life. However, when one encounters premodern figures that seem to embody what might be

called "humanistic" values, but were in fact deeply religious, a problem arises. For example,

what is one to make of such European figures as Francesco Petrarch (d. 1374), Thomas More (d.

1535), Desiderius Erasmus (d. 1536), Baruch Spinoza (d. 1677), Gottfried Leibniz (d. 1716), or

Isaac Newton (d. 1727)? In response to this problem, some writers such as Arthur James Balfour

(d. 1930), Martin Buber (d. 1965), Jacques Maritain (d. 1973), and Emmanuel Lévinas (d. 1995),

have articulated iterations of Humanism that are fundamentally indebted to religion.[31] Rather

than approaching such thinkers as Spinoza or Leibniz as espousing doctrines that heralded a

future secularism, they instead accentuate the role that religiosity played in their doctrines. Due

to the influence of such scholars, one can now find important works on "Religious Humanism,"

such as *Readings in Christian Humanism* (first published in 1982) and *Re-Envisioning Christian

Humanism*: *Education and the Restoration of Humanity* (2017). [32]

---

[29] Ibid. 25.

[30] Ibid., 25-26.

[31] See: Arthur James Balfour, *Theism and Humanism* (New York: Hodder and Stoughton, 1915), 133; Jacques Maritain, *True Humanism,* M.R. Adamson Trans.. (London: The Centenary Press, 1941), 19-20; Emmanuel Lévinas, *Humanism of the Other*, Nidra Poller Trans.. (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2005); Martin Buber, *A Believing Humanism,* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1967), 117-120; David E. Klemm and William Schwiker, *Religion and the Human Future*: *An Essay on Theological Humanism* (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell Publishers, 2008). I am indebted to my colleague Rahimjon Abdugafurov for making me aware of these figures and their works.

[32] See: Shaw, Franklin, Kaasa, and Buzicky Eds., *Readings in Christian Humanism*, 231-232, 248-250, 375-76; R. William Franklin and Joseph M. Shaw, *The Case for Christian Humanism* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1991); Jens Zimmermann Ed., *Re-Envisioning Christian Humanism*: *Education and the Restoration of Humanity* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2017); Douglas Den Uyl, *God*, *Man*, *and Well-Being*:

Likewise, when analyzing current histories of Humanism, another problem comes to light. This concerns those pre-modern, non-Western, and non-Judeo-Christian figures who seem to espouse Humanism as a form of anthropocentrism, as a belief in universal education in the sense of Renaissance *humanitas*, or humane ethics. Rather than entertain the possibility of a form of Humanism that is beyond the writ of contemporary approaches, most scholars of Humanism prefer to adhere to the ideas of Comte and his followers.[33] Likewise, scholars of Religious Humanism tend to see Religious Humanism as exclusively connoting Christianity or Judaism.

Some scholars of Humanism have sought to resolve these problems in two ways. First, some of them deem premodern figures "humanistic" using the majoritarian understanding of the concept, such as the definition used by Copson and Grayling. In this view, the premodern Philosophers Confucius (c. 551 BCE), Protagoras (c. 411 BCE), or the Muslim Brethren of Purity (c. 5th/10th cent. CE) are considered humanists in the same way as the modern philosophers Thomas Huxley (d. 1895) and Bertrand Russell (d. 1970) are seen as humanists.[34] As Tony Davies, Alexander Key, and others revisionist scholars of Humanism have argued, this approach is anachronistic. It holds these scholars up to modern definitions of Humanism, rather than approaching them on their own terms.[35]

Second, other scholars have considered some premodern figures to have enough in common with modern humanists to be seen as possible forefathers of modern Humanism. For example, Pico Della Mirandola's (d. 1494) theological arguments for free will, Erasmus' (d.

Spinoza's Modern Humanism (Bern: Peter Lang Publishing Group, 2008); Matthew J. Kisner, *Spinoza on Human Freedom*: *Reason, Autonomy, and the Good Life* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).
[33] Davies, *Humanism*, 86.
[34] See, for example: Jenneane Fowler, "The Materialists of Classical India," in *The Wiley Blackwell Handbook of Humanism*, 97-119; Merv Fowler, "Ancient China," Ibid., 133-153; Grayling, *The God Argument*, 16-17; Vernon, *Understanding Humanism*, 8-9; Joel Kraemer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam*: *The Cultural Revolution during the Buyid* Age (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992), 11.
[35] See: Davies, *Humanism*, 15-16; Alexander Key, "The Applicability of the Term 'Humanism' to Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī (d. 1023)," *Studia Islamica* (2005): 71-112.

1536) critical approach to the Bible, or the Ethiopian philosopher Zera Yacob's (d. 1692)

critiques of traditionalism have been considered proto-humanistic.[36] However, these figures are

still not viewed as "true" Humanists. These "would be humanists" remain overshadowed by the

later, more progressive Humanism of the Western secular thinkers they are supposed to prefigure.

Kate Soper's book *Humanism and Anti-Humanism* (1986) is the first academic work to highlight

and critique the teleological notions of Humanism from which such "forefather" arguments

stem.[37] Medievalist historian Charles Nauert, in *Humanism and the Culture of Renaissance*

Europe (1995), has challenged the common view that the Humanists of the European

Renaissance were heralds of modern notions of secular Humanism.[38] In *The Measure of Things*:

Humanism, Humility, and Mystery (2002), David Cooper has made unprecedented use of the

works and theories of non-Western thinkers in response to the aforementioned trends. Alongside

pre-modern Religious Humanism and modern secular Humanists, Cooper draws from Hindu,

Buddhist, and Taoist traditions.[39]

  In making a serious theoretical claim for the inclusion of pre-modern, religious, and

especially *non-Western* versions of Humanism, Tony Davies' book *Humanism* (1997; revised in

2008) has surpassed other works in its scope and depth. Besides offering one of the most

comprehensive and critical histories of Humanism to date, Davies posits a comprehensive

methodology and theory to solve the problem of "humanists before 'Humanism.'"[40] He regards

the premodern "would-be humanists," who espoused anthropocentrism, universalist education,

and humane ethics as humanists in the same light as moderns who promote the concept. He

---

[36] Charles G. Nauert, *Humanism and the Culture of Renaissance Europe* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 164-165, 211; Teodros Kiros, "Zera Yacob and Traditional Ethiopian Philosophy," in *A Companion to African Philosophy* Kwasi Wiredu Ed. (Malden: Wiley Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 183-185.
[37] Soper, *Humanism and Anti-Humanism*, 9-25, 55, 128-129.
[38] Nauert, *Humanism and the Culture of Renaissance Europe*, 4-5, 200.
[39] Cooper, *The Measure of Things*, 238-248, 284, 297.
[40] Davies, *Humanism*, 8-25, 105-125, 36-68, 130-140.

argues that if a thinker advocated a doctrine that was akin in significant ways to the modern concept of Humanism, then such a person should not be treated as a "would-be humanist" or a pre-cursor to modern Humanism. Instead, such figures should be considered "humanists before '[the modern definition of the term] Humanism.'"[41] By considering Humanism as a universal philosophical and intellectual orientation rather than as a doctrine with a solely Western history, Davies' iteration of the concept allows for pre-moderns of multiple faiths, ethnicities, and historical affiliations to be considered humanists without anachronism.

b.) *Islamic Humanism: A "Humanism before 'Humanism?'"*

Given their focus on the human being as the center of the world (philosophical anthropocentrism), liberal appreciation of the sources of learning and knowing, and their *humanitas*-oriented ethics (Ar. *adab*), many medieval Muslim thinkers might be considered humanists according to Davies' understanding of the concept. Unfortunately, most of the works that have been written on Islamic Humanism to date perpetuate the very problems that Davies seeks to overcome. More often than not, they promote anachronistic back-projections of the modern concept of Humanism. They also cast pre-modern Muslim thinkers as precursors to modern humanists.[42] For example, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Badawī (d. 2002), George Makdisi (d. 2002), and Mohammed Arkoun (d. 2010) were among the first scholars of Islamic Studies to consider certain premodern Muslim thinkers as representatives of "Islamic Humanism."[43] Their scholarly contributions cannot be denied, especially in the case of the Makdisi, who explored the

---

[41] Ibid., 68, 86-92.

[42] See Key, "The Applicability of the Term 'Humanism' to Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī (d. 1023)," 87.

[43] See, for example: ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Badawī, "L'Humanisme dans le pensée arabe," *Studia Islamica* 6 (1956): 67-100; Mohammed Arkoun, *Miskawayh, philosophe et historien: contribution à l'étude de l'Humanisme arabe au 4e-10e siècle* (Paris: Librarie philosophique J. Vrin, 1970); George Makdisi, *The Rise of Humanism and the Christian West* w*ith Special Reference to Scholasticism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1990).

humanistic ramifications of the medieval Belles Lettres tradition (Ar. *adab*) in Arabo-Islamicate

civilization.[44] However, rather than approaching the writers they studied as humanists in their

own right, they sought to depict them as forerunners of modern humanists. In doing so, they

downplayed or even neglected the actual Islamic contribution to Humanism.

Joel Kraemer's *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam* (1992) and Lenn Evan Goodman's

Islamic Humanism (2003) are prominent examples of this trend.[45] Kraemer seeks to locate a

"Renaissance of Islam" (in the manner of the European Renaissance) in the vibrant intellectual

milieu sponsored by the Shi'ite Buyid dynasty that ruled over Iran and Iraq in the tenth and

eleventh centuries of the Common Era (c. 322-453/934-1062). He models his work on previous

studies that attempted to apply Jacob Burckhardt's romantic teleology of Humanism to the study

of Islamic civilizations.[46] A crucial part of Kramer's endeavor is his description of Buyid-era

"Humanism." For Kraemer, "Buyid Humanism" consisted of a Hellenistic model of education

and elite culture in the formation of mind and character, "a conception of the common kinship

and unity of mankind [i.e., *insānīya*]," and "humaneness, or love of mankind."[47] Because it was a

direct "offspring" of the "humanistic ideal" of Late Antiquity, Kraemer's "Buyid Humanism" had

little to do with the religion of Islam per se. Rather, it was wholly secular.[48]

Whereas Kraemer restricted his analysis to the Buyid period of Islamic history, Lenn

Evan Goodman extends his analysis of figures and institutions that he considers "humanistic"

into the Seljuk era (c. 428-590/1037-1194) of Iranian history.[49] In contrast to "modern iterations

---

[44] For Makdisi's arguments concerning the humanistic nature of *adab*, and the debt owed by Renaissance humanists to this concept, see: Idem., *The Rise of Humanism in Classical Islam and the Christian West* (Edinburg: Edinburgh University Press, 1990), 88-89, 94, 348-351.

[45] See: Kraemer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam*; Lenn E. Goodman, *Islamic Humanism* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

[46] Kraemer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam*, 14-17.

[47] Ibid., 10.

[48] Ibid., 11.

[49] Goodman, *Islamic Humanism*, 22.

of Islam," Goodman's Islamic medieval Islamic humanism is "tolerant, pluralistic, cosmopolitan without triumphalism and spiritual without repression."[50] This bold claim notwithstanding, he does not offer an adequate definition of Islamic Humanism, nor does he say what makes it "Islamic."[51]

Recognizing the theoretical problems of the works of Kraemer and Goodman, Alexander Key's article, "The Applicability of the Term 'Humanism' to Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī" (2005), marks a watershed moment in the study of Islamic Humanism. Key argues that it is difficult to separate any iteration of the concept of Humanism from anachronistic back-projections.[52] Referring to Goodman's *Islamic Humanism*, he notes that this concept "can be used, and has been used, to mean almost anything."[53] Key considers a premodern Islamic Humanism in the Comtean sense to be impossible, and thus any attempt to come up with a meaningful definition of Islamic Humanism is futile. His critique is so severe that it disqualifies the use of the term "Humanism" entirely outside of the Western context in history and modern philosophy.[54] While Key's critiques of the scholarly tradition represented by Kraemer and Goodman are valid, his blanket argument against the use of the term "Humanism" in Islam is too extreme to be tenable. He does not recognize any possibility of envisioning a concept of Humanism beyond its stereotypical and ethnocentric associations.

Abdelilah Ljamai has also argued in favor of an Islamic Humanism. However, he denies the possibility of an "Islamic *Religious* Humanism." Although he argues that "[H]umanistic thought in the Islamic world is not typically atheist," its religious dimension is limited by a

---

[50] Ibid., 23.
[51] Ibid. 23, 27.
[52] Key, "The Applicability of the Term 'Humanism' to Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī (d. 1023)," 87, 105.
[53] Ibid., 104.
[54] Ibid., 105.

"rational" interpretation of faith and scripture and "critical thought."[55] The source of the "humanistic principles" espoused by pre-modern Muslim humanists is thus not to be found in the fundamental texts and doctrines of Islam, but rather in "Greek wisdom," which was transmitted in the context of "Abbasid cosmopolitanism."[56] For Ljamai, only a non-Islamic and ultimately "Western" inspiration could give rise to Humanism in the modern sense of the term. For Ljamai, only the "rationalist" Muslim Peripatetic philosophers (Ar. *al-mashshāʾiyyūn*), Abbasid litterateurs, and the followers of the theological school of the Muʿtazila could properly be considered Muslim humanists. In this sense, the period of "Islamic Humanism" ended with the Aristotelian Philosopher Ibn Rushd (d. 595/1198) and was passed on to Europe via translations. The key issue for Ljamai is a fundamental distinction between Humanism and Islam. While Humanism espouses an egalitarian "horizontal relationship, from man to man," Islam envisions a "vertical relationship, with God above men." Since Islam allegedly cannot harmonize divine and human activity, in Ljamai's view religious Muslim thinkers could not have formulated a version of Humanism beholden to Islamic principles.[57]

Pace Kraemer, Goodman, and Ljamai, I contend that an Islamic Humanism based on religious principles can in fact be discerned in the pre-modern Islamic civilizations. Ljamai's supposed contradiction of the verticality of Islamic theology and the horizontality of Humanism is not irreconcilable. On the contrary, Sufi theologians specifically addressed this problem in their anthropological discourses. Sufi anthropology's doctrine of human theomorphism resolved and the contradiction between the ("vertical") divine and ("horizontal") human realms. Likewise, the belief in the universal potential for good and perfection of the human being on the basis of

---

[55] Abdelilah Ljamai, "Humanistic Thought in the Islamic World of the Middle Ages," *The Wiley Blackwell Handbook of Humanism*, 161.
[56] Ibid., 163-165.
[57] Ibid., 154-155.

this theomorphic identity allowed for the concept of a universal human identity and the concomitant values of human freedom, individuality, and dignity. I contend that Ismail Hakki Bursevi's version Sufi anthropology, and especially his radical "Adamology," are seminal examples of this tradition of Islamic Humanism.

To better explain the concept of Islamic Humanism, it is useful to employ the theories of as presented in the edited volume, *Humanism and Muslim Culture*: *Historical Heritage and Contemporary Challenges* (2012).[58] This work not only scrutinizes the Western concept of Humanism and its Islamic variant in an unprecedentedly rigorous way, but certain essays in the volume discuss the possibility of what Davies calls "humanists before 'Humanism.'" In order to frame the concept of Humanism in general, editors Stefan Reichmut, Jörn Rüsen, and Aladdin Sarhan articulate new criteria that they argue that most versions of Humanism, both secular and religious, share cross-culturally. These include (1) a universal view of humanity or the "human species;" (2) anthropocentrism (and in the case of Islam, *theomorphic* anthropocentrism); (3) a culture oriented towards respect for universal human dignity; (4) the fundamental equality of all humans; (5) reverence for difference and individuality; (6) the importance of transcendence.[59] These criteria make it feasible to discuss comparatively different versions of Humanism, be they secular, religious, modern, or premodern, without fear of anachronism.

In this volume, Renate Würsch applies the above criteria to Sufism. In doing so, she draws on a rather obscure article by the noted scholar of Sufism Annemarie Schimmel (d. 2003), who argues for Sufism as a "humanistic" approach to Islam. Würsch reasons that if Humanism is defined as "an anthropology determining how humans can attain their full humanity and dignity,

---

[58] Stefan Reichmut, Jörn Rüsen, Aladdin Sarhan Eds., *Humanism and Muslim Culture*: *Historical Heritage and Contemporary Challenges* (Goettingen and Taipei: V&R University Press GmbH and National Taiwan University Press, 2012).

[59] See: Reichmut, Rüsen, and Sarhan, "Humanism and Muslim Culture: Historical Heritage and Contemporary Culture," in *Humanism and Muslim Culture*, 13-17.

then there are no obstacles to linking 'Humanism' and Islamic mysticism."[60] In her view,

doctrines that urge reflection on human identity and purpose in relation to the divine and the

cultivation of self and selfhood would clearly make Sufism humanistic. This is also true for Sufi

doctrines that promote striving towards self-transcendence through purification or the taming of

the *nafs* (base self), instruction in ethics and proper conduct, and service to others.[61] Ultimately,

according to Würsch, if any school of thought exemplifies Islamic Humanism as Reichmut,

Rüsen, and Sarhan have defined the concept, it is Sufism.

Although the volume *Humanism and Muslim Culture* is valuable for exploring the

concept of Islamic Religious Humanism, it lacks specific case studies in which the editors' theory

is employed to explicate the doctrines of Islamic Humanism. To rectify this situation, the present

dissertation examines the doctrines of the Ottoman Sufi Ismail Hakki Bursevi as a "humanist

before 'Humanism.'" In metaphysical terms, the concept of theomorphic anthropocentrism was

paramount for Bursevi, and all human beings were seen to share in this fundamental aspect of

their identity. As God's primary "locus of manifestation," the human being for Bursevi stood at

the center of creation as the "image of God" and took responsibility for the world as God's

"successor" or "trustee." Human dignity, equality, respect for differences, and the

acknowledgement of individual identity were also important components of Bursevi's Humanism.

Awareness of the human being's theomorphic nature constituted the acme of human knowledge.

According to Bursevi, the popular Sufi *ḥadīth*, "He who knows himself knows his Lord,"

signified this fundamental fact.[62] He even went so far as to claim that the Qur'an was revealed in

---

[60] Renate Würsch, " Humanism and Mysticism-Inspirations from Islam," in *Humanism and Muslim Culture*, 93.
[61] Ibid., 94.
[62] For more information on this *ḥadīth* in Sufi theology, see: William Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*: *Ibn al-ʿArabī's Metaphysics of Imagination* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 344-346.

part to instruct human beings to reach their theomorphic potential.[63] In addition, because of their

innate connection to God, all human beings were worthy of respect in principle. However, the

ultimate criterion of respect depended on the individual realization of each person's "Adamic"

potential.

II. Antecedents to Bursevi's Humanism in Sufi Anthropology

a.) *Sufism as a Human Potentiality Movement*

Vincent Cornell, Scott Kugle, and Sadiyya Shaikh among other scholars have argued that

Sufism can be distinguished from the juridical approach to Islam by its advocacy of the inherent

goodness of human beings and their potential for perfectibility.[64] Cornell explains this doctrine

well in his analysis the Granadan Sufi ʿAlī Ṣāliḥ al-Andalūsī's (c. late 9th/15th century)

comparison between the Sufi and Juridical approaches to Islam. Andalūsī differentiates Sufism

from Islamic law on the basis of their optimism or pessimism with respect to human potential.

As Cornell explains it, Andalūsī maintained that

> The legalistic perspective of exoterism assumes a weakness or inadequacy on
> the part of the human being that requires discipline and indoctrination to
> overcome. For this reason, it stresses sincerity and effort and depends on
> outward conformity with the divine command. Its epistemology is based on
> knowledge of the laws of God (Ar. *al-ʿilm bi-aḥkām Allāh*) and is
> summarized by the phrase, "We have heard" (Ar. *samiʿnā*). [Sufism] honors
> the same virtues, but starts with the premise that the human being is prepared
> to fulfill his role as God's vicegerent. For this reason, it stresses love and
> perfection rather than discipline and depends on inward conformity with the
> divine command. Its epistemology is based on unmediated knowledge from
> God (*al-ʿilm bi-llāh*) and is summarized by the phrase, "We have witnessed"
> (Ar. *shahidnā*).[65]

---

[63] Bursevi, *Rūḥ al-bayān*, 27.200-202.
[64] Vincent J. Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*: *Power and Authority in Moroccan Sufism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998), 213; Scott Kugle, *Sufis & Saints' Bodies*: *Mysticism*, *Corporeality*, *& Sacred Power in Islam* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007) 26-41, 292-294; Sadiyya Shaykh, *Sufi Narratives of Intimacy*: *Ibn 'Arabi*, *Gender*, *and Sexuality* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 24-28, 81.
[65] Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, 214-215.

Muḥyī al-Dīn ibn al-ᶜArabī's (d. 638/1240) discussion of the etymology of the Arabic term *insān* ("human being") makes some of the same points. According to Ibn al-ᶜArabī juridical scholars, who are fundamentally distrustful of their fellow humans, claim that *insān* is derived from the Arabic verb *nasiya*, "to forget." Forgetful by nature, human beings are prone to commit evil and thus require the regulation and policing of jurists (Ar. *fuqahāʾ*). However, Sufis consider the noun *uns* ("intimacy"), or the verb *anisa* ("to be close"), to be the root of *insān*. Thus, according to Ibn al-ᶜArabī, human beings are intimate with God by their very nature. It is in this respect that Sufis claim that humans are fundamentally oriented toward the good and have the ability to perfect themselves through Sufi doctrines and practices. Beyond this, he remarks that the term *insān* is equivalent to the homonym, *insān*, which connotes the "pupil [of the eye]." By expressing the essential theomorphism of humanity, the human being is metaphorically the "pupil" through which God sees Himself reflected in creation.[66] For Ibn al-ᶜArabī and later for Bursevi, human beings can best realize their true identity as God's "pupils" through the practice of Sufism.

While much has been written on Ibn al-ᶜArabī's doctrine of The Perfect Human Being (*al-insān al-kāmil*) in Sufi studies, the same has not been true for the Sufi conception of the identity and purpose of humanity, which is sometimes referred to as "Sufi anthropology."[67] Both pre-modern Sufis and modern scholars have conflated the doctrine of the Perfect Human Being— a seminal *part* of Sufi anthropological discourse—with Sufi anthropology as a whole.

---

[66] Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-ᶜArabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, Abū-l-ᶜAlā ᶜAfīfī Ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ᶜArabī, 1980), 50.
[67] For a survey of studies on the concept of *al-insān al-kāmil*, see: Gerhard Böwering, "Ensān-e Kāmel," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, online edition, 1998; 2011, available at http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/ensan-e-kamel (accessed on 7 December 2017); Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, 205-211; Giuseppe Scattolin, "Realization of the 'Self' (*anā*) in Islamic Mysticism: ᶜUmar ibn al-Fāriḍ (576/1181- 632/1235), *Annali dell'Università degli studi di Napoli "L'Orientale." Rivista del Dipartimento di Studi Asiatici e del Dipartimento di Studi e Ricerche su Africa e Paesi Arabi* 56 (1996): 14-32; Mehmet S. Aydın, s.v. "İnsân-ı Kâmil," *İslam Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul: Türk Diyanet Vakfı, İslam Araştırmalar Merkezi, 1988; 2000), 22:331; John T. Little, *"Al-Insān al-Kāmil*: The Perfect Man according to Ibn al-ᶜArabī" *The Muslim World* 77 (1987): 43-54.

Although Sufi authors often reviewed and analyzed the concept of Sufi anthropology in their writings, because of the importance of the doctrine of *al-insān al-kāmil*, their discussions of Sufi anthropology as a whole were in general auxiliary.[68] Modern works of Sufi studies, such as Richard Todd's recent book on the influential Sufi theologian Ṣadr al-dīn Qūnawī's (d. 673/1274) conception of Sufi anthropology, have merely perpetuated this trend.[69]

Throughout his writings, Bursevi refers to the concept of *maᶜrifa* ("mystical knowledge," "recognition of God") as the knowledge that God imparted to Adam when He taught him " all the the Names" (Q 2:31).[70] Not only Adam, but also his progeny were singled out for *maᶜrifa*, which in essence consists of awareness of the theomorphism of humanity.[71] Realizing this knowledge and acting upon it constituted the acme of human existence for Bursevi. It was only through Sufism that one could become *al-insān al-kāmil*.[72] Formerly the unique privilege of prophets, what Bursevi termed the "Adamic science" survived exclusively through Sufi doctrine and rituals. Thus, the best way to fully understand the essence and mission of Adam and his progeny is through Sufi anthropology.

Bursevi's belief in the inherent goodness of human beings, their theomorphic nature, and their perfectibility agrees not only with the Granadan Sufi Al-Andalusī but also with such early

---

[68] See: Ibrahim Hakkı Erzurumi's (d. 1194/1780) "'Compendia of Approaches to Human Identity' concerning the Mystical Knowledge of Oneness (Ar. *Al-Majmūᶜāt al-insānīya fī-maᶜrifat al-waḥdānīya*); Seyyid Mustafa Rasim Efendi's (c. mid 13th/19th cent.) "Technical Terms Used in the Doctrine of the Perfect Human Being" (Tur.*İstilahat-ı insan-ı kamil*); Yahya M. Michot, "Sufi Love and Light in Tillo: Ibrāhīm Ḥaqqı Erẕurūmī (d. 1194/1780), *The Muslim World* 105 (2015): 327-328; Mustafa Çağırcı, s.v. "İbrâhim Hakkı Erzurûmî" *İslam Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul: Türk Diyanet Vakfı, İslam Araştırmalar Merkezi, 1988; 2000), 21.310; Seyyid Mustafa Rasim Efendi, *Tasavvuf Sözlüğü*: *Istılahat-ı İnsan-ı Kamil* (Istanbul: Insan Yayınları, 2013); İhsan Kara, "İbnü'l-Arabi'nin Tasavvuf İstılahlarına Etkisi ve Seyyid Mustafa Rasim Efendi'nin *Istılahat-ı İnsan-ı Kamil*'i Örneği," *Tasavvuf* 23 (2009): 583-600.

[69] Richard Todd, *The Sufi Doctrine of Man*: *Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī's Metaphysical Anthropology* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2014).

[70] See: Bursevi, *Rūḥ al-bayān*, 12:76.

[71] Ibid., 12:62.

[72] Kargılı, "İsmail Hakkı Bursevi'nin Kitabü'l-Hucceti'l Baliğa Adlı Eseri," 86, 148-149; Bursevi, *Kitâbü'l-izzi'l-âdemî*, 124a-125b; Engin Söğüt, "İsmâil Hakkı Bursevî'nin Kenz-i Mahfî Risâlesi Muhtevâ ve Tahlîli," M.A. Thesis, Marmara University, Istanbul, 2007, 73.

Sufis from the east as Abū Yazīd (Bayazīd) al-Bisṭāmī (c. 261/874), who stated that all human

beings were "completely complete" (Ar. *al-kāmil al-tāmm*) because they reflected God's divinity,

which by nature is completely perfect.[73] The widely used Sufi concept of *kashf* ("unveiling,"

"personal revelation") is also related to these beliefs. However, although humanity's intimacy

with God entails the possibility of God-given unveiling for all people, in practice it was usually

reserved for only a select few.

The interpretation by Sufis of key Qur'anic verses about humanity and human beings

were more influential than any other source in developing the key features of their anthropology.

Qur'anic narratives of Adam's creation and adoration by the Angels (Q 2:30-32; 7:11-12), his

instruction by God (Q 2:31), and the circumstances of his fall and repentance (Q 2:35-37;

20:121-123) interested Sufis a great deal. They maintained that these verses referred

metonymically to humanity at large, as the "Children of Adam" (Q 7:26-27, 31-25). Verses

recounting human creation (Q 19:67; 21:37; 30:20), God's benediction of humanity (Q 17:70;

95:4), God's "breathing of His spirit" into the human form (Q 15:29; 38:72), and the "covenant"

between God and humanity prior to creation (Q 7:172), likewise fascinated Sufi thinkers.[74] For

Sufi theologians, innate conformity to the primordial *fiṭra* (i.e., Q 30:30) was one of the deepest

and most primordial aspects of human nature. Toshihiko Izutsu's (d. 1993) argument concerning

the polarization of human nature is germane to this discussion. In the Qur'an, humans are at

times portrayed as wicked on account of egoism or folly. At other times, however, given their

---

[73] Scattolin, "Realization of the 'Self' (*anā*) in Islamic Mysticism," 13.
[74] See: Kassem Mouhammed Abbas, *Abū Yazīd al-Basṭāmī: al-majmuʿah al-ṣūfiyyah al-kāmilah* (Damascus, Syria: Al-Madā, 2004), 89, 100; Dr. Ali Hassan Abdel-Kader, *The Life, Personality and Writings of Al-Junayd*, *A Study of a Third/Ninth Century Mystic with an Edition and Translations of his writings* (London: Luzac & Company LTD, 1976), 40-43; Michael Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism: Sufi, Qur'an, Mi'raj, Poetic and Theological Writings* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1996), 83-85, 91-95.

unique intimacy with their Creator, they are portrayed as superior to other creatures.[75] Sufi

anthropology gives preference to this latter characterization. It is as if the Qur'an's depiction of

humans as "the greatest of form" (Q 94:4) surpasses or even supersedes the passages that

chastise humankind as "ignorant" (Q 33:72), "hasty" (Q 17:11), or "wicked" (Q 14:34).

B.) *Sufi Anthropology 1: Theoretical Foundations*

Sufi anthropology developed in three periods. The first period occurred roughly between

the 3nd/9th and 6th/12th centuries CE. During this period, early Sufis articulated many of the

key principles of the tradition of Sufi anthropology as a whole.[76] Their source material was

comprised of Qur'anic and *ḥadīth* exegesis, and on personal instances of personal unveiling or

revelation (Ar. *kashf*). The key principles included: (1) innateness of human goodness; (2) the

reality of human theomorphism; (3) the potential for revelation; (4) and the possibility of human

perfectibility. Some of the best-known concepts of Sufi theology formulated in this period were

also related to these tenets, most notably the concepts of "union with God" (*wiṣāl*, *jamᶜ*, etc.)

knowledge of God (*maᶜrifa*), and Love mysticism (*maḥabba*, *ᶜishq* etc.). This is because

espousing a doctrine of "union" with God, or asserting an inter-reliant relationship between God

and the human being in mystical love, necessitates that humans are theomorphic or that they

have some connection with God at the very least.[77]

A number of early Sufis, including Bāyazīd Bisṭāmī, Abū-l-Qāsim al-Junayd, Sahl al-

Tustarī (d. 283/896), Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj (d. 309/922), and al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, developed

important models of Sufi anthropology. However, they left certain theoretical issues unaddressed.

---

[75] Toshihiko Izutsu, *God and Man in the* Qur'an: *Semantics of the Qur'anic* Weltanschauung (Tokyo and Petaling Jaya: Islamic Book Trust, 2008), 254-265; Idem., *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qurʾān* (Montreal and Ithaca: McGill and Queen's University Press, 2002), 203-204.

[76] See for example: Nile Green, *Sufism*: *A Global History* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 16-18; see also: Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism*, 11-17.

[77] Scattolin, "Realization of the 'Self' (*anā*) in Islamic Mysticism," 15-16; Böwering, "Ensān-e Kāmel."

The most important of these concerned the relationship between the archetypal human being as the embodiment of the Sufi ideal of theomorphism, and normal human beings, who do not embody these ideals but may have the potential to do so. Do all of Adam's descendants have a share in the perfection and theomorphism of their progenitor? If so, what is their true nature, and what are their cosmological, social, and political roles? What is the relation of Adam, the prophets, and the saints of Islam to ordinary, "unsaintly" human beings? Early attempts to resolve these questions included Tustarī's notion of the "Muḥammadan Reality" or "Muḥammadan Light" (Ar. *al-ḥaqīqa al-muḥammadīya*, *al-nūr al-muḥammadī*), and Junayd's interpretation of the Primordial Covenant (Q 7:172).[78]

c.) *A History of Sufi Anthropology 2*: *Elaborations and Delineations*

From roughly the 6th/12th through the 9th/16th centuries CE, Sufi theoreticians synthesized, critiqued, and expanded upon the doctrines of these early Sufis. This was the second period of the development of Sufi anthropology. Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) was the first Sufi theologian of this period to reinterpret the tradition of Sufi anthropology. In his works, Ghazālī stressed the theomorphic nature of humanity based on *ḥadīth*s and Sufi sayings attesting that human beings were created as "images of God."

For al-Ghazālī, the doctrine of human theomorphism was the *sine qua non* of Sufism, and even of Islam itself.[79] Drawing on Sufi approaches to Qur'anic narratives of humanity, he appears to have introduced the term, "divine self-manifestation" (Ar. *tajallī*, c.f Q 7:143), to describe how God is reflected theomorphically in human beings. According to this view, when God "breathed" His Spirit into Adam to give him life, He manifested Himself in him and in his

---

[78] Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, 205-206; Abdel-Kader, *The Life, Personality and Writings of Al-Junayd*, 40-43.

[79] Maha Elkaisy-Friemuth, *God and Humans in Islamic Thought*: *ᶜAbd al-Jabbār, Ibn Sīnā, and al-Ghazālī* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 160.

progeny. The purpose of human existence is thus to recognize this unique relationship and to act in accordance with it as God's *khalīfa* ("representative"). However, this can only be done under the guidance of Islam, and more specifically of Sufism.[80] As Ghazālī wrote in *Kimiyā-yi saʿādat* ("The Alchemy of Happiness"), "No one can understand a king but a king; therefore, God has made each of us a king in miniature, so to speak, over a kingdom which is an infinitely reduced copy of [God's] own."[81]

Although Ghazālī asserted the universality of human theomorphism, he also introduced a well-defined hierarchy for this concept. Those Muslims who cultivated an awareness of their theomorphism and acted in accordance with this awareness by practicing Sufism ranked above those who did not. The prophets of Islam, chief among them the Prophet Muḥammad, and the saints as their inheritors, along with the righteous among Sufis, scholars, and other "knowers [of God] (*ʿulamāʾ*), embodied Adam's identity as an "image of God." While all human beings are essentially theomorphic, their potential can be unrealized through wrong actions and erroneous beliefs. Gor Ghazālī, non-Muslims, Shiites, and others outside of the pale of "orthodox" Sunni Islam were among those who did not make good on their Adamic heritage.[82]

The next most salient moment in the development of Sufi anthropology can be ascribed to Muḥī al-Dīn Ibn al-ʿArabī (d. 646/1248). Although best known for his doctrine of The Perfect Human Being, Ibn al-ʿArabī made many other contributions to Sufi anthropology.[83] Like Ghazālī, he believed that all human beings shared in the theomorphic nature of Adam. God created all human beings in His image. The Perfect Human Being (*Al-insān al-kāmil*) was the locus of God's manifestation *par excellence*. Both cosmologically and politically, the role of this figure in

---

[80] Ibid., 166-168.
[81] Ibid., 136.
[82] Ibid., 137-140.
[83] For the association of Ibn al-ʿArabī with *al-insān al-kāmil*, see: Shahab Ahmed, *What is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), 20-22.

Ibn al-ᶜArabī's Sufism cannot be overemphasized. Representing God's Name, *al-jāmiᶜ* ("The All-Comprehensive"), the human being in God's image enables the most complete manifestation of God in the world, and thereby fulfills the divine purpose of creation. As the most comprehensively theomorphic being in the world of creation, the human being fulfills God's desire for Self-knowledge according to the famous Sufi *ḥadīth*, "I [God] was a hidden treasure and I desired to be known. So, I created creation in order to be known."[84] In order to describe the full interrelationship between God, humanity, and the world, Ibn al-ᶜArabī also developed other concepts. These included the notion of the human being as the "polish [of the mirror of existence]" (Ar. *jilāʾ*) through which God is able to manifest Himself and witness Himself in creation, and the notion of the human being as God's "copy" (Ar. *nuskha*) or focal point (Ar. *nuqṭa*), which comprehensively draws together all of God's creation.[85] In addition, in light of his doctrine of God's emanation of existence through the Divine Names, Ibn al-ᶜArabī offered various iterations of human "anatomies" in relation to the divine Names and qualities.[86]

Despite maintaining that all human beings inherited the theomorphism of Adam universally, like Ghazālī before him Ibn al-ᶜArabī also developed a system of ranking humans on the basis of their awareness and actualization of their theomorphism. It is in this context that he conceived of the doctrine of *al-insān al-kāmil*. This doctrine was an attempt to resolve the theological problem of the discrepancy between the universal theomorphic nature of human beings and the identity of God. In terms of Islamic orthodoxy, only one true Image could actually exist. As the metaphysical "polish" of the mysterious Mirror of Existence, the Perfect Human Being was the first of many "appointments" (Ar. *taᶜayyunāt*) or manifestations of God in the

---

[84] Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 391, n.14; Jonathan A.C. Browh, *Hadith*: *Muhammad's Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World* (Oxford and New York: Oneworld Publications Ltd., 2009), 193-194.
[85] Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 16-17, 178, 188, 274-276, 329.
[86] See: William C. Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God*: *Principles of Ibn al-'Arabi's Cosmology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 269-302.

world.[87] In this role, the Perfect Human Being represented the "First Intellect" (Ar. *al-ᶜaql al-awwal*), the "Spirit" (Ar. *al-rūḥ*) and the "cause" (Ar. *ᶜilla*) of creation. As such, he is the microcosm (Ar. *al-ᶜālam al-ṣaghīr*) or paradigm of creation. As *khalīfa* or representative of God on earth, the Perfect Human Being is the cosmological archetype of all things and the *telos* of creation. Modifying Tustarī's earlier expression of this concept, Ibn al-ᶜArabī asserted that *al-insān al-kāmil* was also the underlying essence of the Prophet Muḥammad. Adam, the other prophets of Islam, and the saints also manifested the reality of the Perfect Human Being in varying degrees. However, the "Seal of the Prophets," the Prophet Muḥammad served as the "Seal of All Versions of *al-Insān al-Kāmil*." In a similar manner, Ibn al-ᶜArabī himself, as the purveyor of this Adamic wisdom, considered himself the "Seal of the Saints."[88]

Sufi thinkers who followed Ibn al-ᶜArabī expanded upon his legacy in their own discussions of Sufi anthropology. These included Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī (d. 673/1274), Fakhr al-Dīn ᶜIrāqī (d. 688/1289), Dawūd al-Qayṣarī (d. 751/1351), Molla Fenari (d. 834/1431), and Sofyalı Bali Efendi (d. 960/1520), among others. Most significantly, they focused on clarifying the exact relationship between God, the *al-insān al-kāmil* paradigm, and ordinary human beings. In general, they tended to create a greater conceptual divide between those humans who could actualize their potential to become *al-insān al-kāmil* and those who could not do so. Whereas in Ibn al-ᶜArabī's system all human beings could *potentially* reach the same level of comprehensiveness as *al-insān al-kāmil*, it seems that most but not all later Akbarian discourses limited or even denied this potential. Rather than function as a possible reality for all human

---

[87] Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 27-30, 277; Michel Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints*: *Prophethood and Sainthood in the Doctrine of Ibn 'Arabi*, Liadain Sherrard Trans. (Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1993), 89-92, 110; Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, 205-208.
[88] Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints*, 75-80, 159-161.

beings, *al-insān al-kāmil* now served a more metaphysical and symbolic function.[89]

Because of the primacy of Ibn al-ᶜArabī, the field of Sufi studies has often been equated

with the Akbarian concept of *al-insān al-kāmil*. Consequently, other vibrant and influential Sufi

anthropological systems have been underrepresented in scholarship, if not ignored entirely. This

is particularly true with respect to the doctrines of the Kubrawīya Sufi order.[90] Sufi anthropology

was crucial to the theologies of the eponym of this order, Najm al-Dīn Kubrā (d. 617-18/1220-

1221), and his students, in particular Saᶜad al-Dīn al-Ḥammūʾī (d. 649/1252), Najm al-Dīn Dāya

Rāzī (d. 654/1256), and ᶜAlā al-Dawla al-Simnānī (d. 736/1336).[91]

Like Ghazālī and Ibn al-ᶜArabī, the Kubrawīs argued that Adam was created in the

"image of God" and that human nature was in principle theomorphic. However, Kubrawī Sufi

anthropology can be distinguished from other versions of this doctrine in its accentuation of the

difference between "primordial" (Ar. *fiṭrawī*) human beings such as the Prophets and saints, and

ordinary human beings.[92] The Kubrawīs established a more rigid criterion of perfection than

either Ghazālī or Ibn al-ᶜArabī, by which humans were ranked according to their level of

actualized theomorphism. Merely inheriting Adam's theomorphism did not automatically make

of humans the "Images of God."[93] The Kubrawī hierarchy of humankind relied greatly upon a

dualistic cosmology of light and darkness, and on the Sufi epistemological principle of the

remembrance and invocation of the Absolute. The Qur'anic account of God's breathing the divine

---

[89] Todd, *The Sufi Doctrine of Man*, 83-101, 107, 170-178; William C. Chittick, "The School of Ibn ᶜArabī" in *History of Islamic Philosophy*: *From its Origin to the Present*, *Philosophy in the Land of Prophecy*, Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman Eds. (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 1.510-514; Idem., "The Five Divine Presences: From Al-Qūnawī to al-Qayṣarī," *The Muslim World* 72 (1982):108-109.

[90] Jamal J Elias, *The Throne Carrier of God*: *The Life and Thought of ᶜAlāʾ ad-dawla as-Simnānī* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 11-12.

[91] Paul Ballanfat, "La Prophétologie dans le *'Ayn al-hayât, tafsîr attribué à Najm al-dîn Kubrâ*," in *Mystique musulmane – Parcours en compagnie d'un chercheur: Roger Deladrière, Actes du colloque du 9 mars 2001, Université Jean-Moulin à Lyon* (Paris: Cariscript, 2002), 240, 244-245, 269-271, 281-284.

[92] Najm al-Dîn Kubrâ, *Les Eclosions de la beauté et les parfums de la majesté*: *Fawâtih al-jamâl wa fawâ'ih al jalâl*, Paul Ballanfat Ed. and Trans.. (Nimes: Editions de l'éclat, 2001), 71-73.

[93] Ibid., 78-82, 113-114.

spirit into Adam (Q 15:29; 38:72) was interpreted to mean that God cast light from His presence into Adam's heart and thus into the hearts of all of Adam's descendants. However, this light was obscured by the materiality of creation. The goal of human existence was to fulfill the "desire" (i.e., principle of attraction) of the light in the heart to return to God, to reestablish the primordial connection between God and humanity, and consequently to illuminate the world.[94] The symbolic "voluntary death" of the worldly person enacted through the Sufi path and the practice of remembrance freed the light of the heart from the bondage of materiality and reconnected it to God. As Kubrawī Sufis progressed in emancipating this inner light, they would witness in their meditations a series of colors reflecting their degree of actualization.

Once reunited with their primordial nature, human beings who actualized their theomorphism would be able to see past the veils of creation and witness the world as a theatre for divine manifestation.[95] This path was seen to fulfill the promise of the Qur'anic verse, "We [God] shall show them Our signs upon the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear that He [God]/the Qur'an is the Truth" (Q 41:53). In ʿAlāʾ al-Dawla al-Simnānī's version of Kubrawī theology, the human being, as the Image of God *in potentia,* was depicted as the paradigm of the universe (Ar. *al-ʿālam al-kabīr*) or macanthropos.[96]

ʿAziz al-Dīn Nasafī (fl. late 7th/13th c.) was the first Kubrawī Sufi to author a treatise entitled *al-insān al-kāmil*. In this work, Nasafī puts forth the notion of the Perfect Human Being as an ethical ideal rather than as a metaphysical archetype. For him, *al-insān al-kāmil* was the one person who achieved full conformity with the rules of Islamic law (Ar. *al-sharīʿa*), the teachings of Sufism (Ar. *al-ṭarīqa*), and the divine realities (Ar. *al-ḥaqīqa*). Given their theomorphic nature all human beings could approach or actualize this tripartite perfection in

---

[94] Ibid., 87-89.
[95] Ballanfat, "La Prophétologie," 336-338.
[96] Elias, *The Throne Carrier of God*, 72-100..

various degrees. However, only one person could be said to be truly "perfect" in each generation.

Just as there is only one heart in the body (Q 33:40), existence only has room for one Perfect

Human Being.[97]

No discussion of Sufi anthropology would be complete without mention of the prolific

and frankly understudied works of ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Jīlī (d. ca. 832/1428). Jīlī devoted many of

his works to Sufi anthropology, and to the doctrine of *al-insān al-kāmil* in particular. His best-

known work is *Al-Insān al-kāmil fī maʿrifat al-awākhir wa-l-awāʾil* ("The Perfect Human Being

in the Mystical Knowledge of the First and Final Things"). In this and other works, Jīlī drew on

and critically evaluated all of the existing Sufi anthropological writings he could find, as well as

works from other religious traditions.[98] In his works, Jīlī emphasized the theomorphic nature of

all human beings. Humans did not inherit Adam's theomorphism as a mere potential to be

actualized, but rather were in their own way all "images of God," regardless of religion, ethnicity,

or even—to some degree—morality. This was not hyperbole for Jīlī. According to him, God

could only be understood in both His divine (Ar. *ḥaqqī*) and manifested (Ar. *khalqī*) modes of

reality in the context of the full actualization of human potential. He maintained that the divine

manifests itself in countless individualizations (Ar. *tanazzulāt*) in relation to God's Names and

Attributes. All human beings reflect the archetype of the Perfect Human Being in their individual

ways. However, the most significant manifestation of *al-insān al-kāmil* was in the person of the

Prophet Muḥammad. Although Jīlī deemphasized the notion of a ranked hierarchy of humanity,

he does assert that those who are more aware of their Adamic potential better fulfill the ultimate

purpose of human creation, and thus have the authority to guide others. In this vein, he claimed

---

[97] Scattolin, "Realization of the 'Self' (*anā*) in Islamic Mysticism," 21; Lloyd Ridgeon, *Persian Metaphysics and Mysticism*: *Selected Works of ʿAzīz Nasafī* (Abingdon and New York: Curzon Press, 2002), 46-51, 231-241.
[98] Scattolin, "Realization of the 'Self' (*anā*) in Islamic Mysticism," 22.

that *al-insān al-kāmil* appeared to him in countless forms over the course of his life.[99]

By contrast, Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (d. 672/1273) conceived of error, deficiency, and humility as essential qualities of human theomorphism. In his Sufi anthropology, Rūmī was greatly indebted to the ideas of Abū-l-Majd Sanāʾī (c. 525-535/ 1131-1141) and Farīd al-Dīn ʿAṭṭār (c. 617/1220), although overall, his discourses on this subject were innovative.[100] For Rūmī, Adam was God's mirror, the prototype of human theomorphism, the purpose of creation, and the microcosm.[101] However, most importantly, Adam was also the unique trustee of the fullness of God's love. He was the only creature both worthy of God's love and of loving God as befits the divine.[102] That which applied to Adam likewise applied to his progeny, and for this reason Rūmī explicitly referred to human beings as "Adamites" (Pers. *ādamīyān*). Although theomorphism characterized humanity universally, not every human being merited the appellation, "Image of God." Rūmī drew a sharp distinction between humans who lived up to their Adamic heritage, and those who squandered it. Human beings were either descended from Adam's son Abel, and hence were "Adamic," or were descended from Cain, and hence were "demonic." "Adamites" could actualize their theomorphism by denying their ego and cultivating a self-consuming love for God.[103] As Rūmī stresses in the introduction to *Mathnawī-yi maʿnawī* ("Spiritual Couplets"), Adam's humble clay and hollow body at creation, which represented human vulnerability and selflessness, were the very attributes that rendered him capable of theomorphism because it

---

[99] See: Reynold A. Nicholson, *Studies in Islamic Mysticism* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1921), 60-66; Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, 208-211.

[100] Franklin D. Lewis, Rumi: *Past and Present, East and West: The Life, Teachings, and Poetry of Jalâl al-Din Rumi* (Oxford and New York: Oneworld Publications Ltd., 2000; 2008), 27-28, 32-33, 64-65.

[101] William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Love*: *The Spiritual Teachings of Rumi* (Albany, NY: The State University of New York Press, 1984), 60-65, 70; Jawid Mojaddedi, *Beyond Dogma*: *Rumi's Teachings on Friendship with God and Early Sufi Theories* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 30-42.

[102] Ibid., 197-200.

[103] Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Love*, 85, 173-175; Mohammed Rustom, "Rumi's Metaphysics of the Heart," *Mawlana Rumi Review* 1 (2010): 72-76.

served as a vessel for the divine spirit.[104] Rūmī's Sufi anthropology had a powerful impact on the

Sufis that followed him. These included the members of the two Mevlevi Sufi orders that were

founded after his death, the Naqshbandī Sufi theologian ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān Jāmī (d. 898/1492),

and those Ottoman Sufi theologians who were able to read Persian.[105]

A crucial, yet underappreciated early proponent of Sufi anthropology in Anatolia was the

enigmatic Sufi poet Yunus Emre (c. 720/1320-21). Yunus articulated a distinct version of Sufi

anthropology that had a lasting impact on Sufis in the Ottoman Empire. In his poems, he

emphasized human selfhood as reflective of divine selfhood. Emre held that this reflection

distinguished humankind from all other creation.[106] God's breathing into Adam of His spirit at

creation signified that God passed on His very self to the "Adamites" (Tur. *adamiler*). The

purpose of human creation was to make this divine selfhood known to the world, while the

business of Sufism was to aid human beings in realizing their connection to God's "I," or ego-self.

Yunus Emre's poetry is replete with discussions of what it means to realize the inner dimension

of selfhood as reflective of the process of realizing theomorphism.[107] Being sharply critical of his

fellow Sufis and the Muslim scholars of Anatolia, he considered Adamites who were more

"themselves" in the realization of their connection to divine selfhood as more worthy of

theomorphism than their peers.[108]

d.) *Sufi Anthropology 3: A Return to Adam*

---

[104] Annamarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 317.

[105] Lewis, *Rumi*. 432-457, 468-482; Abdülbaki Gölpinarlı, *Mevlana'dan sonra Mevlevilik* (Istanbul: İnkilap Kitabevi, 1953; 1983; 2009).

[106] Zekeriya Başkal, *Yunus Emre*: *The Sufi Poet in Love* (Clifton: Blue Dome Press, 2010), 56-67.

[107] Hamilton Cook, "'Beyond Love Mysticism:' Yūnus Emre's Sufi Theology of Selfhood," *Journal of Sufi Studies* 6 (2017): 62-69, 71, 77-78.

[108] Ibid., 74-77.

The third period in the development of Sufi anthropology occurred around the beginning

of the 9th/16th century. Ottoman Sufi theologians, beginning with Dawūd al-Qayṣarī (d.

750/1350) and Molla Fenari (d. 834/1431), studied most of the Sufi anthropological literature

mentioned above. These works were readily available in their original languages or in translated

form in many Ottoman *tekke* libraries.[109] İbrahim Hakkı Erzurumi (d. 1194/1780), Seyyid Rasim

Efendi (ca. mid 13th/19th century) and others authored works that summarized previous Sufi

discourses on this subject.[110] The most salient Ottoman theorists of Sufi anthropology were

Niyaz-i Misri (d. 1105/1694), Sun'ullah Gaybi (ca. 1087/1676), and Ismail Hakki Bursevi.

Despite their different approaches to this subject, all sought to define the "Adamic" or

theomorphic potential of the human being in a clearer way than their predecessors. In addition,

they also sought to explicate the social and political ramifications of the concept of the Perfect

Human Being in the context of Ottoman politics and society.[111]

Vincent Cornell, Omid Safi, and Nile Green have provided crucial observations on the

role of Sufi anthropology in the political careers of Sufis.[112] Generally speaking, there were three

approaches that Sufis developed to rectify the contradiction between their idealistic view of

humanity and the societies of their times. These approaches corresponded roughly to Nathan

Hofer's categorization of state-Sufi relations as "state-sponsored Sufism," "state-sanctioned

---

[109] Paul Ballanfat, *Unité et spiritualité*: *Le courant Melâmî-Hamzevî dans L'Empire ottoman* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2013)*,* 231-232, 268-270; Slobodan Ilıç, s.v.. "Lâmekânî Hüseyin Efendi," *İslam Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul: Türk Diyanet Vakfı,, İslam Araştırmaları Merkezi 1988; 2003), 27.95.

[110] Michot, "Sufi Love and Light in Tillo," 327-328; Kara, "İbnü'l-Arabi'nin Tasavvuf İstılahlarına Etkisi ve Seyyid Mustafa Rasim Efendi'nin *Istılahat-ı İnsan-ı Kamil*'i Örneği," 583-585.

[111] Paul Ballanfat, *Messianisme et Sainteté*: *Les poèmes du mystique ottoman Niyazi Misri* (1618-1694) (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2012), 22, 32, 51-52; and Idem., *Unité et spiritualité*, 19-21, 73.

[112] Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, 63, 156, 198; Omid Safi, *The Politics of Knowledge in Premodern Islam*: *Negotiating Ideology and Religious Inquiry* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006), xxvi-xxvii; Green, *Sufism,* 3-4, 126-128.

Sufism," and "unruly Sufism."[113] "State sponsored Sufis" were those who upheld official models of political and institutional organization; "state-sanctioned Sufis" rejected overt political involvement in favor of quietism; "unruly Sufis" scorned society entirely and sought to reorder it in the image of their beliefs. However, as Vincent Cornell asserts, all three approaches, even the quietistic, were political by implication if not by design.[114]

Most early modern Sufis, including those in the Ottoman Empire, were either "state-sponsored Sufis" or "state-sanctioned Sufis," and thus more often than not affirmed the existing political and social orders. Even when they acted as ostensible representatives of the disenfranchised, they approved of the state for the sake of social harmony. It is in this context that some Sufis of the early period legitimized Sultans or other political leaders by calling them *al-insān al-kāmil*.[115] In addition, the ruling ideologies of the most powerful early modern Muslim "Gunpowder Empires" (including the Ottoman, Safavid, Mughal, and Saʿadī empires), were based on the notion of bettering humanity under the guidance of an enlightened "Perfect Man."[116] In perhaps the most striking example of this trend, the Sultanate of Yogyakarta in Java was referred to explicitly as the domain of *al-insān al-kāmil*, and its court rituals reenacted Ibn al-ʿArabī's metaphysics of the Divine Names.[117]

By contrast, some "state-sanctioned Sufis" and most "unruly Sufis" considered the state

---

[113] Nathan Hofer, *The Popularisation of Sufism in Ayyubid and Mamluk Egypt 1173-1325* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 24, 61.

[114] Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, 63-66, 94-96, 272-274; For a view of the Melamis as "a-political" or even "anti-political," see: Ballanfat, *Unité et spiritualité*, 280-281.

[115] Safi, *The Politics of Knowledge in Premodern Islam*, 136-139, 153; Moin, *The Millenial Sovereign*, 130-170, 181-182.

[116] Green, *Sufism*, 125-130; Douglas E. Streusand, *Islamic Gunpowder Empires*: *Ottomans*, *Safavids*, *and Mughals* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2010), 71, 249-250; Tijana Krstić, *Contested Conversions to Islam*: *Narratives of Religious Change in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011; 2014), 75-98 Said Amier Arjomand, *The Shadow of God & The Hidden* Imam: *Religion, Political Order, and Societal Change in Shiʿite Iran from the Beginning to 1890* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), 80-82; Rula Jurdi Abisaab, *Converting Persia*: *Religion and Power in the Safavid Empire* (London and New York: I.B. Taurus, 2004; 2015), 10-13; Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*: *Sacred Kingship and Sainthood in Islam*, 5-6, 24, 63-70, 88,. 139-146, 167.

[117] See: Mark Woodward, *Java*, *Indonesia*, *and Islam* (London and New York: Springer, 2011), 139-144.

an impediment to the achievement of humanity's "Adamic" potential. Rather than affirm existing

polities with the hope of ensuring social or political stability, many Sufis advocated quietism, the

outright rejection of political involvement, or even the sublimation of politics.[118] For example,

the Ottoman Melamiye's ritual mimicry of Ottoman coronation rituals in their clandestine *tekke*s

embodied this latter strategy.[119]

Beyond these, Sufis that wer emore politically independent were critical of political

authority and did not urge quietism or retreat from society. Instead, they served humanity in

social and political ways as alternatives to conventional military, political, or juridical functions.

For the most part, they comprised Hofer's third category, the "unruly Sufis." Sufis oriented in this

way, such as Abū Yiᶜzzā Yallannūr (c. 572/1177) and ᶜAbdullāh al-Ghazwānī (d. 935/1528-9) in

Morocco, ᶜAyn al-Quḍāt Ḥamadānī (d. 1098/1131) in Iran, Niẓām al-Dīn Awliyāʾ (d. 725/1325)

in India, and Geyikli Baba (c. early 8th/14th century) in Anatolia, challenged state authority from

the margins of society. As champions of the disenfranchised, they sought to curb state power on

their own.[120] To fill political vacuums, certain institutionalized groups such as the Naqshbandīya

order even formulated interregional organizations that became something akin to parallel

states.[121] Other Sufi Shaykhs went so far as to argue for their own political enfranchisement in

order to supplant worldly authorities. The Sufi turned revolutionary Abū-l-Qāsim Aḥmad ibn

---

[118] The Persian Sufi Rūzbihān Baqlī (d. 606/1209) and the Egyptian Sufi ᶜUmar ibn al-Fāriḍ (d. 632/1235) exemplify the quietist political orientation. See: Th. Emil Homerin, *From Arab Poet to Muslim Saint*: *Ibn al-Fāriḍ, His Verse, and His Shrine* (Cairo and New York: The American University in Cairo Press, 2001), 21-22,.; Carl W. Ernst, *Ruzbihan Baqli*: *Mysticism and Rhetoric of Sainthood in Persian Sufism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), ix.

[119] See: Ballanfat, *Unité et spiritualité*, 283-284.

[120] On these figures, see: Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, 70-72, 76-79, 240-243, 260-263; Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, s.v. "Geyikli Baba," *Islam Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul: Türk Diyanet Vakfı,, İslam Araştırmaları Merkezi 1988; 1996), 14.45-47; Safi, *The Politics of Knowledge in Premodern Islam*, 187-188, 200; Nizam al-Din Awliya, *Morals for the Heart*, Bruce B. Lawrence Trans.. (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1992), 35-37.

[121] Green, Sufism, 149-150, 165-166; Hamid Algar; *Jami* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 8, 33-36, 42; Svat Soucek, *A History of Inner Asia* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 115-116, 157-161; Moin, *The Millenial Sovereign*, 134-135, 181-182.

Qasi (d. 546/1151) in al-Andalus is one of the most famous examples of a Sufi shaykh turned temporal emir.[122] An even more prominent example was Shāh Ismāᶜīl I (d. 930/1524) of Iran, who began his career as the shaykh of the Ṣafawīya Sufi order and ended up as the leader of the Safavid Empire.[123]

Ismail Hakki Bursevi also maintained that Sufism was fundamentally oriented toward a belief in human goodness and the cultivation of human potential. However, for him, Sufism was not merely one means by which people could actualize the fullness of their humanity, rather, it was the exclusive means by which "Adamites" could attain to their ultimate purpose. As we shall see in this dissertation, despite professing a sort of "Humanism before 'Humanism'" in his Sufi anthropology, Bursevi's political doctrines were very exclusivistic. Paradoxically, in some ways they seemed to betray the very ideals from which they stemmed.

My exploration of Bursevi's Sufi anthropology in this dissertation will draw from the works of two major historians of Sufism. It is most indebted to the work of Vincent Cornell, particularly his social and political history of Sufi sainthood in Morocco and the Western Maghrib. Cornell's approach to the history of Sufism, which places Sufism in a greater historical context without neglecting the significance of Sufi doctrinal discourses and viewpoints, informs my general methodology.[124] Beyond this, the dissertation makes use of Cornell's focus on the discursive power of Sufism in the social and political realm with respect to Bursevi's doctrines, self-conception, and worldview.[125] In my discussion of what might be called Bursevi's "Adamic Way," I am indebted to Cornell's narrative of the rise of *Al-Ṭarīqa al-Muḥammadīya* in the Maghreb under the Jazulite Sufi ᶜAbd Allāh al-Ghazwānī, which began as an idealistic reform

---

[122] David Raymond Goodrich, "A Sufi Revolt in Portugal: Ibn Qasī and his *Kitāb khalᶜ al-naᶜlayn*," Doctoral Dissertation, Columbia University, New York, 1978, 15-18, 53-60.
[123] Arjomand, *The Shadow of God*, 79-82.
[124] See for example: Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, xlii-xliii.
[125] Ibid., 63, 156.

movement but later was coopted to legitimize dynastic rule in the region.[126] In framing Bursevi's politicization of the Perfect Man, I also draw on Omid Safi's work on the discursive power dynamics of Sufism and sultanate authority in the early Seljuk period. Most notably, I utilize Safi's view of idealistic Sufis as desiring "to rearrange the world" by either collaborating with Sultanate authority or working against it.[127]

III. Sufi Anthropology and Anti-Humanism

Michel Foucault (d. 1984) has remarked on the contradiction of how doctrines of human potential and inclusivity can be inverted and eventually become exclusivistic, elitist, or even misanthropic. This process of inversion can be seen to apply to certain iterations of Sufi anthropology as well, including that of Bursevi. Foucault argues that because Humanism is a philosophy that objectivizes human beings, it has the propensity to make humanity as a whole susceptible to domination. For him, no version of Humanism, no matter how well-meaning, can be disentangled from a teleology that extols one group of "true humans" over another group of "lesser humans."[128] The insidious side of humanist discourse that Foucault and others have exposed can be considered "Anti-Humanism."

Similarly, Tony Davies has brought to light how fascist writers such as T.E. Hulme, Ezra Pound, and the philosopher Martin Heidegger, as well as the Stalinist apologist György Lukács, thought of totalitarian politics as "humanistic." These figures believed that such theories could be

---

[126] Ibid., 220, 233.
[127] See: Omid Safi, *The Politics of Knowledge in Premodern Islam*, 128.
[128] Michel Foucault, *Dits et écrits*: 1954-1988, 4 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), 1:514; Idem., *Les mots et les choses*: *une archéologie des sciences humaines* (Paris: Gallimard, 1996), 355-359, and 398. See also: Béatrice Han-Pile, "Chapter Six: The 'Death of Man:' Foucault and Anti Humanism," *Foucault and Philosophy*, Timothy O'Leary and Christopher Falzon Eds. (Malden: Wiley Blackwell, 2010), 118-142.

used to aid human beings in fulfilling their potential and perfecting human society.[129] The same was true for the idealistic humanist Julian Huxley, the first president of the influential British Humanist Association. Integral to Huxley's "evolutionary Humanism" was the advocacy of eugenic social engineering. Eugenics was for him a fundamentally humanistic enterprise meant to eradicate all social ills, and thus bring about a the perfection of the human species.[130] Huxley argued for the reorganization of society based on ostensibly humanistic theories in his work *If I Were Dictator* (1934).[131] Similarly, the self-conceived humanist Hastings Rashdall divided humanity into "true humans" (i.e., white, Western European, and heterosexual men) versus "inhuman humans" (i.e., people of other races) on the basis of his ostensibly "humanistic" doctrines.[132]

According to the philosopher of mysticism Richard H. Jones, while mystical doctrines of human potential may conform outwardly to inclusivist ethics, neither mystical doctrines nor mystics are necessarily either inclusivist or ethical. In fact, what might appear to be humanistic at first glance may in fact be a form of Anti-Humanism.[133] Although I argue in this dissertation that Bursevi's Sufi anthropology was a version of "Islamic Humanism," I will also demonstrate that his political discourses betray a totalitarian tendency that in modern terms would likely be considered both anti-humanistic and immoral. No matter how much Bursevi may have argued for the fundamental theomorphism and goodness of humanity, he also argued for a conception of humankind that was antithetical to these very ideals. As we shall see in the following pages, the

---

[129] Davies, *Humanism*, 51-52, 66-68.

[130] Paul T. Phillips, "One World, One Faith: The Quest for Unity in Julian Huxley's Religion of Evolutionary Humanism," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 4 (2007): 617, 621-624, 625; Michael Freeden, "Eugenics and Progressive Thought: A Study in Ideological Affinity," *The Historical Journal* 22 (1979): 646-648, 669-670.

[131] Julian Huxley, *If I Were Dictator* (London: Methuen, 1934).

[132] Rashdall, *Theory of Good and Evil*, 1.238-239.

[133] Richard H. Jones, *Philosophy of Mysticism*: *Raids on the Ineffable* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2016), 289-293, 303-305.

political for this contradiction can be found in his utopian Society of Perfect Men and the

utopianistic vehicle for this society, the Despotism of the Perfect Man.

Chapter 2: Ismail Hakki Bursevi: His Life, Times, and Works

This chapter concerns the life, times, and writings of Ismail Hakki Bursevi. It focuses on those

aspects of Bursevi's life that are relevant for discussions of his Sufi anthropology, his utopian

"Society of Perfect Men," and his "Despotism of the Perfect Man."[1] It also contextualizes his

biography in the Ottoman society in which he lived. Bursevi flourished during the period of

Ottoman history that historian Baki Tezcan has called the "Second Ottoman Empire" (c. 987-

1238/1580-1823).[2] Aware of the political, economic, and social transformations of the Ottoman

world of his day and perturbed by the strife that was endemic to his period, Bursevi sought to

reform Ottoman society. However, he was not the only Ottoman religious scholar to react to such

societal turmoil. The self-proclaimed Jewish messiah Sabbatai Zevi (d. 1676), the anarchistic

Melami Sufi Sun'ullah Gaybi (d. 1087/1676), the quasi-Shiite messianist Niyaz-i Misri (d.

1106/1694), and the Celveti Sufi Selami Ali (d. 1103/1691) also offered their own religious or

political responses. Bursevi argued against all of these figures in his writings, and intended his

Society of Perfect Men to surpass the theological and political schemes of his contemporaries.

This chapter consists of four sections. The first section presents the historical sources for

the study of Bursevi's life. The second section gives an overview of studies of Bursevi's life and

works, arguing that they fall into three major historical phases. The third section presents

Bursevi's biography. It foregrounds those episodes of Bursevi's life that are relevant for the study

of his Humanism, Anti-Humanism, and Utopianism. To present this biography, I draw on

Bursevi's autobiographies and other biographical material, as examined by the contemporary

---

[1] I use the terms "utopia" and "utopianism" in the manner of scholar Howard P. Segal. Utopia refers to an ideal vision of society in and of itself, whereas utopianism connotes those movements or theories concerned with bringing about a utopia. See: Howard P. Segal, *Utopias*: *A Brief History from Ancient Writings to Virtual Communities* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 5-6.

[2] For more information on this trend in Ottoman historiography, see: Baki Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire*: *Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern* World (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010: 2012), 9-11.

scholars Ali Namlı and Kamelia Atanasova. In addition, this section utilizes the underrepresented

French-language biography of Bursevi by the noted Turkish scholar Mehmet Ali Ayni (d. 1945).

The fourth and final section of the chapter provides an overview of Bursevi's writings and a short

description of their contents. In particular, it focuses on the works that inform the present

exploration of Bursevi's Humanism and utopian vision.

I. Source Materials for Bursevi's Biography

The sources available on the life of Ismail Hakki Bursevi are extraordinary in Ottoman

literature. Unlike other Sufis who left sparse autobiographical accounts, Bursevi authored two

complete autobiographies.[3] While other Ottoman Sufis of his time such as Niyaz-i Misri kept

journals, they are not as detailed as Bursevi's accounts.[4] Bursevi's first autobiography appears in

the Arabic work, *Tamām al-fayḍ fī bāb al-rijāl* ('"The Completion of God's Effusive Grace'

Concerning Spiritually Realized Masters"). This work discusses Sufi sainthood, Sufi history, and

the condition of Sufism in his time. Bursevi gives an account of his life at the end of this work. It

is replete with details about his birthplace, family, education, spiritual training, travels, and

writings. Kamelia Atanasova has considered this account a kind of "self prosopography" (Ar.

tarjamat al-nafs). In other words, Bursevi wrote about himself as he would have about a past or

contemporary Sufi in a traditional prospographical work.[5] His descriptions of his personal

---

[3] For examples of other Sufis who wrote autobiographical works, see: Firoozeh Papan-Matin, *The Unveiling of Secrets* (*Kashf al-asrār*): *The Visionary Autobiography of Rūzbihān al-Baqlī* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2005); Claude Addas, *Ibn 'Arabī ou la quete du Soufre Rouge* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1989).

[4] Kamelia Atanasova, "The Sufi as the Axis of the World: Representations of Religious Authority in the Works if Ismail Hakki Bursevi (1653-1725)," Doctoral Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, 2016, 35.

[5] Ibid., 38-39; For more information concerning the term "self prosopography," see: Dwight F. Reynolds, "Introduction" and "Biographical Traditions: Early Prototypes," *Autobiography in the Arabic Literary Tradition*, Dwight F. Reynolds Ed. (Berkely: University of California Press, 2001), 10-11, 39.

struggles as a young man and in Sufi training stand out in this account.[6] In contrast to his own

deficiencies, Bursevi lauds the intellectual and ethical superiority of his Sufi shaykh, Osman

Fazlı.[7] Bursevi authored this work in 1103/1692, just after the death of Osman Fazlı in

1102/1691.[8] As the newly installed shaykh of Osman Fazlı's branch of the Celvetiyye, Bursevi

sought to demonstrate that he would faithfully carry on the teachings of his master. Given this

agenda, it is unsurprising that Bursevi wrote this work in Arabic, instead of Turkish, which

would have been more accessible to Ottoman readers. Because it was written in Arabic, the

prosopography would have circulated only among scholars and members of his *ṭarīqa* who had

training in the Arabic language.[9]

Along with this Arabic work, Bursevi produced another autobiography in a more

accessible Turkish history of the Celvetiyye, *Silsilname-yi Celvetiyye* ("The Book of the Initiatic

Chain of the Celvetiyye Order"). Rather than start with the founders of his order, the work

commences with God's creation of Adam and the initiation of Adam into esoteric wisdom. Going

from Adam to his sons and beyond, this wisdom was eventually transmitted to the Prophet

Muḥammad and finally to Bursevi himself.[10] Finished in the last year of Bursevi's life

(1137/1725), *Silsilname-yi Celvetiyye* was meant to serve as a testament to the veracity of

Bursevi's preaching and message.[11] As Atanasova has shown, Bursevi reused some of the

material included in *Tamām al-fayḍ fī bāb al-rijāl* in this account. However, he expunged the

---

[6] For tropes of childhood in Muslim autobiographical literature, see: Reynolds, "Arabic Autobiography and the Literary Portrayal of the Self," in *Autobiography in the Arabic Literary Tradition*, 83-84.

[7] Atanasova, "The Sufi as the Axis of the World," 35-36, 62-65.

[8] Ali Namlı, *İsmail Hakkı Bursevi*: *Hayatı, Eserleri, Tarikat Anlayışı* (Istanbul: İnsan Yayınları, 2001), 171.

[9] See: Dursun Hazer, "Osmanlı Medreselerinde Arapça Öğretimi ve Okutulan Ders Kitapları," *Gazi Üniversitesi Çorum İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 1 (2002): 274-293; Betül Can, "Tanzimat Öncesi Osmanlı Medreselerinde Arapça Öğretim Yöntemleri," in *Ekev Akademi Dergisi* 44 (2010): 305-320.

[10] Atanasova, "The Sufi as the Axis of the World," 35, 107-110.

[11] Namlı, *İsmail Hakkı Bursevi*, 205.

mention of his personal deficiencies described in his previous narrative.[12] In this account,

Bursevi casts himself as destined for human perfection to lead the Celvetiyye. He includes vivid

dream accounts, visions, and auditory revelations (Tur. *varidat*) to validate his self-depiction.

Because it was written in Turkish, *Silsilname-yi Celvetiyye* was far more accessible than the

Arabic *Tamām al-fayḍ fī bāb al-rijāl*.[13] As Ali Namlı notes in his study of Bursevi's œuvre,

Bursevi wrote most of his works in a clear, easy to understand form of Turkish in order to reach

both elites and commoners (Tur. *amm ve hass*).[14] The scholar of Ottoman Sufism John Curry

similarly has highlighted a trend among Ottoman Sufis in the 11th/17th century of authoring

manakipname (Sufi hagiographical works) in a more vernacular style of Turkish to be read out

loud in *tekke*s.[15]

    Apart from these two autobiographies, Bursevi left scattered details about his life in some

of his writings. His theological works and even his Qur'an commentary *Rūḥ al-bayān fī-tafsīr al-*

Qurʾān ("The Spirit of Elucidation: A Commentary on the Qur'an") contain biographical

material. More substantially, in his visionary treatises, Bursevi often gave the exact

circumstances, dates, and times when visions, dreams, or auditions occurred to him, and

discussed their relevance for his life at the time.[16] In doing so, seems that Bursevi sought to

imitate the example of previous Sufi writings, most notably Ibn al-ᶜArabī's *Futūḥāt al-makkīya*

("The Meccan Revelations") which also incorporated visions, dreams, and auditory revelations.[17]

---

[12] Atanasova, "The Sufi as the Axis of the World," 39.
[13] See: Christine Woodhead, "Ottoman Languages," in Christine Woodhead Ed. *The Ottoman World* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 149-150, 152-153.
[14] Namlı, *İsmail Hakkı Bursevi*, 163.
[15] John J. Curry, *The Transformation of Muslim Mystical Thought in the Ottoman Empire*: *The Rise of the Halveti Order, 1350-1650* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 237-240, 283-284.
[16] Atanasova, "The Sufi as the Axis of the World," 135.
[17] Ibid., 75-78.

By modeling his writing after Ibn al-ʿArabī's in this way, Bursevi portrayed himself as a legitimate shaykh continuing in the tradition of the "Greatest Master."

Both during his life and after his death, Ottoman prosopographies commemorated Bursevi for his intellectual expertise, literary output, and spiritual mastery. The most notable biographical accounts of this kind are Ṣeyhi Mehmet Efendi's (d. 1143/1731) *Waqāiʿ al-fuḍalāʾ* ("Incidents that Befell the Learned") and Kazasker Mehmet Emin Salim's (d. 1156/1743) *Tadhkirat al-shuʿarāʾ* ("Memorial of the Poets"). Both works highlight Bursevi's asceticism, his scrupulousness in Sufi practice, and brilliance in Sufi theology. Mehmet Efendi and Mehmet Emin Salim also extolled Bursevi's outstanding poetic talents, his mastery of Arabic, Persian, and Turkish, and his skill in interpreting the Qur'an and *ḥadīth*. Echoing these accounts, Bursevi's close disciples such as Suleyman Zati Efendi (d. 1138/1726) also wrote about his life, teachings, and works. However, this biographical material is meager, ostensibly because they were more concerned with preserving their master's teachings than formulating biographies of their own.[18]

As the leader of one of the most influential Sufi orders in Ottoman society, the author of around 100 works, and the close confidant of many Ottoman officials, Bursevi was an outstanding figure of his times. Nonetheless, contemporaneous histories such as Defterdar Mehmed Paṣa's (d. 1129/1717) *Zübde-i Veqayiat* ("The Essence of Events") or Dimitrie Cantemir's (d. 1723) *Historia incrementorum atquae decrementorm Aulae Othomanicae* ("The History of the Growth and Decay of the Ottoman State") make no mention of Bursevi.[19] The reasons why such an influential Sufi might remain absent from otherwise comprehensive

---

[18] Ibid., 25-26.

[19] See: Dimitrie Cantemir, *The History of the Growth and Decay of the Othman Empire*, trans. by Nicholas Tindal (London: J.J. and P. Knapton, 1734-35); Abdülkadir Özcan, *Zübde-i Vekayiat*, *Tahlil ve Metin* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1995).

histories of this period are unclear. Defterdar Mehmed Paşa and Dimitrie Centemir may simply

not have been aware of Bursevi. Conversely, they might have been aware of Bursevi but felt that

his Sufi theology and politics were too radical for inclusion in their narratives. Intriguingly, in

this regard Cantemir includes in his history Niyaz-i Misri's arguments for the prophethood of

Ḥusayn ibn ᶜAlī (d. 61/680), Misri's claims to be Jesus and the Messiah, and his call to supplant

the Ottoman dynasty with the Giray Dynasty (c. 1427-1783), Crimean Tatar clients of the

Ottomans.[20] Similarly, the nineteenth-century historian of the Ottoman Empire, Joseph von

Hammer-Purgstall (d. 1856), only mentions Bursevi's writings in passing in his work on Ottoman

poetry.[21]

II. The Three Phases of "Bursevi Studies"

In the contemporary hagiographical and prosopographical material of his time, Bursevi

was recognized for his writings, his intellectual prowess, his saintly life, and his mastery of Sufi

doctrine. These descriptions have characterized "Bursevi Studies" ever since. Despite having all

drawn on the same source materials, scholars have depicted Bursevi and studied his writings

very differently. In general, modern scholars have applied three different methodologies in their

approaches to Bursevi. These are the hagiographic-romantic, Neo-Ottoman, and political-

historical.

The first phase of modern scholarship on Bursevi was hagiographical. Romantic and

nationalist scholars of the early Republican Period in Turkey recast earlier hagiographical

material in terms that supported their Turkish nationalist agendas. Scholarship of this phase

---

[20] See: Paul Ballanfat, *Messianisme et Sainteté*: *Les poèmes du mystique ottoman Niyazi Misri* (1618-1694) (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2012), 55-58.

[21] Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall, *Geschichte der Osmanischen Dichtkunst* (Pesth: Conrad Adolph Hartleben's Verlag, 1838), 4.136.

incorporates the views of Bursevi's immediate successors, hagiographies from the late 18th centuries, and Post-Tanzimat Era (19th-20th centuries) compendia. It also comprises studies from the Republican Period of Turkey, culminating with Sakip Yıldız's watershed dissertation on Bursevi's Qur'an commentary in 1972.[22] In general, Bursevi is cast as an exemplary Ottoman Sufi scholar. However, these scholars did not see Bursevi as a stellar or unique Sufi, as later scholarship would represent him.[23]

Sufi hagiographies from the 12th/18th century to the end of the Ottoman Empire (1922) stress Bursevi's literary achievements, his peerless expression of Sufi doctrine, and saintly identity. For instance, the hagiographer Hüseyin Ramiz (d. 1788) emphasized Bursevi's aptitude in the esoteric sciences, as well as his skill in Arabic and Persian.[24] Likewise, the prosopographer Muallim Naci (d. 1893) considered Bursevi's works to be divinely inspired, and claimed that his Turkish rhetorical style was unparalleled.[25] The noted historians of Sufism Bursalı Mehmet Tahir (d. 1925), Mehmet Şemseddin (d. 1936), and Osmanzade Hüseyin Vassaf (d. 1929) emphasized the same traits in their histories.[26] In general, prosopographical and hagiographical compendia of the late Ottoman period focused on glorifying the Ottoman approach to Sufism in opposition to secularism and Westernization.[27] For Tahir, Şemseddin, and Vassaf, Bursevi served as an example of the brilliance of Ottoman Sufism.[28]

Turkish scholars of Sufism in the Republican period (c. 1930s-1980s) tended to shy away from the study of Bursevi's biography, and instead they oriented their scholarship toward his Sufi

---

[22] Namlı *İsmail Hakkı Bursevi*, 17-18.
[23] Atanasova, "The Sufi as the Axis of the World," 27-29.
[24] Ibid., 25-26.
[25] Ibid., 26.
[26] Namlı, *İsmail Hakkı Bursevi*, 15-17.
[27] See: Mustafa Aşkar, *Tasavvuf Tarihi Literatürü* (Istanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 2001; 2015), 145-160; Mustafa Kara, *Metinlerle Osnalılarda Tasavvuf ve Tarikatlar* (Bursa: Sır Yayıncılık, 2008), 358-359; Mehmed Şemseddin, *Bursa dergahları*: *Yadigar-ı Şemsi I-II*, Mustafa Kara and Kadir Altansoy Ed. (Bursa: Uludağ Yayınları, 1997), 5-9.
[28] Atanasova, "The Sufi as the Axis of the World," 26.

theology. These studies were part of a tradition of Turkish nationalistic, romantic, and critical

studies on Sufism in the secular Turkish academy, the best exemplars of which were Mehmet

Fuat Köprülü (d. 1966) and Abdülbaki Gölpinarlı (d. 1982).[29] The historian Mehmet Ali Ayni (d.

1945) was the first scholar of this period to approach Bursevi's Sufism in the context of his life,

times, and in relation to contemporaneous currents in Sufism. Ayni has been an underappreciated

contributor to the study of Ottoman Sufism in the Turkish and French scholarly traditions, and to

the study of Bursevi's biography and Sufi theology in particular. In *Ismaïl Hakki: philosophe

mystique* (1933; Turkish translation published in 1944), Ayni sought to present Bursevi's

biography and Sufi theology in philosophical terms that were palatable to non-Muslim and non-

Turkish audiences.[30] Utilizing Bursevi's autobiographical material as well as accounts found in

his Sufi theological works, he formulated a new, more detailed biography of the Sufi shaykh than

what had been available in previous writings. Distinct from previous biographies, Ayni's work

foregrounded Bursevi's relationship to his Sufi mentor, Osman Fazlı, and brought to light the

ways in which Bursevi perpetuated the Sufi theological and political legacy of his master.[31] Ayni

likewise attempted to summarize the main themes of Bursevi's Sufi theology. Significantly for

the present dissertation, Ayni was the first to take note of Bursevi's fascination with Sufi

anthropology and his radical political stances in relation to the Ottoman Sultanate.[32]

　　　After Ayni, Sakıb Yıldız focused on Bursevi's Qur'anic exegesis. This scholar of Turkish

literature and religion in the Ottoman Empire published as *L'Exégète turc Ismâ'il Haqqî Bursawî,*

---

[29] Mehmed Fuad Köprülü, *Early Mystics in Turkish Literature*, Gary Leiser and Robert Dankoff Eds. and Trans. (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), xxviii-xxxi.

[30] Mehemmed-Ali Aïni/Mehmet Ali Ayni, *Ismaïl Hakki: philosophe mystique 1653-1725* (Paris: Librarie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1933); In many ways, Ayni's appreciation of Sufism as a guiding force for the new Turkish Republic was not unlike the sentiments of celebrated nationalist intellectual Ziya Gökalp (d. 1924). See: Alp Eren Topal, "Against Influence: Ziya Gökalp in Context and Tradition," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 28 (2017): 297-301.

[31] Aïni, *Ismaïl Hakki,* 20-21.

[32] Ibid. 33, 65-66.

sa vie, ses œuvres et sa méthode dans son Tafsîr Rûh al-Bayân (1972). Not only did Yıldız

update previous biographical work on Bursevi with new findings from prosopographies, but he

also corrected the bibliographies of earlier scholars by identifying spurious works attributed to

Bursevi. Yıldız also outlined and analyzed the principles of Bursevi's Qur'anic hermeneutics. He

especially brought to light the ways in which Bursevi attempted to harmonize Sufi and non-Sufi

approaches to *tafsīr*.[33]

The most significant contributions to the study of the life and writings of Bursevi have

been made in the second, "Neo-Ottoman" phase of Bursevi scholarship. The contemporary

growth of interest in the study of Bursevi can be attributed to a renewal of interest in Ottoman

Sufism following the ascendency of Islamism and Neo-Ottomanism in Turkish politics and

culture from the 1990s until today. The rise of politically populist, Islamist, and neo-liberal

forces in Turkey in the late 1980s reached its peak during the ascendancy of the Justice and

Development Party (Tur. *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, abbreviated AKP). Because of the AKP's

initial liberalization and globalization of the Turkish economy, Turkey experienced unparalleled

economic growth in this period. A great deal of new wealth has been invested in aspects of

Turkish culture that highlight its Islamic and Ottoman Muslim identity before the founding of the

---

[33] Sakıb Yıldız, *L'Exégète turc Ismâ'il Haqqî Bursawî, sa vie, ses œuvres et la méthode dans son Tafsîr Rûh al-Bayân* (1063-1137/1653-1725), Thèse de 3e cycle: Etudes arabo-islamique, Sorbonne, Paris, 1972; idem., "Türk Müfessiri İsma'il Hakkı Burûsevi'nin Hayatı," *Atatürk Üniversitesi İslami İlimler Fakültesi Dergisi* 1 (1975): 103-126; Namlı, *İsmail Hakkı Bursevi*, 17-18.

Turkish Republic.[34] Contemporary religious institutions, secular departments of religion, and non-academic religious endowments have particularly benefitted from this development.[35]

Devout Muslim Turks, the parents of whom had been strongly discouraged from practicing, studying, or proclaiming in their Islamic identity in Kemalist times, have been able to thrive in recent years due to the support of AKP-sponsored institutions. Study in newly formed theology institutes, legal schools, and "Sufism Studies departments" in both secular and confessional universities is now considered a viable means of cultivating a pious, "Neo-Ottoman" image. As part of this renewed interest in Turkey's Ottoman heritage, a new generation of Turkish theologians, scholars of religion, legal scholars, and non-specialists have flocked to Bursevi's writings. Recent Turkish scholars have written the most complete biographies of Bursevi, produced critical editions of many of his works, and have published extensive commentaries on his writings. Often working from their doctoral dissertations, for which they are typically required to produce a critically edited Ottoman text, modern Turkish scholars have edited, transliterated, or translated into Modern Turkish a substantial number of Bursevi's works.[36] Magazines, websites, popular literature in religious bookstores, and even public lectures such as those organized by the Bursa provincial government now acclaim Bursevi in a way that would have been unthinkable half a century earlier.[37]

---

[34] William Hale and Ergun Özbudun, *Islamism, Democracy and Liberalism in Turkey*: *The Case of the AKP* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 20-30, 68-80, 152-153; Matthew T. Gullo, "Turkish Foreign Policy: Neo-Ottomanism and the Future of Turkey's Relations with the West," Master's Thesis, Duke University, Durham, NC, 2012, 64-72; Philip Dorroll, "Shar'ia and the Secular in Modern Turkey," *Contemporary Islam* 11 (2017): 131-133.

[35] Svante E. Cornell, "The Islamization of Turkey: Erdoğan's Education Reforms," *The Turkey Analyst,* 8 (2015). Daren Butler, "With More Islamic Schooling, Erdogan Aims to Reshape Turkey," Reuters, January 25, 2018, , accessed March 21, 2018, https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/turkey-erdogan-education/.

[36] Ali Namlı, "İsmail Hakkı Bursevi Hazretlerinin Hayatı ve Eserleri," in İsmail Hakkı Bursevi, *Ruhu'l Beyan*: *Kur'an Meali ve Tefsiri*, H. Kamil Yılmaz, Ömer Çelik, Süleyman Derin, Mehmet Toprak, Surat Sülün and Hüseyin Kayapınar ed. and trans., 26 vols. (Istanbul: Erkam Yayınları, 2008), 1:25-38.

[37] Bursa has hosted two "Bursevi Symposia," popular magazines in Bursa feature his teachings, popular publishers have printed "Bursevi series" (Tur. *Bursevi dizisi*), even the official Directorate of Religious Affairs (Tur. *Diyanet*

In contrast to previous works, in which Bursevi was portrayed as an excellent yet by no means unique Ottoman Sufi luminary, modern works of the Neo-Ottoman phase of Bursevi Studies represent him a unique and incomparable. The pioneering Turkish scholar Ali Namlı can be credited with starting this trend. The contributions of Ali Namlı to the study of Bursevi's biography and writings cannot be overstated. Namlı began his research on Bursevi by co-editing one of the Shaykh's most seminal Sufi works, *Kitāb al-natīja* ("The Book of the Result," Tur. *Kitabü'n-Netice*, 1997).[38] In addition, Namlı contributed substantially to a modern Turkish translation of Bursevi's Qur'an Commentary *Rūḥ al-bayān* (2005), assisted by a cadre of Turkish experts in *tafsīr*.[39] Beyond these editions, Namlı's monograph *İsmail Hakkı Bursevi*: *hayatı, eserleri, tarikat anlayışı* ("Ismail Hakkı Bursevi: His Life, Writings, and Conception of the Sufi Path," 2001) contains the most comprehensive and well-researched biography, bibliography, and summary of the Sufi theology of Bursevi to date. In this work, Bursevi is portrayed as the epitome of Ottoman Sufism and even its "Perfect Man."[40] In Namlı's depiction, Bursevi becomes the Ottoman equivalent of such intellectual giants in the history of Sufism as Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 504/1111), Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (d. 672/1273), and Muḥīy al-Dīn Ibn al-ᶜArabī.

Namlı's works have had a significant impact on modern Turkish conceptions of Bursevi. Most if not all subsequent works on Bursevi cite his studies as a key source for their own approaches. For example, Hasan Turyan's biography of Bursevi, *Bir Kamil Insan: Ismail Hakkı*

İşleri Başkanlığı) has produced a documentary on Bursevi's life. See: Türkiye Cumhuriyeti-Bursa Vakliǧi, Uludaǧ Üniversitesi, "MERİNOS AKKM'DE '2. ULUSLARARASI İSMAİL HAKKI BURSEVİ SEMPOZYUMU'" MERİNOS AKKM. 11/01/2013. http://www.merinosakkm.com/merinos-akkmde-2-uluslararasi-ismail-hakki-bursevi-sempozyumu/; "İsmail Hakkı Bursevi (d. 1653-ö. 1725): Na't-ı Nebi," *Bursevi: Kalbin Ameli: Zarafet*, June 1, 2016, 22-23; "İsmail Hakkı Bursevi," İnsan Yayınları İnternet Sitesi, 01/01/2014, accessed 05/17/2018, http://www.insanyayinlari.com/Module/Yazar/YazarDetay/401019/İsmail_Hakkı_Bursevi. Gönül Sultanları, 11 Bölüm: İsmail Hakkı Bursevi (Ankara: Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı), November 19, 2014, accessed May 17, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S-I26HVhsbI.

[38] İsmail Hakkı Bursevi, *Kitabü'n-Netice*, Ali Namlı and İmdat Yavaş Ed. (Istanbul: İnsan Yayınları, 1997).

[39] See: Bursevi, *Ruhu'l Beyan*: *Kur'an Meali ve Tefsiri*, 1-5.

[40] Namlı, *İsmail Hakkı Bursevi*, 47-48.

Bursevi Hazretleri ("A Perfect Human Being: The Esteemed Master Ismail Hakki Bursevi"), can be considered an extension of Namlı's works. Turyan sets out to prove that Bursevi was indeed a "Perfect Man" and, as such, worthy of imitation by modern, Sufi-inclined Turks.[41]

The current trend of "Neo-Ottoman" scholarship has by and large focused on Bursevi's Sufism and has overlooked Bursevi's political writings. Even few edited political treatises have been considered extensions of his Sufi theology. For instance, the noted Sufi Shaykh Mustafa Utku has critically edited and supported the publication of one of Bursevi's most important political treatises, *Kitāb sulūk al-mulūk* ("The Customs of Kings").[42] Utku has also taught this work in well-attended study groups in Bursa that are focused on Sufi theology rather than on Ottoman political history.[43] Thus, for "Neo-Ottomanist" scholars like Namlı, Turyan, Utku, and others, Bursevi is presented as a paragon of excellence of intellectual and spiritual life under the Ottomans.[44] In addition, imitating Bursevi's way of life, as well as studying his Sufi theology with professors and scholars, has been seen a way for modern, Sufi inclined Turks to cultivate a more saintly Islamic life.

In contrast to the theological emphasis of the Neo-Ottomanist approach, the third phase of scholarship on Bursevi (the "political-historical") has focused on his politics. The Ottomanist historian Merve Tabur and scholar of religion Kamelia Atanasova have championed this approach. Their approach also draws on the methodology of innovative historians of Sufism and politics in the Seljuk, Beylik, and Ottoman periods, Ahmet Yaşar Ocak and Derin Terzioğlu.[45]

---

[41] Hasan Turyan, *Bir Kamil İnsan*: *İsmail Hakkı Bursevi Hazretleri* (Bursa: Merassa Yayınları, 2006), 13-14, 112-113.

[42] İsmail Hakkı Bursevi, *İdarecilere Öğütler* (*Sülükü'l Mülük*), Mustafa Utku Ed. (Bursa: Uludağ Yayınları, 2015).

[43] For more information on Mustafa Utku's scholarly and spiritual activities, see: İsmail Hakkı Bursevi, *Kırk Hadis Şerhi*, *Şerh-i Hadis-i Erbain*, Mustafa Utku Ed. (Bursa: Uludağ Yayınları, 1999), 9-10

[44] Turyan, *Bir Kamil İnsan*, 9-11.

[45] See, Merve Tabur, "İsmail Hakkı Bursevi and the Politics of Balance" M.A.Thesis, Boğaziçi University, Istanbul, 2011, 15-16; Atanasova, "The Sufi as the Axis of the World," 2.

Taking note of the historiographical biases prevalent in many studies of Bursevi's life and works, in 2011 Tabur wrote a Master's thesis on some of Bursevi's "dedicatory treatises" (Tur. *tuhfe*). Whereas earlier scholars such as Turyan, Utku, or Namlı would have approached these dedicatory treatises as apolitical works of Sufi theology, Tabur considers Bursevi's treatises political manifestos. By critically examining these works in light of the new Ottoman Studies historiography of Donald Quataert (d. 2011), Rifaat Abou-El-Haj, and Baki Tezcan, Tabur brings to light Bursevi's deep awareness of the economic, political, and social transformations of his day.[46] Beyond this, Kamelia Atanasova's recent dissertation, "The Sufi as the Axis of the World: Representation of Religious Authority in the Works of Ismail Hakki Bursevi (1635-1725)," explores Bursevi's autobiographical material, some treatises that were not discussed in Tabur's study, and theological works such as *Kitāb al-natīja*. More than any other author, Atanasova has clarified the ways in which Bursevi drew on Sufi theology to offer solutions to the most substantial political issues of his times. Most notably, she has revealed the multifaceted ways in which Bursevi portrayed himself as the Perfect Man, the spiritual "Axis of the Age" (Ar. *quṭb al-zamān*), and as such, the ideal leader of Ottoman society and perhaps the Islamic world in general. Explicating Bursevi's thought in great detail, Atanasova has also reproduced and analyzed diagrams in which Bursevi articulates his alternative political schemes pictorially.[47]

III. The Life of Ismail Hakki Bursevi

a.) *The Significance of the Name Ismail Hakki Bursevi*

The following biography of Bursevi is presented primarily on the basis of the writings of Namlı and Atanasova. It is also augmented by some observations from Ayni's lesser-known

---

[46] Tabur, "İsmail Hakkı Bursevi and the Politics of Balance," 11, 90, 107-110, 221-222.
[47] Atanasova, "The Sufi as the Axis of the World," 42-46, 144-145, 150-152.

French work. Bursevi was preoccupied not only with Sufi anthropology and politics in his writings. In his autobiographical accounts, he also appears concerned with the affairs fellow "Adamites." Early on, he portrays himself as destined for sainthood, and he portrays himself as singled out by God for political authority through critical dreams and visions. This biography differs from previous studies in that it foregrounds those aspects of Bursevi's life relevant to his Sufi anthropology and his politicization of the Perfect Man. It also highlights the financial, political, and social factors that had an impact on his worldview. Building on Atanasova's work, it also takes note of the revelatory experiences Bursevi had of Adam and those in which he identified himself as Adam. Overall, this biography traces Bursevi's gradual self-identification with Adam, the first Perfect Human Being over the course of his life.

The ways in which Ismail Hakki Bursevi interpreted his own name has often overlooked in previous works. This lacuna is important because this detail brings to light significant aspects of his worldview, approach to Sufi theology, and his view of the concept of divine election. Although he was most often called, "The Person from Bursa" (Ar. *Burusawī*, Tur. *Bursevi, Bursalı*), a title he chose for himself, the names Ismail and Hakki were also of great importance to him. Alluding to the prophetic Ismail, Bursevi often refers to himself as "The Sacrifice" (Ar. *al-dhabīḥ*) in his works.[48] In the context of a life devoted to Sufi doctrine, practice, and spiritual guidance, Bursevi conceived of his career as a kind of self-sacrifice to God in the manner of the popular Muslim belief in Ishmael's willingness to be given as a sacrifice for God.[49]

In 1085/1674, Bursevi's spiritual master, Osman Fazlı Atpazari, bestowed upon him the poetic pen name (Tur. *mahlas*) of Hakki (Ar. *ḥaqqī*), meaning "of God, of the Truth" or "The Veracious." According to Bursevi's autobiographies, Osman Fazlı gave him this name because

---

[48] Namlı, *İsmail Hakkı Bursevi*, 32.

[49] See, for example: Abū Isḥāq Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Thaᶜlabī, *ᶜArāʾis al-majālis fī-qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ or "Lives of the Prophets,"* William M. Brinner Trans. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2002), 155-157.

he witnessed in Bursevi an affinity with the divine name, "The Truth" (Ar. *al-ḥaqq*). Fazlı's

appreciation of Bursevi's veracity, preoccupation for "getting to the truth of matters" (Ar.

taḥaqquq), and concern for justice, also led him to name his disciple Hakki. After giving him this

name, Fazlı declared that Bursevi was the "locus of revelation of the wisdom of "[the second

Sunni Caliph] ᶜUmar [Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (d. 23/644)]" (Tur.. *mazhar-ı hikmet-i omeriye*).[50]

Upon receiving his pen name, Bursevi felt that he had matured spiritually enough to

attain to the "The Wisdom in the Word of Isaac" (Ar. *ḥikma ḥaqqīya fī-kalima isḥāqīya*), as

described in Ibn al-ᶜArabī's book *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* ("Ringsettings of Wisdom").[51] In accord with

Ibn al-ᶜArabī's assertion of the dual identity of Isaac and Ishmael in *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, he also

claimed that he was of the spiritual station (Ar. *maqām*) of Ishmael externally (Ar. *ẓāhir^{ān}*), and

of the station of Isaac "in the Truth," esoterically (Ar. *bāṭin^{an}*).[52] Often pen names in Persian and

Ottoman literature are humble epithets, and are reflective of a vocation or associated with a

location.[53] Breaking with this convention, Bursevi embraced the pen name of Hakki to portray

himself as an intimate of God or the Truth and as the representative of God's Truth in the world

of creation.

Bursevi lived for more than 20 years in the city of Bursa. Despite having spent time in

many cities throughout his life, he chose to identify with the first capital of the Ottoman Empire

and its role as the symbolic center of Ottoman spirituality. Known even in Bursevi's time as "The

Constellation of Saints" (Tur. *burc-u evliya*), the city had been a hub for Sufism and religious

---

[50] Namlı, *İsmail Hakkı* Bursevi, 34.
[51] See: Muhyī al-Dīn ibn al-ᶜArabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam,* Abū-l-ᶜAlā ᶜAfīfī ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ᶜArabī, 1946), 84-90, 90-94; Namlı, *İsmail Hakkı Bursevi*, 33-34.
[52] Namlı, *İsmail Hakkı* Bursevi, 34.
[53] In his poetry, the Safavid Shāh Ismail I (d. 930/1524) took on the name "flagrant sinner" (Ar. *khaṭṭāʾī*), Shams al-Dīn Shirazi (d. 792/1390) referred to himself as "one who has memorized the Qur'an" (Ar. *ḥāfiẓ*), and Jalāl al-Dīn Balkhī became associated with his title "from the lands of the Romans / the Roman" (Ar. *rūmī*). See: E.J.W. Gibb, *A History of Ottoman Poetry* 6 vols (London: Luzac and Co, 1900-1909), 1.80-81; Julie Scott. Meisami, *Medieval Persian Court Poetry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987; 2014), 262-263.

scholarship since its conquest by Orhan I (r. 1323/4-1362) early in his reign.[54] Some of the most important figures of Ottoman Sufism lived in Bursa. Many famous Ottoman Sufis are buried there as well. Among the most notable of these Sufis were the prominent early shaykh Emir Sultan Buhari (c. 833/1429), who was the advisor of Sultan "Yıldırım" Bayezid I (r. 1389-1403), and Üftade (d. 988/1580), founder of the Celvetiyye Sufi order. According to Ottoman historical claims and popular belief, it was only through the benediction of shaykhs such as Emir Sultan and Üftade that the Ottoman Sultanate was able to thrive and expand. Given its association with spiritual excellence, and the divine grace (Ar. *baraka*) the saints interred there, Bursa was one of the most sites of Ottoman religious culture.

While Namlı, Atanasova, and other contemporary scholars consider Bursevi to have adopted appellation "from Bursa" to reflect the long time he spent there, I suggest that he chose the title primarily to link himself to the spiritual heart of Ottoman Anatolia. Bursevi sought to associate himself with one of the cities in which the greatest Ottoman Sufi shaykhs were found. Like the saints who were buried there, he also sought to act as the personal spiritual guide of the Ottoman Sultan, and direct Ottoman society from behind the scenes. Bursevi considered himself a member of the elite group of Bursa's spiritual masters and chose his name to reflect this affiliation.

In his writings, Bursevi maintained that his three appellations confirmed his identity as a Perfect Man with the authority to lead society to perfection. The name Ismail reflected his identity as God's sacrifice made for the good of the world. As for Hakki, he was veracious and vindicated by God, the Truth. Likewise, on the basis of his intimacy with God and his continuation of the example of the Sunni Caliph ʿUmar, the name Hakki implied that Bursevi

---

[54] See: Mustafa Kara, *Bursa'da Tarikatlar ve Tekkeler* (Bursa: Bursa Büyükşehir Belediyesi Yayınları, 2012), 1-5.

could speak "truth to power" and champion the cause of justice. By bearing the name Bursevi, he embodied the spirit of shaykhs associated with Bursa, the "Constellation of Saints." Bursevi thus embodied in himself the symbolic center of Ottoman spirituality and seat of divine grace as brokered through Bursa's saints.

b.) *Bursevi's life in the context of the "Second Ottoman Empire" and Ottoman Sufism*

Bursevi lived through the rather turbulent reigns of five Ottoman Sultans: Mehmet IV (r. 1648-1687), Süleyman II (r. 1687-1691), Ahmet II (r. 1691-1695), Mustafa II (r. 1695-1703), and Ahmet III (r. 1703-1730).[55] The Turkish historian Baki Tezcan considers the period in which these Sultans reigned as distinct from the previous imperial system of Selim I (r. 1512-1520), Süleyman I (r. 1520-1566), and their immediate successors. Tezcan argues that the Ottoman Empire of this period was not in decline in relation to some previous "golden age." Rather, it is better portrayed as a separate institution in itself, a "Second Ottoman Empire," (which lasted from 1580-1826). In terms of its political, social, and economic composition, the Second Ottoman Empire was different and thus conceptually distinct from what might be termed the "First Ottoman Empire" (c. 1299-1580).[56]

According to Tezcan, the emergence of a robust Ottoman civil society and the Sultanate's reactionary response to this development sets the Second Ottoman Empire apart from the previous period.[57] To replenish the imperial coffers, weaken feudal lords (Tur. *timarlı*), and strengthen state control in the provinces, Ottoman bureaucrats serving Murad III (r. 1574-1595) introduced sweeping economic reforms. They promoted the adoption of a single, standardized

---

[55] Namlı, *Ismail Hakki Bursevi*, 19-24.

[56] Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire*, 9-10.

[57] Tezcan uses the unwieldy and rather anachronistic terms "constitutionalist" and "royalist" borrowed from the study of the English Civil War (1642-1651) to describe these elements in Ottoman politics and society. While utilizing Tezcan's analysis, I favor the more useful terms of "civil society" and "state." See: ibid., 53-54.

currency, encouraged the monetization of transactions and payment in cash, and fostered a

market-based economy. The Sultanate even began to sell tax-farming contracts to the public.[58]

Simultaneously, when the "collection" (Tur. *devşirme*) of mostly Christian children from the

Balkans for the praetorian soldier-administrator class ended at the close of the 10th/16th century,

opportunistic Janissaries began to sell memberships in their order. Ordinary subjects flocked to

Janissary garrisons, and local Janissary "dynasties" were established in the Balkans and North

Africa.

During the Second Ottoman Empire, the Janissaries were no longer a Constantinople-

based, highly trained slave-soldier and administrative entity loyal only to the Sultan.[59] They

instead became an independent corporate institution with a diverse, non-elite population, the

primary aim of which was to build or expand business interests, create large farms, and accrue

wealth. With increased wealth from the sale of new memberships, state salaries exempt from

taxation, and spoils from military campaigns, the Janissaries invested heavily in local economies.

As a result of these developments, previously economically disenfranchised but freeborn

Ottoman subjects accrued personal wealth in an unprecedented manner.[60] Some *nouveaux riches*

even rivaled the feudal lords, and members of the *ilmiyye* scholarly class who had the most stable

vocations in the Empire and hence great expendable wealth.

Wary of the Sultanate, who fostered the conditions for such changes, the *nouveaux riches*

sought to safeguard their interests from further state interference. It was in their desire to protect

their newfound wealth that Tezcan identifies the birth of "Ottoman civil society" during the

---

[58] Ibid., 8-9,185, 199-214, 222-224
[59] Following conventions in Ottoman history and Bursevi's own usage, I refer to Istanbul by its former, official name of Constantinople (Tur. *Konstantinye*, Ar. *Al-Qunsṭanṭīnīya*). See: Halil İnalcık, "Fatih, Fetih ve İstanbul'un Yeniden İnşası" in *Dünya Kenti İstanbul / Istanbul-World City* Afife Batur Ed. (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı ve Yapı Kredi Bankası Yayınları, 1997), 29.
[60] Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire*, 43-45.

Second Ottoman Empire. Tax farmers, Janissary entrepreneurs, and local merchants found in

opportunistic jurisconsults of the *ilmiyye* class perfect allies to construct the legal architecture

necessary to safeguard their livelihoods.[61] Often involved in businesses with this new class, the

jurisconsults supported the legal protection of their economic allies against the Sultanate. They

also supported the heritability of Janissary appointments and found a loophole in Ḥanafī law that

allowed them to charge interest on loans made from religious endowments (Ar. *waqf*).[62] More

significantly for the body politic, leading jurisconsults of the Empire such as the *Shaykh al-Islam*,

the Mufti of Constantinople, and the Kazıasker, worked diligently to circumscribe the Sultan's

authority and gain more control over dynastic affairs. For Tezcan, the end of political fratricide

and the introduction of "Shari'a-based" criteria for candidates for succession to the Sultanate to

the exclusion of "feudal" Sultanic law (Tur. *kanun*) were proof of the formation of an Ottoman

civil society that was primarily concerned with self preservation. The same was could be said for

the actions of jurisconsults' and certain Grand Viziers who overrode Sultanate commands in

order to introduce reforms or participate in military campaigns.[63]

When the Ottoman Sultans attempted to resist, the members of this "Ottoman civil

society" were effectively able to check them. To counter these developments, the Sultans

elevated certain court officials of previously minor importance as allies.[64] Assisted by private

armies of contracted peasant musketeers (Tur. *sekban*), the Sultans, advised by the war-

profiteering Albanian Köprülü dynasty (c. 1656-1711) of Grand Viziers, undertook massive

military campaigns. These were meant to unify disparate strata of society and restore the Sultan's

---

[61] Ibid., 207-208.
[62] Ibid., 205-207.
[63] Ibid., 53-54, 63, 77.
[64] Ibid., 180-181.

former authority.[65] Consequently, although the Ottoman Empire reached its territorial maximum

around 1682, the overzealousness of Sultans coupled with infighting in the factionalized ranks of

the Ottoman army resulted in some of the most catastrophic defeats in Ottoman history. These

included the Second Siege of Vienna (1683), the Second Battle of Mohács (1687), and the Battle

of Slankamen (1691). Following these defeats, the Ottomans were forced to sign the humiliating

treaties of Karlowitz (1699) and Passarowitz (1718), which surrendered the provinces of

Hungary, the Western Balkans, and Banat (modern-day western Romania).[66] Tezcan identifies

the murder of Osman II (r. 1618-1620) and the depositions of Mehmet IV (1687) and Mustafa II

(1703) as hallmarks of the foundation of Ottoman civil society.[67] Bursevi was well aware of

these events, and of the social discord that ensued. His political schemes were meant to remedy

the conflicts plaguing Ottoman society.

Bursevi's life also coincided with aftermath of the Hijri millennium (1000-1100 AH).[68]

During what climatological historians consider a period of global cooling, or a "little ice age" (c.

1550-1770), which prompted feelings of the coming of the end of days, chiliastic uprisings as

well as puritanical reactionary movements proliferated throughout Muslim-majority societies.[69]

During this period, Ottoman claimants to messianic status were numerous.[70] The most celebrated

---

[65] Ibid., 141-145, 160-161, 180-184.

[66] Mesut Uyar and Edward J. Erickson, *A Military History of the Ottomans*: *From Osman to Atatürk* (Santa Barbara: Praeger Security International, 2009), 98-106; Christoph K. Neumann, "Political and Diplomatic Developments," in *The Cambridge History of Turkey: Volume 3: The Later Ottoman Empire, 1603-*1839, Suraiya N. Faroqhi ed. (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 51-55, 109-111.

[67] Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire*, 142-145, 214-222.

[68] A. Afzar Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*: *Sacred Kingship and Sainthood in Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012; 2014), 1-6, 8.

[69] Sam White, *The Climate of Rebellion in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 126-130, 187-227.

[70] Tijana Krstić, *Contested Conversions to Islam*: *Narratives of Religious Change in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 75-97.

of these was the self-proclaimed Jewish "messiah" Shabbetai Ẓevi (d. 1676).[71] Equally

influential if not as well known was Muḥammad ibn Sayyid ʿAbd Allāh (fl. 1660s) who led a

rebellion in Mosul.[72] Perceiving widespread corruption in both society and government, many

people also flocked to the fiery preacher Kadızade Mehmed (d. 1044/1635), who revived the

teachings of the former Ḥanbali critic of the government Birgili Mehmed Efendi (d. 1573).[73]

Employed as preachers (Tur. *vaizan*) in the *ilmiye* system, the so-called "followers of Kadızade

Mehmed" (Tur. *kadızadeli*) blamed the discord in Ottoman society on Sufis, corrupt jurisconsults,

and non-Muslim subjects (Tur. *millet*). Their harsh reinterpretation of Islam as a revival of the

sunna of the Prophet Muḥammad, and their forbidding of all innovations that had taken place

since the time of the Prophet were believed to restore harmony and bring divine blessings to

Ottoman Muslim society.[74]

In Tezcan's view, seeking to gain the upper hand in their struggle against the unrestrained

forces of Ottoman civil society, the Sultans manipulated these messianic and puritanical

movements for their own benefit. Rather than face execution, Shabbetai Ẓevi and his followers

were made to profess Islam in the presence of Sultan Mehmet IV, while the so-called "messiah"

himself was granted a generous stipend and a palace position.[75] Muḥammad ibn Sayyid ʿAbd

Allāh relinquished his claims to authority, accepting an office in the treasury.[76] Mehmet IV,

Mustafa II, and other Sultans made some of the Kadızadelis, most notably Vani Efendi (d.

---

[71] Gershom Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi: The Mystical Messiah 1626-1676*, R.J. Zwi Werblowsky Trans. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 433-444; Çengiz Şişman, *The Burden of Silence*: *Sabbatai Sevi and the Evolution of the Ottoman-Turkish Dönmes* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 44-83.

[72] Abdülbaki Gölpınarlı, *Mevlana'dan Sonra Mevlevilik* (Istanbul: İnkilap Kitabevi, 1983; 2006), 166; Ballanfat, *Messianisme et sainteté*, 43.

[73] Madeline C. Zilfi, "The Kadizadelis: Discordant Revivalism in Seventeeth-Century Istanbul," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* (1986): 251-255; Krstić, *Contested Conversions to Islam*, 115, 117, 174 .

[74] Zilfi, "The Kadizadelis," 252; Marc David Baer, *Honored by the Glory of Islam*: *Conversion and Conquest in Ottoman Europe* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 64, 70-73.

[75] See: Baer, *Honored by the Glory of Islam*, 126-129.

[76] Ballanfat, *Messianisme et sainteté*, 43.

1096/1685), their personal advisors. They even adopted their doctrines as public policy, turning a

blind eye as Kadızadeli followers shut down Sufi *tekke*s, banned the sale of wine, and set fire to

non-Muslim neighborhoods in Constantinople. By adopting the puritanical Kadızadeli doctrine,

these coopted figures rebranded the Sultan as the legitimate restorer of the rule of law in a

society that had been "corrupted" by illegitimate civil discord. They also presented themselves as

having the God-given right to "forbid the wrong," and hence eliminate any opposition.[77]

Ultimately, when the Sultans failed in their military campaigns against the "infidels," these

puritanicals were blamed for the Ottoman defeats, and the movement was eventually

eradicated.[78] Both from his own experience and that of his teachers, Bursevi was well aware of

these messianic movements and of the Kadızadeli ascendency. As will be explored in greater

detail in the following chapters, his theological and political stances were in many ways critiques

of these developments.

Despite the political and social turmoil of the age, intellectual life and artistic activity

flourished during the "Second Ottoman Empire." Bursevi was a part of this fluorescence,

particularly during his sojourn in Constantinople. In the physical sciences, the works of Nicolaus

Copernicus (d. 1543) were translated into Turkish, while according to some reports the engineers

Hezarfen Ahmed Çelebi (d. 1049/1640) and his brother Lagari Hasan Çelebi (d. unknown)

successfully undertook human flight.[79] Buhurcuoğlu Mustafa Itri (d. 1122/1711) composed

orchestral works that are today considered the pinnacle of Ottoman musical expression.[80] The

---

[77] See: Krstić, *Contested Conversions to Islam*, 29-32; Baer, *Honored by the Glory of Islam*, 105-121.
[78] Zilfi, "The Kadizadelis," 264-265.
[79] Avner Ben-Zaken, "The Heavens of the Sky and the Heavens of the Heart: The Ottoman Cultural Context for the Introduction of post-Copernican Astronomy," *The British Journal for the History of Science*, 37 (2004): 1-28; Mustafa Kaçar, s.v. "Hezarfen Ahmed Çelebi," *İslam Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul: Türk Diyanet Vakfı, İslam Araştırmalar Merkezi, 1998), 17.297.
[80] See: Cem Behar, "The Ottoman Musical Tradition," *The Cambridge History of Turkey*: Volume 3, *The Later Ottoman Empire, 1603-1839*, Suraiya N. Faroqhi Ed. (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 400-401

celebrated calligrapher Hafız Osman Efendi (d. 1109/1698) and the famous miniaturist

Abdülcelil Çelebi "Levni" (d. 1144/1732) were also active in this period.[81] Under the auspices of

Sultan Ahmet III and his grand vizier Nevşehirli Damat İbrahim Paşa (d. 1143/1730), many

buildings, such as the famous Fountain of Ahmet III outside of Topkapı palace, were built in the

opulent "Ottoman baroque" style.[82] In literature, the poet Nedim (d. 1142/1730) practically

reinvented the Ottoman ghazel.[83] Coffee and coffeehouse culture, tobacco smoking, and the

Karagöz ve Hacıvat shadow puppet plays also emerged at this time.[84]

      Many European scholars flocked to Constantinople during this period of intellectual and

cultural fluorescence. Relevant to Bursevi's Humanism, it is significant that many of these

scholars were what modern scholars would consider Renaissance humanists. European

humanists had long been part of elite circles of learning and culture in Constantinople. For

example, Mehmet II (r. 1444-1446; 1451-1481) and Süleyman I (r. 1520-1566) invited Italian

and Greek humanists to join their retinues.[85] In Bursevi's time, the most influential European

humanist interacting with the Ottomans was the Unitarian convert to Islam İbrahim Müteferrika

(d. 1160/1747). A Transylvanian scholar trained in Italy and Croatia, Müteferrika would go on to

write an influential work on epistemology, as well as establish the first Arabic printing press in

Constantinople.[86] Although many of these European humanists converted to Islam and embraced

an Ottoman identity during this period, they did not translate works considered central to

---

[81] Ali Alparslan, *Ünlü Türk hattatları* (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı, 1992), 64-81; Gül İrepoğlu, *Levni*: *Painting, Poetry, Colour* (Istanbul: Society of Friends of Topkapı Palace Museum, 1999).
[82] Tülay Artan, "Arts and Architecture," *The Cambridge History of Turkey*: *Volume 3*, 464-474.
[83] Walter G. Andrews, Najaat Black, Mehmet Kalpaklı Ed. and Trans., *Ottoman Lyric Poetry*: *An Anthology* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), 253-255.
[84] Tezan, *The Second Ottoman Empire,* 227-230.
[85] Nancy Bisaha, *Creating East and* West: *Renaissance Humanists and the Ottoman Turks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 86-130, 176; Krstić, *Contested Conversions to Islam*, 106-110.
[86] William J. Watson, "İbrahim Müteferrika and Turkish Incunablua," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 88 (1968): 435-441; Krstić, *Contested Conversions to Islam*, 118-119.

Renaissance or early Enlightenment Humanism into Turkish or Arabic.[87] Consequently, Bursevi

may have encountered humanists such as Müteferrika during his prolonged stay in the Ottoman

capital, it is unlikely that he had access to the written works of European Humanism.

Despite the fact that it has received little attention from modern scholars outside of

Turkey, religious scholarship was also vibrant during the "Second Ottoman Empire." From

Qur'anic commentaries and legal debates to theological, mystical, and religio-political discourses,

the religious sciences flourished. Unfortunately, the activities of Ottoman Sufis are absent from

most modern histories of this period, and indeed from Ottoman history as a whole. According to

dynastic histories such as that of Aşıkpaşazade (d. 889/1484) and popular legends, were it not for

the Sufis, the Ottoman Empire itself would not have existed.[88]

The beginning of what might be called the symbiosis between a Ottoman dynasty and the

Sufis began during the reign of Osman I (r. 1299-1323/4). The Sufi master Shaykh Edebali (d.

726/1326) interpreted a dream of Osman I that presaged the conquests and brilliance of his

offspring. He also offered his daughter in marriage to the would-be Sultan, whose children would

eventually serve as the first Grand Viziers (Tur. *sadr-ı azam*) of the Ottoman state. In exchange

for this wisdom and the grace of God (Ar. *baraka*), Shaykh Edebali asked that Osman I and his

descendants uphold his teachings and those of his Sufi successors.[89] As a seal of this verbal

contract, Shaykh Edebali, Sultan Veled (d. 712/1312), and the followers of Haci Bektaş-ı Veli (c.

669/1271), offered the Sultan ceremonial swords.[90] When Osman's successor Orhan I (r. 1323/4-

1362), conquered Bursa, he followed the advice of his father's mentor. He installed Molla Fenari

---

[87] B. Harun Küçük, "Natural Philosophy and Politics in the Eighteenth Century: Esad of Ioannina and Greek Aristotelianism at the Ottoman Court," *The Journal of Ottoman Studies/ Osmanlı Araştırmaları* 41 (2013): 125-158.

[88] Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*: *The Construction of the Ottoman State* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), 54.

[89] Ibid., 87-88, 123-129, 132-133.

[90] Abdülkadir Özcan, s.v. "Kılıç Alayı," *İslam Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul: Türk Diyanet Vakfı, İslam Araştırmalar Merkezi, 2002), 25.408.

(d. 834/1431), a devotee of Ibn al-ᶜArabī's teachings, as the Ottomans' first *Shaykh al-Islam*.[91] In the same vein, the Kubrawi Sufi Emir Sultan Buhari (c. 833/1429) guided "Yıldırım" Bayezid I (r. 1389-1402), and gave the Sultan his daughter in marriage.[92] Additionally, Emir Sultan seems to have been the initiator of the "sword-girding ceremony" (Tur. *kılıç alayı*), which was to become a hallmark of the Ottoman enthronement ritual.[93] Symbolically, this act of equipping the Sultan with a sword meant that it was Sufism that gave the Ottoman Sultanate its spiritual legitimacy and God-given power.[94] In return, the Sultan would guarantee the proliferation of God's blessings in the Empire by upholding the teachings of Shaykh Edebali, Emir Sultan, and the other saints of the age, as well as by supporting Sufism as the guarantor of Islamic orthodoxy.

The Sufi authorization of the authority and legitimacy of the Ottoman state was in the political interest of the Sultanate. Therefore, Ottoman rulers did much to provide for the Sufis and allow the preaching of Sufi doctrines throughout the Empire. Since the time of Shaykh Edebali and Emir Sultan, almost every Ottoman Sultan had a Sufi advisor or teacher.[95] Sultans, nobles, wealthy bureaucrats, and others bestowed the proceeds of charitable endowments on Sufis. Endowed funds accessible through individual contracts or through buildings such as *tekke*s or mosques were the primary sources of income for most Sufi institutions in Ottoman society. Those Sufis whose did not benefit from endowed wealth usually worked as preachers (Tur. *vaiz*), and were trained alongside jurisconsults in the *ilmiyye* or in their respective *tekke*s.[96] Because of these connections, being an official or "state-sponsored" Sufi could be very lucrative.[97]

---

[91] Krstić, *Contested Conversions to Islam*, 41-42.
[92] Mustafa Kara, *Metinlerle Osmanlılarda Tassavuf ve Tarikatlar* (Bursa: Sır Yayıncılık, 2008), 70, 116-117.
[93] Özcan, s.v. "Kılıç Alayı," 25:408-409.
[94] Terzioğlu, "Sufis in the Age of State-Building and Confessionalization," 89.
[95] Ibid., 96-97.
[96] Madeline C. Zilfi, *The Politics of Piety*: *The Ottoman Ulema in the Post-Classical Age* (*1600-1800*) (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1988), 35-39; idem., "The Kadizadelis," 268-269.
[97] See: Ballanfat, *Messianisme et sainteté*, 80-83.

Consequently, many Ottoman subjects turned to Sufism not for spiritual refinement, but rather as a means to gain wealth.

Not all Ottoman Sufis were in favor of the close relationship between Sufism and the state. Generally speaking, such Sufis believed that the deal made between the Sufis and the Sultanate should be either emended or abolished. Among the most influential critics of this system were members of the Melamiye Sufi order, most notably Bursevi's contemporary Sun'ullah Gaybi Efendi (d. 1087/1676).[98] Portraying themselves as the greatest Sufis described in Ibn al-ᶜArabī's *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīya*, the Melamis of the Ottoman Empire combined the ethics of the "people of blame" (Ar. *malāmatīya*) of Khurasān with a universalist interpretation of Ibn al-ᶜArabī's Sufi anthropology.[99] The Melamis maintained that every human being was formed in the image of God, and thus was capable of realizing his or her theomorphism. According to Sun'ullah Gaybi, once people gained awareness of their true nature, they could become autonomous "caliphs" or sultans, losing any need for governance.[100]

Melamis systematically rejected all the honorific trappings of state-sponsored Sufis, such as distinguishing garments, rosaries, *tekke*s, grand libraries, and even participation in Sufi rituals such as invocation (Ar. *dhikr*) or audition ceremonies (Tur. *semazen*).[101] Their only ritual was intimate discourse (Tur. *sohbet*) with the Melami Shaykh, which reenacted Adam's instruction by God. Beyond this, certain Melami masters mimicked Ottoman court rituals in secret ceremonies in order to mock official state ideology. Dressed in rags, the Shaykh would take on the role of

---

[98] See: Abdurrahman Doğan, *Kütahyalı Sunullah Gaybi*: *Hayatı*, *fikirleri*, *eserleri* (Istanbul: Önde Matbaacılık, 2001), 17-30; Paul Ballanfat, *Unité et spiritualité*: *Le courant Melâmi-Hamzevî dans L'Empire ottoman* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2013), 436-437.

[99] Ballanfat, *Unité et spiritualité*, 21, 62, 199, 267, 441-442; Victoria Rowe Holbrook, "Ibn 'Arabi and Ottoman Derivsh Traditions: The Melami Supra-Order (Part One)," *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society* 9 (1991): 18-20.

[100] Bilal Kemikli, *Sun'ullah-ı Gaybi Divanı* (Istanbul: H Yayınları, 2017), 218-219, 220-221; 238-239, poem 10.

[101] Ballanfat, *Unité et spiritualité*, 62-65.

Sultan, while his disciples would cater to him as "Shaykh al-Islam," "Grand Vizier,"

"Kazıasker," and so forth.[102] Outside of these ceremonies, the Melami preachers Ismail Maşuki

(d. 934/1528), Hamza Bali (d. 980/1572-73), and Lebeni / Sütçü Beşir (1073/1663) publically

castigated the Sultanate and its Sufi supporters.[103] The followers of Hamza Bali even established

a short-lived "dervish republic" in Bosnia with the military support of local Janissaries and the

financial support of guildsmen.[104] At the behest of orthodox Sufis close to the Sultanate, the

authorities executed these Melami masters and their followers in violent public displays. For

Melamis, the executed Ismail Mashuki, Hamza Bali, and Lebeni/Sütçü Beşir were hailed as the

"Hallāj's" of their day.[105]

While Melami preaching and practices led to state persecution, contemporary scholars

disagree over the exact nature of their politics. Turkish scholars of Ottoman Sufism rarely

discuss the political views of these Sufis. Paul Ballanfat interprets the Melamis' mocking of court

rituals, their critiques of tyranny, and their universalist approach to human perfectibility not as

acts of political rebellion but rather as "anti-political" (Fr. *antipolitique*) critiques. In other words,

the Melamis were not concerned with voicing political critiques to engender change in society,

but rather were more interested in abandoning political life altogether.[106] Following Vincent

Cornell's analysis of the seemingly quietist Sufis of the Maghrib, I contend that even the

allegedly non-political stance of these Sufis was in fact political.[107] In this sense, Melamis might

better be described as politically anarchistic than as anti-political. Drawing on Hayrettin

---

[102] Ibid., 65-66, 142-143, 390-392.
[103] Ibid., 74-82, 268-269, 438-440.
[104] See: Ines Aščerić-Todd, *Dervishes and Islam in Bosnia*: *Sufi Dimensions to the Formation of Bosnian Muslim Society* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2015), 161-174.
[105] Ballanfat, *Unité et spiritualité*, 438-441.
[106] Ibid., 280-283.
[107] Vincent J. Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*: *Power and Authority in Moroccan Sufism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998), 67-79; see also: Nile Green, *Sufism*: *A Global History* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 127-129, 132-134.

Yücesoy's research on anarchistic Muᶜtazilī Sufis of the 3rd/9th century, Melamis and Melami

doctrines can be said to have more in common with pre-modern Muslim anarchist groups than

with quietists.[108] If the Melamis were truly quietistic, the Sultanate and Ottoman Sufis of more

popular orders such as Bursevi's state-supported Celvetiyye would not have felt so threatened by

them as to call for their persecution.

Like the Melamis, who argued for the abolition of Sultanate-Sufi partnerships, the

Halveti shaykh Niyaz-i Misri severely critiqued the current state of affairs. However, unlike the

Melamis, Misri advocated for the transformation of the political system and even the Ottoman

Empire as a whole. Besides being known for his sublime Ottoman ghazels and provocative

works of Sufi theology, Misri is also known for his quasi-Shiite arguments for the prophethood

of Imam Ḥusayn (d. 61/680) and for his own messianic claims. Misri preached that he was not

only the Messiah, but also Adam, Jesus, the Seal of the Saints, and even a prophet (Pers.

paygambar) with a revelation in Turkish.[109] Somewhat surprisingly, the Sultanate and its

orthodox Sufi supporters begrudgingly tolerated Misri's heretical doctrines and claims. Since the

Sultan and rival Halveti Sufis such as Karabaş Veli (d. 1097/1686) did not heed his teachings,

Niyaz-i Misri went so far as to call for the dethronement of the Ottoman dynasty and the

execution of state-sponsored Sufis. In their stead, the Crimean Tatar Giray dynasty (r. 1427-

1783) was to take over the state under the supervision of Misri himself. This new system would

usher in the end of days and prepare humanity for the Final Judgment. These political

provocations could not go unheeded by the Sultanate. Ottoman officials forced Misri into exile

---

[108] Hayrettin Yücesoy, "Political Anarchism, Dissent, and Marginal Groups in the Early Ninth Century: The Ṣūfīs of the Muᶜtazila Revisted," in *The Lineaments of Islam*: *Studies in Honor of Fred McGraw Donner* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2012), 64-66, 80.

[109] Ballanfat, *Messianisme et sainteté*, 201-202, 208-217, 258-260, 264-281, 296; Derin Terzioğlu, "Man in the Image of God in the Image of the Times: Sufi Self-Narratives and the Diary of Niyāz-i Miṣrī (1618-94)," *Studia Islamica* 94 (2002) 157-158.

many times. It was during his final exile that he passed away on the island of Limni (modern day

Limnos, Greece).[110]

Members of the Celvetiyye Sufi order to which Bursevi belonged were well aware of the

close relationship between the Sultanate and state-sponsored Sufis. They were also aware of the

quasi-anarchistic arguments of the Melamis and the calls for rebellion of Niyaz-i Misri. The

Celveti Sufi Aziz Mahmut Hüdayi (d. 1038/1628) even debated Misri in person, and Ismail

Hakki Bursevi wrote treatises against his teachings.[111] Along with the Bektaşis, Bayramis, and

Melamis, the Celvetis were one of the few Sufi orders that was indigenous to Ottoman society.

Hızır Dede (d. 913/1507), the teacher of the order's founder, was a Moldovan or Ukranian

convert to Islam. He came to Bursa as a slave, was freed, and upon reaching sainthood became

fully "Ottomanized" in culture and religion.[112] For later Celvetis, Hızır Dede's cultural

assimilation meant that the order was open to any member of Ottoman society, and thus they

embraced an ethic of cosmopolitanism.[113] Like the Bektaşis and Bayramis, the Celvetis were not

only committed to an Ottoman identity, but also to the Sultanate as an institution. Nevertheless,

they considered themselves providers of vital criticism and guidance for the state—a sort of

"loyal opposition"—without which the Sultanate might lose its divinely favored status.

In accord with this pattern of behavior, in his writings Bursevi depicts the Celveti

shaykhs as unofficial advisors to the Ottoman Sultanate. According to this view, they could

guide the Sultan better than any other member of the court. The founder of the order and Bursa

native Üftade (d. 988/1580) ostensibly rejected the wealth and service of the state, yet in reality

---

[110] Ballanfat, *Messianisme et sainteté*, 52-53, 63, 81-82, 86-88; Terzioğlu, "Man in the Image of God in the Image of the Times," 155-156, 164.
[111] Namlı, *Ismail Hakkı Bursevi*, 39-40, 168.
[112] Hazret-i Pir-i Üftade, *Le Dîwân,* Paul Ballanfat Trans. (Paris: Les Deux Oceans, 2002), 12-14.
[113] Ibid., 46-47.

he was intimately involved with preaching to notables and even to the Sultan himself.[114] His

successor Aziz Mahmut Hüdayı was the first Celveti Sufi to act as unofficial advisor of the

Sultan in Constantinople. However, he rejected all offers of payment for his services. One of his

"miracles" involved saving a non-Muslim quarter of the capital from becoming a royal

zoological garden by convincing the Sultan of the folly of this act.[115]

For Bursevi, who was rooted in the Celveti worldview and wholly oriented towards

institutionalized Sufism, the Celveti shaykh was the *de facto* vizier of the Empire. For him, the

turmoil that racked society in the "Second Ottoman Empire" was due to the fact that Sultans

Mehmet IV (r. 1648-1687) and Süleyman II (r. 1687-1691), rejected the advice of the Celvetiyye.

More than any other political, social, or even religious institution, he considered the Celvetiyye

to be the guarantor of Ottoman legitimacy.

c.) *The Life of a Perfect Man*: *Bursevi's Biography*

Ismail Hakki Bursevi was born in the village of Aydos (in modern day Bulgaria) in

1063/1653.[116] Concerning his mother, Kerime Hanım (d. 1070/1660), Bursevi gives only the

names of her paternal ancestors: shaykh Davut Efendi (unknown), son of Mehmet Efendi

(unknown), son of 'Abdurrahman Efendi (unknown), son of Qazi Ahmet Efendi (unknown).

Given the titles *sheyh* ("learned authority") and *qazi* ("judge"), it would seem that his maternal

family was part of the Ottoman juridical-educational system (Tur. *ilmiyye*). Kerime Hanım left

---

[114] Ibid., 24-26.

[115] See: Hasan Kamil Yılmaz, *Azîz Mahmûd Hüdâyi ve Celvetiyye tarikatı* (Istanbul: Erkam Yayınları, 1982), 58-74; Aïni, *Ismaïl Hakki*, 10-11.

[116] Ali Namlı, *İsmail Hakkı Bursevi*, 35.

Bursevi a large fortune upon her death. This fortune may have been amassed from the savings of her family.[117]

Information concerning the paternal side of Bursevi's family is equally sparse. His father was a well-connected Celveti Sufi from Constantinople named Mustafa Efendi (d. ca. 1118/1706), the son of Shah Hudabende (unknown), son of Bayram "Çavuş" (unknown). While Bursevi mentions that his family was simply "Turkish" (Tur. *türki*), his grandfather's Persian name "God-serving lord" (Pers. *shāh khudā-banda*) seems to be indicative of an Azeri, Turkmen, or Tatar origin.[118] Under the Ottoman *timar* feudal system, a *çavuş* ("sergeant") connoted a palace guard, trainer, military advisor, or diplomat.[119] Bursevi's grandfather likely served as a *çavuş* guardsman under Murat III (r. 1574-1595) or Mehmet III (r. 1595-1603).

Whatever the background of his family, Bursevi was the child of well-educated parents, who claimed to represent elite lineages that were connected to the institution of the *ilmiyye* and the royal court. Given this lineage, Bursevi was afforded opportunities not available to the majority of Ottoman subjects. That his family had served the Empire for generations most likely heightened his concern for the wellbeing of the Sultanate and his willingness to become involved in politics.

In Aydos, Bursevi grew up in a rural environment surrounded by his family and by members of the Celvetiyye order to which his father belonged.[120] Even at an early age, he fraternized with both local and visiting Celvetis. Osman Fazli, one of the main disciples of Aziz Mahmut Hüdayi and Bursevi's future shaykh, lived not far away in the town of Şumu (modern

---

[117] Ibid., 36-37.

[118] Ibid., 36; Sir James W. Redhouse, *A Turkish and English Lexicon*: *Shewing in English the Significations of the Turkish Terms* (Beirut: Librarie du Liban, 1987), s.v.. "Khudā," pg. 832.

[119] Orhan F. Köprülü, s.v. "çavuş," *İslam Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul: Türk Diyanet Vakfı, İslam Araştırmalar Merkezi), 8:236-237.

[120] Namlı, *İsmail Hakkı Bursevi*, 36; Atanasova, "The Sufi as the Axis of the World," 5-6.

day Shumen, Bulgaria) and made frequent trips to Edirne to attend the court of Sultan Mehmet

IV (r. 1648-1687). Apparently a friend of the family, Osman Fazlı visited Aydos frequently to

meet with Bursevi's father. Bursevi claims that around 1066/1658 Osman Fazli initiated him into

Sufism and foretold his discipleship and eventual spiritual state.[121] In order to cultivate his

intellectual gifts, Bursevi's parents sent him to the local Celveti teacher Abdullah Efendi (d.

unknown) to learn the Qur'an, the basics of Islam, Arabic, and Turkish. Bursevi mentions that he

had a natural affinity for writing, calligraphy, and learning, which set him apart from his other

family members, the majority of whom were farmers.[122] Recognizing him as a candidate for a

stable vocation in the *ilmiyye*, his parents invested considerable resources in Bursevi's education

and prepared to send him away to pursue additional training.

When he was seven years old (roughly 1070/1660), Bursevi's mother passed away. he

maintains that Kerime Hanım left him roughly 12,000 *dirham*s to pay for his studies and provide

for his livelihood.[123] The term *dirham* connoted a silver coin worth roughly 12.5 *akçe*s, the most

standard form of Ottoman currency. If this value is correct, then Bursevi received the equivalent

of 150,000 *akçe*s.[124] Given that a Janissary or a scribe earned 1095 *akçe*s a year without bonuses

or rewards, Bursevi received the equivalent of roughly fourteen years' pay for these state

employees. Because of his wealth, he did not have to rely upon the *ilmiyye* system for education

or employment. Instead, he was free to pursue independent studies, purchase any book he desired,

and pay for paper, ink, and other items necessary for scholarship. Thus, he was more able than

others to study and formulate his own opinions independently, without feeling the need to

conform or to impress superiors.

---

[121] Atanasova, "The Sufi as the Axis of the World," 122-123; Aïni, *Ismaïl Hakki*, 7-8.
[122] Namlı, *İsmail Hakkı Bursevi*, 37.
[123] Ibid.
[124] See: Şevket Pamuk, *A Monetary History of the Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 32-33, 46. A diachronic *dirham-akçe* conversion table can be found on pg. 136.

With his mother's inheritance to support him, Bursevi moved to Edirne to pursue further studies under ʿAbd al-Bāqī Efendi (d. unknown), Osman Fazlı's relative and closest disciple. Beyond further study of Arabic and Ottoman, he pursued the study of the Qur'an, Qur'anic commentary (Ar. *tafsīr*), *ḥadīth*, Ḥanafī jurisprudence, theology, logic, and the scribal arts.[125] It was also during this time that Bursevi began his training in the rites and doctrines of Celveti Sufism, often in private sessions with Osman Fazli.

In 1083/1672, at the invitation of Osman Fazlı, Bursevi took up residence at his master's Sufi lodge in Constantinople. With his coveted position of teacher at the Süleymaniye mosque and Friday-preacher at the Selimiye mosque, Osman Fazlı could easily afford to host disciples.[126] While engaged in Sufi training at Osman Fazlı's *khāna-gāh*, Bursevi furthered his studies of theology, jurisprudence, and Qur'anic commentary.[127] He also studied with one of the most celebrated Ottoman calligraphers, Hafız Osman (d. 1110/1698). Bursevi was also a student of music, and set the poems of Hüdayi to music.[128] In addition, he became enamored with the Persian language and studied it passionately with noted scholars to the point of literary fluency.[129] Because of his personal inheritance, Bursevi had a rare opportunity to study Persian to an advanced degree and was able to read Sufi theological works in each of the celebrated "Three Languages" (Tur. *elsine-i selase*): Arabic, Persian, and Turkish.[130] As a Sufi, academic, calligrapher, and musician, Bursevi appears as the consummate Ottoman scholar in his autobiographical writings.

---

[125] Namlı, *İsmail Hakkı Bursevi*, 37.

[126] Ibid., 38-39; Zilfi, *The Politics of Piety*, 25-30, 43-50.

[127] Namlı, *İsmail Hakkı Bursevi*, 39-40.

[128] Aïni, *Ismaïl Hakki*, 9-11.

[129] For more information on Persian language instruction and use in the Ottoman world, see: Christine Woodhead, "Ottoman Languages," *The Ottoman World*, 155; Krstić, *Contested Conversions to Islam*, 40-45, 80; Bertold Spuler, *Persian Historiography and Geography*, M. Ismail Marcinkowski Trans. (Singapore: Pustaka Nasional Pte Ltd, 2003), 68-69.

[130] Woodhead, "Ottoman Languages," *The Ottoman World*, 155.

Accompanying these achievements, Bursevi reports having some of his first mystical visions and confirmations of his spiritual supremacy during his sojourn in Constantinople. As Kameliya Atanasova has noted, the number and intensity of Bursevi's dreams increased as he matured. Bursevi interpreted this increase as indicating his progression in Sufism.[131] Roughly in the year 1085/1674, he began to encounter famous Sufi masters in dreams, receiving both benedictions and instructions from them. More significantly, the figure of Ibn al-ʿArabī appeared frequently in Bursevi's dreams and waking visions. During his adolescence as a student in the capital, Bursevi had a notable dream of Ibn al-ʿArabī in which the latter kissed Bursevi's mouth, and Bursevi kissed Ibn al-ʿArabī's feet. Bursevi interpreted this as a prediction of his initiation into esoteric wisdom and his acceptance as a direct disciple of Ibn al-ʿArabī.[132]

Impressed by the academic and spiritual success of Bursevi, Osman Fazlı named him a spiritual successor (Tur. *halife*), and authorized him to teach his approach to Celveti Sufism.[133] In 1086/1675 shaykh then sent him to Üsküp (modern day Skopje, Macedonia) to preach the Celveti way as his direct representative. Histories from the mid-11th/17th century describe Üsküp as a burgeoning metropolis in the Middle Balkans. A hub for trade strategically located between Constantinople and the Western Balkans, the city had one of the largest Turkish and Balkan Muslim populations in the region.[134] From an abandoned mosque in Üsküp, Bursevi taught, preached, led prayer, and facilitated Sufi ceremonies. His charismatic preaching and provocative teaching seem to have attracted a sizable audience. It also seems that he fraternized with local Sufis. In 1087/1676, after one year in Üsküp, Bursevi married his first wife, Afife Hanım (unknown), the daughter of a local shaykh from the Uşşaki Sufi order who had

---

[131] Atanasova, "The Sufi as the Axis of the World," 75, 111
[132] Namlı, *İsmail Hakkı Bursevi*, 40-41.
[133] Ibid., 41.
[134] Mehmet İnbaşı, "The City of Skopje and its Demographic Structure in the 19th Century," *Turkish Review of Balkan Studies* 8 (2003): 286-287.

considerable influence in the community.[135] It would appear that this marriage was, at least in part, of a political nature. After his marriage, Bursevi attracted an even greater audience than before. A wealthy female donor even offered an endowment (Tur. *vakıf*) to support the building of a Celveti *tekke* for Bursevi and his followers and probably provided him with a salary as well.[136]

Beyond his charismatic preaching and newly established ties to the community, Bursevi's criticism of Üsküp's political grandees, religious scholars (Ar. *ᶜulamāʾ*), and Sufis made him stand out. From the time he first arrived, Bursevi made a point of informing the populace of the city that the leaders of local society had become thoroughly corrupted. The political leaders were given over to passions, "concerned only with their lower selves, drinkers of wine, abandoners of the community, proud of their fathers and mothers."[137] Jurisconsults, who were meant to ensure that Islamic law was practiced and provide deep learning, reduced "all knowledge to copying verses" of their predecessors in a kind of blind traditionalism.[138] Instead of engaging in self-improvement and the sincere study of Sufi theology, Üsküp Sufis reduced Sufism to mere rumination on a "collection of love poems (*ghazal*) which they followed as if they were emanations of the Eternal."[139] Beyond these grievances, Bursevi found fault with the political and academic elites' refusal to offer educational opportunities for ordinary people. He despised the local elites' discouragement of those who would pursue advanced scholastic training in lieu of their traditional vocations. Bursevi had equally severe words for Üsküp's Sufi shaykhs. According to him, they sinned as disbelievers by hindering the progress of Sufi "seekers" (Ar.

---

[135] Namlı, *İsmail Hakkı Bursevi*, 42-43.
[136] Ibid., 43-44.
[137] Ibid., 45; Atanasova, "The Sufi as the Axis of the World," 7.
[138] Namlı, *İsmail Hakkı Bursevi*, 45.
[139] Ibid.

ṭālib) by refusing to teach Sufi theology beyond a limited curriculum of Sufi texts. They were likewise criticized for not preaching beyond the circle of their disciples.[140]

Visionary dreams supported Bursevi's critiques. In one dream, he saw the Mufti of Üsküp in the form of Pharaoh, who had become an idol worshipped fervently by the citizens of the city. Following this dream, Bursevi dreamed of Adam confirming the validity of his critiques. "I saw in a dream the father of man, Adam, who was in a trial of knowledge," he wrote. "Eventually, the pen dried up, and he called on me to sharpen the sword, and kill those lowly devils lest the people have some argument against God. This test validates me and my forefathers."[141] In this dream, Adam, the progenitor of humankind and the first Perfect Human Being, acknowledged Bursevi as his student and approved of his arguments with the scholars. Rather than critiquing the "pharaonic" cadre of Üsküp grandees, jurisconsults, and Sufis from afar and "with the pen," Adam urged Bursevi to confront them directly "with the sword." This was the first of many instances in which Bursevi reported receiving both a positive evaluation of his spiritual mastery and a political validation from Adam.

Encouraged by his dreams and visions, Bursevi began to harass in public the Üsküp grandees whom he deemed wicked. These public critiques ultimately resulted in his expulsion from the city. He reports berating jurisconsults in the mosques and Sufis in their *tekke*s, challenging them to debates in front of their students.[142] Beyond this, Bursevi went after notables who drank wine in taverns in the very institutions that they frequented. For the most part, the recipients of Bursevi's critiques tolerated him. However, his attacks against grandees in public

---

[140] Ibid., 45-46.
[141] Atanasova, "The Sufi as the Axis of the World," 85.
[142] Namlı, *İsmail Hakkı Bursevi,* 45.

were inexcusable. The Üsküp notables complained to Osman Fazlı, who sent a letter to his disciple, urging Bursevi to be concerned with the affairs of his *tekke* alone.[143]

Rejecting his shaykh's advice, Bursevi continued his preaching. The newly appointed *Shaykh al-Islām* Çatalcalı Ali Efendi (d. 1097/1686), the leading religious authority in the Ottoman Empire, received so many complaints about Bursevi that he eventually summoned him to Constantinople and chastised him.[144] This chastisement fell on deaf ears, as Bursevi continued his recriminations. It thus comes as no surprise that Bursevi's enemies tried to assassinate him. Ultimately, a group of infuriated grandees and jurisconsults led by Üsküp's "pharaonic" Mufti expelled Bursevi and his family from the city in 1092/1681. Bursevi and his family first took refuge in the large town of Köprülü (modern day Veles, Macedonia), and then in the city of Ustrumca (modern day Strumica, Macedonia). They remained there until 1095/1684.[145] Bursevi attracted such a substantial following in Ustrumca that the leaders of the city offered him the position of Mufti. At the bidding of Osman Fazlı, who believed it was impossible for someone to be a good Sufi and a jurisconsult at the same time, Bursevi declined the offer.[146]

Bursevi would have stayed in Ustrumca preaching, teaching, and writing were it not for the invitation of Osman Fazlı to stay with him in Edirne for private instruction in the mysteries of Celveti Sufism.[147] In 1094/1683, the Ottoman forces besieging Vienna suffered one of the most calamitous military defeats in Ottoman history at the hands of the combined forces of the Holy Roman Empire, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and Habsburg Hungary. Following this defeat, the armies of the Holy League prepared a punitive campaign against Ottoman

---

[143] Ibid., 46.
[144] Ibid.; For a comprehensive list of those who occupied the post of *Shaykh al-Islam*, see: Esra Yakut, *Şeyhülislamlık*: *Yenileşme Döneminde Devlet ve Din* (Istanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2005), 242-247.
[145] Namlı, *İsmail Hakkı Bursevi,* 47-49.
[146] Ibid., 49.
[147] Ibid., 49-50.

possessions in Hungary and the Western Balkans in 1684.[148] Venetian troops also capitalized on

the Ottoman defeat at Vienna and seized the economically crucial Greek region of Morea.[149]

Osman Fazlı, who was critical of the warmongering Mehmet IV and his government dominated

by the Köprülü viziers, sought to extricate Bursevi from a politically tumultuous region.[150]

Bursevi remained by his shaykh's side in Edirne for some time. He remarks that he

studied Ibn al-ᶜArabī's *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* with his shaykh for three months in intense, private

sessions.[151] As Bursevi studied with his master, he began to have even more profound initiatic

dreams and visions, including complete awareness of God's monistic reality (*tawḥīd*). In one

vision, he claimed, in a manner evocative of the Qur'anic account of Adam (Q 2:31), that God

had instructed him in the divine names and their secrets, their "loci of manifestation" (Ar.

maẓāhir), and the mysteries of the rank of *khalīfa*.[152] Quite differently from his earlier dreams of

Adam in Üsküp, Bursevi's latest visions indicated that he had become "Adamic" himself.

Osman Fazlı took notice of Bursevi's spiritual maturity and felt that he was ready for

greater leadership in the Celvetiyye. In 1096/1685, upon the passing of Sun'ullah Amasyevi,

Osman Fazlı's appointed successor in Bursa, the shaykh ordered Bursevi to serve as his

representative in that city.[153] It was in Bursa that Bursevi attained to spiritual maturity and

became a Sufi shaykh. In terms of both spiritual realization and literary output, his move to

Bursa was a watershed moment in his life. However, emigration came at a great cost. Bursevi

reported that he lost most of his material possessions and massive library when he left Edirne.[154]

---

[148] See: Christoph K. Neumann, "Political and Diplomatic Developments," *The Cambridge History of Turkey*: *Volume 3*, *The Later Ottoman Empire*, 1603-1839, Suraiya N. Faroqhi Ed. (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 50-53.
[149] Ibid., 52.
[150] Aïni, *Ismaïl Hakki*, 17-18.
[151] Namlı, *İsmail Hakkı Bursevi*, 50.
[152] Atanasova, "The Sufi as the Axis of the World," 75.
[153] Namlı, *İsmail Hakkı Bursevi*, 50.
[154] Ibid., 51-52; Aïni, *Ismaïl Hakki*, 23.

When he arrived in Bursa, only his personal library and rosary (Ar. *tasbīḥ*) remained of his previous possessions, which he was forced to sell to provide for his family.[155] In addition, his wife and children were closely attached to their family in Üsküp, and hence Bursevi describes their complaints as a "trial" for him.[156] By making an exodus from the Balkans and emigrating to Bursa, Bursevi seems to have compared himself metaphorically with the Prophet Muḥammad, who left Mecca and arrived in Medina impoverished, yet was cared for by the local community.

In a margin note in his Qur'an commentary *Rūḥ al-bayān*, Bursevi mentions that a local merchant named Muḥammad Sabzī provided a home for him.[157] Local Celvetis and pious supporters of Bursevi also seem to have provided him with an endowed salary.[158] Beyond this aid, Bursevi received the official academic appointment of preacher (Tur. *vaiz*), a coveted position that required teaching the Qur'an and *tafsīr* in Bursa's famous Grand Mosque. The appointment also stipulated that Bursevi was to produce a Qur'anic commentary of his own.[159] The time he spent teaching *tafsīr* allowed him to write his commentary on the Qur'an over a period of eighteen to nineteen years. He began the work in 1097-1098/1687 or 1098/1688 and completed it in 1117/1705, according to dates found in the *tafsīr* itself.[160] However, as a *vaiz*, Bursevi was connected to the Ottoman *ilmiyye* system, and hence could have his teachings critiqued or even silenced by the authorities.

---

[155] Namlı, *İsmail Hakkı Bursevi,* 52.

[156] From what can be gleaned from his autobiographical notes, Bursevi had a large family and many wives. He mentions that they often complained of lack of care, financial support, and the absence of Bursevi himself. Bursevi claimed to be a Perfect Man, but it seemed that he was very much a negligent family provider, more concerned with his mission than with taking care of his family. See: Atanasova, "The Sufi as the Axis of the World," 95-96; Namlı, *İsmail Hakkı Bursevi*, 115-119.

[157] İsmail Hakki Bursevi, *Rūḥ al-bayān fī-tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, Bursa: Bursa Eski Eserler Kütüphanesi (BEYBEK), Genel (GE), ms. no. 12-27, 12:1, 27:202-203; Namlī, *İsmail Hakkı Bursevi*, 89.

[158] Namlı, *İsmail Hakkı Bursevi,* 52.

[159] Ibid., 53-54; Bursevi, *Rūḥ al-bayān fī-tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, 12:1.

[160] See: Bursevi, *Ruhu'l Beyan*, 44-47.

For roughly four years, from 1097/1686-1101/1690, Bursevi occupied himself teaching, writing his *tafsīr* and other works, and visiting his shaykh in Constantinople. As a result of a major military revolt, Mehmet IV was deposed in favor of his brother, Süleyman II (r. 1687-1691). The new Sultan attempted to reform the military, revive the economy, and restore peace to the Empire. In addition, Süleyman II embarked on a campaign to gain back the territory that had been lost since the Second Siege of Vienna, which resulted in another crushing defeat at the Battle of Slankamen (1691) just north of Belgrade.[161] Bursevi's shaykh Osman Fazlı was an unofficial, unpaid advisor to Süleyman II. In fact, Bursevi asserts that it was Osman Fazlı who ensured that Süleyman II would become Sultan. In a dramatic narrative, he relates that while in attendance at the court, Osman Fazlı halted a mob comprised of janissaries, soldiers, and ordinary subjects seeking restitution. With the standard of the Prophet in his hands and speaking from an unveiled spiritual state (Ar. *kashf*), Osman Fazlı convinced the bloodthirsty mob to forsake their rebellion, follow their true leader the Sultan, and punish the instigators of the revolt, who had led them astray. The mob promptly did as instructed, and eventually Süleyman II was enthroned with popular support.[162] Grateful for his support, the new Sultan offered Osman Fazlı tremendous wealth and the position of Grand Vizier. However, the shayh declined, choosing instead to remain an unofficial advisor.[163]

Bursevi describes Osman Fazlı as extremely critical of state authority and the state enterprise of waging war. Like other Celveti shaykhs, he voiced these opinions openly in the presence of the Sultan. Formerly critical of Mehmet IV's militarism, Osman Fazlı was also infuriated that Süleyman II embarked on futile military campaigns. In addition to voicing his

---

[161] See: Caroline Finkel, *Osman's Dream: The History of the Ottoman Empire* (New York: Basic Books, 2005), 202, 295-305; Pamuk, *A Monetary History of the Ottoman Empire*, 155-158.
[162] Aïni, *Ismaïl Hakki*, 19-21.
[163] Ibid., 22.

objections in person, Fazlı wrote letters that called into question the legal validity of Süleyman

II's campaigning.[164] Although Osman Fazlı was put under house arrest in an effort to silence him,

this did not deter him. In 1101/1690, he left the capital with a small band of disciples to protest

personally the expansionist campaigns of the Sultan on the battlefield. Intercepted in Sofia, he

was exiled to Famagusta in Cyprus the same year.[165] Bursevi spent most of 1101-1102/1690

making trips back and forth to Cyprus to visit his exiled shaykh. Osman Fazlı died the next year,

in 1102/1691. Often he alluded that Bursevi was to succeed him, such as referring to him as his

"Hüdayi," the successor to the Celvetiyye's founder, Üftade.[166] However, Osman Fazlı did not

name him as his successor unequivocally.[167] Bursevi returned to Bursa confident of his status as

the successor to Osman Fazlı. Dreams and visions of Sufi saints and Prophets in Bursa and

Cyprus, the shaykh's special instructions and praise of Bursevi during his visits, and the

appointment of Bursevi as *khalīfa* in 1096/1685 verified his status as the new shaykh of the

Celvetiyye order.

Around the time that Bursevi became leader of his branch of the Celvetiyye, the order

underwent a crisis of succession. This crisis had begun with the death of Aziz Mahmud Hüdayi's

successor Zakirzade 'Abdullah (d. 1068/1657), who left no clear succession plan for overall

leadership of the order.[168] Believing himself to be the rightful successor of Zakirzade 'Abdullah,

Osman Fazlı attempted to form a new sub-branch of the Celvetiyye. As noted previously, he

preached political involvement instead of quietism, a greater emphasis on scholasticism, and a

more populist approach to teaching Sufism to non-initiates. Because of Osman Fazlı's critiques

of the military campaigns of the Sultanate, the Ottoman Sultans lost interest in having Celveti

---

[164] Ibid., 23-24; Namlı, *İsmail Hakkı Bursevi*, 64-65.
[165] Namlı, *İsmail Hakkı Bursevi*, 54-55.
[166] Ibid., 66-67.
[167] Atanasova, "The Sufi as the Axis of the World," 7-8, 82, 129-133.
[168] Ibid., 17-20.

shaykhs as their advisors. In stark contrast to the house arrest and later forced exile of Osman

Fazlı, an imperial decree (Tur. *hatt-ı hümayun*) installed Selami Ali (d. 1692) as overall leader of

the Celvetiyye at Hüdayi's original headquarters in Üsküdar. Selami Ali was supportive of the

government in his teachings.[169] For this reason, Bursevi considered Selami Ali and his followers

to be beyond the pale, and therefore excluded them from his accounts of the Celvetiyye.[170] The

exile and death of Osman Fazlı and the imperial appointment of Selami Ali indicated for Bursevi

that the connection between Sultan Osman I and Shaykh Edebali had by now become defunct. It

was thus the task of Bursevi, as a Perfect Man and the Axis of the Age, to restore integrity and

order to Ottoman society.

Since his time in Constantinople as a student and a guest of Osman Fazlı, Bursevi had

become close to high-ranking Ottoman grandees and bureaucrats and cultivated such

relationships throughout his life.[171] Despite being in the good graces of many powerful nobles,

numerous members of the religious elite opposed Bursevi, perhaps to curb his potential influence

at court. They found fault with his denunciation of the corruption of jurisconsults and of other

Sufis in his public preaching. They also disapproved of Bursevi's discussions of arcane aspects of

monistic Sufi theology with non-initiates.[172]

Although Bursevi was despised by the conservative religious elite, his charisma and

cogent explanations of esoteric Sufi doctrines captivated some important Ottoman officials.

Impressed by the shaykh, the Grand Vizier Elmas Mehmed Pasha (r. 1695-1697) requested that

Bursevi advise and preach to the newly enthroned Sultan Mustafa II (r. 1695-1703) during his

military campaigns against the Holy League of 1684 and the Russian Empire under Peter I (r.

---

[169] Ibid., 19.
[170] Ibid., 109-111.
[171] Ibid., 44-47
[172] Ibid., 145-147.

1682-1721).[173] Bursevi, now about 42-43 years old, abandoned the anti-war stance of Osman

Fazlı and accompanied the Sultan's retinue on a campaign throughout the Balkans and Eastern

Europe from 1107-1108/1695-1696. In Atanasova's analysis, he most likely worked as an "'army

shaykh' (Tur. *ordu şeyhi*), a position occupied by a number of Sufis from the major orders in the

Ottoman Empire from the fifteenth through the nineteenth centuries, whose precise role in the

war effort is unclear."[174] In addition to offering spiritual advice and boosting the morale of the

troops, Bursei apparently engaged in actual fighting, because he mentions having to leave the

battlefield to return to Bursa in order to recover from his wounds.[175] Mustafa II scored great

victories at the battles of Lugos (1695), Ulaş/Banat and Cenei (1696), and succeeded in repelling

the Russians during the siege of Azov (1696-1697).[176] It is likely that Bursevi returned home

before the Ottoman defeat at the battle of Zenta in 1697 and the Treaty of Karlowitz in 1698-

1699, which ended Ottoman rule in Hungary and the Western Balkans.

Before one battle, Bursevi relates that he was called into the presence of Grand Vizier

Elmas Paşa to impart wisdom. According to Bursevi, he convinced the Grand Vizier to release

his pet gazelle into the wild, urging him to reflect on the conditions of the prisoners of the

Empire.[177] Ayni notes that this sentiment is echoed in Bursevi's *Tuhfe-i Haliliyye* ("The Treatise

dedicated to Halil"), in which he severely criticized slavery and urged all slaveholders to free

those in bondage.[178] As will be argued in the following chapters, Bursevi's criticisms of

imprisonment and slavery are emblematic of his Humanism. Because he believed in human

---

[173] Namlı, *İsmail Hakkı Bursevi*, 72; Finkel, *Osman's Dream*, 312-318.
[174] Atanasova, "The Sufi as the Axis of the World," 132.
[175] Namlı, *İsmail Hakkı Bursevi,* 73.
[176] Ibid.; Finkel, *Osman's Dream*, 315-318, 320-321; Neumann, "Political and Diplomatic Developments," 51-52.
[177] Namlı, *İsmail Hakkı Bursevi*, 72-73; Aïni, *Ismaïl Hakki*, 27.
[178] Namlı, *İsmail Hakkı Bursevi*, 195; Aïni, *Ismaïl Hakki*, 66-67.

theomorphism and the potential of all humans for perfection, Bursevi considered illegal

imprisonment and slavery offenses against God.

To heal from his battle wounds, Bursevi returned to Bursa around 1109/1697.[179] In

1111/1700, as a result of several dreams and visions, he decided to undertake the Hajj. This

rather sudden decision to embark on pilgrimage seems to have been a way of disassociating

himself from Mustafa II's government, which had continued to suffer military defeats and

provoked a major revolt by not paying the troops.[180] Going on the pilgrimage to Mecca at that

time could also have been a way to avoid recent natural disasters and a famine that plagued

Anatolia.[181] In the vicinity of the Kaᶜba, Bursevi had visions in which Ibrahīm ibn Adham (c.

165/782), ᶜAbd al-Qādir Jilānī (d. 561/1166), the Celveti shaykhs Üftade and Hüdayi, the quasi-

prophet Khiḍr, and Prophets including Muḥammad and Adam confirmed him as the Spiritual

Axis and Perfect Man of his age. These figures also manifested to him the mysteries of

sainthood.[182] Bursevi also claimed to have seen Adam approach the palace of the Ottoman Sultan,

who beckoned to have him follow inside.[183] While returning from the Hajj, bandits assaulted

Bursevi's caravan, killing everyone but Bursevi and taking most of his writings and possessions.

Wandering through the desert, Bursevi prayed for a guide to lead him to safety after some time,

he reports, Khiḍr appeared and guided him to safety. Bursevi returned to Bursa at the end of

1111/1700.[184]

Once again in the old Ottoman capital, Bursevi resumed teaching and writing. In

1112/1701, he became embroiled in a political scandal that shocked Bursan society. A Sufi was

---

[179] Namlı, *İsmail Hakkı Bursevi*, 74.
[180] Ibid.; Finkel, *Osman's Dream*, 329-331.
[181] White, *The Climate of Rebellion*, 264-265, 269.
[182] Atanasova, "The Sufi as the Axis of the World," 127.
[183] Ibid., 75.
[184] Namlı, *İsmail Hakkı Bursevi*, 77-79.

murdered in the Ulu Camii, the mosque in which Bursevi gave his lectures on *tafsīr*. The Sufi

had disagreed with local *madrasa* students and their teachers over praying on the Night of Power

(Ar. *laylat al-qadr*).[185] Bursevi severely criticized the killers, calling into question the *madrasa*

teachers' legitimacy, and chastising them for their refusal to comply with the Sultan's arbitrator,

who came to the city to resolve the conflict.[186] These criticisms deepened the divide between

Bursevi and the religious elites of Bursa. In addition to this scandal, Bursevi also criticized the

merchant-funded and *ᶜulamāʾ*-sanctioned Janissary revolt that deposed Mustafa II in favor of

Ahmet III (r. 1703-1730) in 1114/1703.[187] Although he was displeased with the violence of the

Janissaries, Bursevi also criticized Mustafa II, the Sultan whom he had accompanied into battle.

According to him, the womanizing, hunting-addicted Sultan had deserved his deposition for

neglecting the advice of Sufis and listening to those who denied Sufism.[188]

According to a colophon in the manuscript of *Rūḥ al-bayān*, Bursevi finished his

magnum opus of Qur'anic commentary in 1117/1705.[189] After three more years in Bursa, he

decided to make the Hajj once again, this time by sea. Bursevi met with the Grand Vizier Çorlulu

Ali Pasha (c. 1706-1711) before embarking on his voyage and offered him his counsel on the

management of the Empire. On his way to the Hijaz, Bursevi spent two months in Cairo at the

behest of a local Qādirī shaykh. Bursevi also taught at Al-Azhar, giving certificates of study (Ar.

ijāzāt) to several students in various subjects.[190] While in Mecca, he claimed to have met with

Khiḍr in person, learning from him esoteric wisdom that surpassed many of his earlier teachings.

When requested by his students to give the Friday sermon at the Kaᶜba, Bursevi found himself

---

[185] Ibid., 80; Atanasova, "The Sufi as the Axis of the World," 9.
[186] Namlı, *İsmail Hakkı Bursevi*, 80-81.
[187] See: Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire*, 220-221.
[188] Namlı, *İsmail Hakkı Bursevi*, 82-85.
[189] Bursevi, *Rūḥ al-bayān*, 27:203.
[190] Namlı, *İsmail Hakkı Bursevi*, 86-89.

unable to speak—not unlike Moses in the Qur'an who was described as tongue tied in the presence of Khiḍr (Q 18:65-82). According to him, the wisdom he had received from Khiḍr was so profound that it could not be shared.[191]

Bursevi's return from his second Hajj in 1123/1711 was uneventful.[192] On the way back to Bursa, he spent around three months in Üsküdar teaching and writing at the request of disciples based there. When he finally arrived in Bursa, he began to establish a mosque complex west of the Ulu Camii in the modern-day district of *Tuzpazarı* ("Salt Market"). In this mosque complex, he taught *tafsīr* and directed his Bursa-based disciples.[193] At the behest of other Celveti Sufis who were eager to learn from him, in 1126/1714 Bursevi sojourned in the city of Tekirdağ near Constantinople for most of the year. While there, he married Osman Fazlı's only surviving daughter, Hanife (d. 1125/1713), who died in childbirth two years later. He also married his third wife, 'Aişe (d. 1159/1747).[194] During this period, Bursevi met frequently with Grand Vizier Damad 'Ali Paşa (r. 1713-1716), and reports that he praised the official for his service to the Empire and in particular for his role in regaining the province of Morea from the Venetians. Bursevi also dreamed that the *awtād* ("spiritual anchor saints") of existence prostrated before him, and informed him that he was the Axis.[195]

Although he was blessed by this dream and celebrated by the Grand Vizier, Bursevi experienced a tumultuous return to Bursa. In 1129/1717, an ominous auditory revelation urged him to gather his family and make an exodus (Ar. *hijra*) to Damascus immediately.[196] Several major earthquakes rocked Western Anatolia during this time (in 1708 and 1714). In addition, the

---

[191] Atanasova, "The Sufi as the Axis of the World," 11.
[192] Namlı, *İsmail Hakkı Bursevi*, 88.
[193] Ibid., 89-90.
[194] Ibid., 89.
[195] Atanasova, "The Sufi as the Axis of the World," 12.
[196] Namlı, *İsmail Hakkı Bursevi*, 91.

lands just south of Bursa suffered drought. Famine and harsh winters prompted lawlessness and turmoil.[197] In addition, the Ottomans lost a major war against the Austrian Habsburgs (The Austro-Turkish War of 1716-1718), resulting in the loss of key cities of the Balkans, such as Belgrade and Timisoara, plus their surrounding regions.[198]

Although Bursevi was sheltered from this turmoil, he found life in Damascus difficult. He complained in his works of material challenges and difficulties for his family, even though local religious elites and scholars provided him with a salary for his teaching and writing.[199] General lawlessness in the city, rampant banditry, and a plague that claimed several of his children and disciples made Bursevi's sojourn in Damascus especially hard. While in Damascus, he frequented the shrine of Ibn al-ʿArabī and experienced there a number of important visions, including those that confirmed his status as the world's spiritual axis.[200] He also managed to write a great deal and impressed local nobles with his preaching. Bursevi came into close contact with the governor of Damascus, Recep Paşa (d. 1138/1726), to whom he dedicated *Tuhfe-yi Recebiye* ("The Dedicatory Treatise for Recep Paşa").[201] He also managed to engage in lively debate with local religious authorities. Most notably, he met with the seminal Sufi author ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Nābulūsī (d. 1142/1731), a famed commentator on the works of Ibn al-ʿArabī and ʿUmar ibn al-Fāriḍ (d. 632/1234-5).[202] Bursevi challenged al-Nābulūsī's approval of smoking tobacco, claiming that Ibn al-ʿArabī himself had told Bursevi of his disapproval of tobacco in a

---

[197] See: White, *The Climate of Rebellion*, 264-265; Heath W. Lowry, *Ottoman Bursa in Travel Accounts* (Bloomington: Indiana University Ottoman and Modern Turkish Studies Publications, 2003), 79-80.

[198] See: Finkel, *Osman's Dream*, 337-338.

[199] Namlı, *İsmail Hakkı Bursevi*, 92.

[200] Atanasova, "The Sufi as the Axis of the World," 135-137

[201] Ibid., 93, 192; For more information on Recep Paşa, see: Karl K. Barbir, *Ottoman Rule in Damascus, 1708-1758* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 147-148, 163.

[202] Ibid., 95-98; for more information on ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Nābulūsī at the end of his life, see: Elizabeth Sirriyeh, *Sufi Visionary of Ottoman Damascus: ʿAbd al-Ghani al-Nabulusi, 1641-1731* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 129-132.

vision.[203] The disapproval of tobacco went against the judgment of many Ottoman legal scholars, not to mention the popular culture of the day.[204]

Following instructions given to him in another vision, Bursevi left Damascus for Üsküdar in 1132/1720, spending three years there.[205] While Bursevi was in Üsküdar, the Grand Vizier Nevşehirli Damad Ibrahim Paşa (1718-1730), provided Bursevi with a home and visited him frequently.[206] In political terms, this relationship was extremely important. Effectively, Bursevi had the support of the most powerful person in the Ottoman Empire. During his stay in Üsküdar, he used his status with the Grand Vizier to present officials with dedicatory treatises, most notably the Chief Bodyguard of the Sultan and the Superintendent of the Imperial Gardens.[207] During this time, Bursevi experienced unprecedented inspirations, prompting him to write some of his most provocative works of Sufi theology.[208] As in Üsküp, Bursa, and Tekirdağ, Bursevi preached on various topics, often divulging the mysteries (Ar. *asrār*) of Celveti teachings to non-initiates. Opponents of Bursevi complained to the Grand Mufi of Constantinople, saying that he uttered the heretical statement, "There is no divinity but me" (Ar. *lā ilāha illā anā*).[209] However, governmental and popular support prevented any prosecution against him. During this time, Bursevi experienced a vision in which Üftade and Hüdayi, whose tomb was in the neighborhood in which Bursevi's home was located, confirmed his status as their true successor, the rightful shaykh of the Celvetiyye, the Axis of the Age, and the Perfect Man.[210] Inspired by these visions,

---

[203] Namlı, *İsmail Hakkı Bursevi*, 98-99.
[204] See: Şükrü Özen, s.v. "Tütün," *İslam Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul: Türk Diyanet Vakfı, İslam Araştırmalar Merkezi, 2012), 42:5.
[205] Namlı, *İsmail Hakkı Bursevi*, 104.
[206] Ibid.; Finkel, *Osman's Dream*, 349-351.
[207] Atanasova, "The Sufi as the Axis of the World," 14.
[208] See: Namlı, *İsmail Hakkı Bursevi*, 199-205.
[209] Ibid., 108.
[210] Atanasova, "The Sufi as the Axis of the World," 14, 119-120.

Bursevi returned to Bursa in 1135/1723, during which time he wrote, taught, and oversaw the construction of his mosque complex until he died in 1137/1725.[211]

IV. The Writings of A Perfect Man

a.) *An Overview of Bursevi's Writings*

This section consists of a brief summary of Bursevi's writings along with an overview of the unedited and edited works of Bursevi used in the following chapters. According to Ali Namlı's account, Bursevi authored 106 works, varying from small treatises to multi-volume books.[212] Although he began to author commentaries on the Qur'an and Sufi works while in Üsküp, Bursevi wrote most of his works after becoming shaykh of the Celveti sub-branch of the Hakkiyye, in 1102/1691. He usually titled his writings and included colophons indicating when, where, and under what circumstances he authored the work in question.[213] Therefore, it is easy to recognize his actual writings from spurious works often falsely attributed to him in subsequent bibliographies.

In terms of subject matter, the majority of Bursevi's writings are on Sufi theology. However, he also authored works in other genres, such as commentaries on the Qur'an, *ḥadīth*, *fiqh*, hagiography, hamartiology (the study of sin), Arabic grammar, sermons, letter divination (Ar. *ᶜilm al-ḥurūf*), legal opinions (Ar. *fatāwa*), collections of poetry, ethics, music, personal revelation journals (Tur. *varidat*), and dedicatory works meant for his disciples or for officials of the Ottoman government.[214] Bursevi is best known for his Qur'an commentary, *Rūḥ al-bayān fī-l-tafsīr al-qurʾān* ("'The Spirit of Elucidation:' A Commentary on the Qur'an"), and for his Turkish commentary, *Rūḥ al-mathnawī* ("The Spirit of the Mathnawī"), on the first book of Jalāl

---

[211] Namlı, *İsmail Hakkı Bursevi*, 111-112.
[212] For a chronological list of Bursevi's writings with corresponding manuscripts and editions, see: ibid., 165-206.
[213] Ibid., 161-162.
[214] Ibid., 213-219,

al-Dīn Rūmī's *Mathnawī-yi maʿnawī* ("Spiritual Couplets").[215] Ottoman Sufis also valued his

commentaries on the classical works of Ottoman Sufism. Among these are commentaries on

Yunus Emre's (c. 720/1320-1321) poems, a commentary on the famous didactic poem

Muḥammadiye by Ibn al-Kātib/Yazıcıoğlu Mehmed (d. 855/1451) titled *Farrāḥ al-rūḥ* ("The

Delighter of the Spirit"), and *Şerh-i ebyat-ı Hacı Bayram-ı Veli* ("Commentary on the Verses of

Hacı Bayram-ı Veli" (d. 833/1430)).[216] Beyond these commentaries, members of the Celvetiyye

appreciated his Turkish poetry and Sufi theological works such as *Kenz-i mahfi* ("The Hidden

Treasure") and *Kitāb al-natīja* ("The Book of the Result").[217]

A consummate Ottoman scholar and master of the "Three Languages" (Tur. *elsine-i

selase*) of the Empire, Bursevi wrote in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish. Namlı's list of his works

indicates that forty percent of Bursevi's works were written in Arabic, while the rest were in

Turkish.[218] While Bursevi did not write any works entirely in Persian, he commented on Persian

poetry and translated it, and included Persian verses in his works. When discussing Persian texts,

he regularly included his own explanations of the language. It seems that Bursevi favored writing

in clear, relatively unambiguous Turkish in order to reach as wide an audience as possible. Often,

he gave Turkish synonyms for Arabic or Persian technical terms so as to ensure that his readers

understood them.[219] Bursevi's attempt to reach as wide an audience as possible is consonant with

his self-conception as the Perfect Man, whose duty it was to act as a guide for other potential

"Adamites." By favoring lucid expressions over abstract discourse, he clearly believed in the

potential of his audience to receive to the wisdom he imparted.

---

[215] Ibid., 176-178, 179-181.
[216] Ibid., 171-172, 181-182.
[217] Ibid., 168, 201, 204.
[218] Ibid., 163-164.
[219] Ibid. 163.

While Bursevi's works are diverse in their subject matter, they most often focus on Sufi anthropology. I am not the only scholar to make this contention. Mehmet Ali Ayni's often overlooked French biography of Bursevi, *Ismaïl Hakki: philosophe mystique*, contains a thematic overview of his works that also highlights his fascination with Sufi anthropology. Ayni foregrounds Bursevi's discourses on the universal potential of all human beings to learn and attain perfection.[220] He includes works describing Bursevi's conception of the human being as the telos of creation and the image of God. Regarding legal subjeccts, Ayni summarizes Bursevi's thought as "The essence of the law is care for the children of Adam, 'who are as members of a single body.'"[221] Beyond these remarks, Ayni's biography features Bursevi's attacks on slavery based on his understanding of Sufi anthropology, his defense of music and the arts, and certain legal opinions condemning child-beating and divorcing women found to be unchaste.[222] Without calling Bursevi a humanist explicitly, Ayni seems to portray Bursevi as what Tony Davies would call a "'humanist before 'Humanism.'"[223] While recognizing Ayni's agenda to make Bursevi's teachings appear palatable to a Western audience and relevant for a new generation of Turks, I believe that his views are accurate overall. Bursevi's Humanism becomes even clearer when one examines those works that were dedicated in part or in whole to the discussion of Sufi anthropology.

b.) *Sources for the Study of Bursevi's Sufi Anthropology and Politicization of the Perfect Man*

To bring to light Bursevi's Sufi anthropology and "Politicization of the Perfect Man," I will examine several key works that exhibit Bursevi's Sufi anthropology. These include two unedited manuscripts, *Rūḥ al-bayān fī-tafsīr al-Qurʾān* ("'The Spirit of Elucidation:' A

---

[220] Aïni, *Ismaïl Hakki*, 50-53.
[221] Ibid., 62-63, 64-65, 65.
[222] Ibid., 65-68, 76-77, 79-80.
[223] Tony Davies, *Humanism* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 68.

Commentary on the Qur'an") and *Kitāb al-ᶜizz al-ādamī* ("The Book of the Glorification of the Adamic State"). They also include four critically edited works: Bursevi's *Divan* ("Compendium of Poetry"), *Rūḥ al-kalām fī-sharḥ ṣalāt shaykh ᶜAbd al-Salām* ("'The Essence of Theology:' A Commentary on the Prayer of ᶜAbd al-Salām [ibn Mashīsh])"), *Kitāb al-Hujja al-bāligha* ("The Book of the Conclusive Proof"), and *Kenz-i mahfi* ("The Hidden Treasure"). What follows is a discussion of the form and content of these works, presented in chronological order.

1. *Rūḥ al-bayān fī-l-tafsīr al-Qurʾān* ("'The Spirit of Elucidation:' A Commentary on the Qur'an"). This Qur'an commentary is the work for which Bursevi is best known. He authored the commentary while working as a salaried preacher at Bursa's Grand Mosque. Bursevi dated his work scrupulously, leaving colophons at the end of each *sūra* on which he commented. From the colophons, we know that he wrote *Rūḥ al-bayān* over a span of eighteen years, from roughly 1097-1098/1687 to 1117/1705.[224] Drawing on notes that he had taken as a student and while teaching in the Balkans, Bursevi expounded on the Qur'an in lectures at Bursa's Grand Mosque. After teaching, he would retire to his home in the neighborhood of Tuzpazarı to write down the lectures.[225] The result was a line-by-line, tri-lingual Qur'an commentary, with a text written roughly sixty percent in Arabic, thirty five percent in Persian, and five percent in Turkish (in marginalia).[226] The original holographic work (written completely in Bursevi's hand) was left at the mosque complex that he endowed. Bursevi originally bound the work in three large tomes (*defter*), which were rebound in sixteen volumes after his death.[227] Copies were made from this work, as well as a ten-volume late Ottoman printed version that was published between 1911 and

---

[224] See: Namlı, "İsmail Hakkı Bursevi Hazretlerinin Hayatı ve Eserleri," 1:44-46.
[225] Ibid., 1:39-41.
[226] İsmail Hakki Bursevi, *Rūḥ al-bayān fī tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, Bursa: Bursa Eski Eserler Kütüphanesi (BEYBEK), Genel (GE), ms. no. 12-27.
[227] Namlı, "İsmail Hakkı Bursevi Hazretlerinin Hayatı ve Eserleri," 1:7, 1:30.

1920.[228] Some editors included the Persian sections of the text. However, others excised them, and printed only the Arabic text. Unfortunately, no printed edition has preserved the copious marginalia found in the original copy of *Rūḥ al-bayān.*[229] As Assistant Manuscript Specialist Director at Bursa's İnebey Library Osman Nuri Solak has noted, most Ottoman manuscripts have no more than fifteen lines of text per page.[230] Bursevi's, however, has 35 lines of text per page, with enough marginalia to create another entire volume.

Over the past twenty years, several attempts at critical editions of *Rūḥ al-bayān* have been made. However, each edition has misrepresented the holographic original in one way or another. In 2003 Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmīya in Beirut published an edition that relied on the 1911-1920 Ottoman printing, yet misprinted Bursevi's Persian quotations and comments.[231] In response to the outdated, turn-of-the-century edition and this newer, albeit problematical edition, a team of Turkish scholars of *tafsīr* and Sufism worked to produce a modern Turkish translation of *Rūḥ al-bayān* (2008-2010). This 26-volume translation still excludes Bursevi's Turkish marginalia. For instance, in presenting Bursevi's comments on Q 38:72 concerning God's breathing the divine spirit into human beings, the editors excised the following important marginal statement: "Because the human soul is an extension of God's spirit, human beings are privileged above all things."[232] The reasons why the translators did not include Bursevi's marginalia are unclear. It is possible that such marginal notes were deemed superfluous for a general audience, or that the task was too arduous for the translators. I believe that another

---

[228] Ismāʿīl Haqqī al-Burūsawī, *Tafsīr Rūh al-Bayān li-l-Shaykh Ismāʿīl Haqqī al-Burūsawī*, Muḥammad Ṣāʾim ibn ʿUthmān Bay ed., 10 vols. (Istanbul, unknown, 1330-1339/1911-1920).

[229] For a list of available manuscripts of the copies of *Rūḥ al-bayān*, see: *Al-Fihris al-shāmil li-l-turāth al-ʿarabī al-islāmī al-makhṭūt: vol. 2: ʿUlūm al-qurʾān: makhṭūṭāt al-tafsīr [wa-ʿulūmihi]* (Amman: Muʾassasa Āl al-Bayt, 1987-1989), 1:747-750.

[230] Personal communication. For more information on Ottoman manuscripts, see: Osman Nuri Solak, *Kültür Hazinelerimiz Yazmaları Çalıştayı II: İnebey Yazma Eser Kütüphanesi ve Yazma Eser Terminolojisi* (Bursa: Osmangazi Belediyesi, 2017), 32-33.

[231] Ismāʿīl Haqqī al-Burūsawī, *Rūḥ al-Bayān fī tafsīr al-qurʾān* 10 vols. (Beirut, Dār al-Kutūb al-ʿIlmīya, 2003).

[232] Bursevi, *Rūḥ al-bayān*, 23:89.

reason is possible. Because the members of the translation team were associated with *Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı* ("The Turkish Directorate of Religious Affairs"), they did not include the marginalia in order to avoid tarnishing the image of Bursevi as an orthodox Sunni Sufi.[233]

In terms of content, *Rūḥ al-bayān* is a classic work of Sufi Qur'an commentary. According to Bursevi, the goal of the commentary was to guide readers to the esoteric meaning of each verse.[234] Hence, while he offers linguistic, historical, and at times legal commentary on the Qur'anic verses, such material is rather sparse in comparison with numerous long discourses that are more germane to Sufi theology. In the commentary, Bursevi cites a staggering number of previous works, both non-Sufi and Sufi. However, Sufi Qur'an commentaries, Sufi theological works, and poetry collections (most notably Persian Sufi poetry from Rumi and Hafez (d. 792/1390)), as well as sayings from Celveti shaykhs such as Osman Fazlı or Aziz Mahmud Hüdayi, predominate.[235] As noted previously, most of Bursevi's commentary focuses on Sufi anthropology. The central hermeneutic of *Rūḥ al-bayān* corresponds to Sajjad Rizvi's characterization of Sufi *tafsīr* as "'interpretation through the self,'" or based on the experience of personal *kashf* ("unveiling").[236] For instance, Bursevi interprets even "non-Sufi" *sūra*s such as "The Fig" (Q 95, *Sūrat al-tīn*) in Sufi anthropological terms.[237]As Bursevi asserts in his commentary on the *sūra* of "Humankind" (Q 114, *Sūrat al-nās*), his exegesis was meant to make the reader aware of what he saw as the central message of the Qur'an: that God's Spirit resides within the human being.[238]

---

[233] Namlı, "İsmail Hakkı Bursevi Hazretlerinin Hayatı ve Eserleri," 1:41-43.
[234] Bursevi, *Rūḥ al-bayān*, 12:1-2.
[235] Namlı, "İsmail Hakkı Bursevi Hazretlerinin Hayatı ve Eserleri," 1:47-53.
[236] Sajjad H. Rizvi, "The Existential Breath of *al-raḥmān* and the Munificent Grace of *al-raḥīm*: The *Tafsīr sūrat al-fātiḥa* of Jāmī and the School of Ibn ᶜArabī," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 8 (2006): 58, 77-78.
[237] Bursevi, *Rūḥ al-bayān*, 27:110.
[238] Ibid., 27:201-202.

2. *Kitāb al-ᶜizz al-ādamī* **("The Book of the Glorification of the Adamic State").** This is one of Bursevi's most important works of Sufi anthropology.[239] Bursevi wrote the work roughly three years before his death, according to the dates mentioned in the colophon 1133/1721-1135/1722. The Süleymaniye Manuscript Library in Istanbul houses the holographic, original version.[240] While it is written mostly in Turkish, *Kitāb al-ᶜizz al-ādamī* also has a number of sections in Arabic and Persian. The orthography, style, and numerous pen names in the manuscript indicate that the work is undoubtedly Bursevi's.[241]

Kitāb al-ᶜizz al-ādamī is a summary of Bursevi's views on human theomorphism, the perfectibility of "Adamites," and the "inhuman" nature of those who cannot actualize their Adamic potential. Many of the sections in this work discuss these ideas in the context of Adam's expulsion from paradise and redemption on earth, as described in the Qur'an (e.g. Q 2:36-38; 7:24). The book begins with one of Bursevi's "unveilings."[242] This is followed by commentaries on Qur'anic verses, *ḥadīth* reports, Persian and Turkish poetry, and Bursevi's mystical experiences. The entries usually begin with imperative commands, such as "See" (Tur. *gör*), "Know that" (Tur. *bil ki*), or "Let it be known to you that" (Tur. *saña malum olsun ki*), suggesting that the work was meant for intimate disciples.

3. *Divan* **("Compendium of Poetry").** Throughout his life, Bursevi composed a great deal of poetry. While his major works are replete with his verses, Bursevi apparently produced only a

---

[239] See: İsmail Hakkı Bursevi, *Kitâbü'l-Izzi'l-âdemî*, Istanbul: Süleymaniye Yazma Eser Kütüphanesi, 34 Atif Efendi, ms. no. 1420/8, 34b-52a.
[240] Ibid., 120b-316a.
[241] These pen names (Tur. *mahlas*) include: *Ḥaqqī, Shaykh Ismāᶜīl Ḥaqqī,* or the Turkish phrase *Bu zabih-i İsmail*, "This Ismail, a sacrifice for God." See: Ibid., 100b.
[242] Ibid., 120b-a.

single collected work of poetry.[243] The current, critical edition of Bursevi's poetry was one of the

most circulated works of Sufi poetry in late Ottoman society. First compiled in 1098/1687,

Bursevi most likely wrote this work just as he was beginning his career as a preacher and

educator in Bursa. While the subject matter of his poems varies widely, most of the verses focus

on Sufi theological themes. Certain poems give valuable insight into Bursevi's Humanism.[244]

Others highlight his political views.[245] While perhaps not as profound as his other works,

Bursevi's poetry is still a key resource for the study of his Sufi anthropology and politics.

4. *Rūḥ al-kalām fī-sharḥ ṣalāt Shaykh ᶜAbd al-Salām* ("'The Essence of Theology:' A

Commentary on the Prayer of ᶜAbd al-Salām [ibn Mashīsh] (d. 625/1228)"). This work is a

Turkish translation of the famous Arabic intercessory prayer of the Moroccan Sufi ᶜAbd al-

Salām ibn Mashīsh (Ar. *al-Ṣalāt al-Mashīshīya*). In addition to this translation, Bursevi also

penned an extensive Turkish commentary.[246] In the absence of an autographed copy, the current,

critical edition was prepared from copies made within 100 years of Bursevi's death (with the

oldest copy bearing the date 1179/1765) and from two printed editions (Constantinople, 1849;

Cairo, 1860).[247] According to the colophon transmitted by the copyists, Bursevi authored the

work in 1113/1701, just after returning from his first Hajj.[248] Given the Ottoman domination over

Egypt, Sufi works associated with the Shādhilīya Sufi order, of which Ibn Mashīsh was a

---

[243] Namlı, *İsmail Hakkı Bursevi*, 218-219; İsmail Hakkı Bursevi, *Divan*, Dr. Murat Yurtsever Ed. (Bursa: Arasta Yayınları, 2000), 121-123

[244] Bursevi, *Diwan*, pg. 181, no. 58; 197, no. 85; pg. 291, no. 263; pg. 308, no. 295.

[245] Ibid., pg. 274, no. 232; pg. 306, no. 292; pg. 309, no. 297.

[246] For more information about Ibn Mashīsh, see: Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, 148, 201-202.

[247] İsmail Hakkı Bursevi, *Varlığın Dili: İbn Meşiş Salavatı ve Şerhi*, Nedim Tan Ed. and Translit. (Istanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 2014), 34, 53-56.

[248] Ibid., 48, 231.

founding figure, were readily available in Constantinople. The earliest copies of *al-Ṣalāt al-Mashīshīya* currently housed at the Süleymaniye Library date to the 10th/16th century.[249]

5, *Kitāb al-ḥujja al-bāligha* ("The Book of the Conclusive Proof "). While this is one of Bursevi's lesser-known writings, it is one of the most important works for understanding Bursevi's Sufi anthropology. The critical edition of the work was prepared on the basis of a holographic original housed at Istanbul University. Many copies have been made of *Kitāb al-ḥujja al-bāligha*.[250] According to the colophon, Bursevi authored this work in 1133/1720, while teaching and guiding disciples in Üsküdar.[251] The title of the work refers to Q 6:148-149, which states, "'God's is the conclusive proof (*al-ḥujja al-bāligha*). Had He willed, He would have guided all of you.'" For Bursevi, this "conclusive proof" continues the mystery of the creation of the human being in the image of God.

In *Kitāb al-ḥujja al-bāligha*, Bursevi aims to demonstrate the exceptional, theomorphic nature of human beings.[252] In it, he refutes the views of the *Ḥurūfī*s and "readers of the *Kitāb-i Jāvidān* ["Book of Immortals," by Faḍl Allāh Astarābādī (d. 796/1394)]."[253] He spends much of the work describing the role of the Perfect Human Being in creation.[254] He also describes in detail the ways in which the human being is a microcosm of the world. Bursevi also attempts to show the equivalence of the microcosmic human being and the macrocosmic world in terms of form, psychology, and character traits.[255]

---

[249] Ibid., 34, 43. See also: Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, 148, 202.
[250] Abdullah Kargılı, "İsmail Hakkı Bursevi'nin Kitabü'l-Hucceti'l-Baliğa Adlı Eseri İnceleme-Metin," M.A. Thesis, Istanbul University, Istanbul, 2011, 26.
[251] Ibid., 26-27.
[252] Ibid., 102.
[253] Ibid., 80.
[254] Ibid., 80-81, 82-83.
[255] Ibid., 82, 84-101.

6. *Kenz-i mahfi* **("The Hidden Treasure").** This work is one of Bursevi's best-known and admired Sufi theological works. The current critical edition of the *Kenz-i mahfi* was produced on the basis of the holographic original located in Bursa. According to the colophon, Bursevi authored the work roughly at the same time as *Kenz-i mahfi*, around 1134/1721.[256] *Kenz-i mahfi* was copied extensively and widely circulated throughout Anatolia and the Balkans.[257] Although written mostly in Turkish, it contains extensive Arabic quotations.

When compared with Bursevi's other theological works, *Kenz-i mahfi* is perhaps the most systematized. In very clear argumentation, the work describes God's emanation of creation in various stages through ten discourses (Ar. *maḥdath*). Throughout these discourses, the divine cosmogony is presented in the form of a letter-by-letter commentary on the famous Sufi *ḥadīth* "I [God] was a hidden treasure and I desired to be known. Thus, I created creation in order to be known."[258] The central argument of the work is that the "Hidden Treasure" that fulfills God's desire to be known is the human being.[259] Bursevi argues that although human beings are the *telos* of creation, they do not have innately the proper guidance necessary to fulfill their purpose. It is only under the guidance of a Perfect Human Being and realized "Adamite" that they can fulfill the purpose for which they were created.[260]

---

[256] Engin Söğüt, "İsmâil Hakkı Bursevî'nin Kenz-i Mahfî Risâlesi Muhtevâ ve Tahlîli," M.A. thesis, Marmara University, Istanbul, 2007, 13.

[257] Ibid., 14-15.

[258] Ibid., 16-17; For more information on this *ḥadīth*, see: William Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*: *Ibn al-ʿArabī's Metaphysics of Imagination* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 391, n.14; Jonathan A.C. Brown*, Hadith: Muhammad's Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World* (Oxford and New York: Oneworld, 2009), 193-194.

[259] Söğüt, "İsmâil Hakkı Bursevî'nin Kenz-i Mahfî Risâlesi Muhtevâ ve Tahlîli," 69-70.

[260] Ibid., 79-87.

Chapter 3: "Every Human Being is Adam:" Bursevi's Humanism

Over the course of his career, Ismail Hakki Bursevi gauged his progress in Sufism in relation to

Adam. While in Üsküp, he saw Adam appear in a dream to vindicate his preaching against the

city's "Pharaonic" grandees and religious leaders.[1] Having undergone intimate training with his

shaykh Osman Fazlı Atpazari (d. 1102/1691), Bursevi reported that God instructed him

personally, just as He had instructed Adam at creation (i.e., Q 2:31).[2] During Bursevi's first *Ḥajj*

pilgrimage, Adam was among many prophets and saints who allegedly testified to his spiritual

maturity. In one striking vision near the Kaᶜba, Adam entered the palace of the Ottoman Sultan

and beckoned Bursevi to accompany him inside.[3] Dreams and visions of Adam thus functioned

as milestones marking Bursevi's spiritual maturation.

According to Bursevi's autobiographical accounts, Adam recognized his greatness in part

in order to acknowledge his service to the children of Adam. Bursevi regularly criticized

contemporary Sufis and even Ottoman officials for their neglect of their subjects' welfare.

Throughout his life, he likewise hosted public lectures in which he divulged the mysteries of

Celvetiyye Sufism to initiates and to uninitiated alike. These actions demonstrate that Bursevi

believed in the universal goodness and perfectibility of human beings. Bursevi acted and

discoursed as if he were fundamentally oriented to the wisdom of the old Turkish proverb,

"Every human being is Adam. A hero is just another human being" (Tur. *Adam adamdır*,

pehlivan başka adamdır).[4] Given this belief, it comes as no surprise that Bursevi created an

extensive and innovative Sufi anthropology. As the scholar of Ottoman Sufism Mehmet Ali Ayni

---

[1] Kamelia Atanasova, "The Sufi as the Axis of the World: Representations of Religious Authority in the Works if Ismail Hakki Bursevi (1653-1725)," Doctoral Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, 2016, 85

[2] Ali Namlı, *İsmail Hakkı Bursevi*: *Hayatı*, *Eserleri*, *Tarikat Anlayışı* (Istanbul: İnsan Yayınları, 2001), 50; Atanasova, "The Sufi as the Axis of the World," 75.

[3] Atanasova, "The Sufi as the Axis of the World," 75.

[4] Ömer Asım Aksoy, *Atasözleri ve Deyimler Sözlüğü*: *Deyimler Sözlüğü* (Istanbul: İnkilap Kitabevi, 1995), 2.53.

remarked in *Ismaïl Hakki: philosophe mystique,* Bursevi was a dedicated philanthropist in his career as a public intellectual and in his writings. He condemned slavery, denounced wrongful incarceration, praised universal education and the arts and sciences, and even authored legal opinions (Ar. *fatāwa*), which disapproved child-beating and wanton divorce. These facts led Ayni to portray Bursevi as a humanist in all but name.[5] By examining Bursevi's Sufi anthropology in depth with reference to the study of Humanism, this chapter will argue that Bursevi was a indeed pre-modern Muslim humanist.

As explained in Chapter I, the debate surrounding who can accurately be called a humanist is complicated. The debate over pre-modern Islamic Humanism is equally tortuous. Following Auguste Comte's influential definition of Humanism as *Religion de l'Humanité*, the majoritarian understanding of Humanism is that the concept is Western, modern, and secular.[6] Pre-moderns, Western or otherwise, religious or non-religious, who might have espoused something similar to the tenets of Humanism are treated either as secular humanists of the past or as forerunners to modern humanists. Reacting to this trend in scholarship, Alexander Key has argued that it is impossible to separate the concept of Humanism from anachronistic back-projections.[7]

In contrast to these general trends, a minority of scholars have argued that the ideals of Humanism are not exclusively modern and secular. In particular, religious humanists have existed in both the past and present. However, most of these scholars conceive of Religious Humanism as exclusively Judeo-Christian. In contrast to this approach, Tony Davies has

---

[5] Mehemmed-Ali Aïni/Mehmet Ali Ayni, *Ismaïl Hakki: philosophe mystique 1653-1725* (Paris: Librarie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1933), 50-53, 62-63, 64-65, 65.

[6] See:Andrew Wernick, *Auguste Comte and the Religion of Humanity*: *The Post-Theistic Program of French Social Theory* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001; 2003), 2-5, 153-155; Andrew Copson, "What is Humanism?" in *The Wiley Blackwell Handbook of Humanism*, Andrew Copson and A.C. Grayling Eds. (Malden: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 3-4.

[7] Key, "The Applicability of the Term 'Humanism' to Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī (d. 1023)," 87, 105.

articulated the notion of a "humanist before Humanism." Davies reasons that if a pre-modern,

non-Western, and non-Christian thinker espouses a doctrine that resembles those of Western

Humanism, it makes no sense *not* to call such a person a humanist.[8] In the field of Islamic

Humanism, editors Stefan Reichmut, Jörn Rüsen, and Aladdin Sarhan of the innovative volume

Humanism and Muslim Culture echo Davies' approach. They articulate a definition of Humanism

that encompasses both secular and religious versions of the concept. For them, most if not all

iterations of Humanism share cross-culturally: (1) a universal view of humanity or the "human

species;" (2) anthropocentrism; (3) a culture oriented towards respect for universal human

dignity; (4) the fundamental equality of all human beings; (5) reverence for otherness and

individuality; (6) the importance of transcendence.[9] These criteria make it feasible to discuss

different versions of Humanism comparatively, be they secular, religious, modern, or pre-

modern, without fear of anachronism. In the same volume, Renate Würsch draws on an

overlooked work of the noted scholar of Islam Annemarie Schimmel (d. 2003) and applies these

criteria to Sufi theological discourse. For her, if there is a Humanism in Islam, then it is to be

found within Sufism. However, these theories have yet to be applied in individual case studies.

Employing Davies' concept of a "humanist before Humanism," I contend in this chapter

that Ismail Hakki Bursevi's Sufi anthropology can be considered a form of "'humanism' before

Humanism." Likewise, I argue that Bursevi's Sufi anthropology, and especially his radical

"Adamology," are important examples of Islamic Humanism as Reichmut, Rüsen, and Sarhan

envision it. To make this case, I discuss Bursevi's Sufi anthropology and Adamology as

developed in six major works: (1) *Rūḥ al-bayān fī-l-tafsīr al-Qurʾān* ("'The Spirit of

Elucidation:' A Commentary on the Qur'an); (2) *Kitāb al-ʿizz al-ādamī* ("The Book of the

---

[8] Tony Davies, *Humanism* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 68.
[9] See: Reichmut, Rüsen, and Sarhan, "Humanism and Muslim Culture: Historical Heritage and Contemporary Culture," Ibid., 13-17.

Glorification of the Adamic State"); (3) *Divan* ("Compendium of Poetry"); (4) *Rūḥ al-kalām fī-sharḥ ṣalāt Shaykh ʿAbd al-Salām* ('The Essence of Theology:' A Commentary on the Prayer of ʿAbd al-Salām [ibn Mashīsh]"); (5) *Kitāb al-ḥujjat al-bāligha* ("The Book of the Conclusive Proof"); and (6) *Kenz-i mahfi* ("The Hidden Treasure").

This chapter is comprised of three sections. The first section discusses Bursevi's "Adamology," his conception of Adam as the "Image of God." It also discusses Adam's theomorphism, which may be seen in Bursevi's arguments for reciprocity between God and Adam, the fundamental goodness of Adam, and Adam's function in creation as God's *khalīfa*. The second section of the chapter explores Bursevi's concept of theomorphic anthropocentrism. It includes Bursevi's arguments that Adam is both cause and effect of creation, that Adam represents the world in microcosm, that Adam has supremacy over the cosmos, and that creation as a whole is anthropocentric. The final section of the chapter discusses Bursevi's view of the descendants of Adam as inheritors of their progenitor's qualities and his differentiation between Adam and "Adamites." In each section, whenever relevant, I relate Bursevi's doctrines to those of classical, Western Humanism in order to illustrate the claims that Bursevi was a Muslim humanist.

I. Adam as the Image of God: Bursevi's Concept of Human Theomorphism

This section investigates Bursevi's conception of Adam as the Image of God, which I refer to as Bursevi's "Adamology." Bursevi's Adamology is the foundation of his Sufi anthropology. The importance of the doctrine of Adam's theomorphsm in Bursevi's Humanism cannot be overstated. His interpretations of the Qur'an, *Ḥadīth*, works of Sufi theology, and most importantly his own *kushūf* ("spiritual unveilings") inform his Adamological discourses. Bursevi

gives precedence to his alleged personal communications with God and uses them to interpret "orthodox" traditional sources. This section begins with a discussion of the foundational source materials from which Bursevi draws to articulate his theory of Adamology. It then investigates the ways in which he argues for an existential reciprocity between God and Adam as "God's Image." Following this crucial discussion, the section highlights Bursevi's conception of the fundamental goodness of Adam on the basis of his theomorphic identity and its implications for Adam's existential role as God's *khalīfa*.

a.) *The "Ḥadīth of God's Image:" The Scriptural Foundation of Bursevi's Adamology*

No scriptural source inspires Bursevi's Adamology more than the famous *ḥadīth qudsī*, "God created Adam in His Image" (Ar. *khalaqa Allāh ādam ʿalā ṣūratihi*). Bursevi constantly cites this *ḥadīth* in his works and discusses its significance in several key passages. In his view, Muslims have long misunderstood and misrepresented this *ḥadīth*. For example, certain "exotericists" (Ar. *ahl al-ẓāhir*) have erroneously interpreted the prepositional phrase *ʿalā ṣūratihi* to mean "God created Adam *in Adam's own form*." By advancing this interpretation, they deny the *ḥadīth*'s essential message of Adam's theomorphism. Instead, Bursevi reasons that the pronominal suffix "his" (i.e., *ṣūrati**hi**)* refers to God and not to Adam—that is, it refers to His [God's] form and not his [Adam's] form.[10] Bursevi likewise contends that there is an implied exclusivity in the meaning of the *ḥadīth*. In other words, Adam and Adam alone was created in God's Image to the exclusion of angels, Jinn, and other creatures.[11] Bursevi also believed that the *ḥadīth* referred both to Adam and to every subsequent member of the human species, at least in

[10] İsmail Hakkı Bursevi, *Kitâbü'l-Izzi'l-âdemî*, Istanbul: Süleymaniye Yazma Eser Kütüphanesi, 34 Atif Efendi, ms. no. 1420/8, 148b. For more information on the various interpretations of this *ḥadīth*, see: Christopher Melchert, "God Created Adam in His Image," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 13.1 (2011): 118-121.
[11] İsmail Hakki Bursevi, *Rūḥ al-bayān fī-tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, Bursa: Bursa Eski Eserler Kütüphanesi (BEYBEK), Genel (GE), ms. no. 12-27, 15.125.

potential.[12] In his discussions of Adam as a metonym for the human species in general, he uses

the terms *ādam* ("Adam"), *al-insān* ("the human being"), *ademi* ("Adamite"), and *al-insān al-*

kāmil ("The Perfect Human Being") interchangeably.[13] Even more, Bursevi argues that Muslims

have not only misinterpreted this *ḥadīth* but have also transmitted an incomplete version of it.

Ostensibly informed by his unveilings, he emends the *ḥadīth*as follows: "God created Adam in

His Image, and then manifested [Himself] in him" (Ar. ...*wa-tajallā fīhi*).[14] Bursevi's revision of

the *ḥadīth* thus makes it impossible to interpret God's saying as connoting anything less than

human theomorphism.

However, another important question arises at this point. Given that the essential nature

of Adam is theomorphic, *how* exactly does Adam reflect God's Image? For Bursevi, the term

"God's Image" connotes the sum of the most essential divine qualities, including those which

make God divine: "Life, Knowledge, Will, Power, Hearing, Sight, and Speech."[15] Furthermore,

he states that in the overall scheme of creation, Adam is a product of God's self-awareness.[16]

Another *ḥadīth qudsī* central to Bursevi's Sufi anthropology implicitly refers to Adam as the

aspect of creation in which God is recognized: "I [God] was a hidden treasure and I desired to be

known. Thus, I created creation in order to be known."[17] While creation overall is a locus for the

manifestation of God's Names, Qualities, and Presence, "Adam," according to Bursevi, is the

---

[12] Bursevi, *Kitâbü'l-Izzi'l-âdemî*, 148b.

[13] Throughout this chapter, I refer to Adam and his progeny with the pronouns he/his to accord with Bursevi's discussions, particularly in Arabic. In the third section of this chapter, I will explain the ways in which he conceives of Adam as a universal archetype for all humans regardless of gender.

[14] Bursevi, *Kitâbü'l-Izzi'l-âdemî*, 148b.

[15] İsmail Hakkı Bursevi, *Varlığın Dili*: *İbn Meşiş Salavatı ve Şerhi*, Nedim Tan Ed. and Translit. (Istanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 2014), 206.

[16] Bursevi's Sufi anthropology echoes that of Muḥī al-Dīn Ibn al-ʿArabī (d. 638/1240) in his *Ringsettings of Wisdom* (Ar. *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*), see: Muḥī al-Dīn ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, Abū-l-ʿAlā ʿAfīfī Ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1946), 48-56.

[17] For more information on this hadith, see: William Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*: *Ibn al-ᶜArabī's Metaphysics of Imagination* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 391, n.14; Jonathan A.C. Brown*, Hadith: Muhammad's Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World* (Oxford and New York: Oneworld, 2009), 193-194.

only "locus of manifestation of [God's] Essence" in creation.[18] Despite his unique role as the locus of manifestation of God's Essence and upholder of God's Names, Qualities, and Presence, God and Adam are not existentially equivalent. However, the monistic reality of the divine nature nonetheless prevails. "God *is* Adam and all created things." For him, any other interpretation would be heretical.[19]

For Bursevi, these two *ḥadīth*s support the notion that there is an essential human nature or humanity to which all human beings conform. Beyond these traditions, he often employs the term *jins al-insān* ("human species") in his writings.[20] By thus formulating the notion of an essential human identity, Bursevi's Adamology can be seen to exemplify several iterations of Humanism. Scholars who espouse a secular conception of Humanism, such as Martin Heidegger or Tsvetan Todorov also share the notion of an essential humanity.[21] Proponents of Religious Humanism such as Arthur James Balfour, Martin Buber, Jacques Maritain, and Emmanuel Lévinas also envision an ideal humanity.[22] More significantly for the present study, a universal

---

[18] Bursevi, *Kitâbü'l-Izzi'l-âdemî*, 148b

[19] Abdullah Kargılı, "İsmail Hakkı Bursevi'nin Kitabü'l-Hucceti'l-Baliǧa Adlı Eseri İnceleme-Metin," M.A. Thesis, , Istanbul University, Istanbul, 2011, 102.

[20] Bursevi, *Rūḥ al-bayān*, 27:153.

[21] See: Andrew Wernick, *Auguste Comte and the Religion of Humanity*: *The Post-Theistic Program of French Social Theory* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001; 2003), 153-155; Martin Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism (1946)," Frank A. Capuzzi Trans., in *Pathmarks* (*Wegmarken*), William McNeill Ed. (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 245; Andrew Copson, "What is Humanism?" in *The Wiley Blackwell Handbook of Humanism*, Andrew Copson and A.C. Grayling Eds. (Malden: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 25-26; Tsvetan Todorov, *Imperfect Garden*: *The Legacy of Humanism*, Carol Cosman Trans. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 32.

[22] See: Arthur James Balfour, *Theism and Humanism* (New York: Hodder and Stoughton, 1915), 133; Martin Buber, *A Believing Humanism,* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1967), 117-120; Jacques Maritain, *True Humanism,* M.R. Adamson Trans.. (London: The Centenary Press, 1941), 19-20; Emmanuel Lévinas, *Humanism of the Other*, Nidra Poller Trans.. (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2005); Joseph M. Shaw, R.W. Franklin, Harris Kaasa, and Charles W. Buzicky Eds., *Readings in Christian Humanism* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 17-19; Jens Zimmermann Ed., *Re-Envisioning Christian Humanism*: *Education and the Restoration of Humanity* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 5-7.

similarly constitutes the first aspect of Stefan Reichmut's, Jörn Rüsen's, and Aladdin Sarhan's definition of Islamic Humanism.[23]

However, while Bursevi's conception of an essential humanity may resemble these other iterations of Humanism, his notion of theomorphism sets his Adamology apart. For Bursevi, the concept of theomorphism entails a kind of transcendence of the created order. As the locus of manifestation of God's Essence, which is existentiated in Divine Qualities, Adam is directly linked to the transcendent divine. Thus transcendence of the world of experience is bound up in Adam's very being. This notion of transcendence is another important aspect of Reichmut, Rüsen, and Sarhan's definition of Islamic Humanism.[24] By foregrounding the fundamental transcendental quality of human identity, Bursevi's Adamology provides another example of their definition of Islamic Humanism.

b.) *The Reciprocity between God and God's Image in Bursevi's Adamology*

Secular critics of the notion of an Islamic Humanism informed by Sufi anthropology such as Joel Kraemer, Lenn E. Goodman, and Alexander Key would likely consider it oxymoronic to speak of Bursevi's discourses as humanistic because of his focus on transcendent human theomorphism.[25] For instance, Abdelilah Ljamai has claimed that because Islamic doctrines are beholden to a "vertical relationship, with God above men," any "Islamic Religious Humanism" maintaining this relation would contradict the notion of an egalitarian, "horizontal relationship"

---

[23] Stefan Reichmut, Jörn Rüsen, and Aladdin Sarhan, "Humanism and Muslim Culture: Historical Heritage and Contemporary Culture," *Humanism and Muslim Culture*: *Historical Heritage and Contemporary Challenges* Idem. Eds. (Goettingen and Taipei: V&R unipress GmbH, 2012), 13.

[24] Ibid., 17.

[25] See: Kraemer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam*, 14-17; Goodman, *Islamic* Humanism, 22-23; Key, "The Applicability of the Term 'Humanism' to Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī (d. 1023)," 87, 105.

between members of the human species.[26] Ljamai would also reject the notion of Bursevi's Sufi anthropology as humanistic because of its emphasis on Adam as the Image of God. Were Bursevi to have drawn from what Ljamai considers the "secular" Muslim Peripatetic philosophers (Ar. *al-mashshāʾiyyūn*), Abbasid litterateurs, or Muʿtazili theologians, he might have formulated an Islamic Humanism that does not sacrifice an egalitarian, horizontal relationship between human beings in order to uphold Islamic theology.[27]

However, a closer examination of Bursevi's Adamology shows that his conception of the relationship between God and the human being as God's Image appears to be something far less hierarchical than Ljamai or other critics of an "Islamic Religious Humanism" assume. An enigmatic passage in *Rūḥ al-kalām fī-sharḥ ṣalāt Shaykh ʿAbd al-Salām* suggests a fundamental reciprocity between God and His [Human] Image. Bursevi begins the passage by interpreting the Qur'anic phrase, "He [God] is the First, and the Last, and the Manifest, and the Inner" (Ar. *Huwa al-awwal wa-l-ākhir wa-l-ẓāhir wa-l-bāṭin,* Q 57:3), in terms of Adam's theomorphism. He states that this verse alludes to two mysteries of existence, "the mystery of the human being [*qua* Adam], and the mystery of God." The mystery of Adam is his theomorphism. For Bursevi, this means that Adam is "the externally manifest aspect of God, the Truth (Tur. *sırr-ı Hakk'ın zahiri ve suretidir*)." Conversely, the mystery of God is "the mystery of the innermost aspect of the human being, and is the reality of the human being (Tur. *Fe-emma Hakk'ın sırrı, sırr-ı insanın batını ve hakikatidir*)."[28] Because the monistic reality of God is never invalidated in this formulation, God and Adam have an inherently interdependent relationship. God and God's Image thus complete each other as internal and external manifestations of the divine Essence.

---

[26] Abdelilah Ljamai, "Humanistic Thought in the Islamic World of the Middle Ages," *The Wiley Blackwell Handbook of Humanism*, 161.

[27] Ibid., 163-165.

[28] Bursevi, *Varlığın Dili*, 206-208.

Because of this intimate relationship between God and Adam, the notion of human theomorphism all but collapses the hierarchical relationship between Creator and creation. Likewise, beyond any other quality, it is theomorphism, that all members of the human species have in common as Adam's progeny. Thus, *pace* Ljamai, all of humankind is united in a "horizontal" relationship on account of this theomorphism. In this sense, Bursevi's Adamology centered on theomorphism resolves the contradiction between the "vertically" divine and "horizontally" human existential domains. Ironically, Bursevi's Sufi anthropology arguably exemplifies Ljamai's ideal of Islamic Humanism without relying upon a secular premise.

For Bursevi, Adam as the Image of God reflects the divine in every fiber of his being. The Qur'anic accounts of God breathing "My Spirit" into Adam (Q 15:29; 38:72) connote this. According to other Qur'anic passages, God generated creation by "speaking" it (i.e., 2:117; 3:47; 36:82). Although "spoken" into creation the same way as any other creature, Adam was the only creature to receive the "breathing of the divine Spirit," that purified him from all blameworthy qualities.[29] The fact that God references Himself in describing this "breathing" (i.e., Ar. *wa-nafakhtu,* "*I* blew") implies for Bursevi that this act is "equivalent to the breathing of the very selfhood of God" into Adam.[30] God's infusion of His selfhood into Adam is not an arbitrary act. "The selfhood of God is manifested in the very self of Adam," writes Bursevi in *Kitāb al-ḥujjat al-bāligha*. "So, consider that God meant only Himself when saying 'Hidden Treasure.' God created creation only to make His selfhood appear [in Adam]."[31] Thus, God's breathing into Adam constitutes the telos of creation with respect to the manifestation of divine self-knowledge in creation.

---

[29] Bursevi, *Rūḥ al-bayān*, 13.121, from the marginalia.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Kargılı, "İsmail Hakkı Bursevi'nin Kitabü'l-Hucceti'l-Balig̎a Adlı Eseri İnceleme-Metin," 85.

c.) *The Goodness of Adam is God's Goodness*

Since for Bursevi, Adam is God's unique Image, composed of the divine qualities and even God's selfhood, is Adam fundamentally good just as God is good? Theoretically at least, Bursevi contends that Adam is good to his core. This is because Adam's goodness reflects that of the divine. His discussion of "The Trust" (Ar. *al-amāna*) in Q 33:72 illustrates this tenet perhaps better than any other discourse in his Adamology. In the Qur'anic narrative, God offers the unqualified "Trust" to the heavens, the earth, and the mountains, yet they refused to bear it. The human being (Ar. *al-insān*) alone agreed to accept it. To accentuate the gravitas of preserving the Trust, God chastises the human being: "Indeed, the human being acts oppressively (Ar. *ẓalūm^{an}*), and acts ignorantly (Ar. *jahūl^{an}*)." Bursevi contends that because the Trust is something that the human being alone upholds in creation, its meaning is clear: the "Trust" can only mean theomorphism. Any other human quality besides theomorphism can be shared by the rest of creation.[32] As the bearer of the Trust of God's Image, Adam must be as good as the divine to be worthy of it. Thus, the Qur'anic references to oppression and ignorance in human behavior are not rebukes. Instead, they are tokens of praise. Elaborating on verses from ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Jāmī's (d. 897/1492) *Haft awrang* ("Seven Thrones"), Bursevi contends that both of these attributes refer to the chief virtues of God's Image:

> No one but the human being could accept the Trust.
> So from that time onwards the human being has been an oppressor and ignorant.
> His oppression is that his very being (Per. *hastī-yi khod-rā*)
> Becomes annihilated in eternal subsistence (Per. *sarmad-rā*).
> His ignorance is of everything but the Real;
> That kind of ignorance is not erased from the tablet of the heart.
> The beauty of this oppression is the essence of justice.

---

[32] Bursevi summarizes the typical exegeses of this verse without citing any particular sources. See: Bursevi, *Rūḥ al-bayān*, 22.63. For a general overview of *tafsīr* on this verse, see: Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Caner K. Dagli, Maria Massi Dakake, Joseph. E. B. Lumbard, Mohammed Rustom, Ed. and Trans., *The Study Quran*: *A New Translation and Commentary* (New York: HarperCollins, 2015), 1040-1041.

The excellence of ignorance is the substance of intimate knowledge.[33]

Following Jāmī, Bursevi argues that "oppression" connotes Adam's misapplication of the aspects of human nature that might incline him to evil. In other words, Adam "oppresses" (Ar. *yaẓlim*) to the lower soul inclined to evil (Ar. *al-nafs al-ammāra bi-l-sūʾ*, i.e., Q 12:53). As for human ignorance, it is not unawareness or willful neglect of the truth. Rather, the ignorance mentioned in the verse connotes being *unable* to know "that which is other than God" (Ar. *mā siwā Allāh*). In the final analysis, God is the only true object of human knowledge, according to Bursevi.[34]

Bursevi believed that God is good and is the source of goodness in creation. Drawing on the tradition of Sufi anthropology, he also extended that the same goodness to the human being as God's Image. Scholars of Sufism Vincent Cornell, Scott Kugle, and Sadiyya Shaikh among others have contended that Sufism in general advocates fundamental goodness of human beings.[35] In this same vein, another scholar of Sufism, Renate Würsch, has argued that Sufism is fundamentally "humanistic." Würsch reasons that if Humanism is defined as "an anthropology determining how humans can attain their full humanity and dignity, then there are no obstacles to linking 'Humanism' and Islamic mysticism."[36] Bursevi's Adamology fits these analyses well. Even more, it does so perhaps in a more concentrated and intensive way than other, more diffuse Sufi discourses of human potential, such as those of Abū Yazīd (Bayazīd) al-Bisṭāmī (c.

---

[33] ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Jāmī, *Mathnawī-yi haft awrang*, Murtaḍā Mudarris Gīlānī ed. (Tehran: Kitāb-Furūsh-i Saʿdī, 1337/1958), lines 9-14, pg. 72; Bursevi, *Rūḥ al-bayān*, 22.65.

[34] Bursevi, *Rūḥ al-bayān*, 22.65-66.

[35] Vincent J. Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*: *Power and Authority in Moroccan Sufism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998), 213; Scott Kugle, *Sufis & Saints' Bodies*: *Mysticism, Corporeality, & Sacred Power in Islam* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007) 26-41, 292-294; Sadiyya Shaykh, *Sufi Narratives of Intimacy*: *Ibn 'Arabi, Gender, and Sexuality* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 24-28, 81.

[36] Renate Würsch, "Humanism and Mysticism-Inspirations from Islam," in Stefan Reichmut, Jörn Rüsen, and Aladdin Sarhan Eds. *Humanism and Muslim Culture*: *Historical Heritage and Contemporary Challenges*, 93.

261/874), Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), Ibn al-ᶜArabī, Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī (d. 673/1274), and Yunus Emre (c. 720/1320-21).

For Bursevi, Adam is the only Image of God in creation. Adam is so unique that he surpasses all other creatures, even the inerrant angels. As he clarifies, belief in the supremacy of the angels contradicts the *ḥadīth* "God created Adam in His Image, and then manifested [Himself] in him." It also goes against Qur'anic narratives in which God ordered the angels to prostrate to Adam (Q 2:34; 7:11; 17:61). On account of his theomorphism, Adam is superior to all of creation, even to the extent that the cosmos is compelled to adore him, with the sole exception of Iblīs and his satanic followers. "There is not a single creature more sublime than Adam in spiritual rank," he states in *Al-Tāʾwīlāt al-najmīya* (The Exegeses of Najm [al-Dīn [Kubrā]"), "At every moment, the call 'O Adam' occurs without interruption in the world."[37] The cosmos glorifies Adam out of awe at his ability to accept "the Emanation of the Light of God, the Truth, without any intermediary...[Adam] possesses alone this potential from among the entirety of created things."[38]

In Bursevi's Adamology, the relationship between God and Adam is so close that the distinction between Creator and creature is all but nullified. Given this relationship, there is no creature that is worthier than Adam of representing the divine. Bursevi's Sufi anthropology here seems to resemble the doctrines of Renaissance Humanist Marsilio Ficino (d. 1499). Ficino also states that, unlike all other creatures, the human being is "a great miracle" because he is created in the image of God (i.e., Gen 1:26-27). He alone has the potential to transform into God, becoming as if "God himself." Ficino also believed in human theomorphism. This meant that the human species occupies the highest rungs of worldly existence. It also necessitated that they

---

[37] Ibid., 12.72.
[38] Ibid.

were the center of the world, towards which all of creation was oriented in access to the

Creator.[39] Given the similarity of this aspect of Bursevi's Adamology to the doctrines of Ficino,

it would be farfetched *not* to consider Bursevi a "humanist before Humanism," as Tony Davies'

puts it. Although different doctrines and source materials informed them, Ficino and Bursevi

espoused almost similar notions of theomorphic anthropocentrism.

d.) *God's Khalīfa: Adam as "He who Stands in for God" in Creation*

In Bursevi's Adamology, Adam is not an embellishment of creation. Rather, God created

him for a purpose. Bursevi reasons that if creation of the world is the means by which God gains

self-knowledge, Adam is the "means of the means," or the essence of God's self-awareness. In

this vein, he views all aspects of the cosmos according to the manner in which they fulfill the

purpose of God's emanation. God's physical creation of the cosmos is the "Completion of

Clarification [of God's self-knowledge]" (Tur. *kemal-ı isticla*), whereas the creation of Adam is

the "Perfection of Clarity [of God's self-awareness]" (Tur. *kemal-ı cila*)."[40] Bursevi further

contends that the creation of the essence of Adam preceded the creation of the cosmos because

Adam is "the source of the telos (Tur. *ayn-ı maksut*) of the creation of the world."[41] Adam is thus

the *raison d'être* of God's creation of the cosmos because as God's Image and representative of

the divine Essence, he best satisfies God's desire to be known.

Adam's function as "the source of the telos" has cosmological as well as political

significance. As a unique Image of God, Adam is the only member of creation who is fit to serve

as God's representative or *khalīfa*. Since Adam represents God to God, he also represents God to

---

[39] Shaw et. all, *Readings in Christian Humanism*, 241-242.
[40] Engin Sögŭt, "İsmâil Hakkı Bursevî'nin Kenz-i Mahfî Risâlesi Muhtevâ ve Tahlîli," M.A. thesis, Marmara University, Istanbul, 2007, 69-70.
[41] Ibid., 70.

creation. Bursevi's interpretation of the Qur'anic Trust (Q 33:72) as human theomorphism

exemplifies this logic. The very connotation of the term "trust" (Ar. *amāna*) implies that the

Trust of being God's Image is a kind of vocation or duty. In a similar vein, Bursevi draws on Ibn

al-ᶜArabī's conceptualization of Adam as the *khatm* ("seal") of creation, who completes, upholds,

and legitimizes creation as a signet ring does for an important document or treasure.[42]

Bursevi develops Ibn al-ᶜArabī's notion of "seal" in his interpretation of the final chapter

of the Qur'an, "Humankind" (Ar. *Sūrat al-nās*, Q 114)." This *sūra* is essentially a prayer to seek

refuge in God as "The Lord" (Ar. *rabb*), "King" (Ar. *malik*), and "Divinity" (Ar. *ilāh*) of

humankind. It is no coincidence for Bursevi that the final "seal" of the Qur'anic revelation is

called "Humankind" and concerns the intimate relationship between humankind and God.

Rather, the Qur'an in its literary form reaches a climax in its discussion of Adam's role as a

theomorphic seal and *khalīfa*. By taking refuge in God through the words of this *sūra*, the reciter

of the Qur'an metonymically reproduces the ways in which Adam reflects God in the world as

"Lord," as "King," and as "Divinity." Understanding the essential message of Q 114 leads to the

advanced stage of transcending and "forgetting of the previous Pact (*al-ᶜahd*) of the Day of the

Covenant (i.e., Q 7:172)...Were the human being to forget this Pact, he would no longer have any

need for a return to God. Indeed, in essence, the human being would be eternally (Ar. *dāʾim^{an}*) in

the core (Ar. *kunh*) of God."[43]

According to Bursevi's exegesis, every aspect of the human being as "seal of the Qur'an

and creation" reveals the essential identity of Adam as Image of God.[44] To know Adam as the

"seal of the Qur'an" is to have access to the mysteries of divine revelation. Both the Qur'an and

---

[42] For Ibn al-ᶜArabī's concept of the "seal," see: Michel Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints*: *Prophethood and Sainthood in the Doctrine of Ibn 'Arabi*, Liadain Sherrard Trans. (Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1993), 31-33, 42, 125-135.
[43] Bursevi, *Rūḥ al-bayān*, 27.202.
[44] Ibid.

Adam can thus be seen as a "scripture (Ar. *muṣḥaf*) that unite all truths." Elsewhere, Bursevi

asserts that Adam is the "ascendant horizon" (Ar. *maṭlaᶜ*) mentioned in a statement of the famous

Companion of the Prophet ᶜAbd Allāh ibn Masᶜūd (c. 32/653). For Bursevi, to read the Qur'an

from the "ascendant horizon" is to behold the essence of the Qur'an, which is Adam's

theomorphism.[45]

As the sole bearer of the Trust of theomorphism, the seal of the cosmos, and the key with

which the mysteries of revelation are unlocked, Adam, stands for God in creation. Bursevi states

that "Adam 'stands in for God (Ar. *yanūb ᶜan Allāh*)' both formally and essentially (Ar. *ṣūrat^{an}*

wa-maᶜn^{an})."[46] The very existence of Adam "indicates [i.e., symbolizes] the being of the One

who brought him into existence," while "his unity [symbolizes] God's Oneness." Just as Adam's

essence reflects the essence of the divine, so do his qualities God's qualities. On the basis of

these relations, "there is not a species among created things that represents God in the way that

Adam does, even if some creatures seem to represent Him."[47]

Adam represents God in creation because he is inseparable from it. Because he reflects

the divine Essence and the divine Selfhood, Adam as symbolizing the essence of humanity also

partakes somewhat of God's eternality. In his exegesis of the Qur'anic phrase "All things perish

save His Face (Ar. *wajh*)" (Q 28:88), Bursevi asserts, "The 'face' (Ar. *wajh*) of the human being

that is connected to God, the Truth, does not perish. It never disappears." Because "God is

Living, Everlasting," the essential Adam is figuratively an immortal being. This immortality

exists "[on account of] the Spirit breathed into [him]."[48] Adam's political function as the creature

who "stands in" for God also entails that he exist as long as the world exists. Were Adam to

---

[45] Bursevi, *Kitâbü'l-Izzi'l-âdemî*, 130a-b. For more information on this statement of Ibn Masᶜūd, see: Kristin Zahra Sands, *Ṣūfī Commentaries on the Qurʾān in Classical Islam* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 8-10.
[46] Bursevi, *Rūḥ al-bayān*, 12.62.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Bursevi, *Kitâbü'l-Izzi'l-âdemî,* 127b.

perish, creation would not only lose its caretaker, but also the being by means of which the world is related to its Creator. On the basis of this arguments Bursevi concludes "So know all of this well. Do not say that everything in the world of creation perishes."[49]

II. Bursevi's Theomorphic Anthropocentrism: Adam as Microcosm and Macrocosm.

According to Bursevi, the Creator's intimacy with creation equally applies to God's Image. Although it is much more vast and diverse than Adam, the cosmos in its totality is mysteriously reflected in Adam's being. Like many other Sufis, Bursevi believed that there was an intimate correspondence between the world and Adam. He expressed this correspondence by conceiving of Adam as a microcosm (Ar. *al-ᶜālam al-ṣaghīr*) in relation to the macrocosm (Ar. *al-ᶜālam al-kabīr*) of creation.[50] Given Adam's apparent insignificance compared to the cosmos, this relationship may seem to render the theomorphic Adam less important than macrocosmic creation. However, for Bursevi, the opposite is true. The relationship between the cosmos and Adam is not one-dimensional. Rather, the cosmos reflects Adam in a reciprocal manner. Adam as God's Image in fact facilitates God's emanation of the cosmos. Akin to Heidegger's concept of the human being as the "shepherd" of Being, Bursevi's Adamology has Adam connecting creation to the Creator by "standing in" for the divine. Thus, Bursevi's cosmos is existentially oriented toward Adam because he serves this crucial function. Although he represents the cosmos in microcosm, Adam is the paradigm without which the macrocosm has no meaning.

---

[49] Ibid.

[50] See: Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints*, 75-80, 159-161; Scattolin, "Realization of the 'Self' (*anā*) in Islamic Mysticism," 21; Lloyd Ridgeon, *Persian Metaphysics and Mysticism*: *Selected Works of ᶜAzīz Nasafī* (Abingdon and New York: Curzon Press, 2002), 46-51, 231-241; William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Love*: *The Spiritual Teachings of Rumi* (Albany, NY: The State University of New York Press, 1984), 60-65, 70; Jawid Mojaddedi, *Beyond Dogma*: *Rumi's Teachings on Friendship with God and Early Sufi Theories* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 30-42; Elias, *The Throne Carrier of God*, 72-100.

Thus determined by the paradigmatic Adam, macrocosmic creation is by definition anthropocentric.

This section explores the discourses on anthropocentrism that play a crucial role in Bursevi's Adamology. It foregrounds the ways in which Bursevi argues for an anthropocentric cosmology as a corollary to his Adamology. The section first investigates Bursevi's conception of Adam as both cause and effect of creation. Adam's unique, paradigmatic role is the foundation of Bursevi's cosmology. This section then details Bursevi's conception of Adam as a microcosm in relation to the macrocosm of creation. It also highlights his arguments for the reciprocity of microcosm and macrocosm. Of particular significance are Bursevi's attempts to demonstrate the correspondences between Adam and the world in an empirical fashion. Lastly, the section brings to light Bursevi's arguments for the paradigmatic supremacy of Adam in the cosmos, and consequently the theomorphic anthropocentrism of all of creation.

a.) *Adam as the Paradigm of Creation*

Because he "reveals" God in creation, Adam is the "paradigm" or "essence" (Ar. *khulāṣa*) of the world. According to Bursevi, there are two ways in which Adam is the paradigm of creation. First, as God's Image, Adam is the template from which the cosmos stems as a lesser reflection of God. Second, Adam completes creation by functioning as God's representative (*khalīfa*) and caretaker of the cosmos. To illustrate these two cosmological functions, Bursevi conceives of creation as a tree. Adam, in the form of God's Image, is the "seed" of this tree, and Adam, in the form of *khalīfa*, is the tree's "fruit." Thus, every aspect of creation comes from the "seed" of Adam. Existent beings appear as the trunk, branches, and leaves of "the tree of physical existents" (Ar. *shajarat al-kāʾināt*). Just as a tree's fruition signals that it has reached

full growth, so too God becomes fully manifest in creation by means of the "fruit" that is the Image of God.[51]

Bursevi's discussion of Adam as the "seed" and "fruit" of the "tree of physical existents," is paralleled elsewhere when he equates Adam with the Ka°ba of creation in order to demonstrate his central role in the cosmos. This discussion takes place in the "Book of the Glorification of the Adamic State" as a part of Bursevi's interpretation of the Qur'anic account of God's command for the angels to prostrate to Adam (Q 2:34; 7:11; 17:61; etc.). God did not order the angels to prostrate to Adam as an ordinary human being. Rather, they were ordered to worship God through Adam or *by means of* Adam.[52] God's command to bow down to anything but the divine would be irrational, hence unbecoming of God for Bursevi. In addition, the adoration of Adam by the angels did not end at Adam's creation, but is a perpetual act. Although the Qur'an mentions only the prostration of the angels in reality, all of creation prostrates before God's Image.[53] Adam is thus the Ka°ba of creation, the creature toward which all of existence orients itself in its worship of God. Adam's heart is the "Black Stone" (Ar. *al-ḥajar al-aswad*), which is the essence of this cosmic Ka°ba. Unfortunately, the majority of human beings are those "who do not realize the great degree of difference" between the Ka°ba of creation the Ka°ba of Mecca. According to Bursevi, most people "give greater importance to the Black Stone and the Ka°ba of the world instead of [Adam]...they lack all comprehension of the divine mysteries."[54] To understand Adam's theomorphism as Bursevi describes it means to be aware of the fundamental anthropocentrism of creation, and thus to possess the key to the "divine mysteries."

---

[51] Bursevi, *Rūḥ al-bayān*,12.68; See also: Kargılı, "İsmail Hakkı Bursevi'nin Kitabü'l-Hucceti'l-Baliǧa Adlı Eseri İnceleme-Metin,"120.
[52] Bursevi, *Kitâbü'l-Izzi'l-âdemî*, 125b.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid.

b.) *Reciprocity of Adam as Microcosm and the World as Macrocosm*

As stated previously, Bursevi conceives of Adam as a microcosm in relation to the macrocosm of creation.[55] In many passages, he describes Adam as a "copy" (Ar. *nuskha*) of creation. A passage from *Kitāb al-ḥujja al-bāligha* typifies his conception of Adam as microcosm:

> Adam is the microcosm (Tur. *nuskha-yi sughra-dır*, literally "diminutive copy"), and as such, is the summation of existence. The world, however, is the macrocosm, and as such, is by its very nature an elaboration. They are as two mirrors that face one another, witnessing each one's form in the other. The mirror that summarizes is called microcosmic, whereas the one that elaborates is called 'macrocosmic.'[56]

Creation, with all of its diversity, is in reality an elaboration of the possibilities of divine manifestation. In contrast to creation writ large, Adam acts as a summarization or blueprint for all of the possible manifestations of God in existence. As the above passage indicates, microcosmic Adam and macrocosmic creation are related in the manner of two interfacing mirrors. Each mirror reflects the divine and within themselves and to each other. Although they are described as "microcosm" and "macrocosm" respectively, both Adam and the world of creation facilitate God's emanation in a reciprocal manner. To illustrate the correspondence of their functions in relation to God, Bursevi often distinguishes between "horizons" (Ar. *āfāq*) and "Souls" (Ar. *anfus*) in respect to creation. These terms are drawn from Q 41:52, "We [God] shall show them Our signs upon the horizons (Ar. *āfāq*) and within their souls (Ar. *anfusihim*) until it becomes clear that God is the Truth." For Bursevi, "The entirety of created beings is found within the mystery of the essence of [Adam]," who is the only truly theomorphic being. "However, with regard to form, creatures are external. This external form of creatures is thus

---

[55] Bursevi does so drawing inspiration from the Sufi anthropologies of Ibn al-ᶜArabī, his "Akbarian" successors, ᶜAbd al-Karīm al-Jīlī (d. ca. 832/1428), and the Kubrawīya in particular.
[56] Kargılı, "İsmail Hakkı Bursevi'nin Kitabü'l-Hucceti'l-Baliğa Adlı Eseri İnceleme-Metin," 82.

called 'Horizons.'"[57] By contrast, theomorphic Adam is called "soul" "from the point of view of his distinction from everything."[58] Both "Horizons" and "Souls" stem from God and refer back to Him, yet do so in different ways.

Bursevi reasons that the correspondence between the "signs" of the "Horizons" and the "Souls" can be discerned by empirical observation. In order to prove this point, he dedicates a long section of *Kitāb al-ḥujjat al-bāligha* to demonstrate the ways in which the "Souls" of Adam are externalized in the "Horizons" of creation, and vice versa. By way of introduction, he reasons, "Just as the macrocosm has land, mountains, minerals, veins, seas, rivers, creeks, and springs, so too does the microcosm have such things."[59] In the same way that the human body has "a surface and bones," so too the world has "mountains and pillars that hold [it] up...these pillars being in truth the Fasteners of the World (Ar. *awtād*), which are the Men of God (Ar. *rijāl*)."[60] Without the mountains, the world would collapse and fall into disarray. Likewise, without the support of the Men of God to maintain the world creation would simply cease to be.[61]

Examining the "Souls" and "Horizons" as reciprocal mirrors, Bursevi discusses the correspondences between Adam and the world in two passages of *Kitāb al-ḥujja al-bāligha*. One passage correlates Adam's physical and psychological features with the cosmos, in a topographical, geological, and cosmological manner. The other passage relates Adam's character traits to other beings. These correspondences are summarized in the following tables:

---

[57] Ibid., 85.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid., 90.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid. 90-91.

Souls (Ar. *anfus*)	Horizons (Ar. *āfāq*)
Human marrow	Mines, mineral veins
Human rate of maturity (18 years, 30-40 years)	Silver (18,000 years), gold (30,000 years)
Human fat	Clay
Human hair	Plants
Human capacity (for knowledge, training)	The ocean
Human hair and nails (that require trimming)	Plants, trees, and foliage
Human back	Wastelands
Human sociability	Civilizations, building, development
Human wildness (as nomads)	Wilderness
Human breath	The wind, time
Human words, yelling	Thunder, lightning
Human depression	Dark clouds
Human weeping	The rain
Human happiness, sadness	Morning light, pitch black darkness of night
Human waking, sleeping	Life, death
Human birth, death	Beginning of a journey, end of a journey
Human childhood, young adulthood, adulthood, old age	Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter
Lifespan in years, months, weeks, days, breaths	Lands, abodes, *farsang*s, miles, footsteps.
The span of human breath (24,000 in a day)	24 hours
Human fat, meat, veins, sinew, bile, bones	Black, sandy, red, yellow, white, blue, and green earth tones
The four humors (black bile, yellow bile, blood, phlegm)	Earth, fire, wind, water
Various kinds of water found in humans	Potable, salty, mixed water, brackish water
The seven faculties	Seven planets of the solar system
Humans' 360 joints	360 days
28 possible phonemes of human speech	28 houses of the moon

Figure 1. Correspondences between Adam's Features and the Cosmos. [62]

Bursevi asserts that each worldly or cosmological phenomenon has a human analogue. Even

phenomena that are seemingly distinct from human traits such as the ocean, the seasons, the

colors of the earth, or the four elements are in reality externalizations of the "Souls" of Adam.

The various aspects of creation that make up the world of nature are likewise intimately linked to

the character traits of Adam as the Image of God.

---

[62] Ibid., 90-95

Souls (Ar. *anfus*)	Horizons (Ar. *āfāq*)
Recognition of God (Ar. *maᶜrifa*), purity	Angels
Pride, haughtiness	Satan
Courage and bravery	Lions
Ignorance	Pack animals
Rage	Tigers, leopards
Ability to attack and thwart others	Wolves
Patience	Donkey
Rapacious hunger	Sparrows
Scheming and cleverness	Foxes
Greed and thronging together	Mice, ants
Stinginess, or loyalty	Dogs
Covetousness, avidity for forbidden things	Pigs
Ability to bother others	Serpents
Clemency	Camels
Generosity	Roosters
Complacency	Owls
Smiling, fawning over something	Female cats
Human's capacity to be early	Crows
Resolve	Falcons, turtles
Inner sight (Ar. *baṣīra*)	*Hudhud*, Hoopoes
Striving	Rabbits, Arabian Horses

Figure 2. Correspondences between Adam's Charachter Traits and Creatures[63]

As Figures 1 and 2 indicate, a close reciprocal relation obtains between the world of creation and the paradigmatic Adam as the Image of God. However, although this relationship is reciprocal, both sides of the comparison are not equal. In Bursevi's logic, each "correspondence" begins and ends with Adam. Worldly phenomena have their origin in Adam as God's "seed" and are later made whole as the Adamic "fruit." Bursevi concludes, "In reality, the macrocosm is in fact the microcosm, for the human being is the most total and most comprehensive locus of God's self-manifestation."[64] In the final analysis, Adam is more reflective of the divine and hence superior to the rest of creation.

In fact, Bursevi contends not only that Adam is macrocosmic, but also that he is also the center-piece of creation. For Bursevi, creation is anthropocentric because in the scheme of divine

---

[63]Ibid., 95-100.
[64] Ibid., 82.

manifestation, Adam represents the "Fulfillment of *Clarity* [of God's self-awareness] (Tur. *kemal-i cila*) because of his unique theomorphism. The creation that hosts the physical Adam also reflects God because it too is a divine manifestation. However, it reflects the divine in a lesser degree than Adam, who is God's Image. Ultimately, according to Bursevi, Adam "pours forth" (Tur. *fayz eder*) God's manifestation into the receptacle of the cosmos. Thus, he considers creation the lesser "Fulfillment of *Clarification* [of God's self-knowledge]" (Tur. *kemal-i isticla*).

According to Bursevi, Adam's superiority is logically necessary because in order to fulfill his function as *khalīfa*, he must occupy a place of centrality in the cosmos. The "seed" of Adam produces the "tree of existents," in order to facilitate the culmination of Adam as the "fruit." Since Adam is the telos of creation as the fulfillment of God's self-knowledge, creation without the human paradigm "is impossible, just like a body without spirit."[65] Adam as the first human being may pass away, but the species of Adam cannot be eradicated. To obliterate the Image of God from the world would be to decenter creation and thus decompose it.[66]

c.) *God as the Measure of All Things through Adam*

Most scholars of Humanism maintain that anthropocentrism is a key humanistic principle. For example, the Presocratic philosopher Protagoras has been considered one of the first humanists precisely because of his early doctrine of anthropocentrism: "Of all things the measure is [the human being], of things that are that they are, of things that are not that they are not."[67] In this vein, the definitions of Humanism championed by most secular and religious

---

[65] Kargılı, "İsmail Hakkı Bursevi'nin Kitabü'l-Hucceti'l-Baliğa Adlı Eseri İnceleme-Metin," 146.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Daniel W. Graham Ed. and Trans., *The Texts of Early Greek Philosophy*: *The Complete Fragments and Selected Testimonies of the Major Presocratics*, 2 vols. (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 2.701; for Protagoras as an early humanist, see: Davies, *Humanism*, 123, 141-142.

humanists share as the core principle that the human being is the "measure of all things."[68]

Philosopher David Cooper argues that all forms of Humanism view the world as "a human

world," in which the human being plays an axial role by virtue of its centrality.[69] As he puts it,

"There is no discernable world—no world at all—except in relation to human language and

perspective. More poetically put, [the human being] is the 'clearing' or 'house of Being' in which

alone beings can 'light up' or be 'gathered' and 'lodged.'"[70] Much like Cooper, Bursevi also

conceives of the world as fundamentally anthropocentric, but not in a way that would exclude the

divine. Rather, God is present in the world through Adam in Bursevi's conception of

anthropocentrism.

By relating the cosmos back to its divine source, Bursevi's Adam can be compared to the

Heideggerian "shepherd of Being" as well as the Cooper's "clearing," in which creation is

enabled to appear and thrive. However, Bursevi also insists on the centrality of theomorphism in

his Sufi anthropology. In contrast to Protagoras, Comte, Todorov, Heidegger, Cooper, and

others, Bursevi would say that in essence, God is the measure of all things, and the source of all

things as well. However, it is only through His Image, that God is in creation at all. For this

reason, Bursevi's Sufi anthropology can still be said to embody the anthropocentrism that

Reichmut, Rüsen, and Sarhan posit as the key to Islamic Humanism, whether Western or

Islamic.[71] Bursevi's cosmos is not a "human world," but rather is the world of the Image of God,

who harmonizes the "Horizons" and "Souls" of divine manifestation. His Humanism can be

---

[68] See: Davies, *Humanism*, 28-34, 57-71; Andrew Copson, "What is Humanism?" 3-4; See: Shaw, Franklin, Kaasa, and Buzicky, *Readings in Christian Humanism*, 27; Balfour, *Theism and Humanism*, 133; Maritain, *True Humanism,* 19-20; Lévinas, *Humanism of the Other*, 47-48; Martin Buber, *A Believing Humanism,* 117-120.

[69] David Cooper, *The Measure of Things*: *Humanism, Humility, and Mystery* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 1, 6-8.

[70] Ibid., 326.

[71] Reichmut, Rüsen, and Sarhan, "Humanism and Muslim Culture: Historical Heritage and Contemporary Culture," 15.

found in the fact that this function is not restricted to the paradigmatic and cosmological Adam, but rather lives on throughout Adam's progeny. Just as creation is fundamentally oriented toward Adam, so too is oriented toward the "Adamites."

III. The Universality of Bursevi's Humanism

Most if not all of Bursevi's aforementioned discussions of the human condition have Adam as their subject. Without context, Bursevi's use of Adam might be taken to mean that he intended only some archetypal "primordial" human being or the Islamic prophet Adam in his discourses. His Sufi anthropology would thus resemble what Richard Todd considers the "metaphysical anthropology" of Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī (d. 673/1274), which largely ignored the ordinary human being.[72] In such a case, the argument that Bursevi was a humanist would be untenable. However, a deeper investigation of his writings shows that Bursevi believed that the metaphysical Adam and Adam's progeny were equivalent from the standpoint of their fundamental theomorphism. In this way, Bursevi's Adamology might best be described with reference to the old Turkish proverb, "Every human being is Adam. A hero is just another human being." (Tur. *Adam adamdır, pehlivan başka adamdır*).[73]

Bursevi's argument for the universal theomorphism of all "Adamites" distinguishes his Sufi anthropology from other Sufi anthropological discourses. Although human beings might sin against or betray the ideals of their primordial Adamic heritage, all the descendants of Adam are essentially "Adamites" (Tur. *adamiyan*, *adamiler*) without exception. Bursevi advances this notion to the point of often conflating the terms "Adam," "Perfect Human Being," "Adamite,"

---

[72] Richard Todd, *The Sufi Doctrine of Man*: *Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī's Metaphysical Anthropology* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2014), 105, 114-115, 135-136, 165.
[73] Ömer Asım Aksoy, *Atasözleri ve Deyimler Sözlüğü*: *Deyimler Sözlüğü* (Istanbul: İnkilap Kitabevi, 1995), 2.53.

and "ordinary human being" in many of his discussions.[74] There is no real distinction between Adam or a descendant of Adam, if one considers their essential theomorphism. In this way, Bursevi intended in his Sufi anthropology to bring to light the theomorphism inherent in all human beings.

This section discusses Bursevi's conceptualization of the descendants of Adam as inheritors of their progenitor's theomorphism and their vocation as God's *khalīfa*. It discusses the ways in which Bursevi equates Adam and the "Adamites" in three parts. The first part highlights Bursevi's explicit discussions and implicit allusions, in which he associates Adam with "Adamite" humankind in general. The second part concerns Bursevi's arguments for the heritability of Adam's characteristics. The final part explores Bursevi's relativization of human evil in light of the theomorphism of the "Adamites."

a.) *Every Human Being is Adam*

As discussed above, for Bursevi Adam is the Image of God, the focal point towards which all of creation orients itself in order to gain access to its Creator. However, according to the Qur'an and *Ḥadīth*, Adam was not created to be alone. Adam is co-created with his wife Eve (Ar. *ḥawwāʾ*) in the Qur'an (Q 2:35; 7:19; 20:117). In the *Ḥadīth*, Even is created from Adam's rib.[75] What, then is the exact relationship between Adam and his progeny? Are they theomorphic like their progenitor? Are they, too, the "Kaᶜba of existence?" Bursevi would respond to this question in the affirmative. For him, the human species is "Adamic" in its entirety. Every individual inherits the traits of humankind's ultimate progenitor.

---

[74] See: Kargılı, "İsmail Hakkı Bursevi'nin Kitabü'l-Hucceti'l-Baliğa Adlı Eseri İnceleme-Metin," 102; Bursevi, *Varlığın Dili*, 206-208; Idem., *Rūḥ al-bayān*, 12.62, 12.68, 19.80.
[75] For more information on this contradictory *ḥadīth*, see: Kugle, *Sufism and Saints' Bodies*, 90-92; Shaikh, *Sufi Narratives of Intimacy*, 146-157;

As Bursevi explains, the Qur'an speaks of Adam and his progeny as equally "Adamic." Q 7:11 perhaps contains the most salient example: "And indeed, We [God] created you all, then formed you. Then We said to the angels 'prostrate to Adam.'" The universality of the Adamic inheritance can also be seen in God's command to Adam and Eve to leave paradise (i.e., 2:36, 38; 7:24). God uses the second person plural in these passages deliberately. Were God to have employed the dual form, then only Adam and Eve would have been signified. According to Bursevi, this usage indicates that Adam was created "with the character of total comprehensiveness (Ar. *bi-khuluq al-kull*)." Thus, Adam's offspring are "a sort of condensation of Adam's comprehensive character."[76] Recall that for Bursevi Adam was the cosmogonic "seed" of the "tree of existence," as well as the teleological "fruit" of the tree of creation.[77] In light of these metaphors, "Adamites" can be considered as "fruits" of a single species of Adamic "fruit." Bursevi reasons that if Adam were to exist without wife or children, Adam's role as God's Image would be severely limited. Likewise, his function as the representative of the divine that connects creation to God would be undermined. Thus, Bursevi writes, "The diverse forms given to Adam's offspring are meant to actualize the creation and the formation of Adam in order to populate the earth."[78] Viewed as an extension of God's Image, "Adam's character is at the same level as that of his progeny."[79] In other words, to speak of "Adam" is also to speak of all of his descendants.

b.) *The Universal Heritability of Adam's Theomorphism*

The equivalence between Adam and his progeny includes Adam's theomorphism. According to Bursevi, every Adamite inherits that which makes Adam the Image of God in

---

[76] Bursevi, *Rūḥ al-bayān*, 15.124.
[77] Ibid. 12.68; See also: Q 2:33; Kargılı, "İsmail Hakkı Bursevi'nin Kitabü'l-Hucceti'l-Baliġa Adlı Eseri İnceleme-Metin,"120.
[78] Bursevi, *Rūḥ al-bayān*, 15.124.
[79] Ibid.

creation. It is this Adamic theomorphism that in fact makes human beings human. In his exegesis

of the Qur'anic chapter, "The Human Being" (Q 76:1-2, *Sūrat al-insān*), Bursevi asserts that

Adam's theomorphism is found in the biological makeup of Adamites, in the reproductive fluids

from which God creates humans:

> Has there come unto the human being a moment in time in which he was not a thing
> remembered? Indeed, We created the human being from a drop from mixed reproductive
> fluids, that we might try him. Consequently, We gave him hearing, sight.[80]

According to Bursevi, because God cannot neglect His Image, there cannot be a moment in time

in which the theomorphic human being is neglected. It is in this vein that God mentions creating

humankind from "a drop of mixed reproductive fluids" (Ar. *nuṭfa amshāj*), which is in a sense an

incarnation of Adam's theomorphism. According to Bursevi, what God means in the verse is

"We created the human being from the reproductive fluid of the Most Holy Emanation (Ar. *al-fayḍ al-aqdas*), which is linked to God as Agent, and from the reproductive fluid of the

Sanctified Emanation (Ar. *al-fayḍ al-muqaddas*), which is linked to God as Receptor." In a way

endemic to Sufi discussions of gender in his time, Bursevi continues by relating the "Most Holy

Emanation" and the "Sanctified Emanation" to semen and eggs respectively.[81] "The Most Holy

Emanation of the Essence is found in the reproductive fluids of men," he writes, adding, "As for

the Sanctified Emanation of the Names, it is found in the reproductive fluids of women."[82] No

matter their gender, ethnicity, or physical form, human beings are spiritually and physically

theomorphic. They are Images of God, in the theological, cosmological, and even political sense

of the term.

---

[80] My translation.
[81] See: Kugle, *Sufis and Saints' Bodies*, 183-184, 244-46, 265; Shaikh, *Sufi Narratives of Intimacy*, 11, 31, 72-74,
115-117, 128-133, 147-150, 184-189.
[82] Bursevi, *Rūḥ al-bayān*, 27.27-29.

Bursevi argues that by inheriting Adam's theomorphism, Adamites also bear the cosmological function for which Adam was selected. In *Kitāb al-ḥujja al-bāligha*, he reinterprets a Qur'anic verse that is crucial for his discussion of the reciprocity of the human microcosm and worldly macrocosm: "'We [God] shall show them Our signs upon the Horizons and within their Souls" (Q 41:52). As in his discussion of Q 7:11 (see above), Bursevi contends that God's use of the second person plural in this verse is intentional. The referent here is not limited. Rather, "Every single person... is a copy of the 'Horizons' and the 'Souls.'"[83] If every human being is a copy of the "Horizons" and the "Souls," then the world must be seen as anthropocentrically focused on Adam's progeny just as it was on Adam himself.

Elsewhere in *Kitāb al-ḥujja al-bāligha,* Bursevi urges the reader to recognize these truths for themselves. "The mystery of the unity of God's Essence and Qualities is found in you," he writes.[84] Oriented thus in self-reflection, Bursevi guides the reader to the ways in which the mystery of humanity might be perceived, both within the human soul and upon the "Horizons." Because of their inherited theomorphism as well as their cosmological role, Adamites possess divine insight (Ar. *baṣīra*), with which they are able to perceive God in a manner unlike any other creature. Any descendant of Adam has the ability to perceive the correspondence between themselves and the totality of creation as well as between their character traits and the species of creation as Bursevi conceives of them. If one has such insight, Bursevi asks "How can it be that you are weak and without light, when you are radiance?...From the earth to the firmament no affair should remain hidden from you; the revealed mysteries of the Realms of Dominion and Domination should be abundant for you."[85] In other passages, Bursevi explains that not all creatures have the insight to comprehend the "revealed mysteries." Because they are

---

[83] Kargılı, "İsmail Hakkı Bursevi'nin Kitabü'l-Hucceti'l-Baliǧa Adlı Eseri İnceleme-Metin," 85.
[84] Ibid. 141.
[85] Ibid. 141.

distinguished in this way, human beings can be said to possess their forefather's quality of superiority over all creatures.

c.) *The Absolute Goodness and Relative Evil of Humanity*

According to Bursevi, because the human being is a descendant of the Image of God, "the human being is blessed (Ota *mübarek*) in every way." This blessedness is the trait of human goodness which reflects the Goodness of the divine, as well as divine favor in terms of material benefits, intelligence, and guidance.[86] This blessed status applies to all Adamites, whether from the first generation of Adam's progeny or the last. Bursevi then asks: If human beings are so blessed, why do they experience misfortune? For Bursevi, adversity in life does not result from any fundamental evil or divine displeasure. Rather, it stems from God's Majesty and is intentional. Bursevi clarifies this notion in a poem in which he attempts to reconcile the theological problem of theomorphism versus theodicy by using the examples of the godfearing Abel and the murderous but repentant Cain:

> When the Beauty of God, the Truth has manifested itself,
> > All becomes one—paradise, the *ḥūrī*, and serving boys.
> By contrast, when the light of God's Majesty shines forth,
> > The tablet of wisdom appears aflame.
> In these two mysteries, God has manifested
> > Being in the form of Adam, the human being, and the Perfect Human.
> Fix your glance then in the mirror of Adam.
> > You will see gathered therein the totality of the rays of the Compassionate.
> Do you understand, then, who Abel and Cain really are?
> > Indeed, in them, these two mysteries are exteriorized.
> These two are the inheritors of the great mystery found in their father:
> > The mystery of divine possibility has become actualized and externalized in them.
> Abel, the first of them, came into being laughing from God's Beauty.
> > Cain, the other, came into being crying from God's Majesty.
> At times, [God] manifests the things that are hidden.
> > At times, God, the Truth, makes hidden the manifest things.

---

[86] Ibid. 141.

> So proceed then, to the Originator of creation, to the Truth,
> > If indeed in the eye is found the gleaming light from God.
> The person without awareness of the significance of this wisdom,
> > Or without regard for his state, is deficient in countless ways.
> The one upon whom the Lord has blessed with awareness of His most holy presence,
> > Is the one who brings to this discourse sincerity and faith.
> Open your eyes, make them see with insight (Tur. *basiret*)!
> > Oh Hakki, the Light of God is not concealed by anything.[87]

Adam, as the seed of the tree of existence" is the Image of God in which is reflected God's Beauty and Majesty together. Focusing on this Adamic inheritance, Bursevi conceives of the awareness of human theomorphism as gazing into the "mirror of Adam." When viewed from their essential theomorphism, all Adamites are in principle reflective of God's Goodness. Because of their theomorphic heritage, Cain and Abel represent the divine in creation in different ways. Cain's ingratitude and fratricide are reflections of God's Majesty, to which he responds at birth by "crying." His identity as an Image of God that he inherits from his father Adam exonerates him in the final analysis. By contrast, Abel's gratitude and steadfastness represent God's Beauty. Since they represent two sides of the same reality, both Cain and Abel are symbolic figures. From the perspective of their theomorphism, all human beings may be considered "Cains" and "Abels," who reflect God's Beauty or Majesty respectively.

In a way similar to his discussion of Abel and Cain, Bursevi argues in an enigmatic passage in *Rūḥ al-bayān* that sins, grievances, and even major offences do not invalidate the reality human theomorphism. He argues that Adam was meant to eat from the "tree," and take the fruit that he was forbidden to consume in Paradise (Q 2:35). The unspecified tree mentioned in the Qur'an was actually "The tree of love and knowledge of God (Ar. *maᶜrifa*)," and its fruit was his means of gaining this wisdom. Because of the importance of love and knowledge of God,

---

[87] İsmail Hakkı Bursevi, *Divan*, Dr. Murat Yurtsever Ed. (Bursa: Arasta Yayınları, 2000), pg. 291, no. 263.

this fruit "contains by its very nature trials and tribulations."[88] According to Bursevi, "God

forbade the tree from Adam as a way to provoke him to consume its fruit—for human beings are

naturally inclined toward that which is forbidden to them."[89] In a theologically problematic way,

Bursevi opines that God intended Adam to transgress His command. Consequently, all human

beings are similarly meant to sin in the way of their forefather. In reality, God's desire to have

Adam and his descendants transgress is only to give them the opportunity to repent. For it is only

through repentance that sincere love of God can occur. Sin is merely a lapse of judgment, and

"every lapse has its outcome in repentance, after which comes honoring, and then selection by

God."[90] The episode of the forbidden fruit was "meant to demonstrate to Adam how befitting

blame is for him by means of God's forbidding him from eating from the tree."[91] Adam's

transgression was in reality an act of "transcendence (Ar. *tanzīh*), among the good deeds of the

pious, and among the sins of 'those who are brought near'" (Ar. *min qabīl ḥasanāt al-abrār wa-

sayyiʾāt al-muqarrabīn*).[92] The same applies for the sins of all people. Their transgressions also

are God-sanctioned opportunities for transcendence by means of repentance.

In *Rūḥ al-bayān*, Bursevi often interprets the Qur'an as if he has "opened his eyes" and

has seen all phenomena clarified in the "mirror of Adam." Bursevi's exegesis of Q 95 "The Fig"

(Ar. *Sūrat al-tīn*), is one of the most notable examples of "gazing into the 'mirror of Adam.'" This

Sūra has no reference to human theomorphism on the surface. It commences with an enigmatic

oath "By the fig and olive. And by Mount Sinai. And by this protected land" (Q 95:1-4). A

seemingly paradoxical statement concerning human nature follows in Q 95:4-6: "Indeed, We

---

[88] Bursevi, *Rūḥ al-bayān*, 12.71
[89] Ibid. Here, Bursevi elaborates on *The Exegesis of Najm al-Dīn* (Ar. *Al-Taʾwīlāt al-Najmīya*), of which a critical edition has yet to appear.
[90] Bursevi, *Rūḥ al-bayān*, 12:72
[91] Ibid.
[92] Ibid., 12:71-72.

[God] created the human being in the most excellent of forms. Then, We reduced the human being to the lowest of the low. Save for those who believe, and work righteous deeds—theirs is a reward unending." The conclusion of "The Fig" pertains to human hypocrisy and God's justice "What is it then that leads you to lie, after attaining to faith? Is not God the most just of those who judge?" (Q 95:7-8). When perceived with the proper insight and viewed "in the mirror of Adam," for Bursevi, this *Sūra* serves as a kind of allegory of God's Image, they key to which is Q 95:4: "Indeed, We created the human being in the most excellent of forms." According to Bursevi, it is the Qur'anic equivalent of the *ḥadīth*, "God created Adam in His Image, and then manifested [Himself] in him."[93]

In addition, Bursevi considers the oaths in "The Fig" not as vows but as depictions of the human being as the Image of God in metaphorical terms.[94] By the term "fig," God means experiential knowledge or "tasting" (Ar. *dhawq*), which is comprised of "the ways of knowing God the Truth (Ar. *al-ḥaqq*) in the mystery of the human being." These "ways of knowing" are the most enjoyable in existence, and hence are represented by the sweetness of the fig. As for the "olive," it designates "the ways of knowing of the Shari'a." According to Bursevi, these ways of knowing are best portrayed by the bitter olive because "they are meant to aid in the taming of the human soul... the Shari'a must be discomfort directed against soul and body." "Mount Sinai," corresponds to God's Spirit, which is external to the human form yet mysteriously present in the human being since God "breathed" it into Adam (i.e., Q 15:29; 38:72). The "protected land" is the "Mecca of Existence" (Ar. *Makkat wujūd*) which is the human heart that reflects God's Essence in creation.

---

[93] Ibid., 27.152.
[94] For more information on the exact nature of Qur'anic oaths, see: Angelika Neuwirth, "Images and Metaphors in the Introductory Sections of the Makkan Sūras," in *Approaches to the Qurʾān,* G.R. Hawting and Abdul-Kader A. Shareef Eds. (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 3-36.

Thus, when considered together with the oaths in Q 95:1-3 offer an allegorical description of the human being as the Image of God. This anatomy begins with the "olive of the human body" instead of the "heart of the fig" in Bursevi's scheme. This is so because the sweet "fig" of experiential knowledge is more sublime than the bitter "olive" of the Shari'a. Considered in this way, "The human body is ultimately ennobled by the heart [of the "fig"] in the 'secure land.'" Furthermore, "the heart [of the "fig"] stems from the Spirit [of Sinai], and the Spirit stems from the mystery [of "this protected land]." Having embodied the rules of the Shari'a and having attained to the sweetness of experiential knowledge of God, the human being becomes aware of God's Spirit, which is latent within the "abode of the human heart." This constitutes the purpose and meaning of humanity according to Bursevi.[95]

However, this anatomical analogy of God's Image does not apply solely to Adam or to some idealized Perfect Human Being. Rather, Bursevi clarifies that "The Fig" applies to every single member of the human species (Ar. *jins al-insān*). To support this claim, he equates this *Sūra* with a verse that addresses human beings in the second person plural: "And your forms, He made them excellent" (Q 40:64).[96] In the margins of the exegesis in *Rūḥ al-bayān*, Bursevi cites a *ḥadīth* report in which the Prophet himself clarified that the name "Adam" also connotes all of his offspring.[97] In another margin note, Bursevi contends that "God originated His Image without reference to any previous example. [Thus] God created the human being as a totally original creation." The diversity of human forms and characteristics is reflective of this originality.[98]

---

[95] Bursevi, *Rūḥ al-bayān*, 27.152.

[96] Devin Stewart has argued that the Arabic word *taqwīm* is a cognate substitution for the term "form" (Ar. *qiwām*) in the Qur'an, and is thus synonymous with the word *ṣūra*. To make this argument, he has compared Q 95:4 with Q 40:64 in a way similar to Bursevi. See: Devin J. Stewart, "Poetic License in the Qur'an: Ibn al-Ṣāʾigh al-Ḥanafī's *Iḥkām al-rāy fī aḥkām al-ay*, *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 9 (2009): 21-22.

[97] Bursevi, *Rūḥ al-bayān*, 27:153.

[98] Ibid.

Consequently, Bursevi maintains that Adamites are formed "in the most excellent of forms" (Q 95:4).[99] Whit this means is that human beings are "most excellent in [both] formation and proportion—in form as well as in substance." The human form "is the most excellent and beautiful of all forms that can be formed." The concept of "formation" (Ar. *taqwīm*) also connotes the erectness of human posture and the "mastery of the human being over all that is found in the world," according to Bursevi. As for the substance of the human being, it is comprised of the essential qualities of God. "Life, Knowledge, Will, Power, Hearing, Seeing, and Speech." These qualities constitute the "divine image" (Ar. *al-ṣūra al-ilāhīya*), about which Bursevi contends that the statement "God created Adam in His image, and manifested [Himself] in him," refers. Equally relevant is the Sufi *ḥadīth* "He who knows himself self knows his Lord," for it "concerns this true image of the divine." Taking into account the anatomical allegory of the Image of God, as detailed in Q 95:1-3, Bursevi concludes that "the human being is an entity in which is manifested God's Majesty, Beauty, and Perfection."[100] This description applies to all Adamites, a fact to which Bursevi claims even the angels bear witness, according to the *ḥadīth*: "'Those who enter paradise are in the image of Adam. People have not been deficient since then, and even now.'"[101]

In the vein of this proclamation, because human identity is fundamentally theomorphic, any claim of human deficiency must be relative, or even void in the final analysis. Thus, Bursevi interprets the verse Q 95:5, "Then We reduced the human being to the lowest of the low" as if it were abrogated (Ar. *mansūkh*) by Q 95:4, "Indeed, We [God] created the human being in the most excellent of forms." He believes that the locution, "lowest of the low," refers only to those who have "lacked the initiative to actualize the telos incumbent upon human beings," which is

---

[99] Ibid., 27:152.
[100] Ibid.
[101] Ibid., 27:153, from the marginalia of the main text.

manifest the divine qualities that constitute God's Image.[102] From the paradigmatic "most excellent of forms," the Image of God can become disfigured by the sins of wickedness and sedition. Thus disfigured, God will reduce such people to "the lowest of the low" and punish them with hellfire. Bursevi likewise explains in his marginalia that human wickedness comes about only by "[abusing] the honor of being the Image of God through ascribing this identity to themselves without remembering the Divine."[103] In light of this reasoning, verse Q 95:7-8 refers primarily to those who have succumbed to conceptual "lies" concerning human theomorphism. They must be reminded that God is "the most just of those who judge," and is able to punish them for squandering their Adamic heritage. Although their theomorphic identity may become disfigured, the theomorphic essence of human beings remains unchanged according to Bursevi.

Later on in *Rūḥ al-bayān*, Bursevi he suggests that Q 95:5—"Then We [God] reduced the human being to the lowest of the low"— does not apply to humanity in general, but only to unrepentant sinners. Bursevi cites a couplet from the Persian poet Saʿdī (d. 689/1291) to reinforce this point:

> The human form must be erect. However, human trials will not be so straightforward.
> For we human beings are all from Adam's same form—even the disbelievers.[104]

Similarly, Bursevi contends that the phrase "lowest of the low," has no moral bearing on humans created in "the most excellent of forms." The verse is analogous to Q 16:70, "And among you are those reduced to the most feeble of ages." As such, Q 95:5 refers to the reduction of human beings to feebleness in old age. To be the "lowest of the low" is not to be wicked or morally

---

[102] Ibid., 27:153.

[103] Ibid., from the marginalia of the main text.

[104] Muṣliḥ al-Dīn Saʿadī, *Būstān-i Saʿdī*, Doctor Ghulām-Ḥusayn Yusūfī Ed. (Tehran: *Intishārāt-i Anjuman-i Ustādān-i Zabān ve Adabiyyāt-i Fārsī*, 1985), pg. 175, line 3357.

inept, but rather to attain to "senility after youth and weakness after strength."[105] For Bursevi,

being aware of "the ways of knowing God through the mystery of the human being" can yield no

other interpretation. To appreciate the importance of this Sufi anthropological concept is to

become fully aware of the telos of human creation.

Throughout his writings, Bursevi reminds the reader that the Sufi anthropology he

advances is not a minor part of Sufi doctrine. Rather, awareness of Sufi anthropology is the first

step toward doing justice to one's Adamic heritage. From a soteriological perspective, knowledge

of the human being's theomorphic nature can provide the impetus to save oneself from

damnation. In the aforementioned discussion concerning Adam, Abel, and Cain, Bursevi

rhetorically calls upon himself to guide the reader to the divine *basiret* ("insight") latent within.

With this insight, one can both witness the theomorphic nature of human beings as well as the

fundamentally anthropocentric nature of the world in which "the Light of God is not concealed

by anything." Bursevi expands upon this point in a provocative poem in the Sufi theological

work *Kenz-i mahfi* ("The Hidden Treasure"):

> Open your eyes! The mirror of God the Truth is the human being.
> The human being that is seen is nothing but the Compassionate.
> The human being is the one who is cloaked in the raiment of God's Names.
> That one who appears in the form of a lowly dervish is also a Sultan.
> For the breath of the Spirit of God fills the human being.
> In truth, the human being is the spirit of the world.[106]

In this poem, Bursevi attempts to "open the eyes" of his audience in order for them to

recognize the true, Adamic nature of human beings. When one becomes aware of this nature

within the self, one will recognize that all children of Adam share in it. Ultimately,

---

[105] In this same vein, Bursevi relates that a variant reading in Ibn Masᶜūd's lost copy of the Qur'an posits a definite article in the verse (i.e., Ar. *asfal al-sāfilīn*), resulting in "lowest of *some* who are lowly." Accordingly, the verse would connote "those few who have become senile, in particular people who have chronic illnesses." Drawing on Maybudī's *Unveiling of Mysteries*, Bursevi argues that the "lowest" refers to the most elderly among the "low." See: Bursevi, *Rūḥ al-bayān*, 27:153.

[106] Soğüt, "İsmâil Hakkı Bursevî'nin Kenz-i Mahfî Risâlesi Muhtevâ ve Tahlîli," 170.

theomorphism is the very quality that distinguishes human beings from other creatures. It is also

that which renders them equal to each other. As Bursevi clarifies in several passages, Adamic

theomorphism unites all human beings in a horizontal relationship that virtually collapses the

vertical hierarchy of God above His Image. In this sense, Bursevi's Sufi anthropology meets the

criterion of Reichmut, Rüsen, and Sarhan that Islamic Humanism should imply the fundamental

equality of all human beings.[107] No matter the difference in outward appearance, equality of the

progeny of Adam is respected and even celebrated in Bursevi's Sufi anthropology. "The diverse

forms given to Adam's offspring are meant to actualize the creation and formation of Adam in

order to populate the earth," he asserts.[108] Because they are "reproductions of Adam's

comprehensive character," Adamites of all kinds are to be revered.[109] Bursevi's Sufi

anthropology in this way also typifies Reichmut, Rüsen, and Sarhan's criterion of reverence of

otherness and individuality that is so crucial for the concept of Islamic Humanism.[110]

---

[107] Reichmut, Rüsen, and Sarhan, "Humanism and Muslim Culture: Historical Heritage and Contemporary Culture," 15.

[108] Bursevi, *Rūḥ al-bayān*, 15.124

[109] Ibid.

[110] Reichmut, Rüsen, and Sarhan, "Humanism and Muslim Culture: Historical Heritage and Contemporary Culture," 17.

Chapter 4: Bursevi's Anti-Humanism

In Bursevi's autobiographical accounts, Adam himself blesses Bursevi and vindicates his spiritual work. Bursevi thus concluded that he inherited the theomorphism of his ultimate ancestor. More than other religious or political leaders of his day, on the basis of this realization, he believed that he could guide other Adamites to the realities described in his Sufi anthropological writings. Consequently, Bursevi dedicated his life to reaching the pinnacle of human potential and serving his fellow "Adamites."

Approaching Bursevi's Sufi anthropology and Adamology through the lens of Tony Davies' concept of a "humanist before Humanism," the previous chapter demonstrated the ways in which this occurred. Without resorting to anachronism or casting him as a kind of humanistic forerunner, it is possible to argue on this basis that Bursevi was a pre-modern humanist. As the scholars of Sufism Vincent J. Cornell, Scott Kugle, Sa'diyya Shaikh, and Renate Würsch have argued, if there is an intellectual tradition in Islam that can be called humanistic, it is Sufism. Following their precedent, I too argue that Bursevi's Sufi anthropology constituted a seminal example of Islamic Humanism.

However, Bursevi's writings are not one-dimensional. Elsewhere, he makes claims that seem antithetical to those aspects of his Sufi anthropology that are humanistic. In fact, a great deal of Bursevi's Sufi anthropology may be considered "anti-humanistic." As other scholars have demonstrated, this contradiction is not unique to Bursevi.[1] Scholars of Sufism such as Vincent J. Cornell, Omid Safi, Nile Green, and Nathan Hofer have also uncovered the ways in which universalist and egalitarian Sufi theologies can also be exclusivist and hierarchical, especially

---

[1] See: Kate Soper, *Humanism and Anti-Humanism* (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1986), 9-25, 55, 128-129.

when applied to politics.[2] Bursevi was no exception to this trend.

The present chapter investigates this contradiction in Bursevi's otherwise humanistic writings. It explores the following questions that are left unaddressed in his Sufi anthropology: Does Bursevi's Adamology work in the real world? Can human theomorphism be actualized in practice? Why is it that many of Bursevi's Sufi writings are so hierarchical, exclusivistic, and elitist that they constitute a sort of "Anti-Humanism?"[3] To give but an example of Bursevi's Anti-Humanism the following verse can suffice:

> Do not suppose that every Adamite in the world is a real human being (*insan*).
> > If there is a real human being (*kimisi insan*) among the Adamites, then there is a demon among them as well (*kimisi şeytan*).[4]

In another discourse on Sufi anthropology in *Kitāb al-ḥujja al-bāligha*, Bursevi remarks, "The real man (Tur. *merd-i hakiki*) is one that does not have any deficiency...However, most people incline to their base passions. Instead of true perfection, they attain to the 'perfection' of mortal human weakness."[5] Even more in *Kitāb al-ᶜizz al-ādamī*, he seems to contradict his argument for the universality of human theomorphism by stating that human beings who do not perfect themselves are human "in form alone."[6]

---

[2] See: Vincent J. Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*: *Power and Authority in Moroccan Sufism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998), 63, 156, 198; Omid Safi, *The Politics of Knowledge in Premodern Islam*: *Negotiating Ideology and Religious Inquiry* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006), xxvi-xxvii; Nile Green, *Sufism*: *A Global History* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 3-4, 126-128; Nathan Hofer, *The Popularisation of Sufism in Ayyubid and Mamluk Egypt 1173-1325* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 24, 61.

[3] I mean by "Anti-Humanism" a doctrine that is antithetical to the core values of most versions of Humanism, such as universalism, anthropocentrism, and the belief in the fundamental goodness of human beings. I thus employ the conception a way different from Kate Soper, who conceives of Anti-Humanism as a modern philosophical tradition of critique of Humanist discourses. See: Kate Soper, *Humanism and Anti-Humanism* (London: Hutchinson and Co. Publishers, 1986), 9-12.

[4] İsmail Hakkı Bursevi, *Varlığın Dili*: *İbn Meşiş Salavatı ve Şerhi*, Nedim Tan Ed. and Translit. (Istanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 2014), 197.

[5] Abdullah Kargılı, "İsmail Hakkı Bursevi'nin Kitabü'l-Hucceti'l-Baliğa Adlı Eseri İnceleme-Metin," M.A. Thesis, , Istanbul University, Istanbul, 2011, 84.

[6] İsmail Hakkı Bursevi, *Kitâbü'l-Izzi'l-âdemî*, Istanbul: Süleymaniye Yazma Eser Kütüphanesi, 34 Atif Efendi, ms. no. 1420/8, 240a.

This chapter seeks to understand the contradiction between Bursevi's Humanism and his Anti-Humanism. Focusing on the criteria by which Bursevi distinguishes actualized and perfected "Adamites" from those who have the potential for perfection but cannot fulfill the telos of human potential is the key to this endeavor. These criteria are linked to Bursevi's notion of Sufism as "the Adamic Science." In practice, one's level of achievement on the Sufi path distinguishes the true human being from the person who is only potentially "human." Bursevi's Adamology, which embraces all human beings as equally theomorphic, applies in the real world only to certain perfect *men* rather than to all human beings. Finally, his arguments for the supremacy of the Celvetiyye Sufi order over all others and for himself as the only truly "Adamic" human being of his era form a crucial part of his Anti-Humanism.

This chapter explores Bursevi's Anti-Humanism in four sections. The first section examines Bursevi's thought on human potential versus its actuality. It locates the divergence of his Anti-Humanism from other, more humanistic discourses in his definition of potential Adamites versus actual Adamites. The second section investigates the ways in which Bursevi conceives of Adamites who *do* actualize their potential as "Perfect Men" (i.e., males). It also explores why Bursevi considers them to be "true humans." The third section examines the ways in which Bursevi defines those who cannot actualize their theomorphic potential. It shows that Bursevi conceived of those who are only "potentially perfect," such as non-Muslims, apostates, and non-Celveti Sufis as "inhuman humans." This section also foregrounds Bursevi's conception of women as sub-human. It also brings to light the ways in which Bursevi believed society should treat those who are inferior to "true human beings." In the fourth section, the chapter answers the question, "Who met Bursevi's criteria for the Perfect Man of his times?" It discusses

the ways in which Bursevi exploited elements of his Sufi anthropology to argue for his own

identity as the Perfect Man, the Axis of the Age, and the fully actualized Adam.

I. Potentiality and Actuality in Bursevi's Sufi Anthropology

Bursevi's anti-humanistic turn is not surprising, given the social and political critiques

that can be found in his writings. From corrupt Üsküp scholars and irrational Sultans to

opportunistic and misguided Sufis, the Ottoman society that is depicted in them is utterly

corrupt. The environment in which he lived was replete with people who had the potential to do

good and but squandered such opportunities. Thus, it is easy to argue that Bursevi's Anti-

Humanism was not incidental to his thought in general. In order to make sense of this argument,

it is necessary to explore Bursevi's conception of human potential as it is applied to the real

world.

a.) *"Potential" Is Not the Same as "Actual"*

Bursevi wrote a great deal about the difference between potential (Ar. *isti^cdād*) and

actuality (Ar. *bi-l-fi^cl*), as applied to human nature. He concentrated on these topics to resolve

certain theoretical problems in his Adamology. Because all human beings bear the same Adamic

inheritance, it would appear that merely being born human entails theomorphism. In this vein,

Abū Lahab, the famous villain of Banū Hāshim mentioned in the Qur'an, "and or even the

"Pharaonic" Üsküp grandees, could possess a theomorphic identity in the manner of the Prophet

Muhammad or Bursevi's Sufi shaykh Osman Fazlı. However, as Bursevi clarifies in his writings,

he did not consider these former figures to be theomorphic in the same way.[7] Therefore, to avoid

---

[7] See: Īsmail Hakki Bursevi, *Rūḥ al-bayān fī tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, Bursa: Bursa Eski Eserler Kütüphanesi (BEYBEK), Genel (GE), 27.191-193.

any possible misunderstanding, Bursevi distinguishes between a "potential theomorphism,"

which is universal, and actual theomorphism, which only a select few can achieve.

In several works, Bursevi argues that human beings are not automatically theomorphic

"Adamites" by virtue of their birth. Rather, theomorphism is only a potential to be actualized. A

passage in *Kitāb al-ᶜizz al-ādamī* ("The Book of the Glorification of the Adamic State")

illustrates this idea well. In this passage, Bursevi quotes two lines from Jalāl al-Dīn Rumi's (d.

672/1273) *Mathnawī-yi maᶜnawī* (*Spiritual Couplets*) and provides an exegesis of them:

> Mere receptivity (Ar. *qābilīya*) is not a condition to obtain God's bounty.
>   Rather, God's bounty is a condition for receptivity.[8]

Bursevi draws on these lines of poetry to argue in favor of the Ashᶜarī theological doctrine that

denies human agency.[9] The capacity to receive divine grace does not mean that God is required

to give it. Striving for perfection does not necessarily perfect human character. Rather, perfection

consists in the God-given ability to strive for perfection. In the rest of the passage, Bursevi

makes several analogies to illustrate this point. He argues that a mirror cannot be made from a

stone, yet a mirror can serve its true function only after it is cleaned of dust, rust, dirt, and other

obfuscating materials.[10] Bursevi also likens human potential to a coin purse in which are

deposited various coins. Gold and copper coins connote both perfection and deficiency: every

individual has been given a different "sum" of money. Drawing certain coins from the purse but

not other coins constitutes the "actualization of the ability to receive one's potential [whether it is

"gold" or "copper"]." Just as gold cannot be transformed into copper, so too can potential for

---

[8] Bursevi, *Kitâbü'l-Izzi'l-âdemî*, 147a. Examining the most critical editions of the *Mathnawī-yi maᶜnawī*, it is clear that Bursevi conflates the final hemistich of one line and first hemistich of another (indicated in boldface): *Chāra-yi ān dil ᶜaṭāʾī mubaddalast.* **Dād-i ū rā qābilīyat sharṭ nīst. Bal-ki sharṭ-i qābilīyat dād-i-ū-st**. *Dād lubb-u-qābiliyyat hast pūst.* See: Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, *The Mathnawí of Jalálu'ddín Rúmí*, Reynold A. Nicholson Ed. and Trans, (London: Luzac & Co, 1939), 5.1537-1538**.**

[9] See: Imām al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynī, *A Guide to Conclusive Proofs for the Princples of Belief* (*Kitāb al-irshād ilā qawāṭiᶜ al-adilla fī-uṣūl al-iᶜtiqād*), Dr. Paul E. Walker Trans. (Reading: Garnet Publishing, 2001), 103-110, 119-120, 139-140.

[10] Bursevi, *Kitâbü'l-Izzi'l-âdemî*, 147a-b.

perfection cannot be transformed into deficiency. "God makes manifest the proper state of every person in accordance with his worthiness," writes Bursevi.[11] Ultimately, Bursevi concludes that "when one arrives at the ability to actualize the capacity to receive God's grace...it simply manifests [itself]."[12] Using the above analogies, Bursevi asserts that a Sufi shaykh cannot guide one who is a "stone" instead of a "mirror," or one whose "purse of potentiality" contains only copper coins.[13]

In his theoretical discourses on anthropocentrism, Bursevi asserts that the human being is the archetype of all things. As discussed in the previous chapter, he envisions the human being as the "seed" of the "tree of existence." Thus, the "fruit of the tree" that encompasses all opposites found in the created order of things. Although the human being is a comprehensive microcosm of creation, the human being cannot be two different things at once. In particular, a human being cannot be a believer (Ar. *mu'min*) and an unbeliever (*kāfir*) at the same time. It is more accurate to say that, one has the *potential* to actualize either identity.[14] Bursevi explains, "In every individual, the entirety of possible qualities that make him a believer or an unbeliever are actualized (Ar. *bi-l-fiᶜl*), whereas the opposing qualities remain only in potential (Ar. *bi-l-quwwa*)."[15] In other words, to become a believer is to manifest outwardly the actuality (Ar. *sha'n*) of belief while internalizing the possibility of infidelity. Once a believer has actualized the potential of faith, he loses the potential to be an unbeliever: "Just as the believer in actuality cannot be an unbeliever in actuality, the unbeliever in actuality cannot be a believer in

---

[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid., 148b.
[13] Ibid., 147b.
[14] Abdullah Kargılı, "İsmail Hakkı Bursevi'nin Kitabü'l-Hucceti'l-Baliğa Adlı Eseri İnceleme-Metin," M.A. Thesis, , Istanbul University, Istanbul, 2011, 100.
[15] Ibid.

actuality."[16] Thus, those Sufis who claim, "I have known the Truth, Most High, through the 'unification of opposites'" (Tur. *Ben Hak teala'yı cem'-i ezdadla bildim dedikleri*)," only express theoretically the comprehensiveness of monistic theology. Because they are only *images* of God, they cannot manifest in reality the harmonization of opposites like God can. Rather, they activate certain qualities and keep others *in potentia*.[17] As will become clearer later on in this chapter, this logic also applies to human theomorphism. Despite the universal human potential for theomorphic perfection, no person can be a true "Adamite" and an imperfect human being at the same time.

In several, Bursevi also asserts that human nature cannot be truly theomorphic. Rather, "because heart of the Perfect Human Being" (Tur. *kalb-i insan-ı kamil*) is the locus of God's self-witnessing in creation and the core of the human being as the Image of God, it alone can take on divine qualities. However, the heart, despite its ability to become like God, is not itself divine. That which is "divine" in the heart is the potential (Ar. *istiᶜdād*) to become perfect.[18] Bursevi's analysis of the Qur'anic statement "We [God] have given you all of which you asked" (Q 14:34), offers insight into this issue. Since there can be nothing more desirable for the human being than excellence, Bursevi reasons that the verse "is an allusion to the fact that God, Most High, has given the human being, from even before creation, the potential for excellence" (Ar. *ḥusn al-istiᶜdād*)."[19] This potential for excellence means more than simply having the capacity to become perfect. For Bursevi, "It necessitates that the human being receive the Divine Emanation—as God has said elsewhere 'Indeed, We created the human being in the most excellent form (Q

---

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid., 100-101.

[18] Engin Söğüt, "İsmâil Hakkı Bursevî'nin Kenz-i Mahfî Risâlesi Muhtevâ ve Tahlîli," M.A. thesis, Marmara University, Istanbul, 2007, 76.

[19] İsmail Hakki Bursevi, *Rūḥ al-bayān fī tafsīr al-Qurᵓān*, Bursa: Bursa Eski Eserler Kütüphanesi (BEYBEK), Genel (GE), 18.105.

94:4)."[20] The significance of this potential to be theomorphic is indicated by the requirement to undergo tremendous trials that reduce the human being to the "lowest of the low" (Q 95:5). God responds to petitions for extraction from the state of the "lowest of the low" and guides humans to realize to the sublimity of their potential selves.[21] It is significant that in this case Bursevi makes no effort to argue for the abrogation Q 95:5, as he does in his commentary on "The Fig" (Q 95).[22] Instead, human beings can become reduced to wickedness despite being created with hearts that can take on the divine qualities.

b.) *Bursevi's Exclusivistic Definition of the Concept of Fiṭra*

In light of his discussions of the fundamental theomorphism of humanity, the anthropocentric nature of the world, and the equivalence of Adam and Adamites explored in the previous chapter, one would expect Bursevi's discussion of humankind's *fiṭra* or primordial nature to be similarly humanistic. However, his discussions of *fiṭra* are anti-humanistic and even exclusivistic in a way that is anomalous in the tradition of Sufi theology. In contrast to most Sufi and even non-Sufi conceptions of the *fiṭra*, Bursevi asserts that it is not an inherent nature, but rather is a *potential* that can either be activated or remain undeveloped.

In his works, Bursevi draws on a wide variety of definitions of *fiṭra* as found in the Qur'an, *Ḥadīth*, and interpretive works.[23] The Qur'anic concept of *fiṭra* is an inherent inclination to believe in monotheism: it is a theological orientation "upon which God originated humankind" (Q 30:30). However, in *Ḥadīth* literature, *fiṭra* is defined differently. Here, it is described variously as the external nature of males, a state of immutable perfection in which children are

---

[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid., 27.152-153.
[23] Ibid., 22.14-15.

created, or a tendency for monotheism in children that parents can alter by foisting upon them Christianity, Judaism, Zoroastrianism, or in some versions, Islam.[24] Most Muslim theologians also agree that *fiṭra* connotes a kind of primordial religion (for some, this is Islam) and excellence of character. They also argue that all human beings have an essential *fiṭra*. Whether or not someone lives in accord with this *fiṭra* is another matter.[25] The two dictionaries of Sufi terminology on which Bursevi frequently draws, ᶜAbd al-Razzāq al-Kāshānī's (d. 730/1329) *Muᶜjam iṣṭalāḥāt al-ṣūfiya* ("Dictionary of Sufi Terminology") and al-Sharīf ᶜAlī al-Jurjānī's (d. 816/1413) *Kitāb al-taᶜrīfāt* ("Book of Definitions"), define *fiṭra* respectively as "distinguishing creation from the Truth through returning to one's essence and its moral ramifications," and "the presumable natural disposition to accept faith."[26]

　　Although he is indebted to these previous conceptions, Bursevi's definition of *fiṭra* is uniquely his own. For him, the term entails "that there is no transforming what human beings possess in their creation. God originated (Ar. *faṭara*) all human beings with a natural disposition toward divine unity (Ar. *tawḥīd*)."[27] Bursevi's notion of *fiṭra* thus signifies the state of primordial human theomorphism and its corollary, moral excellence. The way in which Bursevi's definition is distinct from its predecessors is that for him, *fiṭra* is only a *potential*—not an inborn disposition whose manifestation is guaranteed. Bursevi cites *al-Taʾwīlāt al-najmīya* ("The Exegesis of Najm [al-Dīn Kubrā]") to assert that God "set up in the hearts of those whom He created the realization of unity and salvation by means of [the *fiṭra*]. He likewise made some of

---

[24] See: *Ṣaḥīḥ Bukharī*, 77 *Kitāb al-libās* (*The Book of Attire*), 106; *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 46 *Kitāb al-qadar* (*The Book of Destiny*), 36, 34.

[25] See: Hayati Hökelekli, s.v. "*Fıtrat*," *İslam Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul: Türk Diyanet Vakfı, İslam Araştırmalar Merkezi, 1996), 13.47-48.

[26] ᶜAbd al-Razzāq al-Kāshānī, *Muᶜjam iṣṭalāḥāt al-ṣūfiya*, Dr. ᶜAbd al-ᶜĀl Shāhīn Ed. (Cairo: Dār al-Manār, 1988), s.v. "*Fuṭūr*," 154; ᶜAlī al-Jurjānī, *Kitāb al-taᶜrīfāt*, Gustav Flügel Ed. (Leipzig: FCG Vogelii, 1845) s.v. "*Al-Fiṭra*," 175.

[27] Bursevi, *Rūḥ al-bayān*, 22.14-15.

the hearts of His creation deviate by means of godless materialism and damnation."[28] *Fiṭra* thus entails a universal tendency that all human beings possess to know God (Ar. *maʿrifat Allāh*). According to Bursevi, "Naturally endowed mystical knowledge" (Ar. *al-maʿrifa al-lubbīya*) is found in all human beings. However, it "is not always willingly employed." All in all, Bursevi reasons that *fiṭra* is best described as the potential to recognize God's presence in the human heart.[29] However, it would seem that through divine predestination, only certain human beings are able to activate the *fiṭra*. The rest of humanity is are doomed to a state in which they cannot actualize their *fiṭra*.

In his humanistic writings, Bursevi employs the doctrine of *fiṭra* to argue for the universality of human perfection and theomorphism. However, his interpretation of *fiṭra* is also exclusivistic and perfectionistic a manner that is antithetical to Humanism. To make sense of this paradox, it is helpful to examine the theories of the philosopher Władysław Tatarkiewicz (d. 1980). Tatarkiewicz examined Western philosophical, religious, mathematical, ethical, and artistic concepts on perfection and perfectionism from Antiquity to the present. On the basis of this investigation, Tatarkiewicz argued that all notions of perfection are extreme by their very nature. In order to be truly perfect in the sense of an ultimate, incomparable ideal, perfection must be taken to its utmost degree. For Tatarkiewicz, such extremism is typically found in discussions of the perfect good. Although Tatarkiewicz did not read Bursevi's works, his theories describe well how Bursevi's perfectionistic notion of human excellence also presupposes the existence of that which is "perfectly bad," such as the "perfect thief" or the "perfect idiot."[30] In

---

[28] Ibid., 22.15.
[29] Ibid., 22.15.
[30] Władysław Tatarkiewicz, *On Perfection,* Janusz Kuczyński Ed., Christopher Kasparek Trans. (Warsaw: Warsaw University Press, 1992), 12-13.

light of the extreme nature of this type of idealism, he concludes that there are many reasons why

"a perfectionist morality of striving after perfection does not inspire universal sympathy."[31]

In light of Tatarkiewicz's analysis, I argue that Bursevi espouses an extreme,

perfectionistic conception of the *fiṭra* that applies only to a select elite. This is apparent in his

exegesis of the Qur'anic verse, "God desires to lessen your burdens. Indeed, the human being

was created weak (Ar. *wa-khuliqa al-insān ḍaʿīf^{an}*) (Q 4:28). In keeping with discussions

explored in the previous chapter, Bursevi argues that the Qur'an does not chastise humankind

categorically:

> Because of his weakness, the human being cannot renounce God even for a
> moment. Nonetheless, he is praised by this weakness; no matter how the human being
> may appear in his human (Ar. *al-fiṭra al-insānīya*), it corresponds to the nature of God (
> Ar. *fiṭrat Allāh*), upon which He originated humankind (Q 30:30)...[32]

Bursevi argues that human weakness is paradoxically "the very reason for the perfection (Ar.

kamāl) of the human being, the reason for his salvation (Ar. *saʿādatihi*)—and [conversely] the

cause of his deficiency and distress"[33] He equates this Qur'anic notion of human weakness with

human potential (Ar. *istiʿdād*). Unlike the instinctively driven angels or beasts, human beings

have the potential to change their state. By transcending the weakness of human nature (Ar. *ḍaʿf

al-insānīya*), they can become angelic. However, by succumbing to this weakness, they can

become beastly. Ultimately, "Only the human being has been chosen for this weakness, in order

to strive to become perfect (Ar. *li-istikmālihi*) by taking on the characteristics of God."[34]

Although Bursevi stresses that all human beings are "blessed" with weakness, not everyone can

make use of the potentials to perfect oneself. "By perfecting this weakness, the human being can

become the greatest of creation (Q 98:7, *khayr al-barīya*)," writes Bursevi. However, those who

---

[31] Ibid., 34.
[32] Bursevi, *Rūḥ al-bayān*, 14.57.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid.

do not perfect this weakness take on beastly qualities, thereby transforming into "the 'worst of creation' (Q 98:8, *sharr al-barīya*)."[35]

Because the potential to actualize human theomorphism is not guaranteed, the onus is on human beings to take their *fiṭra* seriously. By virtue of their very humanity, all human beings have the potential to be theomorphic and to be good and perfect following God's example. Bursevi's arguments here resonate with existentialist philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre's concept of "Existentialist Humanism," in which humans are portrayed as the only beings who are "condemned to be free."[36] For Sartre, this freedom is thrust upon humans "because [the human being] did not create himself, yet is nevertheless at liberty, and from the moment that he is thrown into this world is responsible for everything he does."[37] Humans are worthy of respect because of their capacity to realize that they "before all else" exist, and can live in accord with their unique identity which is the fruit of their existence.[38]

For Bursevi, humans are condemned to be free in a similar sense. However, this freedom entails the free will both to do justice to the *fiṭra* and to neglect it. No external factor can prevent the human being from actualizing the *fiṭra*. When God declares that all things are created to be at the disposal of human beings (i.e., Q 14:32-34; 22:65; 45:13 etc.), Bursevi contends that this refers to whatever aids in fulfilling the potential of the *fiṭra*. "God made them means (Ar. *sabab*[an]) for the perfection of the potential of the human being to accept the Divine Emanation," he writes.[39] Furthermore, he argues,

> The world, meaning all that is in it, was created subservient to the existence of the human being. Its sole purpose is to serve as a means to perfect the human being (Ar. *li-*

---

[35] Ibid.

[36] For more information, see: Soper, *Humanism and Anti-Humanism*, 60.

[37] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism*, Carol Macomber Trans., (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 28-29.

[38] Ibid., 23-24.

[39] Bursevi, *Rūḥ al-bayān*, 18.105.

kamāliyyatihi)...The human being who has spiritually matured, who is perfect (Ar. *kāmil*), is the fruit of the tree of all existing things. Understand this point very seriously.[40]

In the final analysis, there is no excuse for human imperfection. Human beings are "condemned to be free" in order to actualize their theomorphism.[41] Although Bursevi argues for the doctrine of striving for perfection, he ultimately upholds a more, exclusivistic notion of *fiṭrawī* perfection. This leads him to promote an elitist meritocracy that ironically undermines his conception of human goodness.[42]

c.) *The Means to Reach Perfection*

Bursevi speaks of various "means" (Ar. *sabab*) by which human beings can actualize their *fiṭra*. However, he does not clearly explain what they are. What are the ways in which human beings can go from being potential Adamites to actual Adamites, according to Bursevi? Unsurprisingly, Bursevi eventually clarifies that Sufism is the means by which people can best activate their Adamic potential. In his translation and extended commentary on *Rūḥ al-kalām fī-sharḥ ṣalāt Shaykh ʿAbd al-Salām* ("The Essence of Theology:' A Commentary on the Prayer of ʿAbd al-Salām ibn Mashīsh"), he explains why Adamites need Sufism in order to activate their theomorphic potential. He says that the Prophet Muḥammad is the greatest example of a *fiṭrawī* human being. The Prophet's *fiṭra* was fully actualized during his Heavenly Ascent (Ar. *miʿrāj*). He could ascend to the summit of divine unity during the Ascent because of his coming to know the "sciences of Adam" (Ar. *ʿulūm ādam*) that conveyed the reality of his *fiṭra*.[43] Although the Prophet's ascent was exemplary, this experience was not necessarily unique to him. Rather, "The

---

[40] Ibid.
[41] Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism*, 28-29.
[42] Tatarkiewicz, *On Perfection,* 34.
[43] İsmail Hakkı Bursevi, *Varlığın Dili*: *İbn Meşiş Salavatı ve Şerhi*, Nedim Tan Ed. and Translit. (Istanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 2014), 195.

perfect ones in the community of Islam (Tur. *kümmel-i ümmet*) by virtue of their potential (Ar. *bi-qadr al-istiᶜdād*) are heirs of the Prophet." Such people experience their own *miᶜrāj* by also coming to know the theomorphic "sciences of Adam," latent within them.[44] These "perfect ones" are the Sufis, and the essence of the "Adamic Science" is Sufism. By identifying Sufism as the means to human perfection, Bursevi considerably narrows his conception of human perfectibility. This conception becomes even more exclusivistic in his discussions of the varieties of Sufism that are valid, and the nature of the "Adamite" Sufis who have achieved perfection through them.

II. Sufis, the True Adamites.

a.) *The Adamic Science*

In his works, Bursevi often speaks of an "Adamic Science" or "Adamic Sciences" (Ar. *ᶜilm ādamī, ᶜulūm ādamīya*). Usually, these terms connote the knowledge that God has imparted directly to Adam. Doctrinally, Bursevi follows the exegesis by Ibn al-ᶜArabī (d. 638/1240) of the Qur'anic statement "God taught Adam 'the names,' all of them" (Ar. *wa-ᶜallama Ādama al-asmāᵓa kullahā*, Q 2:31). According to Ibn al-ᶜArabī, the "names" that were taught to Adam are the totality of God's "Names," by which God names Himself. This act of naming engenders creation because it conveys the fullness of the divine command "Be!" (i.e., Q 2:117; 3:47; 16:40 etc.). God's teaching Adam the Names also confirms Adam as the Image of God.[45] In his own exegesis of Adam's instruction by God, Bursevi agrees with Ibn al-ᶜArabī's interpretation and deems it valid. He states that "Adamic Science" consists of knowledge of the Names.[46] However,

---

[44] Ibid.

[45] See: William Chittick, *The Sufi Path of* Knowledge: *Ibn al-Arabi's Metaphysics of Imagination* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 30-36, 55-57.

[46] Bursevi, *Rūḥ al-bayān*, 12.67.

Bursevi also offers another definition of the Adamic Science: this is the awareness of human theomorphism. When God "breathed" His spirit into Adam (Q 15:29; 38:72), He imparted knowledge of not just the divine Names, but also the identities of all divine and created beings. Ultimately, to speak of the "teaching" of Adam is to present a tautology. Because he was created as God's Image, Adam had full knowledge of both God and creation without any intermediary. In reality, God's teaching was a kind of "honoring" (Ar. *tashrīf*) of Adam, which applies to every descendant of Adam as well.[47]

Bursevi views the Adamic Science as the unique prerogative of humankind. The angels, despite their excellence, are neither theomorphic nor were they taught God's Names. Thus, rather become angelic, Bursevi argues that it is the God-given duty of humankind to cultivate self-awareness and realize the "clear proof" (Ar. *bayyina*) of human theomorphism. Recognizing this "clear proof" is the means by which one can become an Adamite. As Bursevi remarks in a poem:

> Consider the nobility of the Adamic Science. Know well its worth.
> Taking up service in the Evident Faith, you will find the path to God.
> If you say, "Ah! Let the Light of God be manifest to me,"
> Then [by the Adamic Science] erase from the heart all that is other than He.[48]

Once again, Bursevi notes that the mere inheritance of the Adamic Science cannot actualize the human potential for theomorphism. Although the seeker after the Adamic Science, was "taught" this mystery just as it was taught to Adam, he is obliged to study with a master who can help him actualize it.

b.) *The Adamic Science as Sufism, the Prophet's Science*

---

[47] Ibid. 12.67-68.
[48] Bursevi, *Varlığın Dili*, 194.

Who were the masters of the Adamic Science according to Bursevi? On the surface, it might appear that such a guide could be any Adamite who has awareness of human theomorphism and who has perfected himself on the basis of this knowledge. As Bursevi stresses, "Everyone has the ability to gain this [Adamic] knowledge, insofar as one plumbs the depths of one's potential" (Tur. *Herkes ol ilmi isti'dadı kadar fehm eyledi*).[49] Because it is the sole means by which human beings can fulfill their *raison d'être*, it would appear that the ability to master the Adamic Science must be universal.[50] In actuality, however, Bursevi's definition of the master of Adamic Science is much more limited than this. One's ability to comprehend is "restricted by the extent of his potential and by that of his receptivity" (Ar. *fa-idrākuhu idrāk muqayyad bi-qadr istiʿdādihi wa-qābiliyyatihi*).[51] According to the poem reproduced in the previous section, the Adamic guide is one who by mastering the Adamic Science has taken up the "Evident Faith" of Islam. In other words, the masters of the Adamic Science are exemplars of Islam. For Bursevi these are the Sufis, the masters of the Prophetic way.

To make sense of Bursevi's equation of the Adamic Science with Sufism, it is first necessary to understand his conception of the Prophet Muḥammad in relation to Adam. His most illustrative discussion of the Prophet Muḥammad can be found in the work, *Rūḥ al-kalām fī sharḥ ṣalāt shaykh ʿAbd al-Salām*. For Bursevi, the prayer (*ṣalāt*) of Ibn Mashīsh is tantamount to a revelation, a kind of "recitation" of the "book" of the Prophet's Muḥammad's character.[52] For this reason, its verses should be approached almost as one approaches the Qur'an. The *Prayer* contains a verse praising the Prophet as surpassing Adam: "The sciences of Adam were revealed [to the Prophet], and all other creatures were dumbfounded" (Ar. *wa-tanazzalat ʿulūm Ādam wa-*

---

[49] Ibid., 187-188.
[50] Ibid., 188.
[51] Bursevi, *Kitâbü'l-Izzi'l-âdemî*, 166a.
[52] Bursevi, *Varlığın Dili*, 178-179.

aᶜjaza al-khalāʾiq).[53] As discussed in the previous chapter, Bursevi argues that the name *ādam* can be considered a metonym for "the entire human species (Tur. *cins-i insandır*)." In light of this, this verse from the *Prayer* signifies that "all of the means of knowing unique to human beings were revealed to the heart of the Prophet."[54] Bursevi also contends that the word *ādam* can also signify "the father of all mortal humans (Ar. *abū-l-bashr*)" and the theomorphic archetype of humankind. Given this fact, the "revelation of the Adamic Sciences" connotes the revelation of the truth of God and the reality of human theomorphism.

Bursevi reasons that Ibn Mashīsh's prayer reveals not only the supremacy of Adam and of Adamites in general but also of the Prophet Muḥammad as supreme Adamite. On the basis of the aforementioned verse, if Adam is the telos of all creation, then Muḥammad is "the telos of the telos." For Bursevi, Muhammad is "the true Adam" (Tur. *adem-i hakikat*), whereas the historical Adam is "the Adam of form" (Tur. *adem-i surat*).[55] To support this claim, Bursevi cites *ḥadīth*s that assert Muḥammad's predominance over the other prophets of Islam, most notably "I am of God, and the believers are from me," and "I am the city of knowledge, and ᶜAlī is its gate."[56] Alluding to another *ḥadīth*, "I existed while Adam was between water and clay," Bursevi asserts that Muḥammad's creation preceded even that of Adam.[57] Unlike Adam, who gathers together God's Names in his being, "God's Names, all that which the Names signify, and their realities are united" (Tur. *belki esma ve müsemmeyat ve hakayıkın mecmu'udur*)" in Muḥammad.[58] According to the Sufis, the "name of something is significant to its manifestation. The meaning of a

---

[53] Ibid., 64.
[54] Ibid., 187.
[55] Ibid., 188.
[56] Ibid., 210-211. Most Sunni scholars consider the first *ḥadīth* to be fabricated. The majority of Sunni scholars dispute the other *ḥadīth*'s authenticity, but a minority do not. See: Muḥammad ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Maqāṣid al-ḥasana fī bayān kathīr min al-aḥādīth al-mushtahara ᶜalā al-alsina*, Muḥammad ᶜUthmān al-Khusht Ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ᶜArabī, 1985), *ḥadīth* 190, pg. 171; *ḥadīth* 189, page 167-171.
[57] For more information on this *ḥadīth*, see: al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Maqāṣid*, *ḥadīth* 842, pg. 522.
[58] Bursevi, *Varlığın Dili*, 188.

manifested thing is the reality of the name."[59] Following this principle, Bursevi argues that

Muḥammad represents the reality of the name of Adam. The "revelation" of the Adamic

Sciences to Muhammad did not connote a mere inheritance, but rather the culmination of these

sciences in the Prophet. Having perfected the Adamic Sciences, the Prophet Muḥammad

actualized Adam's theomorphism to the greatest extent possible.[60] Surpassing Adam,

Muhammad achieved "the most perfect potential of human nature" (Tur. *İşte bundan insanın*

isti'dadı ekmel olduğu ma'lum oldu).[61] Because he was the true Perfect Human Being,

Muḥammad transcended all spiritual stations in a single instance during his "Nocturnal Ascent"

(Ar. *miʿrāj*).[62]

According to Bursevi's view of the supremacy of the Prophet Muḥammad, what it means

to be an Adamite is hypothetical for the rest of of humanity, including Adam. However, it is not

hypothetical for Muḥammad. However, the Prophet's actualization of his Adamic inheritance is

not exclusive to him. "All human beings are Aḥmad in the station of the First Intellect," says

Bursevi, "They are Muḥammad in the station of the human soul." He further explains that

because of their diverse "capacities to receive God's grace and the disparity of their potential (Ar.

tafāwut istiʿdādihi), human beings are diverse in their appearance and characteristics."[63] The

light of Adam's knowledge light is derived from that of Aḥmad, who is the First Intellect, and his

status as a prophet stems from Muhammad's prophethood (Ar. *fa-ādam aḥmad bi-qadr nūrihi*

wa-Muḥammad bi-qadr nubuwwatihi).[64] Contradicting the tenets of his Adamology, Bursevi

states that the true forefather of humankind is Muḥammad, not Adam. To fulfill the purpose of

---

[59] Ibid.
[60] Bursevi, *Varlığın Dili*, 187-188.
[61] Kargılı, "İsmail Hakkı Bursevi'nin Kitabü'l-Hucceti'l-Baliğa Adlı Eseri İnceleme-Metin," 143.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Bursevi, *Kitâbü'l-Izzi'l-âdemî*, 135b.
[64] Ibid., 136a.

humanity is thus to be a Muslim and to become an "Adamite" is to become "Muhammadan" in this sense.[65]

Simply by belonging to the Prophet's community (Ar. *umma*), Muslims are able to access Muhammad's wisdom to become themselves Perfect Human Beings. However, Bursevi makes it clear that most Muslims do not take advantage of this connection. In reality, only an exceptionally few Muslims can master the Adamic Science and actualize their potential for theomorphism. These are the Sufi "heirs of the Prophet" (Tur. *varis-i resul olanlar*) who can "perceive true unity and experience God's self-manifestation from His Essence within to the extent that they can actualize their potential (Ar. *bi-qadr al-isti ͨdād*)."[66] These "heirs" are masters of mystical knowledge (Ar. *ma ͨrifa*). On the basis of this knowledge, they are the "most perfect" (Ar. *akmal*) of the *umma*.[67]

In stark contrast to his universalistic Adamology, Bursevi argues that this elitist meritocracy is foreordained. Moreover, it is natural to the world and to human society. Bursevi's theories might be best described as a philosophy of perfectionism, similar to Thomas Hurka's concept of "maximizing perfectionism." For Hurka, perfectionism generally conceived can be either "narrow," such as "a moral theory based on human nature," or "broad," such as a "more inclusive view that values some development of capacities or some achievement of excellence."[68] Perfectionism is the "narrow" sense is often a "maximizing morality," which teaches human beings who are able to achieve perfection must achieve the greatest perfection possible in order to be of true worth. "Half" or "nearly" perfect does not entail perfection.[69] Similar to Hurka, Bursevi also conceived of human perfection (Tur. *kemal-i insani*) in degrees of

---

[65] Ibid., 176b.
[66] Kargılı, "İsmail Hakkı Bursevi'nin Kitabü'l-Hucceti'l-Baliğa Adlı Eseri İnceleme-Metin," 143.
[67] Ibid., 143-144.
[68] Thomas Hurka, *Perfectionism* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 3-4.
[69] Ibid., 55-58.

hierarchy which reflect different "determinations (Ar. *aḥkām*) of the Divine Names" in

creation.[70] The greater the degree to which a human being has actualized his potential for

theomorphism, the more perfect he will become. For Bursevi "perfect" means "completely

perfect." It is incumbent on Muslims to seek out the "perfection of mystical knowledge," which

is the "Adamic Science," and fulfill the telos of human existence. They should maximize their

striving for theomorphic perfection, even if it means prioritizing such efforts "above seeking out

divine mercy and forgiveness."[71]

In their actualization of their theomorphic potential, the Sufis not only exceed their fellow

Muslims, but also surpass the prophets before Muḥammad.[72] Bursevi's exclusivistic favoritism of

the Sufis is not unique to him, but is endemic to Sufi writings of the early modern period.[73] As

discussed in Chapter 1, Sufi theologians who articulated some of the most universalistic Sufi

anthropologies, such as Abū-Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī, Ibn al-ᶜArabī, and Rumi, positioned Sufis above

all other Muslims.[74] What distinguishes Bursevi's conception of Sufism from that of other Sufis

is his assertion that Sufis are "true humans" beyond other Muslims and even other prophets.

Michel Foucault's critique of Humanism can help elucidate the logic behind Bursevi's

depiction of Sufis as "true humans" superior to all others. To avoid anachronism, I acknowledge

that Foucault intended his critique to apply primarily to modern, Comtean notions of Humanism

---

[70] Söğüt, "İsmâil Hakkı Bursevî'nin Kenz-i Mahfî Risâlesi Muhtevâ ve Tahlîli," 82.

[71] Ibid., 145.

[72] Kargılı, "İsmail Hakkı Bursevi'nin Kitabü'l-Hucceti'l-Baliğa Adlı Eseri İnceleme-Metin," 144-145.

[73] See: Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, 135-136; Ovamir Anjum "Mystical Authority and Governmentality in Medieval Islam," in *Sufism and Society*: *Arrangements of the Mystical in the Muslim World*, 1200-1800, John Curry, Erik Ohlander Eds. (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), 71-75.

[74] See: Maha Elkaisy-Friemuth, *God and Humans in Islamic Thought*: *ᶜAbd al-Jabbār, Ibn Sīnā, and al-Ghazālī* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 160, 137-140;   William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Love*: *The Spiritual Teachings of Rumi* (Albany, NY: The State University of New York Press, 1984), 85, 173-175; Jawid Mojaddedi, *Beyond Dogma*: *Rumi's Teachings on Friendship with God and Early Sufi Theories* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 197-200; Gregory A. Lipton, *Rethinking Ibn 'Arabi* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 1-23;

as he makes clear in his works, particularly on Anthropology.[75] Nevertheless, Foucault's

criticism of Humanism can elucidate a great deal concerning Bursevi's Anti-Humanism.[76] Most

pertinent to Bursevi's exclusivism, Foucault brings to light the ways in which Humanism has

been used to conceal strategies of domination. Most strikingly, he argues that the very notion of

Humanism made it an effective "technology of control." For Foucault, because Humanism is

based on an idealistic definition of human nature, it is not difficult to employ it to justify the

denigration of people who do not conform to its ideals.[77] No matter how universalistic a version

of Humanism may be, it can be weaponized to differentiate "true humans" from "monsters." In

this vein, Humanism may be employed to support means of subjugation in relation to the ideal

"human being" which is the goal of human perfectionism.[78] For Foucault, nowhere was this more

apparent than in the Humanism-inspired "humanitarian" efforts of the 19th century behind the

construction of prisons and asylums, the creation of social welfare programs, and even

colonialism. These "humanitarian" efforts were often described as being for the betterment of all

of humankind. However, in the final analysis, they only served white, heterosexual Western

males—the ideal, "true humans" of most 19th-century versions of Humanism.[79] In an interview

conducted later in his life, Foucault summed up the critique of Humanism that he advanced

throughout his career:

---

[75] See: Béatrice Han-Pile, "'The 'Death of Man:' Foucault and Anti Humanism," in *Focault and Philosophy*, Timothy O'Leary and Christopher Falzon Eds. (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell Publishing, 2010), 118-142; Soper, *Humanism and Anti-Humanism*, 132-142.

[76] Scholars of Foucault remain divided as to Foucault's exact position on Humanism. I agree with Nancy Frazer and David Ingram concerning his ultimate disavowal of the concept. See: Nancy Frazer, 'Michel Foucault: A 'Young Conservative'?', in *Critique and Power*, M. Kelly Ed. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994), 185-211; David Ingram, "Foucault and Habermas," in *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 245-257.

[77] Michel Foucault, *Dits et écrits*: 1954-1988 (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1994), 1:514; Idem., *Les mots et les choses*: *Une archéologie des sciences humaines* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1966), 375-376, 383-387, 421-422; Michel Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?," in *The Foucault Reader,* Paul Rabinow Ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 44.

[78] Andrew Sharpe, "Foucault's Monsters, the Abnormal Individual and the Challenge of English Law," in *Journal of Historical Sociology* 20 (2007): 3:384-403.

[79] Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et punir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975), 142-143, 185-186.

What we call Humanism has been used by Marxists, liberals, Nazis, Catholics. This does not mean that we have to get rid of human rights, but that we can't say that freedom or human rights has to be limited to certain frontiers....What I am afraid of about Humanism is that it presents a certain form of ethics as a universal model for any kind of freedom. I think that there are more secrets, more possible freedoms, and more inventions in our future than we can imagine in humanism as it is dogmatically represented on every side of the political rainbow.[80]

In conformity to Foucault's critique, Bursevi's Anti-Humanism makes use of much of the same terminology as his Humanism. This terminology separates humankind into "true humans" versus Foucauldian "monsters," or what I refer to as "inhuman humans" or "sub-human women." Because Sufism is the core of the religion revealed to Muhammad, it contains the wisdom of the Prophet's actualization of Adamic theomorphism. Sufi theology, meditation, and rituals such as the recollection and invocation of the divine (Ar. *dhikr Allāh*) are not simply extraordinary acts of devotion. Rather, they are means to realize the core human identity, "the locus of manifestation of the Names and Qualities of God." In sum, according to Bursevi, Sufism is the essential way in which people can be truly human.[81] As such, Sufis are the true followers of the "Muḥammadan Way" (Ar. *al-ṭarīqa al-muḥammadīya*).

c.) *The Celvetiyye Sufi Order as A Vehicle for the Adamic Science*

Although Sufis are fellow travelers, some Sufis traverse the Path better than their peers.[82] In this regard, Bursevi quotes a saying that he attributes to Abū Yazīd (Bāyazīd) Bisṭāmī (ca. 252/874): "Whoever does not have a shaykh, his shaykh is Satan."[83] For Bursevi, it means that

---

[80] Michel Foucault, "Truth, Power and the Self: An Interview with Michel Foucault," in *Technologies of the Self*, Luther Martin, Huck Gutman, and Patrick Hutton Eds., (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 15; see also: Idem., "What is Enlightenment?," 43-44.

[81] Kargılı, "İsmail Hakkı Bursevi'nin Kitabü'l-Hucceti'l-Baliğa Adlı Eseri İnceleme-Metin," 148-149.

[82] Ibid., 114.

[83] I have not been able to locate this saying in the most authoritative works on Basṭāmī's sayings. See: Abū Yazīd al-Basṭāmī, *Al-Majmū ʿa al-ṣūfīya al-kāmila*, Qāsim Muḥammad ʿAbbās Ed. (Damascus: Al-Madā Publishing, 2004).

literally anyone who does not swear allegiance to a Sufi shaykh has Satan as a guide.[84] Most Sufi scholars consider this statement ostensibly uttered by Bāyazīd Bisṭāmī to apply only to Sufis and to no one else.[85] Bursevi's application of this saying to non-Sufis appears to be unprecedented.

According to Bursevi's hierarchical model of the Adamic Science, there are several distinct ranks among the Sufi "inheritors of the Prophet." These ranks reflect different degrees of human perfection, which in turn reflect differences among God's Names. Bursevi clarifies these ranks in a discussion of what it means to have an Adamic "lineage" (Ar. *nasab*). Adam was created of clay, and then God breathed into him of His Spirit. As a result, all human beings trace their lineage back to the theomorphic Adam in two ways: by their mortal bodies of clay and by the immortal Spirit. According to Bursevi, only the Prophet Muḥammad was able to shed his dependence on to the clay body of Adam and subsist through the Spirit. Because they are members of the Prophet's spiritual community, Sufis are "the real people of this [Spiritual] lineage [to God]. The elites who actualize the Spirit are those who attain to belonging to the people of this lineage" (Tur. *...bu neseb ehlindedir. Bu neseb ehline galib olan havvas-ı ruhaniyyettir*). By contrast, deficient people are trapped in their "lineage of form and clay" (Tur. *neseb-i suri ve tini*).[86]

Bursevi also entertains the idea that familial descendants of the Prophet (*shurafāʾ*) may be better suited to actualize the potential for theomorphism. However, according to him, conformity to the prophetic character better establishes the nobility of lineage than bloodline. In a discussion of this "lineage by character," Bursevi cites Rumi's *Mathnawi* to prove his point:

The son of the villain "Abū Jahl" clearly became a true believer,

---

[84] Bursevi, *Kitâbü'l-Izzi'l-âdemî*, 300-301.
[85] See: Margret Malamud, "Gender and Spiritual Self-Fashioning: The Master-Disciple Relationship in Classical Sufism," in *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 64 (1996): 93-94, 101, 103-106; Ahmet T. Karamustafa, *Sufism*: *The Formative Period* (Ediburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 116-120.
[86] Bursevi, *Varlığın Dili*, 210.

While the son of the prophet Noah became one of the profligates.[87]

Just as ʿIkrimah ibn ʿAmr (d. 14/636) was a good Muslim yet born Abū Jahl the "Pharaoh of Mecca," Ham betrayed his father despite his prophetic lineage.[88] The moral of this example is that non-*sharīf* Sufis such as Bursevi can become true "people of the Prophetic lineage" because their spiritual vocation is dedicated to imparting the essence of Muḥammadan wisdom. Bursevi envisions such Sufis as superior to the majority of people in the same way that "worldly elites" are positioned above commoners (Tur. *Avam-ı nasa galib olan havvas–i beşeriyettir*).[89] However, one must always remember that even the Sufis are not guaranteed salvation. In a short poem, Bursevi cautions:

> Think not that one must memorize the Qur'an alone to attain salvation.
> What alone is necessary for salvation is the character of the Prophet
> Which is of God, and is found in the Perfect Human Being (Tur. *Adem-i kamilde*).[90]

For Bursevi, the majority of Sufis are people of the Prophetic lineage in name alone. While they may possess the potential to live like most other human beings in the Spirit as the Prophet, they are bound up in their clay lineage to the exclusion of God's Spirit. Those who are the true "descendants" of the Prophet are those who have mastered Sufism. For Bursevi, the true *shurafāʾ* are accomplished Sufis, the best exemplars of which are the Celvetis.

Ali Namlı, Kameliya Atanasova, and other scholars of Ottoman Sufism have foregrounded the ways in which Bursevi argued for the supremacy of the Celvetiyye order.[91]

---

[87] Bursevi, *Rūḥ al-bayān*, 15.125. For the lines from the *Mathnawī*, see: Rūmī, *The Mathnawí of Jalálu'ddín Rúmí*, Nicholson Ed. and Trans., 1925, 1.3402-3403.

[88] See: *EI2*, s.v. Abū Djahl, by Montgomery Watt; *EI2*, s.v. "Ikrima," by J. Schacht; *EI2*, s.v. "Ḥām," by G. Vajda.

[89] Ibid.

[90] Ibid., 212.

[91] Ali Namlı, *İsmail Hakkı Bursevi*: *Hayatı*, *Eserleri*, *Tarikat Anlayışı* (Istanbul: İnsan Yayınları, 2001), 254-255; Kamelia Atanasova, "The Sufi as the Axis of the World: Representations of Religious Authority in the Works if Ismail Hakki Bursevi (1653-1725)," Doctoral Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, 109-110. For the ways in which Bursevi employs the sayings of Üftade to argue for such supremacy, see: Hazret-i Pir-i Üftade, *Le Dîwân,* Paul Ballanfat Trans. (Paris: Les Deux Oceans, 2002), 28-32.

Often he foregrounded his arguments on his belief in the efficacy of the Celveti method for

guiding Sufis to spiritual maturity. This was due to the comprehensiveness of its Sufi theology

and the supremacy of its spiritual masters.[92] At times, his arguments also rely on his Sufi

anthropology. To give one example, in his Qur'an commentary, Bursevi cites Hüdayi, the

"authority" (Ar. *marjiᶜ*) of the Celveti order to explicate God's command for Adam and Adam's

"spouse" (Ar. *zawj*) to inhabit paradise (Q 2:35). According to Hüdayi, this command was given

to all humankind, latently within their forefather. God did not order humankind to seek to return

to paradise, but rather to "occupy the Station of the Spirit that is found in the very being of the

children of Adam."[93] God speaks to every human being directly in the verse, "Oh Adam of the

human heart, inhabit you and your partner—who is the human soul in reality —the Spirit by

means of pious acts and worship."[94] "Partaking of the delights of paradise," thus constitutes the

consummation of God's command. It entails attaining to "divine, mystical knowledge (Ar.

maᶜrifa)" and reaching "the station of the Spirit by means of it."[95] Agreeing with Hüdayi's

interpretation, Bursevi argues that fulfilling a human potential means to strive to cultivate

mystical knowledge from the Sufis who are its sole purveyors. Sufis alone can impart the

Adamic Science by which people can become fully human.[96] For Bursevi, the only Sufis of his

time who conveyed the Adamic Science in a real sense were the Celvetis—more specifically,

Celvetis from his Hakkiye order.

  For Bursevi, no other shaykh could transmit the core of Sufi teachings as well as Hüdayi

and his successors. While all Sufis have the potential to become Adamites in principle, Celveti

---

[92] Kargılı, "İsmail Hakkı Bursevi'nin Kitabü'l-Hucceti'l-Baliğa Adlı Eseri İnceleme-Metin," 114-115; İsmail Hakkı Bursevi, *Kitâbü'l-Izzi'l-âdemî*, Istanbul: Süleymaniye Yazma Eser Kütüphanesi, 34 Atif Efendi, ms. no. 1420/8, 246a-247a.
[93] Bursevi, *Rūḥ al-bayān*, 12.72.
[94] Ibid.
[95] Ibid.
[96] Ibid., 12.72-73.

Sufis are Adamites by their very nature. Tony Davies has remarked that all iterations of Humanism serve a political agenda in one form or another. Humanist discourses "speak of the human in the accents and the interests of a class, a sex, a race, a genome. Their embrace suffocates those whom it does not ignore."[97] Those who argued for universalistic Humanism also found ways to denigrate those who did not conform to their definitions—in other words, what I have been calling Bursevi's notion of "inhuman humans." As Davies notes "At various times, not excluding the present, the circuit of the human has excluded women, those who do not speak Greek or Latin or English, those whose complexions are not pink, Jews, Arabs, children."[98] In a similar sense, Bursevi's Anti-Humanism can be considered a weaponized version of Humanism that served the political interests of the Celvetiyye.

II. "Inhuman Humans" and Sub-Human Women

a.) *More Human than Human*

For Bursevi, those who strove to perfect themselves in Sufism, especially Celveti Sufism, were not simply superior people. Rather, they were in a class of their own, as "more human" than others. As such, Bursevi's idealism epitomizes Thomas Hurka's concept of "narrow perfectionism," discussed above. For Hurka, "narrow perfectionism" is what "people ought to pursue regardless of whether they now want it or would want it in hypothetical circumstances."[99] Bursevi's anti-humanistic writings, human beings *must* perfect themselves if they are to be considered as true children of Adam.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Bursevi believed that the very reproductive material from which all humans are made is a reflection of the divine. Thus, those who are misguided or

---

[97] Tony Davies, *Humanism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997; 2008), 141.
[98] Ibid.
[99] Hurka, *Perfectionism*, 17.

"inhuman humans" are both theologically and morally culpable for their denial of their own

theomorphic potential.[100] One of Bursevi's poems presents an elitist vision that is radically from

his Humanism:

> For one who has realized that all the realities of creation are found in his essence,
>   Such a one is a man (Tur. *merd*) who has transcended his fellow human beings.
> He is a gazelle that secretes musk, in a society of gazelles that could do so, but do not.
>   Such a man is desired by all the creatures in the world.[101]

Both musk-secreting and non-musk-secreting gazelles belong to the same biological family.

Despite being the same superficially, only musk-secreting gazelles exemplify the species as a

whole. The others are "quasi-gazelles" because of their deficiencies and imperfections. Just as

the musk-secreting gazelle is more desirable than its imperfect counterpart, so too will the fully

actualized Adamite man be "desired by all the creatures in the world." As Bursevi asserts in

other writings, those who are not true Adamite men do not belong to the same species as other

human beings. In Bursevi's "narrow perfectionism," such inhuman humans are detested by all the

creatures of the world.

b.) "*Inhuman Humans*"

For Bursevi, there are "true humans," and there are imperfect, lesser, "inhuman humans."

Only "true humans" are unequivocally children of Adam and are favored by God. As a humanist,

Bursevi wrote at length about the equivalence of Adam and his descendants with respect to their

potential for theomorphism. As he makes clear in a poem that has been repeated throughout this

study, Bursevi has a dualistic conception of humanity:

> Do not suppose that every human (Tur. *ademi*) in the world is a human being (*insan*).

---

[100] Bursevi, *Varlığın Dili*, 186.

[101] Ibid. The Turkish quatrain is as follows: *Kimin ki ola zâtında hakâyık*, *Olur akrân içinde merd-i fâik*, *Olupdur nâfe-i müşk ile âhû*, *Göre âlemde mergûb-ı halâyık*.

> If there is a human being (*kimisi insan*) among humans, then there is a demon among them as well (*kimisi şeytan*).[102]

Bursevi's exegesis of the Qur'anic passage, "Indeed, We [God] favored the children of Adam" (Q 17:70), reiterates the essence of this poem. Although he often cites this verse to support his humanistic claims, in his commentary of the passage, he uses the *aya* to substantiate his Anti-Humanism. According to Bursevi, the real meaning of the verse indicates that "[God's] favoring [of the children of Adam] is meant for the elite among the people of belief (Tur. *havass-ı ehl-i imana dairdir*). It cannot be said that the unbeliever (Ar. *kāfir*) is favored in a correct and true sense."[103] God is the creator of believers and unbelievers alike. However, as Bursevi remarks, God is not praised with "Glory be to the Creator of Infidels! (Ar. *subḥān khāliq al-kuffār*)"[104] Despite their potential for theomorphism, the vast majority of people cannot attain to salvation. In Bursevi's time, "some utterly ignorant people" have claimed that "miracles (Ar. *karāmāt*) can be found in the heart of just anyone." For Bursevi, confusing infidels for Adamites in this way is "the worst form of heresy (Tur. *ilhad-ı azimdir*)."[105] In reality, God favored the "sons of Adam" only with respect to *Adamite* progeny of Adam. Contrary to its universalist connotation, the term "children of Adam," signifies only a select few of Adam's progeny.

In this vein, Bursevi also interprets the *ḥadīth*, "Indeed, God created Adam in His Image" in a way that further reinforces his Anti-Humanism. In a key section of *Kitāb al-ᶜizz al-ādamī*, he remarks that Adam and the heart of the perfect believer are the "weakest of things" in the hand of God, because both are in a state of total surrender to the divine. The "deficient person" (Ar. *al-nāqiṣ*) has not submitted to God in the same way. Thus, Bursevi claims that such a one does not have a heart in reality. Lacking the organ of spiritual awareness, "a deficient one cannot reflect

---

[102] Bursevi, *Varlığın Dili*, 197.
[103] Kargılı, "İsmail Hakkı Bursevi'nin Kitabü'l-Hucceti'l-Baliğa Adlı Eseri İnceleme-Metin," 135.
[104] Ibid.
[105] Ibid.

the divine image" (Ar. *fa-lam yakun ᶜalā al-ṣūra al-ilāhīya*).[106] It is in this sense that he radically

reinterprets the *ḥadīth* of Adamic theomorphism.

> The term "Adam" or "human being" (Ar. *ādam*) in the Prophet's saying "Indeed, God
> created Adam in His Image" is the "true human being" (Ar. *ādam al-ḥaqīqī*). This term
> does not mean the "human being in form alone" (Ar. *ādam al-ṣuwarī*). The "human being
> in form alone" does not possess the real divine image, which is the image of God's
> perfect Qualities and Attributes. He is merely the form of the descendants of his species.
> Without first possessing human character (Ar. *al-sīra al-insānīya*), the one veiled from
> God cannot avail himself of the "[theomorphic] human image" (Ar. *al-ṣūra al-insānīya*)
> and all that is concomitant with it. Such a one does not fulfill the divine image in himself
> save by attaining to its true significance (Ar. *fa-innahu lā yukmil al-ṣūra illā bi-l-
> maᶜnā*).[107]

Elsewhere, Bursevi describes the ways in which one can corrupt his God-given potential.

In his exegesis of the Qur'anic passage, "Thus We entrust (Ar. *nuwallī*) the wrongdoers (Ar. *al-

ẓālimīn*) to the wrongdoers on account of that which they obtained (Q 6:129)," Bursevi states that

"the speech of God, the Truth, has no benefit for the wrongdoer." This is so because wrongdoing

"corrupts the potential of the *fiṭra* beholden to the Spirit, which is capable of receiving the

outpouring of God's grace."[108] Although anyone can corrupt the *fiṭra,* grandees of political and

military power (Ar. *arbāb al-riyāsa li-l-qudra wa-l-ghalaba*) rank among the worst offenders.

Through their actions, they have rejected their *fiṭra* and thus have severed the intimate

connection between themselves and God.[109]

The result of this corruption is the loss of theomorphism. Since theomorphism is the very

essence of the human identity, the person who does not realize theomorphism becomes sub-

human or even inhuman. Hence, Bursevi interprets the Qur'anic chastisement of Jews who broke

the Sabbath: "'Be you all despicable apes!'" (Q 7:163) as the result of their corruption of the

---

[106] Bursevi, *Kitâbü'l-Izzi'l-âdemî*, 240a.
[107] Ibid., 240a
[108] Bursevi, *Rūḥ al-bayān*, 15.104.
[109] Ibid..

fitra.[110] The perversion of Pharaoh and his followers "...the worst of beasts in the sight of God" (Q 8:55) also stems from injustice done to the *fitra*. Pharaoh and his followers had the potential to become true human beings according to Bursevi. However, on account of Pharoah's claims of godhood, and his desecration of prophecy, Pharaoh and his community corrupted their full human potential. "They became the 'worst of beasts,'" writes Bursevi. "They were not called 'the worst of humankind' because they became separated from their species."[111]

Even further, Bursevi devotes an entire section of *Kitāb al-ᶜIzz al-ādamī* to the "Distortion of the Inner Self" (Ar. *maskh al-bāṭin*). He identifies this distortion as a "pretentious embellishment" (Ar. *al-zayn*) that "transforms the beauty of the *fitra* into hideousness, the attribute of Islam into infidelity, and even changes the means to cultivate excellence into veils covering the heart."[112] Bursevi clarifies that these veils mentioned in such *ḥadīth* as "God has seven and seventy veils of light" stem from creatures, not from the Creator.[113] Such veils render otherwise theomorphic and "immortal" human beings mere mortals, who are beholden to caprice and base desires. One whose *fitra* is obscured by such veils is disconnected from God, which results in damnation and annihilation. Without the *fitra*, the "inhuman human" has a "soul with no true existence" (Ar. *al-lā-huwīya al-nafsānīya*).[114] Just as Bursevi cautions his readers to strive to actualize their potential, he also exhorts his audience to avoid annihilation. "The onus is on you to preserve the potential of the *fitra* within you," he warns. "Be wary of the calamity that results from those evil acts that result in its corruption and ultimately obliteration."[115]

---

[110] Ibid., 16.17.
[111] Ibid., 16.71.
[112] Bursevi, *Kitâbü'l-Izzi'l-âdemî*, 166a.
[113] Ibid. For a discussion of this *ḥadīth* in the major collections see: William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*: *Ibn al-ᶜArabī's Metaphysics of Imagination* (Albany: State University of New York, 1989), 401 n. 19.
[114] Bursevi, *Kitâbü'l-Izzi'l-âdemî*, 166a.
[115] Bursevi, *Rūḥ al-bayān*, 16.71.

As Bursevi makes clear, Adamites are responsible for their own perfection. They are also accountable for all of their failures and deficits. As explored in the previous chapter, Bursevi often seeks to reinterpret Qur'anic chastisements to support his conception of human theomorphism. Despite making this case, for Bursevi some Qur'anic verses are valid chastisements. Thus, the verse, "Indeed, the human being is a transgressor and ingrate" (Q 14:32), entails for Bursevi that a non-Adamite "transgresses against his own self, insofar as he undermines his potential for perfection by shunning the truth and accepting falsehood and vanity."[116] Following this interpretation, Bursevi defines "the true man" (Pers. *mard-i ḥaqīqī*) as one "who does not have any deficiency in his striving against inner and outer enemies" in the process of self-realization. "The majority of people (Ar. *akthar al-nās*)," however, "incline to their base passions and attain to 'the perfection' of mortal human weakness" (Tur. *kemal-i za'f-i beşeriden zen payesine ermişler*).[117] Even further, Bursevi describes the fate of those who do not take advantage of their blessed human status: "Because they have ruined their potential," cautions Bursevi, "they remain in the lowest levels of hell, deprived of bliss eternally and everlastingly."[118]

Ironically, one of the consequences of free will is that human beings undercut their potential to be Images of God. Bursevi argues that everyone is potentially a Perfect Human Being and can in principle pursue the Adamic Science, in a way that resembles Jean-Paul Sartre's notion of the human condition "condemned to be free."[119] However, unlike Sartre, Bursevi believed that the vast majority of people will never take advantage of this freedom. For him, human beings are are condemned to be free only to become damned and subsequently

---

[116] Ibid., 18.105.
[117] Kargılı, "İsmail Hakkı Bursevi'nin Kitabü'l-Hucceti'l-Baliğa Adlı Eseri İnceleme-Metin," 84.
[118] Bursevi, *Rūḥ al-bayān*, 12.76.
[119] Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism*, 28-29.

obliterated. From the discussion in the previous chapter, one might consider Bursevi's humanistic Sufi anthropology as evoking the Enlightenment philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau's (d. 1778) notion of the natural goodness and freedom of the human being. However, Bursevi's Anti-Humanism more resembles Thomas Hobbes' (d. 1679) pessimistic view of human nature.[120] If left to their natural selves without the guidance of a Celveti shaykh, humans will corrupt their potential for theomorphism at the expense of others, not unlike Hobbesian brutes.[121]

c.) *Sub-Human Women*

Bursevi's use of the term "man" (Pers. *mard*, Tur. *mert*) in his anti-humanist writings is significant. He restricts membership in the ostensibly universal ranks of "Adamites" to Muslim men who are able to pursue the Adamic Science. In practice, this group is even more restricted to Celveti Sufis under Bursevi's personal guidance. All other individuals are "demons," humans in form alone. As for of women, female identity, and even female exemplars of piety such as the Virgin Mary or the Sufi saint Rābiᶜa al-ᶜAdawīya (d. c. 184/801), do not meet his criteria for perfection despite their ostensible participation in the human species.[122] In this prejudice, Bursevi is much different from other pre-modern Muslim writers, even Sufis.[123] As Sa'diyya Shaikh has brought to light in her research, there is a "systematic history of male domination that has constantly rendered women the objects of male subjectivities in so much of the Islamic tradition,

---

[120] Jean-Jacques Rosseau, *The Basic Political Writings*, Donald A. Cress Trans. and Ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2012), 37-60; Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, J.C.A. Gaskin Ed. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 82-85.

[121] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 86-89.

[122] For more information on representations of Rābiᶜa al-ᶜAdawīya in Sufi discourses, see: Rkia Elaroui Cornell, "Rabi'a from Narrative to Myth: The Tropics of Identity of a Muslim Woman Saint," doctoral dissertation, Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam, 2013, 1-7.

[123] For illustrative examples of Sufis' misogyny in history, see: Scott Kugle, *Sufis and Saints Bodies*: *Mysticism, Corporeality, and Sacred Power in Islam* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 108-109, 112-115, 150-151.

including Sufism."[124] Although Sufis often challenged hierarchy and promoted a more egalitarian version of religiosity in their writings, the majority have upheld the tenets of patriarchy.[125] In a similar way, Bursevi conceived of the children of Adam as a patriarchy in which women's participation is highly circumscribed.

Although emblematic of the cultural misogyny that Shaikh has identified, Bursevi's writings go even further is their insistence on the inhumanity of women as a result of their inability to attain to Adamic perfection. In *Kitāb al-ʿIzz al-ādamī*, Bursevi recounts that one of the "revelations" he received was that "All [spiritual] lineage stems from male exemplars" (Ar. *al-nasab min al-rijāl*). Using the legal terminology of inheritance as a metaphor, he clarifies that just as a child born from unlawful sex cannot inherit from its father, so too a Sufi cannot attain to the perfection inherited from Adam by following an illegitimate master. The "sound" lineage of Sufism is thus derived from the "male exemplars" that perpetuate the teachings of male prophets. An "adulterated" spiritual lineage is merely an imperfect image (Ar. *ṣūra*) of the true "spiritual bloodline." In this context, Bursevi draws on the saying of ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (d. 21/661) that was thought to be a *ḥadīth* concerning the religious, financial, and intellectual deficiency of women: "Women are deficient in intellect and religion."[126] On the basis of this saying, he asserts

---

[124] Sa'diyya Shaikh, *In Search of "Al-Insān:"* Sufism, Islamic Law, and Gender, in *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 77 (2009): 785.

[125] Ibid., 816; See also: Annemarie Schimmel, *My Soul is a Woman*: *The Feminine in Islam*, Susan H. Ray Trans. (New York: Continuum Press, 1997), 34-54; Nina Hoel, Sa'diyya Shaikh, "Sexing Islamic Theology: Theorising Women's Experience and Gender through ʿabd-Allah and *khalīfah,*" in *Journal for Islamic Studies* 33 (2013): 133-134; Amanullah De Sondy, *The Crisis of Islamic Masculinities* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 153-156, 160-164.

[126] The saying is from *Nahj al-balāgha* (*The Peak of Eloquence*): ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, *Nahj al-balāgha* (Cairo: Dār al-Fajr li-l-Turāth, 2005),"*Min khuṭbat lahu ʿalayhi al-salām, baʿd ḥarb al-jamal fī-dhamm al-nisāʾ*," 149-150. For more information on this saying and its presentation as a *ḥadīth*, Roxanne D. Marcotte, "Šaḥrūr, the Status of Women, and Polygamy in Islam," in *Oriente Moderno* 81 (2001): 322; for other instances of misogynistic statements that Muhammad did not utter becoming *ḥadīth*, see: Fatima Mernissi, *Women and Islam*: *An Historical and Theological Enquiry*, Mary Jo Lakeland Trans. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1991), 49-52.

the patriarchal nature of this Adamic lineage: "Indeed, the saints are masculine. They are perfect. Their opposites are female. They are deficient (Ar. *nawāqiṣ*)."[127]

Elsewhere, Bursevi discusses why women cannot attain to perfection despite being Adam's offspring. He interprets the Qur'anic verse "Men are custodians of women" (Q 4:34), to mean "the very being of women is inferior to that of men. Men are the roots, women are the branches. This is just as a tree is able to produce fruit because it is [itself] produced from the fruit."[128] Contradicting both the Qur'an and his other writings on human origins, Bursevi argues that women are created from the ribs of men, following Eve's creation of Adam.[129] Even before his full manifestation in creation, Adam was the custodian of Eve who resided *in potentia* within him. Bursevi interprets the Qur'anic statement, "Save yourselves and your families from a fire whose fuel is people and stones" (Q 66:6) as God's command for men to oversee the religion and finances of the women in their families.[130] Most significantly, men are chosen by God for this vocation because "of their potential for perfection, *khilāfa*, and prophecy. The very being of men is foundational. Because of their role in childbearing and procreation, the being of women is contingent, hence inferior."[131]

To reinforce his assertion of the imperfect nature of women, Bursevi even belittles female Muslim exemplars. He cites a *ḥadīth* asserting that many men have achieved perfection while only Mary the daughter of Amram, Āsiya the wife of Pharaoh, and the Prophet's own wife

---

[127] Bursevi, *Kitâbü'l-Izzi'l-âdemî*, 228a-229b.
[128] Bursevi, *Rūḥ al-bayān*, 14.56.
[129] For more information on the conception of Eve's creation from Adam's rib in Muslim discourses, see: Hatice K. Arpaguş, "The Position of Woman in the Creation: A Qur'anic Perspective," in *Muslima Theology: The Voices of Muslim Women Theologians*, Ednan Slan, Marcia Hermansen, Elif Medeni Eds. (Bern: Peter Lang AG, 2013), 115-132.
[130] Bursevi, *Rūḥ al-bayān*, 14.56-57.
[131] Ibid., 14.57

ᶜĀᵓisha bint Abī Bakr (d. 17/678) have become perfect females.[132] Bursevi asserts that although

these women are described as perfect in the *ḥadīth*, their perfection "is in reality defective.

Unlike male perfection, which consists of the actualization of human theomorphism, female

perfection merely constitutes excellence in serving men. Since they are "deficient in intellect and

religion," Āsiya, Mary, even ᶜĀᵓisha could attain to male perfection only metaphorically.

Bursevi even denigrates the Prophet Muḥammad's wife ᶜĀᵓisha, from whom a *ḥadīth* urges

Muslims to take "two-thirds of the religion."[133] According to him, the Prophet did not say "'Take

the *fullness* (Ar. *kamāl*) of your religion'" from ᶜĀᵓisha. On the basis of this prejudiced analysis,

Bursevi concludes that the "perfection of female religion is two thirds of what religion would be

for men."[134]

Ultimately, in Bursevi's Humanism, women seem to occupy a liminal space between

male Adamites and those who fail to fulfill their spiritual potentials. They are children of Adam,

but because they cannot fully actualize their potential given the constraints of their gender, they

have more in common with Bursevi's "inhuman humans" than with "real men." So, what is to be

done with them? To borrow Shaikh's terminology, Bursevi renders women the "object of his own

subjectivity" by proposing two ways in which women can alleviate their deficiencies. He

employs a common trope in Sufi writings by claiming that women can reach perfection only by

transcending their femininity and thereby becoming "male saints."[135] However, according to the

examples given above, it does not seem that Bursevi believed this could be achieved. For the

---

[132] *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 62 *Kitāb faḍāᵓil aṣḥāb al-nabī* ("The Book concerning the Excellence of the Companions of the Prophet"), 116; *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Muslim*, 44, *Kitāb faḍāᵓil al-ṣaḥāba* ("The Book concerning the Excellence of the Prophetic Companions"), 102.

[133] See: Nūr al-Dīn ᶜAlī ibn Muḥammad ibn Sulṭān Molla ᶜAlī al-Qārī, *Al-Asrār al-marfūᶜa fī al-akhbār al-mawḍūᶜa*, Muḥammad ibn Luṭfī al-Ṣabbāgh Ed. (Beirut; Damascus: Al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1986) *ḥadīth* 185, pp. 198-199.

[134] Bursevi, *Rūḥ al-bayān*, 14.57.

[135] Bursevi, *Kitâbü'l-Izzi'l-âdemî*, 229b. For more information on the trope of women "becoming men" in Sufi discourses, see: Valerie J. Hoffman-Ladd, "Mysticism and Sexuality in Sufi Thought and Life," in *Mystics Quarterly* 18 (1992): 82-85.

female exemplars Āsiya, Mary, and ᶜĀʾisha, perfection was merely metaphorical. Thus, for

Bursevi, it is better for women to strive to attain "female perfection" by embracing their

inferiority and devote themselves to the service of male Adamites. By so doing, they could attain

to a certain degree of perfection simply by being in the presence of a "Perfect Man."[136] In one

passage, Bursevi states that women can reach "female perfection" through childbearing,

childrearing, and domestic services for male Adamites. In this way, they become *ḥūrī*s made of

light. As a reward for their services, they have the privilege of attending to the true "Images of

God" as consorts in paradise.[137]

d.) *What Is To Be Done With Inhuman Humans*?

According to Bursevi, women have a chance to attain some kind of perfection by

acknowledging their subordination to "Perfect Men." In this manner, they can attain to some kind

of quasi-humanity. However, what is the fate of "inhuman humans," who do not have this

option? What are the real Adamites to do with them? Bursevi presents three options. The first is

to recognize that there is no hope for such individuals and to treat them as beasts. "Since the

human species (Tur. *ahl-i insan*) is not human by virtue of the animal spirit alone," writes

Bursevi, "the human being who remains veiled by the veils of the beastly spirit is himself a mere

beast."[138] In other words, they should be considered animals, and not afforded the rights and

benefits due to the true children of Adam. Because they have squandered their potential to fulfill

their human creation, such inhuman humans must be marginalized.[139] Out of a sense of general

goodwill, the true human beings should preach to them in ways that they can understand. In

---

[136] Bursevi, *Rūḥ al-bayān*, 14.57.
[137] Bursevi, *Kitâbü'l-Izzi'l-âdemî*, 283b.
[138] Kargılı, "İsmail Hakkı Bursevi'nin Kitabü'l-Hucceti'l-Baliğa Adlı Eseri İnceleme-Metin," 88.
[139] Ibid.

general, for Bursevi the fate of non-Adamites should be left to God. In his exegesis of the

Qur'anic statement, "Verily, We belong to God, and unto Him we return" (Q 2:156), he argues

that the supposed universality of the verse is superficial. In reality, the return to God is relative.

Only fully actualized Adamites return to God. Non-Adamites will perish because of their

theomorphic potential.[140] Those who are imperfect (Ar. *ghayr al-kummal*) will burn in hellfire

until they are obliterated, whereas the "perfect ones" (Ar. *al-kummal*) are infused with God's

Spirit and subsist through it.[141] Thus, it is in the best interest of Adamites to focus solely on

themselves and avoid those who cannot become truly "human."

Bursevi's second option is more severe. He reasons that it is not only licit but

advantageous to sacrifice non-Adamites for the sake of Adamites. Thomas Hurka conceives of

this kind of thinking as "consequentialist perfectionism," in which the slaying of imperfect

people "to promote the good of others" is deemed morally good.[142] Bursevi's Anti-Humanism

here also typifies Hurka's notion of "averaging perfectionism," which dictates that "people

[should] end their lives if their level of perfection will be lower in the future than it was in the

past. If they refuse, it can tell others to end their lives for them."[143] In his discussion of the

famous *ḥadīth* concerning the "Lesser Jihad" of combat versus the "Greater Jihad" against the

lower soul, Bursevi asserts that the most meritorious death is that of the lower soul during Jihad

against human imperfection, although martyrdom on the battlefield is also meritorious.[144]

Bursevi then argues that if the lower soul cannot attain to "death by [spiritual Jihad]," then "the

---

[140] Bursevi, *Kitâbü'l-Izzi'l-âdemî*, 141a. Bursevi makes a similar statement in ibid., 315a-b.
[141] Ibid., 127b.
[142] Hurka, *Perfectionism*, 75.
[143] Ibid., 74.
[144] Abū Bakr Aḥmad al-Bayhaqī (d. 458/1066) considers this *ḥadīth* to be of weak authentication (*ḍaʿīf*). *Al-Sunan al-Kubrā*, 2 "Asceticism" (*al-zuhd*), 165. For more information on this tradition within Muslim discourses, see: Michael Bonner, *Jihad in Islamic History: Doctrines and Practice* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 13-14, 21-22; David Cook, *Understanding Jihad* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 32-49.

heart cannot find life in the outpouring of discursive knowledge and mystical knowledge. It can never come to possess the keys to the 'castle of Being.'"[145]

In this context, Bursevi asserts that God has decreed Jihad to "give fresh life" (Tur. *taze hayat vardır*) to believers at the expense of the slain infidels. Those who cannot "die" to their lower selves are liable to be slain in order to make available more resources and space for those who can.[146] In his interpretation of Q 9:5, "And when the sacred months have passed, slay the polytheists wherever you may find them. Take them captive, besiege them, and lie in wait for them in ambush...," Bursevi clarifies that those who have corrupted themselves are also liable for death through Jihad. Those who "associate partners with God" are to be slain with the "outer sword," while disobedient souls are to be put to the "inner sword," which means forbidding souls from caprice, base desires, and corruption.[147] He cites legal authorities to support the validity of executing those who do not pay the tithe (Ar. *al-zakāt*) or who do not pray.[148] Elsewhere, Bursevi claims that it is licit to slay "inhuman humans" just as Khiḍr slew the child who was to become a disbeliever (Q 18:74-75).[149] He considers the Qur'anic discussion of those who have "sold their souls" to God (2: 207) as metaphorical. They could not have sold "The animal and base soul of the human being" because it has "no value whatsoever" (Ar. *lā-qadr li-l-nafs al-insānīya al-ḥayawānīya aṣl^{an}*). Its only value is in its being slain through Jihad. By analogy, those who cling to the base souls instead of their theomorphic identities are liable for death if they should interfere with the Adamites.[150]

---

[145] Kargılı, "İsmail Hakkı Bursevi'nin Kitabü'l-Hucceti'l-Baliğa Adlı Eseri İnceleme-Metin," 84.
[146] Ibid.
[147] Bursevi, *Rūḥ al-bayān*, 16.86-87.
[148] Ibid., 16.86.
[149] Soğüt, "İsmâil Hakkı Bursevî'nin Kenz-i Mahfî Risâlesi Muhtevâ ve Tahlîli," 158.
[150] Bursevi, *Kitâbü'l-Izzi'l-âdemî*, 133a.

In the context of the history of Humanism, the fact that Bursevi could articulate a universalistic Humanism and also advocate for an anti-humanistic sacrifice of "inhuman humans" is not anomalous. As a result of a comprehensive study of various iterations of Humanism, Tony Davies concludes that for the most part Humanist discourses "speak of the human in the accents and the interests of a class, a sex, a race, a genome. Their embrace suffocates those whom it does not ignore."[151] Bursevi's "second option" here is no exception. His Anti-Humanism anticipates the arguments of the fascist humanists T.E. Hulme (d. 1917), Ezra Pound (d. 1972), and Martin Heidegger (d. 1976) and the Stalinist humanist theoretician György Lukács (d. 1971) as a kind of Humanism meant to cater to "true" human beings by calling for the elimination of imperfect human beings.[152] The same could be said for humanist Julian Huxley (d. 1975), the first president of the British Humanist Association. Integral to Huxley's "evolutionary Humanism" was the advocacy of eugenic social engineering. Enforced eugenics was for him a fundamentally humanistic enterprise meant to eradicate all social ills, and thus bring about a perfect iteration of the human species.[153] Bursevi's Anti-Humanism also brings to mind the philosophy of the racist humanist Hastings Rashdall (d. 1924), with the difference that Rashdall claimed that white men constituted the "true humans," while all other races were to be sacrificed in order to further the interests of the "Perfect Men:"

> All improvement in the social condition of the higher races postulates the exclusion of competition with the lower races. This means that, sooner or later, the lower well-being— it may be ultimately the very existence—of countless Chinamen or negroes must be sacrificed that a higher life may be possible for a much smaller number of white men.[154]

---

[151] Tony Davies, *Humanism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997; 2008), 141.

[152] Davies, *Humanism*, 51-52, 66-68.

[153] Paul T. Phillips, "One World, One Faith: The Quest for Unity in Julian Huxley's Religion of Evolutionary Humanism," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 4 (2007): 617, 621-624, 625; Michael Freeden, "Eugenics and Progressive Thought: A Study in Ideological Affinity," *The Historical Journal* 22 (1979): 646-648, 669-670; see also Julian Huxley, *If I Were Dictator* (London: Methuen, 1934).

[154] Hastings Rashdall, *Theory of Good and Evil*: *A Treatise on Moral Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907) 1.238-239

Although Bursevi suggests similar options in his writings, he did not consider them absolute. Instead, he advocated an alternative option for inhuman humans. Although they cannot themselves reach the perfection for which they were created, inhuman humans can still be of value as servants for actualized Adamites. Whether by means of labor or financial aid, their servitude can function as a lesser form of perfection in and of itself. Bursevi argues that inhuman humans should "feminize" themselves in their subordination to the Perfect Men. For example, the first Sunni Caliph Abū Bakr (d. 12/634) and the early Muslims attained such perfection merely by serving the Prophet Muḥammad with their labor, financial support and other acts of dedication.[155] For non-Adamites, such service can lead to salvation or at the very least alleviate the cruel reality of their being fated to fall short of their potential.

III. Bursevi as the Supreme Adamite

As discussed above, Bursevi wrote a great deal concerning who can become an Adamite and who cannot become an Adamite. This begs the question of who could meet the criteria for being an Adamite in his time? As Kamelia Atanasova demonstrates in her study on Bursevi's autobiographical accounts and *tuhfe* works addressed to Ottoman officials, it is clear that the answer to this question is Bursevi himself. Atanasova concludes that "Through subtle, yet consistent appeals to his superior spiritual authority as Axis (Ar. *quṭb*), [Bursevi] asserts his position as the preeminent Sufi of his time and a force with which the Ottoman ruling elite should reckon."[156] He asserts his spiritual mastery in not-so-subtle ways in his self-evaluation in his autobiographies. Bursevi called himself "King of *Rum*," "Sultan," the "equal to the *abdāl* saints," "Solomon of East and West," "the loftiest Imam," "possessor of the mystery of

---

[155] Kargılı, "İsmail Hakkı Bursevi'nin Kitabü'l-Hucceti'l-Baliğa Adlı Eseri İnceleme-Metin," 98.
[156] Atanasova, "The Sufi as the Axis of the World," 145.

Muhammad," "Recipient of Divine Guidance" (Tur. *vahy-i huda*) and most importantly, Spiritual Axis.[157]

My own research confirms Atanasova's conclusions. In his works, Bursevi cast himself not only as the Axis of the Age, but also as the true Adamite of his time. As demonstrated in Chapter Two, it is clear that Bursevi's spiritual progress was marked by a close association with Adam. Adam blessed him as he preached against the Üsküp grandees. In Edirne, Bursevi also claimed to have been instructed by God like Adam. Finally, in a dream he had in Mecca, Adam beckoned Bursevi to follow him into the palace of the Ottoman Sultan, ostensibly to be enthroned there.[158]

These unveilings portray Bursevi as the sole person who could fulfill the criteria for a fully Adamic identity. In one account, God says to Bursevi "Our renown will be great" (Tur *şohretimiz çok olacak*). Bursevi explains that the first person plural in this statement not only signifies the divine, but also includes himself.[159] The "renown" mentioned in the statement is not worldly fame, but rather "the transmission of God's grace" (Tur. *ta'sir-i ilahi*) through the Perfect Human Being. Bursevi also argues that such an Adamite becomes an actualized *khalīfa*. Although many have claimed this title, it is ultimately the actualized, theomorphic Adamite who is true *khalīfa*. Bursevi ends his discussion by clarifying that "[ultimately] God is the one who bestows the office of *khalīfa*, and is the *khalīfa* himself (Ar. *wa-Allāh al-mustakhlif wa-l-khalīfa*)."[160] As the *khalīfa* in the Image of God, Bursevi is like the Ka°ba, from which all other houses of worship derive.[161]

The fact that Bursevi spends much time describing in great detail what Adamites must do to realize their potential suggests that he thought of himself as a master of the Adamic Science.

---

[157] Ibid., 147-149.
[158] Ibid., 75, 85.
[159] Bursevi, *Kitâbü'l-Izzi'l-âdemî*, 170a.
[160] Ibid.
[161] Ibid., 171b.

This is clear in his discussion of a revelation (Tur. *varid*) that occurred to him after writing the

Sufi theological work *Kenz-i mahfi*. After awakening from sleep, Bursevi apparently heard a

voice tell him, "Not everyone can know their potential in the time before creation" (Tur. *herkes*

ezelde isti'dadi olduğunu bilmez).[162] What this meant for Bursevi was the following: "If one were

to know that one was destined for God's grace, that is, if one had the potential for perfection, one

would endeavor to be perfect...He would simply enter into the path of perfection."[163] He goes on

to explain that "the ability (Ar. *qudra*) to actualize one's potential for perfection does not pertain

to everyone (Tur. *herkese ta'alluk etmez*). This is because something prevents access to this

ability."[164] On account of predetermined factors beholden to "entifications of the unseen" (Tur.

ta'ayyunat-i gayb), "the majority of human beings...remain misguided," although they are still

urged to "gain knowledge of God and worship Him," as in the Qur'anic statement "We [God] did

not create jinn and humans save to worship Us" (Q 51:56). Ultimately, the *raison d'être* for

creation is "to bring into being the Perfect Human Being."[165] According to this revelation,

Bursevi has become one a Perfect Man. In addition, Bursevi's identity as the Adam of his age is

clearly implied.

In a number of writings, Bursevi also likens himself to the *khalīfa* or to a kind of divine

messenger (Tur. *peygamber*). He describes in one revelation that he was meant to preach out

loud: "So follow me, all of you, until you arrive at your respective abodes" (Ar. *fa-attabiᶜūnī*

ḥattā taṣilū ilā manāzilikum).[166] For Bursevi, this revelation affirms that he has reached spiritual

mastery. Therefore, following him will give others the ability to ascend to transcend their own

sublimity "in form and essence" (Tur. *suveri ve-manevi*). He then describes himself as the prime

---

[162] Soğüt, "İsmâil Hakkı Bursevî'nin Kenz-i Mahfî Risâlesi Muhtevâ ve Tahlîli," 157.
[163] Ibid., 158.
[164] Ibid.
[165] Ibid.
[166] Bursevi, *Kitâbü'l-Izzi'l-âdemî*, 306a.

inheritor of the spiritual state of the Prophet Muḥammad as *khalīfa*. Because of this inheritance, he is also the manifestation of God, who ultimately bestows the office of *khalīfa* (Tur. *mustahlifin hey'a'tile zahir-dir*).[167] This assertion is not heretical according to Bursevi. As he clarifies, "Every age has one who summons [others] to the Messenger of God. Thus, every age has its own 'messenger' (Tur. *Her asirin peygamberi vardır*). Being a messenger in this way depends on one being God's trustee and *khalīfa* (Tur. *demek vekalet ve hilafete racidir*)."[168] To reinforce his claims to be such a "messenger," Bursevi ends this passage with the Qur'anic statement: "So follow me, all of you—God will love you" (Q 3:31).[169]

Conclusion

   To end this chapter, it is helpful to examine one of Bursevi's poems that epitomizes his Anti-Humanism. Employing the same terminology and logic that I argued Bursevi used to formulate his Humanism, the poem arrives at a radically different, anti-humanist conclusion. Rather than connote humanity a universal sense, the term *adam* as used in the poem has a very restricted meaning. It is clear that Bursevi takes *adam* to mean masculine "man" or "mankind," in a way not unlike the use of these English terms until relatively recently.[170] It is also clear from the final hemistiches of the poem that the true Adam of the Age, the only real master of the Adamic Science, is Bursevi himself.

   Although man (Tur. *adam*) is lesser in form,
        In significance, man is greater.
   The existence of this world, which is "other than God," resembles pearls.
        In this existence is a marvelous gem: man.

---

[167] Ibid., 306a.
[168] Ibid., 306b.
[169] Ibid., 307b.
[170] See: Carol Braun Pasternack, "Ruling Masculinities: From Adam to Apollonius of Tyre in Corpus 201b," in *Intersections of Gender, Religion, and Ethnicity in the Middle Ages*, Cordelia Beattie and Kirsten A. Fenton Eds. (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), 38, 57, ft. 25.

From even before creation, great zeal (Tur. *gayret*) has been given to man.
>Thus, the human being (Tur. *adem*) who is a "real man" (Tur. *er*) does not look to the
>woman of the world for inspiration (Tur. *zen-i dünyaya bakmaz*).
The world attained to elegance and beauty only through man.
>It is man alone who brings harmony to the world.
His name is recited from the Book of God's Love.
>Indeed, man is the summit of all created things.
The musky perfume of God's reality wafts through man, eternally.
>O Hakki, Adam is the censer, and you are a waft of that perfume.[171]

Despite the misogyny and exclusivism of this poem, Bursevi authored that relativizes

human evil in light of humanity's shared Adamic heritage. In it, Bursevi likens those human

beings whom one might consider imperfect as "inheritors of Cain." Those who are seemingly

perfect are "inheritors of Abel." Although they may be heirs of Abel or of Cain, all human beings

Adamic and hence theomorphic in the final analysis.[172] This poem is found in the very same

Divan as the poem reproduced above. As Władysław Tatarkiewicz, Thomas Hurka, Michel

Foucault, and Sa'diya Shaikh have demonstrated, humanistic and anti-humanistic discourses are

more interrelated than one might expect. As Tony Davies has observed, no matter how

universalist it may appear, humanist discourses always "speak of the human in the accents and

the interests of a class, a sex, a race, a genome. Their embrace suffocates those whom it does not

ignore."[173] Similarly, the scholar of mysticism Richard H. Jones has argued that while mystical

doctrines such as Sufi theologies of human potential may conform outwardly to inclusivist ethics,

mystical doctrines and mystics themselves are not necessarily inclusivist. What might appear to

be humanistic at first glance may in fact be anti-humanistic.[174]

The following chapter will seek to answer the question: What motivated Bursevi to

formulate his Anti-Humanism? The discourses examined above allude to the answer. Bursevi's

---

[171] Bursevi, *Diwan*, pg. 259, no. 207.
[172] Ibid., pg. 291, no. 263.
[173] Tony Davies, *Humanism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997; 2008), 141.
[174] Richard H. Jones, *Philosophy of Mysticism*: *Raids on the Ineffable* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2016), 289-293, 303-305.

definition of "the true human being," his concept of the "inhuman human" and the "sub-human woman," as well as his own self-aggrandizement, were not accidental. Rather, as I will argue, they were meant to support arguments for Bursevi's political aspirations. As such, they further Bursevi's political ideologies of the utopian "Society of Perfect Men" and "Despotism of the Perfect Man."

Chapter 5: Bursevi's Politicization of the "Perfect Man"

The previous chapter examined Ismail Hakki Bursevi's Sufi anthropology under greater scrutiny. It showed the ways in which several of Bursevi's Sufi anthropological discourses seem to contradict the Humanism for which I argue in this dissertation. Ultimately, the chapter argued that a great deal of Bursevi's Sufi anthropology can be considered anti-humanistic. Drawing on the analyses of Władysław Tatarkiewicz, Thomas Hurka, Michel Foucault, Tony Davies, and Richard H. Jones, as well as examples from Sufi history, it showed that Bursevi's departure from his Humanism was not unprecedented. Despite its universalist rhetoric, Humanism has often been articulated to serve the interests of a particular group. Because they are considered better exemplars of human identity, this group is seen as superior, even "more human."[1] Bursevi's Sufi anthropology, which distinguishes between theomorphic "true humans," potentially theomorphic "quasi-humans," and unredeemable "inhuman humans," embodies this logic.

What motivated Bursevi to adopt his Anti-Humanism? I contend in this chapter that Bursevi's Sufi anthropology, in both its Humanist and Anti-Humanist manifestations, was ultimately bound up with his political agenda. His ostensibly egalitarian Humanism served as the basis for his idealistic conception of society. Bursevi saw himself as the champion of this ideal society, the adoption of which would rectify the maladies plaguing the Ottoman Empire in his day. Bursevi's Anti-Humanism was formulated to legitimize his claims political power for himself and the "true humans" of this society. Both iterations politicized the concept of "The Perfect Human Being" in order to argue for the legitimacy of his leadership and to convince others to follow him.

---

[1] Tony Davies, *Humanism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997; 2008), 141.

To appreciate the inner logic of Bursevi's apparent contradictions, it is necessary to explore the political ramifications of Bursevi's theological works. To do so, I draw on the recent scholarship of Merve Tabur and Kamelia Atanasova. These scholars have exposed Bursevi's political aspirations, as detailed in his "dedicatory treatises" (Tur. *tuhfe*) offered to members of the Sultanate government, and in his history of the Celvetiyye Sufi order (Tur. *Kitāb silsilenāme-yi celvetiye*).[2] Beyond offering spiritual admonitions and advice in these works, Bursevi articulated a new politics that was meant to rectify the political, social, and spiritual maladies of the Ottoman Empire in his day. He formulated his political system on the basis of his understanding of religious and temporal authority according to Sufi theology, particularly with regard to the role and function of *quṭb al-zamān* (the "Axis of the Age") and *al-insān al-kāmil*. Considered in relation to his Politicization of the Perfect Man, Bursevi's Sufi anthropology was a clarion call for political change. In his view, the Ottoman authorities neglected to provide the means for cultivating the full Adamic potential of their subjects. Through their engagement in frivolous warfare, disenfranchisement of jurists, economic and political exploitation of their subjects, and marginalization of enlightened Sufis, they had lost their right to rule. These authorities, the Sultan included, actively prevented humankind from reaching its perfection.[3] To remedy this situation, Bursevi envisioned a political corrective beholden to his Sufi anthropology.

Bursevi's theoretical political discourses were not unique in the history of Sufism. Many Sufis before and since have theorized political schemes, been involved in politics, and have

---

[2] Merve Tabur, "İsmail Hakkı Bursevi and the Politics of Balance" M.A. Thesis, Boğaziçi University, Istanbul, 2011, 11, 60, 107-110; Kamelia Atanasova, "The Sufi as the Axis of the World: Representations of Religious Authority in the Works of Ismail Hakki Bursevi (1653-1725)," Doctoral Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, 2016, 42, 111, 152-158.

[3] On this point, see: Tabur, "İsmail Hakkı Bursevi and the Politics of Balance," 152-180; Atanasova, "The Sufi as the Axis of the World," 164-166; Namlı, *İsmail Hakkı Bursevi*, 43-46.

argued for their own role as political leaders. However, the society that Bursevi imagined and the political role that Bursevi envisioned for himself in the society were unprecedented. For Bursevi, humankind had departed from its ideal *fiṭra* ("primordial human nature"), since the majority of Perfect Men remained so only in potential. To rectify this, Bursevi argued for a Society of Perfect Men. In it, "true humans" would be enfranchised to lead society, inspire potential Adamites to emulate them, and to put those who could not actualize their potentials— "sub-human women" and "inhuman humans"— in their place.

Bursevi argued that in order for the Society of Perfect Men to be a social reality, it needed a leader. In the place of the Sultan, Bursevi saw himself at the center of government as the self-conceived Axis of Creation, "Protégé of God" (Ar. *walī Allāh*), Perfect Man and, most saliently for the present work, Adam on Earth. Being aware of the full potential of "true humanity," he felt it was his duty to take power for the sake of the "Adamic race."[4] Just as Adam acted as God's *khalīfa*, so too did Bursevi, as the Perfect Man of his age, preside over creation in what I term "The Despotism of the Perfect Man." This despot was neither a sultan, nor a "philosopher king," nor an Imam, nor a messiah.[5] Rather, Bursevi's imagined Despot was the epitome of the accomplished Sufi master with ultimate political authority. As such, he envisaged the Ottoman Sultan and the government of the Ottoman Empire as subjected to his will. In a more perfect world, the Sultan and his entourage would have been obliged to carry our Bursevi's directives as the "Shadow of God's Image"—a reformulation of the well-known political title from the Abbasid Caliphate, "Shadow of God on Earth" (Ar. *ẓill Allāh fī-l-arḍ*).[6]

---

[4] See: Atanasova, "The Sufi as the Axis of the World," 75, 85, 94, 150.

[5] For these other Islamic political figures, see: A. Afzar Moin, *The Millenial Sovereign*: *Sacred Kingship and Sainthood in Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012; 2014), 130-170, 181-182; Antony Black, *Islamic Political Thought*: *From the Prophet to the Present* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001; 2011), 40-44, 60-61, 58, 70, 224.

[6] Atanasova, "The Sufi as the Axis of the World," 144-146.

Because its major components are the concepts of the Society of Perfect Men and Despotism of the Perfect Man, Bursevi's political theory is summarized in this dissertation as the "Politicization of the Perfect Man." However, his Sufi theology as a whole was not merely a pretext for his political aspirations, an accusation that he levied against many contemporary Sufis.[7] Rather, Bursevi felt that it was his role to aid all of humanity in actualizing their Adamic potential. As a leader working in the interest of Perfect Men, Bursevi felt that he could reorder society Ottoman society around himself. However, his exclusivist and totalitarian political vision resembled more a nightmarish dystopia than a utopian paradise.

In discussing Bursevi's Society of Perfect Men and Despotism of the Perfect Man, I make use of several trends in Ottoman historiography. The most salient of these trends is Baki Tezcan's conception of Ottoman politics and society after the so-called "Golden Age" of Selim I (r. 899-916/1494-1511) and Süleyman I (r. 926-973/1520-1566). Tezcan argues that rather than being in a state of decline, the Ottoman Empire of 987-1238/1580-1823 was instead transformed into something unique in its own right, and hence should be considered a "Second Ottoman Empire." The birth of Ottoman civil society in the form of an alliance of the Janissary Corps, influential religious scholars, and particularly distinguished the "Second Ottoman Empire" from other periods of Ottoman history.[8] Through his utopian vision, Bursevi sought to reorder Ottoman society and politics and restore the "Golden Age" in which Sufis had power.

Although it is extremely insightful, Tezcan's work lacks any mention of Ottoman Sufis or Sufi orders. To address this lacuna, I thus draw on several important historians of Ottoman Sufism. Merve Tabur has similarly argued that Bursevi advocated a sort of "balancing" of the Ottoman political system to favor disempowered Sufis, whom he believed had been neglected by

---

[7] See: Ali Namlı, *İsmail Hakkı Bursevi*: *Hayatı*, *Eserleri*, *Tarikat Anlayışı* (Istanbul: İnsan Yayınları, 2001), 43-46.

[8] Baki Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire*: *Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010; 2012), 39, 61-62, 74-76, 126, 216-217.

the state. He believed that by restoring power to the spiritual pillars of the Empire, Ottoman society as a whole would flourish as it had done under Selim I and Süleyman I.[9]

Kamelia Atanasova's recent work on Bursevi's politics, historical writings, and self-conception as "Axis of the Age" (Ar. *quṭb al-zamān*) has had a major impact on my research. She has made clear in her research on Bursevi's autobiographical accounts and dedicatory treatises addressed to key Ottoman officials that Bursevi had great ambitions. Beyond Tabur's theory of "balancing," Atanasova has demonstrated that Bursevi considered himself a Spiritual Sultan, with political interests in the Ottoman Empire, to be enthroned above the temporal leader of the Empire. Not only did she bring to light his explicit claims for political authority on the basis of his spiritual mastery, but she has also reproduced his detailed diagrams, which depicted a new way to organize the Ottoman government. In Bursevi's political system, he himself would be the leader of the "true Sultanate" operated by a retinue of his closest Celveti disciples. The Ottoman Sultanate, led by the Sultan and managed by the Grand Vizier, *Shaykh al-Islām*, and other bureaucrats, was merely a "shadow Sultanate" of God's chosen government.[10] By focusing on Bursevi's Humanism, this dissertation augments Atanasova's research in that it brings to light the Sufi anthropological underpinnings of his political theory.[11]

In my exploration of Bursevi's politics, I also make use of Hüseyin Yılmaz's recent work that demonstrates how Ottoman political discourse was infused with Sufi theology. In effect, for Ottoman political theorists, the Sultan functioned not only as a Sufi shaykh and *al-insān al-kāmil* in his rule, but as God himself. In theory, Sufis were the arbiters of this power since they

---

[9] See, Merve Tabur, "İsmail Hakkı Bursevi and the Politics of Balance" M.A.Thesis, Boğaziçi University, Istanbul, 2011, 107-110, 221-222.

[10] Kamelia Atanasova, "The Sufi as the Axis of the World: Representations of Religious Authority in the Works if Ismail Hakki Bursevi (1653-1725)," Doctoral Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, 2016, 147-150, 166.

[11] Atanasova, "The Sufi as the Axis of the World." 147-149, 166, 170.

articulated this configuration of power. Since the reigns of Selim I and Süleyman I, the Ottoman Sultan and his government conceived of themselves as representatives of God's kingdom on earth.[12] Bursevi's Politicization of the Perfect Man focused on restoring power to God's true *khulafāʾ*, Perfect Men lead by the Perfect Man Despot. Subordinating the Sultanate to his will, Bursevi as Despot would actualize the *fiṭra* of humanity.

Tabur, Atanasova, and other scholars of Ottoman Sufism tend to cast Bursevi as a political opportunist. That is, Bursevi utilized Sufi doctrine to attempt to convince others to grant him political authority in a rather Machiavellian manner. On the basis of my own investigation into his Sufi anthropology, I argue that Bursevi's foray into politics was not only out of a desire for political power. From his autobiography, it is clear that he spent most of his life critiquing the abuses of power, the corruption of society, and the misuse of religion in the Ottoman Empire. Rather than conceive of his Sufism and his politics as only tangentially related, Bursevi's writings show them to be unified. Bursevi considered Ottoman society as having departed from the ideals of the Humanism that he preached. In his view, the Ottoman government, Ottoman civil society, and state-supported religious establishment (Tur. *ilmiye*) undermined the telos of human creation by deterring Adamites from actualizing their theomorphic potentials. According to Bursevi, even the Sultanate had not made good on the original pact enacted by Osman I (r. 1299-1323/4) and the Sufi Şeyh Edebali (d. 726/1326) to care for the spiritual welfare of its subjects. Apart from Celveti Sufi masters such as Aziz Mahmut Hüdayi (d. 1038/1628) and Osman Fazlı (d. 1102/1691), Ottoman Sufis also betrayed their duty to humankind. For Bursevi, the "sword of authority" that Ottoman Sufis such as Osman Fazlı girded on the Sultan at each coronation had to be regained. For the good of the Ottoman State and for the good of

---

[12] Hüseyin Yılmaz, *Caliphate Redefined: The Mystical Turn in Ottoman Political Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 13, 16, 97-107.

theomorphic humankind, the Perfect Human Being or Axis of the Age must be empowered politically. Bursevi saw himself as the Shaykh to take back the role of Şeyh Edebali. Once established in power, he planned to delegate authority as he saw fit. The Sultan and the government would be compelled to follow what Bursevi considered the will of God and would answer to him as the Axis of Existence and the Perfect Human Being.

This chapter explores Bursevi's politicization of the Perfect Human Being in two sections. The first section concerns his literally conceived "Society of Perfect Men." Specifically, it pieces together Bursevi's concept of the Society of Perfect Men in the context of his Sufi anthropology. His "revelatory" treatise *Kitāb al-ᶜizz al-ādamī* ("The Book of the Glorification of the Adamic State") is the main source for this discussion. To make sense of the relationship between his concept of an ideal and his Sufi anthropology, I draw upon Utopian theory and philosopher Shelly Kagan's concept of "conditional egalitarianism." The section ends by discussing how Bursevi argued that the Perfect Human Being as *khalīfa* should serve as a kind of of *primus inter pares* over other Adamite *khulafāʾ*. The second section of the chapter focuses on Bursevi's "Despotism of the Perfect Man," the vehicle for making his utopian society a reality. It first delineates Bursevi's criteria for the Perfect Human Being as despot, and then discusses the Despot's role in society. To contextualize his despotism in the framework of his utopian society of Perfect Men, the chapter makes use of theories of Utopianism, in particular those ideologies designed to make a Utopia into a sociopolitical reality. The section concludes by foregrounding Bursevi's arguments for his own authority as a despot over the Ottoman Empire, and humankind in general.

I. Bursevi's Society of Perfect Men

a.) *Bursevi's Politics as Utopian and Utopianistic Enterprises*

Bursevi's politicization of the concept of the Perfect Man was comprised of two major components. The first was the notion of an idealized political society, a Society of Perfect Men. In many ways, this ideal society had much in common with the Platonic ideal of a social utopia. The second component was an argument for the political system by which the Society of Perfect Men could be achieved. This was Bursevi's "Despotism of the Perfect Man." Although both components were articulated on the basis of Bursevi's understanding of Sufi anthropology, his arguments for a personal despotism was more akin to a dystopia than to an idyllic, utopian society.

A quick survey of theories of Utopia and Utopianism can illuminate the underlying logic behind Bursevi's political theory. These theories suggest that there is an ironic relationship between utopian ideology and dystopia that is created when utopian ideals are implemented in the form of ideological dogmas. For example, Thomas More's (d. 1535) dual etymology of the term "utopia" as both *eu-topia* ("a place of ultimate good") and *u-topia* ("no place at all") reflects this view.[13] Scholars of Utopia have made a further distinction between places, societies, or polities that are conceived as ideally perfect or good, and those that are in fact oppressive when put into actual practice. In this sense, Howard P. Segal makes a useful distinction between Utopia, as an ideal vision, and Utopianism, the movements or theories that are created to bring about a Utopia.[14]

As Frank E. and Fritzie P. Manuel maintain in their seminal work *Utopian Thought in the Western World* (1979), theories of Utopia are in many ways extensions of previous discussions on the human condition. Most utopian visions are formulated on the basis of a belief in human

---

[13] Frank E. Manuel and Fritzie P. Manuel, *Utopian Thought in the Western World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), 1-3.

[14] Segal, *Utopias*, 5-6.

goodness, the possibility of the betterment of individuals and society, and the possibility of achieving an ideal polity despite the existence of societal and governmental shortcomings. To conceptualize a Utopia entails "a measure of confidence in human capacity to fashion on earth what is recognized as a transient mortal state into a simulacrum of the transcendental."[15] Because of this built-in contradiction, Utopias are distinct from other political theories. Because they are based on the notion of human agency, they are distinct from apocalyptic or chiliastic theories of social reformation. In temporal terms, Utopias are usually conceived during times of relative political stability, not as a means to fill a vacuum of political power. Conceptually, they are totalistic: they are oriented toward the radical improvement of all aspects of society to the point of reinventing society itself, not only toward the improvement of certain facets of society such as economics, the justice system, or countering oppression.[16] Thus, Utopianism attempts to redefine the future by establishing the image of a utopian society in the world by any means necessary.[17]

Although Thomas More coined the term, "Utopia," there is a well-established tradition of "Utopias before '*Utopia*.'" Plato's *Republic*, Aristotle's *Politics*, Cicero's *Offices*, and St. Augustine's *City of God* can all be said to offer versions of Utopia. Muslims have also articulated their own versions of Utopia and Utopianism. While indebted to classical and especially Platonic Utopianism, Abū Naṣr al-Farābī's (d. 339/950) concept of *al-madīna al-fāḍila* ("The virtuous societys"), the Brethren of Purity's political discourses, "Mirrors for Princes" literature such as Niẓām al-Mulk's (d. 485/1092) *Siyāsat-nāma* ("The Book of Governance"), and Sayyid Quṭb's (d. 1966) concept of the "Cosmic Shar'ia" (Ar. *al-sharīʿa al-kawnīya*) all reflect uniquely Islamic

---

[15] Manuel and Manuel, *Utopian Thought in the Western World*, 3, 13.
[16] Segal, *Utopias*, 7.
[17] Ibid., 12-13; Manuel and Manuel, *Utopian Thought in the Western World*, 24-26.

notions of utopia.[18] The few discussions of Islamic Utopianism in contemporary scholarship have tended to focus on philosophical and legalistic works and have privileged the modern period over the past.[19] As a corrective to this trend, I argue that the political aspect of Sufi anthropology can also be explored in the context of theories of Utopianism. Many of the Sufis who believed that they could either reform or lead society in order to better serve the ideals of Islam and humanity were just as utopian as their Classical or modern counterparts.

It is my contention that Bursevi's vision of a Society of Perfect Men constituted an important early modern example of Utopianism in Sufi anthropology. According to his vision, "true human beings" are inherently good—in potential perfect and theomorphic on the basis of their "Adamic" identity—it made sense that society should be structured in a way that fostered their betterment. Thus, the existing society had to be rearticulated in order to remind "truly human" Muslims of their potential to become Perfect Human Beings. Unlike other Sufis, Bursevi never conceived of himself as the *mahdī* ("Guided One") or *masīḥ* ("Messiah"). Rather, as Adam reborn, Bursevi was the initiator and arbiter of a new world order meant to do justice to Perfect Men.

b.) *The Ideal Adamite and Society*

Generally speaking, in his Sufi anthropology, Bursevi focused on discussing the human being as an ideal. He also considered humankind as a whole as members of a society. In these discussions, Bursevi imposed his theory of the "Perfect Human Being" (Ar. *al-insān al-kāmil*) on

---

[18] Aziz Al-Azmeh, "Utopia and Islamic Political Thought," *History of Political Thought* 11 (1990): 11-13, 16-17; Antony Black, *The History of Islamic Political Thought*: *From the Prophet to the Present* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001; 2011), 61, 68, 71, 74-76, 91-97, 120.

[19] Al-Azmeh, " Utopia and Islamic Political Thought," 9; Andrew F. March, "Taking People as They Are: Islam as a 'Realistic Utopia' in the Political Theory of Sayyid Qutb," *The American Political Science Review* 104 (2010): 190, 193.

society. Employing the terminology of his Humanism, he envisioned human society as populated by potential Adamites. Members of this society were depicted as ostensible equals on the basis of their inheritance of Adam's theomorphism. Since they were all potential "Images of God," the members of this Adamic society could constitute what I call an egalitarian "Society of Perfect Human Beings." However, upon closer scrutiny, it is clear that such egalitarianism is conditional. While the theomorphic *potential* of humanity was universal, the only kind of person who could actualize it was a Muslim, a male Sufi, and a member of the Celvetiyye order. *Al-insān* in the truest sense was thus masculine, hence *al-insān al-kāmil* was the Perfect Man. Sub-human women as well as inhuman humans consisting of non-Muslims and apostates, were not full members of the ideal society. On the basis of these conditions, it is more accurate to speak of this society as what I call a "Society of Perfect Men," rather than of "Perfect Human Beings." At times, Bursevi discusses this society as an ideal. Elsewhere, he treats it as a primordial reality. His most provocative political writings describe the Society of Perfect Men as an actuality that must be acknowledged and then instituted for the good of the world. Overall, Bursevi's political discourses are teleological. Just as an individual's actualization of his *fiṭra* fulfills the telos of human creation, so too the establishment of the Society of Perfect Men fulfills the telos of human political life.

What was the exact relationship between Bursevi's Sufi anthropology and his social and political discourses? Examining studies of utopian literature can help to answer this question. In particular, Manuel and Manuel's *Utopian Thought in the Western World* can shed light on the inner logic of Burevi's Society of Perfect Men. In their assessment of Western utopian literature, Manuel and Manuel observe that most theorists of Utopia conceive of their ideals as extensions of their conceptions of human nature. For instance, in the *Republic*, Plato discusses notions of

human justice and virtue on the level of individual behavior before formulating his ideal polity.[20]

Thomas More drew on his Renaissance Humanist conception of the ideal human being when

formulating the just society of the "New Island of Utopia."[21] On the basis of these examples and

others, Manuel and Manuel conclude that all Utopias are logically dependent on the concept of

human nature put forth by their authors.[22] Like Plato's and More's, Bursevi's conception of the

Perfect Man acts as a foundation for his Society of Perfect Men. His notion of the ideal Adamite

is the basis for his social and political theories.

In this vein, Bursevi's treatment of the politically and religiously charged term *khalīfat*

Allāh contain some of the most significant examples of his conception of the Society of Perfect

Men. After a lengthy discourse on theomorphic anthropocentrism in *Kitāb al-ᶜizz al-ādamī*,

Bursevi claims, "Every single person is called to arrive at the station of God's reality (Tur.

Herkes makam-ı hakikata vusula mad'u-dur). This is the case despite the fact that those who

fully actualize their potential are exceedingly few."[23] For Bursevi, the proof of the actualization

of one's one's theomorphic *fiṭra* is becoming a *khalīfa*.[24] Bursevi makes it a point to argue in

several places that God did not place just one single *khalīfa* on Earth (Q 2:30). Rather, discussion

of the concept of *khilāfa* includes all of the "true" children of Adam. Ultimately, if every true

human individual is God's *khalīfa*, then society as a whole is made up of of Adamite *khulafāʾ*. As

shown in the discussion of Bursevi's Sufi anthropology, human perfection (Ar. *kamāl*) consists in

actualizing one's theomorphism. Upon actualizing this innate potential, the Adamite is bestowed

---

[20] Frank E. Manual and Fritzie P. Manuel, *Utopian Thought in the Western World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), 71-72.
[21] Ibid., 123-124.
[22] Ibid. 13.
[23] İsmail Hakkı Bursevi, *Kitâbü'l-Izzi'l-âdemî*, Istanbul: Süleymaniye Yazma Eser Kütüphanesi, 34 Atif Efendi, ms. no. 1420/8, 306b
[24] Ibid.

the rank of *khalīfa* or God's representative. To be *al-insān al-kāmil* is also to be a *khalīfa*, and both titles are the unique prerogative of true Adamites.[25]

Elsewhere, Bursevi clarifies that just as every individual must strive to become a *khalīfa*, so too should every society endeavor to produce *khulafāʾ*. One of the most significant discussions of this idea can be found in his exegesis of God's "settling" or "establishing" (Ar. *tamkīn*) of humankind on Earth (Q 7:10): "Indeed, We settled [or established, *makkannākum*] you upon the Earth. We appointed for you a means of livelihood in it. Little do you give thanks." Bursevi acknowledges that the outward meaning of the *aya* relates "settlement" of human beings to God's providing the "means of livelihood" (Ar. *maʿāyish*) for them. However, God's true "establishment" is of a spiritual nature. God's establishment of human beings means "the ability to perfect the human potential for mystical knowledge (Ar. *maʿrifa*), divine love, desire, wayfaring to God, attainment to God, and divine union."[26] On the basis of this understanding of perfection, the verse also signifies that God meant to establish Adamites as His representatives (Ar. *khulafāʾ*), in the sense of political appointment, enthronement, or consecration. According to Bursevi, the very term "'establishment' unites meanings of ownership, control, and the capacity to acquire the means of obtaining every kind of worldly and otherworldly goodness."[27]

In essence, Bursevi's conception of God's "establishment" of Adam on Earth exemplifies Sufism Vincent J. Cornell's definition of Sufi sainthood in Sufi theology. The *walī-Allāh* ("saint") is the figure who possesses *walāya* or "proximity to God" in the sense of closeness or intimacy and consequently has *wilāya*, divinely-bestowed authority in spiritual and political

---

[25] İsmail Hakki Bursevi, *Rūḥ al-bayān fī-tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, Bursa: Bursa Eski Eserler Kütüphanesi (BEYBEK), Genel (GE), ms. no., 12.62, 12.68, 27.202; Abdullah Kargılı, "İsmail Hakkı Bursevi'nin Kitabü'l-Hucceti'l-Baliǧa Adlı Eseri İnceleme-Metin," M.A. Thesis, , Istanbul University, Istanbul, 2011, 146.
[26] Bursevi, *Rūḥ al-bayān*, 15.124.
[27] Ibid.

matters.[28] Bursevi argues similarly that to become a true *walī Allāh* means to gain proximity to God in order to exercise divine authority on Earth as God's *khalīfa* or representative.[29] Upon establishing Adam on Earth as God's representative, God ordered the angels to prostrate to him (Q 7:11) as subjects would to a monarch upon his coronation. In sum, Bursevi claims that God meant to say, "'We have guided all of you, and have endowed you with the office of *khalīfa* in a way that we have not done for any other living being."[30] However, unrealized Adamites give "little thanks" for God's establishment of them as *khulafāʾ*.[31] Bursevi concludes his discussion by exhorting true children of Adam to carry out God's plan and ensure that creation recognizes God through them. "The human being is God's trustee over absolutely everything, and His representative to them," he writes.[32] The onus is on potential Adamites to uphold their divinely ordained anthropocentrism. Adamites should not do this as individual *khalīfa*s, but rather should band together as a society of *khulafāʾ* for the sake of humanity and creation.

c.) *The Society of Perfect Men as an "Egalitarianism of Desert"*

For all of his seemingly universalist rhetoric, Bursevi elucidates in some passages that all human beings are not *khulafaʾ* at birth. In the manner of his Anti-Humanism, he adopts the position that all human beings are indeed *khulafāʾ* in potential, yet only a small cadre of *men* can become true representatives of God. The *khilāfa* belongs in actuality only to those who can master the means to actualize the fullness of their human potential. "With training, [the potential Adamite] can ascend from the world of the seen to the world of the Unseen," writes Bursevi. By

---

[28] See: Vincent J. Cornell, *Realm of the* Saint: *Power and Authority in Moroccan Sufism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998), xvii-xix, 228-229.
[29] Bursevi, *Rūḥ al-bayān*, 15.124.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid.

persisting in this training, the Adamite ascends through the cosmos to the "Unseen of the Unseen" (Ar. *ghayb al-ghayb*), and witnesses God as pure light. Consequently, the fully actualized Adamite becomes *khalīfat Allāh* and in this position he "knows the Unseen and the Seen—just as God, most high, is "Knower of the Unseen (Q 72:26)."[33] As he states in his anti-humanist discourses, the "training" or means to actualize this potential are the "Adamic sciences." Beyond all Adamites and even Adam himself, the Prophet Muḥammad is depicted as mastering these sciences. Sufis, who are the Prophet's true followers and inheritors, transmit the Adamic sciences to the world in the form of Sufism. It is they exclusively who have attained *maᶜrifa*, the product of the Adamic sciences. Mastery of *maᶜrifa* is the prime criterion for being God's representative on Earth. It is a "condition of the *khilāfa*. Nay, *maᶜrifa* is the very pillar upon which the *khilāfa* rests."[34] A true *khalīfa* is thus one who mystically knows God through God (Ar. *al-ᶜārif bi-llāh*). Anyone who claims this status and does not have *maᶜrifa* is baseless.

Because their vocation is the transmission of the Adamic sciences, all Sufis fundamentally belong to one order (Ar. *ṭarīqa*) according to Bursevi. "There is only one 'Muhammadan Path' (Tur. *Tarikat-ı Muhammadiye*),' which is in fact Sufism. Although it is one path, it still possesses many branches."[35] All Sufis are true "Children of the People of God's Breath. They constitute the true 'Family of the Messenger.' They truly uphold the Shari'a. Because they are purified in their hearts, they purify others."[36] Sufis who are aware of these truths mutually aid one another to reach their spiritual goals. Bursevi asserts that "The Perfect Men are fully aware of each others' spiritual states. They respect one another on the basis of the

---

[33] Ibid., 12.63.
[34] Ibid., 12.68.
[35] Kargılı, "İsmail Hakkı Bursevi'nin Kitabü'l-Hucceti'l-Baliğa Adlı Eseri İnceleme-Metin," 114.
[36] Ibid..

spiritual stations that they have individually reached" (Tur. *Fe-emma kamiller birbirlerinin hallerine vakıf olup her hali makamına göre riayet ettiler).*[37]

From one perspective, Bursevi makes use of universalistic language and promotes an ostensibly egalitarian society. This society is one populated by the "Children of the People of God's Breath," who are moral paragons. They purify those who need to be purified, and support one another in their mutual endeavor to become full Adamites. Upon deeper investigation, it becomes clear that this society is exclusivistic to its core. In accord with Bursevi's Anti-Humanism, this society is comprised only of an elite corps of Perfect *Men*, who act as lords over all the others.

To make sense of Bursevi's ideal but imperfectly egalitarian society, it is beneficial to examine philosopher Shelly Kagan's concept of the "egalitarianism of desert." Kagan has attempted to formulate an egalitarianism in which all members of a society are equal in rights and opportunities yet still participate in a meritocracy that provides just deserts to the society's more "outstanding" members. His "egalitarianism of desert" rewards the "best" of the society who embody the ideals of the society above and beyond "ordinary" members, who could theoretically fulfill these ideals, but cannot do so in actuality. For the sake of inspiring all members of society to emulate the best members, the just deserts of the best are prioritized above the egalitarianism of the whole. Conceiving of his "egalitarianism of desert" in terms of saints and sinners, Kagan argues that while all people should theoretically be treated as equals, in reality a below average, yet potentially perfect "saint" is more deserving of reward than an outwardly "good sinner."[38]

---

[37] Ibid., 87.

[38] See: Shelly Kagan, *The Geometry of Desert* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press: 2012), 102; Idem., "Equality and Desert," in *What Do We Deserve? A Reader on Justice and Desert*, Louis P. Pojman and Owen McLeod Eds. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 298–314.

Bursevi's Society of Perfect Men operates similarly as an "egalitarianism of desert." Nowhere does Bursevi disavow outright the fact that all human beings are *potential* Adamites. However, while still upholding this ideal, his Society of Perfect Men ultimately empowers only those who are considered true human beings for the benefit of inspiring potential Adamites to activate their theomorphism. For Bursevi, human society is one that Perfect Men should lead and shape so as to transform all true humans beings into the Perfect Men they potentially are. They should receive the "just deserts" concomitant with the actualization of their theomorphic potential. Those who cannot realize this potential receive their "just deserts" as well. In Bursevi's society, sub-human women or inhuman humans are disenfranchised so as not to hinder true humans beings from fulfilling the purpose of human creation. Unfortunately, in the Ottoman Empire of his day, the Perfect Men have become disenfranchised. As a result, not only has Ottoman Society become corrupt, but the world at large has also become deficient. In this vein, Bursevi's Society of Perfect Men must become more than just an ideal. It is in reality the primordial state of humankind—the *fiṭra* of human society. thus, to return society to this *fiṭra* is to rectify the ills that plague humanity and creation as a whole.

c.) *The Society of Perfect Men as Utopia*

Based on Mandel and Mandel's analyses, one can assume that Bursevi applies his conception of human nature to society in a way that resembles that of earlier, Western theorists of Utopia such as Plato or Thomas More. When Bursevi's Society of Perfect Men is compared with the typology of utopian discourses developed by Howard P. Segal, it appears more and more utopian than not. For Segal, all versions of Utopia have a common interest in the

improvement of the physical, social, economic, and spiritual conditions of their people.[39] Utopias

go beyond reform movements in their comprehensiveness: they seek to improve all aspects of

society and not just one.[40] Rather than promoting an escape from the material world, the call for

a Utopia is a clarion call to improve the world on an idealistic basis. In practice, however, most

Utopias remain hypothetical or unrealized. Drawing on More's etymology of the term, Segal

argues that no matter how serious theorists may be in arguing for the adoption of their "ideal

place" (Gr. *Eu-topos*), there is a degree to which a Utopia will always be "nowhere" (Gr. *Ou-*

topos).[41] However, a Utopia cannot by definition be chiliastic or the product of some *Deus ex*

machina. Human beings alone make a Utopia a social reality.[42]

Bursevi's ideology of a Society of Perfect Men advocated for the comprehensive

betterment of all "true human beings." He saw the spiritual excellence of the Perfect Men as the

foundation for the enhancement of all other aspects of society. This Society even was even

tasked to improve the condition of sub-human women and inhuman humans by rendering them

subservient to true human beings. Thus subordinated, they might have the chance to emulate the

Perfect Men and to benefit from their presence and guidance. Most previous Sufis who argued

for political power used chiliastic or millenarian terminology to legitimize their claims. For

example, the Andalusian Sufi Ibn Qasī (d. 546/1151), Safavid Shāh Ismāᶜīl I (d. 930/1524), even

Bursevi's contemporary Niyaz-i Misri (d. 1106/1694) claimed the title of *mahdī* and conceived of

their followers as harbingers of the Resurrection.[43] It is striking that given all the spiritual and

---

[39] Howard P Segal, *Utopias*: *A Brief History from Ancient Writings to Virtual Communities* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 5-7.
[40] Ibid., 5-6.
[41] Ibid., 6.
[42] Ibid., 7.
[43] See: David Raymond Goodrich, "A Sufi Revolt in Portugal: Ibn Qasī and his *Kitāb khalᶜ al-naᶜlayn*," New York, Faculty of Political Science, Columbia University, 1978, 15-18, 53-60; Said Amier Arjomand, *The Shadow of God & The Hidden* Imam: *Religion, Political Order, and Societal Change in Shiᶜite Iran from the Beginning to 1890* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), 79-82; Paul Ballanfat, *Messianisme et sainteté*: *Les poèmes*

political titles he employed, Bursevi never laid claim to the messianic title *mahdī* ("guided one").

Nor did he conceive of Adamites as heralds of the apocalypse. Even though Bursevi believed

that God was manifest in the human being as His Image, in the final analysis it was the task of

"true humans" to implement the Society of Perfect Men.

d.) *Perfect Men and "Lords of the State:" Bursevi's Conception of Political Power*

As God's representatives, Adamite Perfect Men are meant to be leaders of humankind in

both spiritual and political affairs. However, although they may appear to possess absolute, God-

given powers, their authority is rather nuanced in Bursevi's writings. For example, an auditory

revelation in *Kitāb al-ᶜizz al-ādamī* problematizes Bursevi's otherwise unchecked glorification of

the Perfect Men: "The Lords of the State are [also] inspired by God" (Ar. *Arbāb al-duwal*

mulhamūn). Bursevi interprets this statement as referring to kings (Ar. *mulūk*) in general, and the

Ottoman Sultan in particular. On the basis of this revelation, he concedes that the inspiration of

monarchs is also something akin to Sufi *maᶜrifa*, albeit lesser and more conditional. Unlike

Sufis, who are by nature good because they are "mystical knowers" (Ar. *ᶜārifūn*), the Lords are

inspired only as a result of their pursuit of personal refinement and societal good (Ar. *ṭalaba a-*

khayr).[44] According to Bursevi, "The reason why the Lords of the State are inspired is because

they are 'men of totality'" (Tur. *bunlar rical-i külliyet-dir*).[45] Their "totality" consists in their

being loci of manifestation for God's Names. Using the language of his Adamology, Bursevi

claims that because the Lords of the State have actualized their theomorphism in a greater degree

than their peers, they are more fit to rule. As for those who do not manifest God's Names as

thoroughly, they are fated to be subjects. They are the "flock" (Tur. *reaya*), who are "partial

---

du mystique ottoman Niyazi Misri (1618-1694) (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2012), 55-58, 135-147, 264-282.
[44] Ibid., 253a.
[45] Ibid.

people" (Tur. *rical-i cuz'iye*) in relation to the "total" Lords of State. Because they are incomplete, "the flock is administered as women are administered domestically (Tur. *Anuñiçün reaya müennis hikmetinde-dir*)."[46] To reinforce this conclusion, Bursevi cites the Qur'anic verse (Q 4:34) "Men are the custodians of women" (Ar. *Al-rijāl qawwāmūn ᶜalā al-nisāʾ*).[47] In a similar manner, the Lords of State are the custodians of their flock.

To make sense of this view, it is beneficial to examine the work of Ottomanist Hüseyin Yılmaz on politics in the Ottoman Empire. For Ottoman intellectuals since the inception of the Ottoman polity, government by definition constituted despotism (Ar. *sulṭana*). The earliest Ottoman translations of classical Islamic works on political philosophy, such as Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī's (d. 505/1111) *Naṣīhat al-muluk* ("Advice for Kings"), Najm al-Dīn Dāyā's (d. 654/1256) *Mirṣād al-ᶜibād* ("The Hitching Post of the Worshippers"), Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī's (d. 672/1274) *Akhlāq-i Naṣīrī* ("The Ethics of Nāṣir al-Dīn"), excised the descriptions of other possible forms of governmental organization. Ottoman translations and commentaries presented the Sultanate as the only possible form of government.[48] The majority of Ottoman political theorists perpetuated this conflation of government organizational and raw political power. Bursevi was no exception. Informed by the thinking of his Ottoman predecessors, he conceived of government as the Sultanate by definition. The Ottoman Sultanate with subservient feudal lords and tributaries, a Vizirate, state-bound bureaucracy and military (Tur. *kapıkullu*), and religious jurisconsults was a kind of touchstone for the best version of government.[49]

However, while Bursevi may have supported the Ottoman Sultanate and conceived of the Adamite *khulafāʾ* as subservient to it, he subtly advocated a different configuration of power. By

---

[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Yılmaz, *Caliphate Redefined*, 24-27.
[49] Ibid., 145, 150-156.

casting the Lords of the State as "inspired," he depicts them as quasi-Adamites, who are unaware of their true identities. Despite being divinely-inspired to some degree, they lack knowledge of the "Adamic Science" by which they could fully actualize their human potential. Unlike the blameless Sufis, inspiration received by the Lords of the State is contingent on their intentional pursuit of the good. For this reason, they need Sufis to guide them to the good. In more political-moral terms, the Lords of State have legitimacy only insofar as they follow the guidance of Sufi Adamites. Bursevi makes this clear in his discussion of the role of the Perfect Man in the context of mundane political power. He writes, "The Perfect Man is under the authority of the Men of State only outwardly" (Tur. *Insan-i kamil ola bu-suretinde tassaruf-i zahir rical devletiñ*).[50] There are temporal power structures in place in which the Perfect Man is subservient or even "administered as women domestically" (Tur. *müennis hikmetinde-dir)* in accord with the abovementioned statement. This statement is consonant with Bursevi's own experience. Aziz Mahmut Hüdayi, Osman Fazlı, even Bursevi himself served the Sultan and the Sultanate as unofficial advisors. He believed that they directed the Ottoman state inwardly.[51] For this reason, he asserted "Unto the Perfect Man belongs real authority over the populace—albeit in an inward manner. (Tur. *tasarruf-i batin ri'ayyet suretinde olan insan-i kamiliñ-dir*)."[52]

No matter how powerful the "Lords of State" may be outwardly, true political authority belongs to the Perfect Men. However, this power is not always outwardly apparent. Bursevi illustrates this in an anecdote about a certain illiterate albeit mystically inspired official "in North Africa" (Tur. *Diyar-i Mağribde*). Despite his lack of education, this official performed the duties

---

[50] Bursevi, *Kitâbü'l-Izzi'l-âdemî,* 253a.
[51] See: Hazret-i Pir-i Üftade, *Le Dîvân,* Paul Ballanfat Trans. (Paris: Les Deux Oceans, 2002), 24-26; Hasan Kamil Yılmaz, *Azîz Mahmûd Hüdâyi ve Celvetiyye tarikatı* (Istanbul: Erkam Yayınları, 1982), 58-74; Mehemmed-Ali Aïni/Mehmet Ali Ayni, *Ismaïl Hakki: philosophe mystique 1653-1725* (Paris: Librarie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1933), 10-11, 19-22.
[52] Bursevi, *Kitâbü'l-Izzi'l-âdemî,* 253a.

of his office well (Tur. *taharra ile ihtisap ederdi*), and always desired to do what was right (Tur. *savap*). By contrast, other officials neglected their duties and instead congregated in a "house of intoxication" (Tur. *ihsam hanesine geldiğinde*)—not unlike the Üsküp grandees that Bursevi delt with in his career.[53] For the good of the realm, the inspired official confronted them, paraphrased the Qur'anic prohibition on alcohol despite not having memorized the verses, and had them arrested. The realm flourished as a result.[54] Bursevi concludes the story by stating that because they are inspired by God, "The hearts of those who seek to do good do not have an obstacle obscuring them." The moral of the story is that because the Lords of State are inspired, the revelation that Bursevi received "must be accepted as inspired by God" (Tur. *Bu maqula ilhami lazim gelür*). "The 'lords of state' must accept their true natures (Tur. *kendileri kabul edüp*). Their actions will conform to their true selves."[55] In other words, the lords must accept that they are potential true human beings who require the guidance of Perfect Men to actualize the fullness of their potentials.

In another section of *Kitāb al-ᶜizz al-ādamī*, Bursevi discusses the nature of political authority more directly, in the form of an Arabic and Turkish discourses entitled "Politics" (Ar. *al-siyāsa*). Although this discourse does not cite a particular revelation as in other parts of the work, the discourse is quasi-revelatory. Here, Bursevi reaffirms the notion that the Society of Perfect Men is paradigmatic for political society in general. Deviation from this norm corrupts humanity as a whole. Bursevi begins the chapter with a definition of politics in Arabic: "Politics means dealing with an issue on the basis of what can improve it" (Ar. *Al-siyāsa al-qiyām ᶜalā*

---

[53] Ibid. For more information on Bursevi's sojourn in Üsküp (Skopje), see: Ali Namlı, *İsmail Hakkı Bursevi*: *Hayatı, Eserleri, Tarikat Anlayışı* (Istanbul: İnsan Yayınları, 2001), 42-45; Atanasova, "The Sufi as the Axis of the World," 7.

[54] Bursevi, *Kitâbü'l-Izzi'l-âdemî,* 253a-b.

[55] Ibid.

shayʾ bi-mā yuṣliḥuhu).[56] To explain this point further, he writes in Turkish that politics consists

of improvement (Ar. *iṣlāḥ*), from one perspective. From another perspective, politics is the

business of "how one becomes a political authority" (Tur. *ka'im olmağa*). Politics has its own

specialized knowledge, which consists of the ability to "evaluate the efforts and strengths of

people."[57] This evaluation is based on the ability to distinguish "wickedness from goodness" (Tur.

munkir ve-ma'rufı teşhis) and wicked people from good people. Both rulers and administrators of

the state (Ar. *mulūk*, *wukalāʾ*) must have knowledge of the Shari'a "in order for them to uphold

God's ordinances" which consists of "commanding the right and forbidding the wrong" (Q 4:104).

One who has not mastered such knowledge "cannot be one of the people of political

discernment" (Tur. *ahl-i ihtisap olmaz*)."[58]

Politicans who do not heed this wisdom damage society as a whole. This damage is not

simply material according to Bursevi. Such corruption hinders true human beings from becoming

what God intended them to be—Perfect Men. Thus, Bursevi exhorts rulers and their

administrators to "ensure that ordinary subjects are not left to their own devices (Tur. *ve-halkı*

müseyyip-kavmiyeler). In past ages when rulers [and administrators] did not supervise adequately

the populace, human beings took on animal natures. The world as a whole became deficient."[59]

Every human being is rewarded or punished "according to one's state" (Tur. *haline göre*). In this

context, Bursevi cites the Qur'an: "Indeed, God does not alter the condition of a people until they

alter that which is in their souls" (Q 13:11).

> To be changed from a state of goodness to a state of wickedness in the 'Horizons' (Tur.
> *afakta*) occurs as a result of the change that takes place in the 'Souls' (Tur. *enfüste*, in

---

[56] Ibid., 214a.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid.

reference to Q 42:53). This is because the Souls of human beings are the foundation of the world. Adam is like the very heart of the human being."[60]

The achievement of social wellbeing and political harmony outwardly, or in the "Horizons," results from the transformation of Souls from the potential of perfection to those who are like Adam. To neglect the actualization of "true" human potential on a societal level is to give power to "inhuman humans," who have taken on animal natures. Bursevi further cautions, "Just as one's faculties and limbs can become corrupt from the vicissitudes of the heart (Tur. *kalbıñ inkilabından*), so too administrators (Tur. *vukala*) who are in the station of the heart' [of the body politic] corrupt the external affairs of society because of their deviation from the Shari'a."[61] The punishment for this corruption is immediate according to Bursevi. "The forms that one will take at the Final Resurrection on account of one's deeds finds existence in accord with correct actions that take place immediately and will manifest itself in the Lesser Resurrection (Tur. *kiyamet-i suğra*)," he writes. Those Adamites who are bound for Paradise are in their true forms as "Images of God," while corrupt bureaucrats and the *reaya* beholden to them have lost their very humanity.

The "transformation of souls" that can rectify this situation can only take place under the guidance of theomorphic Perfect Men. Since government is by definition the Sultanate, the Perfect Men achieve this transformation through the guidance of "inspired Lords of the State." A further section of *Kitāb al-ᶜizz al-ādamī*, "Designating an Imam, Appointing a Sultan" (Ar. *Taᶜyīn imām, naṣb sulṭān*), sheds light on this dynamic.[62] For Bursevi, "both of these processes are necessary for people (Tur. *halk*). Religious and worldly affairs require the designation and

---

[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Ibid., 196a

appointment of these leaders."[63] According to him, the Qur'an and the Shari'a do not equivocate

concerning this obligation. To reinforce this point, he cites the verse, "Follow God, and follow

the Messenger, and those in authority among (*ūlī al-amr*)" (Q 4:59). For him, the phrase, "follow

the Messenger," also applies to the Sultan. Because he carries the political legacy of the Prophet,

the Sultan is "established (Tur. *mensüp*) by the Messenger of God. All of those possessed of

insight [in the Sultan's retinue] who are consulted are also established by the Messenger."[64] Most

of those "in authority" rank behind the Sultan and his close associates. They are commanders (Ar.

umarāʾ), jurists (Ar. *fuqahāʾ*), and spiritual masters (Ar. *mashāyikh*). The commanders have

authority "outwardly, through the sword," while the jurists "persist in urging others to follow

commands derived from religion and Law."[65] The "greatest spiritual masters" (Tur. *maşaih-i*

kibar) are "engaged in guiding others (Ar. *irshād*) to spiritual and mundane truths drawn from

esoteric knowledge."[66]

Despite advocating a power hierarchy in which the Sultan is at the top and Sufi Shaykhs

are in the third rank, Bursevi does not diminish the influence of the Perfect Men. The Perfect

Men are the foundations or bedrock of which government is built to Bursevi. They are the ones

who ultimately enfranchise the Sultan and his government. The Sultan does not possess *sui*

generis authority. Rather, his will is authoritative only insofar as it represents the power and

guidance of the Perfect Men. Obedience to the Sultan and the Sufi Shaykhs who support him is

necessary "if one hopes to follow the Qur'an's exoteric and esoteric wisdom."[67] This is incumbent

not only upon Muslims, but upon all people of the world. "Even the people of pernicious

---

[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid. See also: İsmail Hakkı Bursevi, *Varlığın Dili: İbn Meşiş Salavatı ve Şerhi*, Nedim Tan Ed. and Translit. (Istanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 2014), 192.
[66] Bursevi, *Kitâbü'l-Izzi'l-âdemî,* 196a.
[67] Ibid., 196b.

innovation, godless materialism, and outright infidels must swear allegiance to the Sultan,"

Bursevi writes.[68] He begins his discussion by likening the submission to the Sultan and by

extension the Perfect Men to allegiance sworn to God by all human beings described in the

Qur'an (Q 7:172). Bursevi writes: "At the end of time, in which just governance comes to an end

and is extinguished, even then it is necessary to swear allegiance to the Sultan. Swearing

allegiance is, in essence, an eternal affair."[69]

Bursevi conceived of his own time as one in which just governance had come to an end.

In this vein, he speaks in a hypothetical mode, casting his Society of Perfect Men as a Utopia that

could rectify the sociopolitical ills of his time. However, he also implies that his depiction of

affairs accurately portrays reality. "A sign of those days is that the people of the time will be in

the form of human beings," he writes, "but will have the character of beasts (Tur. *Ol zamanın*

halkı süretinde insan ve siretinde heyvan olmasalar gerek-dir)."[70] Governance and politics is the

privilege of true human beings." but "As for animals, they have no real relationship to divine

governance."[71] Bursevi urges that the utopian Society of Perfect Men be implemented, for the

sake of humanity. Who, then, is able to make this Utopia a sociopolitical reality?

c.) *Primus Inter Pares: The First Perfect Man among Perfect Men*

Just as government is based on one sole authority, the Sultan, so too the Perfect Men are

led by one leader. In numerous passages, Bursevi makes it clear that among God's *khulafāʾ* there

is one primary *khalīfa*. He usually refers to this Perfect Man among Perfect Men as the "Axis"

(Ar. *quṭb*). This "Axis" is the "seal" (Ar. *al-khatm*) of the world that preserves its integrity "and

---

[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Ibid.

there is only one in every age."[72] Why should God endow an individual with the position of *khalīfa* or even Axis-hood (Ar. *al-quṭbīya*), when all of humankind are potentially Adamites? The transcendent majesty of God's Image cannot be borne by just anyone, reasons Bursevi. "Given God's transcendence, the outpouring of His Grace occurs only through an intermediary for any creature...This necessary intermediary is the *khalīfa*, no matter who he may be."[73] Bursevi comes up with several analogies to prove his point. Bone and muscle cannot work together without cartilage. Analogously, the Sultan cannot cater by himself to the needs of all of his subjects, and thus has a Vizier and a bureaucracy. The Vizier is akin to cartilage as an intermediary between the Sultan and his subjects. In a similar way, among *khulafāʾ*, there is a single *khalīfa* who serves as "cartilage" or as an intermediary between humankind and God.[74] In one respect, all *khulafāʾ* are human beings, and are of the same nature as this exceptional Perfect Man. From another perspective, however, there is a clear "First among Equals" in the Society of Perfect Men. Like the English political philosopher Thomas Hobbes (d. 1679), Bursevi believed that people have the government they deserve. Since Ottoman society has not yet become a Society of Perfect Men, it is in need of a single, strong leader until it can.[75] For Hobbes as for Bursevi, this political configuration conforms to the will of God as absolute monarch.[76]

Just as God is One but reveals Himself through multiple loci of manifestation, so too the sublime *khalīfa* is both unique and ubiquitous among Perfect Men. In discussing the true meaning of the human being as God's Image, Bursevi draws an analogy to the mirror. "Mirrors have the perfection of utter clarity and manifestation that enable witnessing to take place," he writes. Invoking a common Sufi trope, Bursevi argues that although the mirror and the person

---

[72] Bursevi, *Rūḥ al-bayān*, 12.61.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, J.C.A. Gaskin Ed. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 111-115.
[76] Ibid., 234-235.

gazing into it are separate, a mirror still facilitates awareness and is in a mysterious way an extension of the one gazing into it.[77] Unlike other Sufi authors such as Ibn al-ᶜArabī, who maintain a fundamental separation between the mirror and the gazer, Bursevi stresses their essential connection.[78] He emphasizes "The mystery of the appointment of the *khalīfa* is as [the mirror and gazer]. God is both He who bestows the *khliāfa* and the *khalīfa* (Ar. *Wa-Allāh al-mustakhlif wa-l-khalīfa*).[79] Just as there is only one God, so too is there only one true Image of God for Bursevi's discourses. Even further, for Bursevi, the *khalīfa is* God on earth for all intents and purposes. To this representative of the Divine Essence, the Perfect Men *khulafāʾ* are merely as the Divine Names.

II. Bursevi's Despotism of the Perfect Man

a.) *The True Sultanate and Its Shadow on Earth*

Bursevi argues for the leadership of a despot to make the *fiṭra* of humanity the utopian Society of Perfect Men a reality. Despite stressing that all true human beings are *khulafāʾ Allāh*, this Society cannot function without the guidance of a supreme leader. Furthermore, without this guidance, the "Lords of State," who are subordinate to the Perfect Men remain unguided, and thus can become corrupt. For the sake of all members of society, spiritual and political authority must be centralized in a single figure. According to Bursevi, this figure is the Sufi Axis of the Age, who is the true *al-insān al-kāmil* and the fully actualized Adamite of his time. A great deal of Bursevi's political discourses argues for recognition of the spiritual authority of this figure,

---

[77] Bursevi, *Kitâbü'l-Izzi'l-âdemî,* 170b.
[78] See: William Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*: *Ibn al-'Arabi's Metaphysics of Imagination* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 178, 351-352.
[79] Bursevi, *Kitâbü'l-Izzi'l-âdemî,* 170b.

and his establishment in a place of governmental power. I call Bursevi's arguments for this political configuration his Despotism of the Perfect Man.

Kamelia Atanasova has brought to light the ways in which Bursevi argued for himself as the Sufi Axis of the Age, even the Axis of Existence (Ar. *quṭb al-wujūd*) itself. She demonstrates that Bursevi argued for this not only among his disciples, but also to members of the Ottoman bureaucracy in the form of dedicatory treatises (Tur. *tuhfe*). In the final analysis, Bursevi considered himself a kind of Sultan, and his disciples as subjects of a spiritual, true Sultanate. As such, he endowed these Perfect Men with titles taken from Sufi spiritual hierarchies. In Bursevi's scheme, there were two "Imams," four "Anchors" (Ar. *awtād*), and seven "Substitutes" (Ar. *abdāl*).[80] This Despotism of the Perfect Man was to constitute the real authority of worldly government, albeit in an inward, quasi-clandestine manner. The "exterior" or "worldly" Sultanate was the mere shadow of this inner regime. Although the Ottoman Sultan was outwardly the supreme ruler, inwardly he was the shadow of the Perfect Human Being. The Grand Vizier and Grand Mufti reflected the two "Imams" on the worldly plain. Likewise, the commanders of the major branches of the Ottoman military were shadows of the "Anchors," while the provincial governors of the four most important provinces, the Chancellor, Imperial Scribe, and leader of the Janissaries represented the "Substitutes."[81]

Bursevi did not conceive of his political theory as an imposition of the Sultanate system onto Sufism. Instead, the hierarchy of Sufi leaders was a paradigm for the Sultanate itself. If the "Shadow of God on Earth" was outwardly the Sultan, as a *ḥadīth* widely circulated in the

---

[80] Atanasova, "The Sufi as the Axis of the World," 151-153; For more information on figures within Sufi spiritual hierarchies on which Bursevi drew, see: ᶜAlī ibn ᶜUthmān al-Jullābī al-Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-maḥjūb*, "The Revelation of the Veiled:" An Early Persian Treatise on Sufism, Reynold A. Nicholson Trans. (Warminster: The E.J.W.Gibb Memorial Trust, 2000), 212-216; Michel Chodkiewicz, *Le Sceau des* saints: *Prophétie et sainteté dans la doctrine d'Ibn Arabî* (Paris: Gallimard, 1986), 111-127.

[81] Atanasova, "The Sufi as the Axis of the World," 154-157.

Ottoman Empire conveyed, then his glory was partly eclipsed by the Axis of the Age. In

Bursevi's terminology, the Sultan was the "image of the true 'Image of God.'"[82] Sufism, the way

of Adam and the true human beings, was the model on which the governance of the true

Sultanate was based. In this sense, as depicted in his autobiography and "dedicatory treatises,"

Bursevi pandered to high-ranking Ottoman officials, and through them the Sultan, to make them

aware of the "shadowy" nature of the Sultanate. Once aware of the identity of the true arbiters of

power, the Sultanate would work to enforce this authority externally. In such a way, the political

and social turmoil that arose with the appearance of Ottoman Civil Society as Baki Tezcan has

described it could be rectified.[83]

What is the exact relationship between Bursevi's Despotism of the Perfect Man and his

Society of Perfect Men? Howard P. Segal's theories of "Utopianism" can be of help in clarifying

this relationship. According to Segal, most theorists of Utopia did not consider their ideal society

as something that would be implemented in real life. A Utopia functions as a social critique, an

impetus for change, and an ideal toward which society and government should strive. When

Utopian theorists formulated ways in which their could be implemented, the nature of their

discourse changed. In Segal's terms, they become "utopianistic" rather than Utopian.[84] As the

ideological vehicle by which the Utopian Society of Perfect Men could be achieved in

---

[82] Ibid., 144-146; The authenticity of this *ḥadīth* is disputed, even today, see: *EI2* s.v. "Sulṭān" by J.H. Kramers-C.E. Bosworth; Mehmet Akif Aydın, s.v. "Anayasa" *İslam Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul: Türk Diyanet Vakfı, İslam Araştırmalar Merkezi, 1991), 3.160-161; D.G. Tor, s.v. "sultan," in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought*, Gerhard Bowering Editor (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 532-534.For more information on the term in general in Ottoman mirror for princes works, see: Cornell H. Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire*: *The Historian Mustafa Âli* (*1541-1600*) (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 280-281; Yılmaz, *Caliphate Redefined*, 186-188. The alleged *ḥadīth* is enshrined in calligraphy to the left of the *miḥrāb* of Bursa's Ulu Camii, see: "Bursa Ulu Camii Hüsnü Hat Sanatı." Bursa Ulucamii Sitesi. January 1, 2006. http://www.bursaulucamii.com/husnuhat.html.

[83] Baki Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire*: *Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern* World (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010: 2012), 9-11, 53-54, 199-214, 222-224.

[84] Segal, *Utopias*, 7.

government and society, Bursevi's Despotism of the Perfect Man can best be described as a

Utopianism.[85]

b.) *The Criteria for the Legitimate Authority*

Like many Sufis of his era, Bursevi asserted that every era has a spiritual leader meant to

guide Muslims in the current age. Consonant with his rejection of chiliastic or messianic

theology and movements, he did not use the terms *mahdī* or *mujaddid* ("renewer").[86] In

particular, Bursevi refashioned the concept of "renewer" in the language of Sufi anthropology:

"In every age there is a 'knower of the Lord' who is sent to improve the lot of the Children of

Adam (Tur. *her asırda meb'us olan alim-i rabbani dahi sebeb-i salah-ı beni Adem-dir*)...just as

the Prophet was sent to improve the lot of the world."[87] The Turkish term *alim-i rabbani* can be

rendered as "knower of the Lord" or "Lordly knower"—that is, a knower of God who represents

God on Earth. In other terms, this Lordly knower is the Perfect Man, of which there is only one

in every age. Because he knows God and represents Him, the Lordly Knower is a quasi-

prophetic figure in his abilities and duties, for this reason, he must experience the same

tribulations that befall Prophets. As with the Prophets, if the Lordly Knower is obeyed, then the

world flourishes. If his teachings are disobeyed, however, havoc is unleashed. Bursevi

elaborates, "If the children of Adam do not accept the education and instruction of the 'Lordly

Knowers,' it is impossible to improve the world, either outwardly or inwardly."[88] The natural

tendency of inhuman humans is to adopt corruption, despite their potential for theomorphism. It

is for this reason that God sends Lordly Knowers, such as Prophets and saints.

---

[85] Ibid.
[86] See: *EI2*, s.v. "Mudjaddid" by E. van Donzel.
[87] Abdullah Kargılı, "İsmail Hakkı Bursevi'nin Kitabü'l-Hucceti'l-Baliǧa Adlı Eseri İnceleme-Metin," M.A. Thesis, , Istanbul University, Istanbul, 2011, 133.
[88] Ibid.

> Even though human beings were together entirely at the beginning of the Pact [of God's statement "Am I not your Lord" (Q 7:172), and they are unified in their most sublime *fiṭra* (Tur. *fıtrat-ı ula*), they conform to their base souls and lower natures and become overcome by base desires and caprices. Thus, in every age Prophets and Saints have been sent to warn such folk and bring them glad tidings because their "Horizons" and "Souls" become deficient in this manner.[89]

Bursevi further explains that just as was the case with the Prophets, the majority of people will reject the Lordly Knowers that are sent to aid them. Although "people were indeed one community" (Q 2:213), they are now in chaos and disunity because they rejected their theomorphic potential along with the Lordly Knowers sent to benefit them.

According to Bursevi, the Despot is endowed with two kinds of authority, spiritual and political. Spiritual authority is confirmed by revelation while the political authority manifests itself in the form of ruler-ship (Ar. *mulk*). In one discourse, he argues that both types of authority are unified with a "seal" (Ar. *khātim*) that is born by "The Perfect Servant" (Ar. *al-ᶜabd al-kāmil*). In the terminology of Sufism generally, Bursevi's Perfect Servant is a *walī Allāh* who has perfected his *walāya* ("proximity to God") to the point of being endowed with *wilāya* ("divine authority").[90]

As such, each "Perfect Servant" is the *khalīfa*, or even the Sultan, at the same time. Bursevi asserts that the Prophet Solomon was the supreme *khalīfa* of his time because he manifested the Name of God as "The Outward" (Ar. *al-ẓāhir*).[91] To justify his rule, "God gave unto him the 'Separated Seal' to signify his general authority (Ar. *aᶜṭā lahu al-khātim al-munfaṣil min al-wajh al-ᶜām*)"—that is, God gave Solomon his signet ring (Ar. *khātim Sulaymān*).[92] In contrast, the Prophet Muḥammad was given this Seal in a different form. He was *khalīfa* "insofar as he manifested the Divine Name "The Inward" (Ar. *al-bāṭin*). God also gave him the

---

[89] Ibid.
[90] Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, xvii-xix, 228-229.
[91] Bursevi, *Kitâbü'l-Izzi'l-âdemî,* 240b.
[92] Ibid.

"Connected Seal" that signified his elite authority (Ar. *aʿṭā lahu al-khātim al-muttaṣil min al-wajh al-khāṣṣ*).[93] This Seal was the birthmark or "Seal of Prophecy" which was between Muhammad's two shoulders.[94] Although the seals of both Solomon and Muḥammad were signs of divine approval, Muḥammad's seal was superior because "it connoted divine appointment (Ar. *bi-l-waḍ ᶜ al-ilāhī*). The Seal of Solomon connoted only the monarchical authority (Ar. *bi-l-waḍ ᶜ al-mulkī*)."[95] Although both were absolute rulers, only the Prophet Muḥammad had comprehensive authority.[96] The Seal that combined both aspects of power was granted only to Muhammad, and by extension, the Perfect Men who follow him.

In some parts of *Kitāb al-ᶜizz al-ādamī,* Bursevi stresses the quasi-Prophetic role of the Perfect Man as absolute ruler. For him, one who speaks on behalf of the Prophet is not fully distinct from him. Bursevi states, "The Messenger of the Messenger (Ar. *rasūl al-rasūl*) is himself a messenger."[97] This messenger is the *khalīfa*, who appears in the "form of the One who bestows the *khilāfa* (Ar. *al-mustakhlif*)" and is the saint (Ar. *walī Allāh*) who is in the Divine Image.[98] By virtue of the actualization of his theomorphism, such a saint is the "Messenger of the Messenger." He is for all intents and purposes the Messenger of God on earth. For theological reasons, it is significant that Bursevi does not call the Sufi Axis of the Age a divine messenger or *rasūl Allāh*, but rather develops his own term "Messenger of the Messenger." Bursevi's near contemporary Niyaz-i Misri claimed that he was a prophet and messenger of God several times in his writings (as Tur. *peygamber*, Ar. *nabī*, Ar. *rasūl Allāh*) because the Angel Gabriel had

---

[93] Ibid., 241a.
[94] See: Alfred Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*: *A Translation of Sirat Rasūl Allāh by Ibn Ishaq* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 80, 97.
[95] Bursevi, *Kitâbü'l-Izzi'l-âdemî,* 241a.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Ibid., 122a.
[98] Ibid.

given him a "Turkish revelation" (Tur. *vahi-i türki*).[99] Bursevi, on the other hand, couches his

assertions in language that was be more palatable to Sunni Muslims.

However, Bursevi asserts in some discourses that the that the Perfect Man asAxis of the

Age is the supreme manifestation of God on Earth. Drawing on Ibn al-ᶜArabī's concept of the

"preferential ranking" (Ar. *tafāḍul*) of God's Names, he is the emanation of the Greatest Name of

God, whereas the Perfect Men who follow him represents God's other Divine Names. The

Greatest Name of God ranks above all other Names of God insofar as it encapsulates the realities

of all Names and divine qualities.[100] Thus, the Sufi as *khalīfa* thus deserves to be called "the

Greatest Sultan" (Tur. *sultan-i az'am*). According to Bursevi, "The Greatest Sultan, the very heart

of the world, is the locus of manifestation of the external aspect of the Greatest Name of God."

He clarifies, "Because he is a Sultan, he is a *khalīfa* as well. This Sultan is one who truly

embodies the prophetic character."[101] Historical examples of this Great Sultan who succeeded the

Prophet in their embodiment of his example include the *Rāshidūn* Caliphs and the Prophet's

grandson Ḥasan ibn ᶜAlī (d. 50/670).[102] Inconsistently, however, Bursevi denies that the

Prophet's grandson, the Imām Ḥusayn ibn ᶜAlī (d. 55/680) was a Sultan, or even a *khalīfa*. This

was on the basis of a supposed *ḥadīth* which claimed that the successor-ship to the Prophet

would end after 30 years. Despite the fact that it contradicts his own political theory of Prophetic

Succession, Bursevi's disavowal of Ḥusayn as a *khalīfa* was most likely a critique of Niyaz-i

Misri, who preached that Muhammad's martyred grandson was in fact a prophet.[103]

---

[99] Derin Terzioğlu, "Man in the Image of God in the Image of the Times: Sufi Self-Narratives and the Diary of Niyāzī-i Mıṣrī (1618-1694)," in *Sutdia Islamica* 94 (2002): 157-158.

[100] Kargılı, "İsmail Hakkı Bursevi'nin Kitabü'l-Hucceti'l-Baliğa Adlı Eseri İnceleme-Metin," 81. For Ibn al-ᶜArabī's theories, see: Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 8, 51.

[101] Kargılı, "İsmail Hakkı Bursevi'nin Kitabü'l-Hucceti'l-Baliğa Adlı Eseri İnceleme-Metin," 81.

[102] Ibid.

[103] See: Paul Ballanfat, *Messianisme et sainteté*: *Les poemes du mystique Niyazi Misri* (1618-1694) (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2009) 237-248.

As demonstrated by the preceding discussion, Bursevi sometimes blurs the distinction between *khalīfa*, Prophet, and God. Nowhere is this more apparent than in a chapter of *Kitāb al-ᶜizz al-ādamī* in which he discusses the revelations that the *khalīfa* experiences. He begins the passage by equating the *khalīfa* with the "One who appoints the *khalīfa*" (Ar. *al-mustakhlif*).[104] To clarify this, he draws an analogy between his concept of political authority and the Ottoman government. When a subject is in the presence of the Grand Vizier, he is in fact in the presence of the Sultan, whose authority is mysteriously present in him. "Whosoever has seen the Vizier," states Bursevi, "has also seen the Sultan." [105] The same logic applies to the *khalīfa* and God. The proof of this lies in the *ḥadīth*, "Whosoever has seen me [Muḥammad], has seen the Truth" (Ar. *man raʾanī fa-qad raʾā al-ḥaqq*).[106] For Bursevi, whosoever has seen the *khalīfa* has seen the Prophet; by the same token, he has seen the Image of God. Because a direct vision of God would obliterate the witness, God appoints interlocutors, namely, the Prophet and his successors, the *khalīfa*s. The *khalīfa* himself is drowned in God's light, yet at the same time he is a veil through which the world can connect to the divine.[107]

One of Bursevi's most provocative discussions of the authority of the *khalīfa* can be found in a discussion of the political legitimacy of the Ottoman Sultan (Tur. *padişah*). According to him, the Ottoman Sultan cannot have success in his ruler-ship without swearing fealty to the Perfect Man upon whose spiritual power he ultimately depends. "The *padişah* who does not swear fealty to the people to whom fealty is sworn (Tur. *mubaya'a ehli*)," asserts Bursevi, "cannot have any success in his rule."[108] Simply having military and economic control over his subjects is not sufficient to guarantee his success in rule. "That the Sultan's subjects swear fealty

---

[104] Bursevi, *Kitâbü'l-Izzi'l-âdemî,* 147b.
[105] Ibid.
[106] See: *Ṣaḥīḥ Bukharī*, 42 *Kitāb al-ruʾyā* (*The Book of Dreams*), 25.
[107] Bursevi, *Kitâbü'l-Izzi'l-âdemî,* 148b.
[108] Kargılı, "İsmail Hakkı Bursevi'nin Kitabü'l-Hucceti'l-Baliǧa Adlı Eseri İnceleme-Metin," 122..

to him is not sufficient for his ruling," Bursevi elucidates. No matter how powerful he may

outwardly appear, the authority of the Sultan is incomplete without the *khalīfa*. To complement

the Sultan, Bursevi asserts "The Sultan is in need of a power greater than him to whom he must

swear fealty. That one is the Perfect Shaykh, the Guide who is God's interlocutor (Tur. *mürşid-i*

vasıldır)."[109]

Once the Sultan recognizes the reality that he is merely the "Image of the Axis" (Tur.

süret-i kutb), but not its substance, his authority is substantiated. The oath of fealty sworn by his

subjects are only valid after the Sultan and his government have sworn their own oaths of fealty

to the Perfect Shaykh. Those who do not swear fealty to the "Image of the Axis" are unbelievers,

irrespective of their outward display of faith. Furthermore, those who deny the validity of this

configuration of power are "people of wrongful innovation and heresy;" in other words, they are

inhuman humans.[110] Bursevi makes it clear that it is "necessary that one swear fealty to both the

Image [of the Axis, the "Shadow Sultan"] and its underlying reality [the Axis himself]. Within

these are found God's Names, 'The Outward' and 'The Inward.'"[111] Denying their power is

tantamount to denying God's power, reasons Bursevi. Bursevi further argues that such a

disavowal would be sheer hypocrisy. All of humankind already swore allegiance to the Perfect

Man *khalīfa* and his Image at the time of the "eternal pact" (i.e., Q 7:172). When God asked

humanity, "'Am I not your Lord?'" He included the lordship of His Supreme *khalīfa* and his

Image, the Sultan.[112] Perfect Men recognize that they have already made this pact, and live in

accordance with it in their actualization of the *fiṭra* of theomorphism. As Bursevi puts it, "The

act of swearing fealty [to the Axis and the Image of the Axis] constitutes the unveiling of the

---

109 Ibid.
110 Ibid., 122-123.
111 Ibid.
112 Ibid. 123.

'unicity of being' (Ar. *waḥdat al-wujūd*). It is the realization of the mystery of 'There is no existent save God.'"[113]

For Bursevi, there is no time more pressing than the present age in which the *khalīfa* is needed more than ever. In this era, blind traditionalism has taken over the "Adamic sciences," which lead to true knowledge of God (Ar. *maᶜrifat Allāh*). The vast majority of the *ilmiye* class and even the Sufis act "on the basis of vain and false traditionalism, doubt, and ostentation...on the basis of love of the world and of creation instead of God, they are damned, and find no benefit by which they might save themselves."[114] True politicians must ensure that God's plan for humanity is enacted in its entirety. It is significant that those whom Bursevi calls "friends of Satan" resemble the scholarly and political personages mentioned his autobiography. In order of proximity to Satan, these are "a tyrannical Sultan, a self-aggrandizing rich person, a traitorous trader, an imbiber of alcohol, a murder, an ostentatious worshipper, a consumer of the wealth of orphans, those who exact usury, those who forbid charity, and those who encourage trust in people instead of God."[115] A "Just Ruler" (Ar. *imām ᶜādil*), aided by a cadre of virtuous advisors are the enemies of Satan and his ilk.[116] This Just Ruler and his compatriots are the *khalīfa* and the Perfect Men subservient to him.

c.) *Bursevi as the Perfect Man* khalīfa

The fact that Bursevi wrote about his utopianistic Despotism of the Perfect Man from the perspective of the Perfect Man himself implies that he believed that he was this figure. As he elucidates in one passage, only a Lordly Knower can know what it is to be such a sublime figure,

---

[113] Ibid.
[114] Bursevi, *Rūḥ al-bayān*, 15.132.
[115] Ibid., 15.130.
[116] Ibid.

just as only a Sultan can know what it is like to occupy the throne.[117] However, Bursevi's apparent calls to recognize the legitimacy of his authority are ambiguous. While he appears to imply that he is in fact the one is most suited for this office, he does not say explicitly that he is the Axis of the Age, the Sultan, or the *khalīfa*. Elsewhere, Bursevi identifies himself as the Perfect Man *khalīfa* more explicitly.

However, in a few instances, Bursevi indicates that the revelations given to him prove that he was in fact the true Sultan. One example is a chapter in *Kitāb al-ᶜizz al-ādamī* that is aptly titled "The Sultan" (Ar. *Al-sulṭān*). "Even though the mystery of God's *khalīfa* is manifest in the form of the [political] Sultanate," asserts Bursevi, "God's [spiritual] *khalīfa* does not cease to consider himself a Sultan (Ar. *lam yazal yarā nafsahu sulṭān^{an}*)." Echoing the discussion found in the chapter of this same work entitled "Politics" (Ar. *al-siyāsa*), Bursevi claims that the *khalīfa* "has authority in his inner self (Ar. *bi-bāṭinihi*) over creation while the ["political"] Sultan is vested with authority outwardly, and may even have some power over the *khalīfa* in an outward manner."[118] However, despite having some political authority over God's representative, "The Sultan is to the *khalīfa* as the Divine Name 'The Manifest' (Ar. *al-zāhir*) [is to God's Essence]." Despite the apparent hegemony of the Sultan, his power ultimately stems from the *khalīfa*, whose image the monarch ultimately reflects. Having said this, Bursevi then reveals himself to be the *khalīfa* of his age. "This mystery of the Sultanate has occurred to this poor one (Ar. *li-hādhā-l-faqīr*) on two occasions," he writes, "The first occasion took place in Rumelia and the second took place in Anatolia."[119] A series of politically radical statements follow: "The Great Sultan answers to God alone...This servant is overwhelmed by God and is under His

---

[117] Bursevi, *Varlığın Dili*, 197.
[118] Bursevi, *Kitâbü'l-Izzi'l-âdemî,* 266a.
[119] Ibid., 266b.

fist."[120] As *khalīfa*, Bursevi himself is the Great Sultan. Furthermore, he has a message for the

worldly Sultan: "Whosoever recognizes the reality of the power of the Great Sultan abandons all

other claims to authority. Such a one witnesses the true agent whom God has chosen (Ar. *al-fāʿil*

al-mukhtār al-ḥaqīqī)."[121] To deny Bursevi's authority is to go against the divine, for "Is it not

God Himself who is in control through [this agent] and by means of [this agent] (Ar. *A-lā an*

yakūn Allāh huwa al-mutaṣarrif fīhi wa-bihi)."[122]

Bursevi ends his revelation by reinforcing the premise that true authority lies in the hands

of the *khalīfa* and not in the Sultan, his image. The Sultanate has no power on its own. It is not

authoritative on its own, but is always relative. Bursevi clarifies, "The secret of the Sultanate is

in outward manifestation (Ar. *al-ẓuhūr*), and in taking on the Qualities of the Divine Essence."[123]

Bursevi sets up a theological analogy from his Adamology to prove his point. God's

manifestation of creation facilitates the divine will, and is completed in Adam. Because he stands

for God and is His Image, the *khalīfa* is the inward or hidden authority behind the state and is

manifested outwardly in the Sultanate. As Bursevi clarifies, "Every rank that belongs to the

greatest Sultan in appearance (Ar. *al-sulṭān al-aʿẓam al-ẓāhir*) is a rank that belongs in reality to

the greatest Sultan of the inner realm (Ar. *al-sulṭān al-aʿẓam al-bāṭin*)."[124] This wisdom of the

true nature of the Sultanate and his own election constitutes the "secret of the Sultanate" revealed

to Bursevi.

Another revelatory passage in *Kitāb al-ʿizz al-ādamī* proclaims Bursevi as *khalīfa* in even

more explicit terms. Unlike other revelations detailed in the book, this one addresses him

---

[120] Ibid.
[121] Ibid.
[122] Ibid.
[123] Ibid.
[124] Ibid.

explicitly with the benediction, "You are the Axis of the Circle" (Ar. *anta quṭb al-dāʾira*).[125] By way of exegesis, Bursevi clarifies that the circle is "The Circle of Existence" (Ar. *dāʾirat al-wujūd*), in which the Axis is the central "point" (Ar. *nuqṭa*). Geometrically, a circle by definition can only have one center, and the circle itself can be seen as a series of points that radiate from the center. In a circle or a sphere, "The Axis is at the center of existence, such that every creature receives Divine Grace and Subsistence from it (Ar. *li-yataʾakhkhudh minhu al-fayḍ wa-l-baqāʾ*).[126] There are many similar "axes" in creation, since "Axis-hood is the highest level of every kind of category" (Ar. *fa-l-quṭbīya khuṣūṣ al-martaba fī-kull bāb*).[127] The Greatest Name of God is the Axis of God's Names: the Axis of the Heavens is God's Throne; the Axis or Center Point of the Earth is the Kaʿba; and the Axis of the Body is the Heart. No matter how great these axes may seem, "The greatest of all of the Axes is the Axis of Existence, who is the Perfect Man." The Axis of Existence is the true servant of God (Ar. *ʿAbd Allāh*). Just as there is only one center of a circle, there can only be one such servant. Similarly, "There is only one Sultan, who is the outward form of the Axis and is ranked below the Axis such that he follows his orders."[128] As the Axis of Existence, the Perfect Man Axis is the true bearer of the trust of human theomorphism (Q 33:72). Thus, God manifests Himself in the Axis in a way "that He did not manifest in any other creature."[129]

To further bolster the exclusivity of this rank, Bursevi argues that any Perfect Man may theoretically become the *khalīfa* by virtue of his good deeds. However, in actuality, there is only one Perfect Man and *khalīfa*.[130] "Axis-hood is bestowed by the grace of God, He gives the Axis-

---

[125] Ibid., 242b.
[126] Ibid.
[127] Ibid.
[128] Ibid., 243b.
[129] Ibid.
[130] Ibid.

hood to whomever He wishes. Axis-hood is a unique trait of the divine, so there is no way to gain it through acts," he clarifies.[131] Bursevi further affirms the same exclusivity for the Sultanate, which is the outward form of Axishood. "Both the Sultanate and Axis-hood are inherited," concludes Bursevi, " only those who are worthy of them can attain to them."[132] The final exhortation of Bursevi's revelation confirms that outwardly, it may seem as if any person can become a *walī Allāh* through good deeds and pure beliefs. However, "inwardly, every single one of these stations is a product of God's election" (Ar. *min qabīl al-ikhtiṣāṣ al-ilāhī*).[133]

As the true Perfect Man, the Axis, the true Sultan, and the real *khalīfa*, Bursevi viewed himself as the bedrock of worldly governance. He avowed his exalted rank not simply to argue for his own empowerment. Politically, Bursevi's Sultanate of the inner realm provided the framework for the governance of the Society of Perfect Men. As God's representative, Bursevi could choose whomever he willed to be his "image" and aid him in the duty to guide "true humans" to perfection.

In a couplet in *Kitāb al-ᶜizz al-ādamī,* Bursevi equates "dervish-hood" with political power. Those who want true power should not endeavor to become bureaucrats, merchants, noblemen, soldiers, or even the Sultan. One should instead become a Sufi:

> If you desire authority, then become a dervish.
> Authority is his because he is really the Sultan—that is his mystery.[134]

This poem epitomizes what I have called Bursevi's "politicization of the Perfect Man." In his ability to actualize his theomorphism, each Perfect Man bears within him the authority of a Sultan. Together, the Sufi Perfect Men of the world are the true humans beings, *khulafāʾ* who constitute a Society of Perfect Men. To recognize this Utopia is to render power to the true

---

[131] Ibid.
[132] Ibid.
[133] Ibid.
[134] Ibid., 305b. The Turkish is as follows: *Sultanat ister iseñ derviş ol. Oldu zira sırrına sultan ol.*

human beings for whom it is most authentically due, according to Bursevi.[135] Who might this Perfect Man be? Clearly, for Bursevi, it is himself. He is the one who has realized this "mystery," and has come to be "True Sultan." To become like Bursevi, and for the sake of all Perfect Men, the dervish must find a Perfect Man to follow. Under his leadership, the "True Sultanate" will maintain its guidance of the "Shadow Sultanate," in the form that Kamelia Atanasova has brought to light in Bursevi's diagrams.[136]

Bursevi's politicization of the Perfect Man is an application of the ideals of his Sufi anthropology in society. It is not the employment of Sufi theology for political ends. His Sufi anthropology is indebted to his politics, since the Society of Perfect Men and the Despotism of the Perfect Man that constitute the goal of all of his discourses. Correspondingly, his politics is an extension of his Sufi anthropology—it *is* his Sufism. Rather than consider them separate as Merve Tabur and Kamelia Atanasova have argued, Bursevi's political agenda and Sufi anthropology were two different aspects of the same situation. As he made clear in the above couplet, "dervish-hood" and "authority" are one and the same, although they may appear separate.

---

[135] Kargılı, "İsmail Hakkı Bursevi'nin Kitabü'l-Hucceti'l-Baliǧa Adlı Eseri İnceleme-Metin," 114.
[136]Atanasova, "The Sufi as the Axis of the World," 154-157.

Conclusion: Ismail Hakki Bursevi's Islamic Humanism: A Reassessment

I. "The Human in the Accents and Interests of a Class, a Sex, or a Race"

The *Ode to Joy* (Ger. *An die Freude*) by the romantic philosopher and poet Friedrich Schiller (d. 1805) was adopted by Ludwig Van Beethoven (d. 1827) to conclude his famous Ninth Symphony in its Fourth Movement. Personifying Joy (Ger. *Freude*) as a "spark of divinity" (Ger. *Gotterfünken*), *Ode to Joy* depicts humankind as united under the leadership of Joy in the pursuit of wellbeing and felicity. Joy is that which makes "all men become brothers" (Ger. *Alle Menschen werden Brüder*). He who chooses Joy is he who "can all one's soul his own." Those who shy away from Joy are condemned to "steal [away] weeping from this fellowship." Not only human beings but indeed every creature is beholden to this God-given joy. The onus is on the "brotherhood" of Joy to live in accord with it: "Run, brothers, your course. Joyfully, like a hero towards victory!"[1]

Beethoven set an altered version of Schiller's humanist poem to music, hoping to inspire a new era of peace, humanitarianism, and equality after the catastrophic Napoleonic Wars (c. 1803-1815). Since its debut, the Fourth Movement has been touted as a musical symbol of Humanism, and is played to celebrate humanitarian causes.[2] Little did Schiller or Beethoven know that *Ode to Joy* would also be coopted to advance anti-humanist endeavors. Because it was a favorite of Adolf Hitler (d. 1945), many official Nazi gatherings featured *Ode to Joy*. Musicians at concentration camps were even ordered to play it before their deaths to celebrate their sacrifice to "true humanity." The Soviet Union and Maoist China also drew on *Ode to Joy* to legitimize their purges, which were done for the sake of "humanitarian" ideals. Apartheid

---

[1] David Benjamin Levy, *Beethoven*: *The Ninth Symphony* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 101, 104.
[2] Esteban Buch, *Beethoven's Ninth*: *A Political History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 209-210, 251-262.

Southern Rhodesia (1979-1980) claimed the *Ode to Joy* as its national anthem, celebrating the

"brotherhood" of White settlers.[3] In these examples, the universalist, humanist lyrics of Schiller

were forced to serve the definition of "true humanity" that these regimes maintained. The phrase,

"All men shall become brothers," meant for some that the "brotherhoods" of Aryans, Stalinists,

Maoists, or Rhodesian Whites would triumph over "inhuman humans." Stanley Kubrick's film

Clockwork Orange (1971) is another vivid illustration of the problem of the employment of *Ode*

to Joy. Kubrick's protagonist Alex is not inspired to love his fellow human beings upon hearing

the *Ode to Joy*, but is instead incited to violence, rape, and murder. Beethoven's Ninth Symphony

is instrumental in the State's brainwashing of Alex, and serves as a psychological trigger for him

later on in the film.[4] To reiterate the point made by Tony Davies throughout this dissertation,

most if not all humanist discourses such as Schiller's text of *Ode to Joy* can be made to speak of

"the human in the accents and the interests of a class, a sex, [or] 'a race.' Their embrace

suffocates those whom it does not ignore."[5]

 The history of the cooption of *Ode to Joy* serves as a good analogy for the subject of this

dissertation, Ismail Hakki Bursevi's Sufi anthropology and his Politicization of the Perfect Man.

As Vincent J. Cornell, Scott Kugle, Sa'adiya Shaikh and others have demonstrated, Sufi

anthropology largely conceives of humanity in positive terms. All humans beings are, at the very

least, potentially good. Arguably more so than other intellectual traditions in Islam, Sufism has

been oriented toward cultivating the human potential for good.[6] Elements of Bursevi's Sufi

---

[3] Ibid., 205-206, 209-210, 216-219, 224, 244-250.

[4] Robert P. Kolker, *Stanley Kubrick's A Clockwork Orange* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 29-31, 90-91.

[5] Tony Davies, *Humanism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997; 2008), 131.

[6] Vincent J. Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*: *Power and Authority in Moroccan Sufism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998), 213-215; Scott Kugle, *Sufis & Saints' Bodies*: *Mysticism*, *Corporeality*, & *Sacred Power in Islam* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007) 26-41, 292-294; Sadiyya Shaykh, *Sufi Narratives of Intimacy*: *Ibn 'Arabi*, *Gender*, *and Sexuality* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 24-28, 81.

anthropology, particularly his "Adamology," exemplify this aspect of Sufism. Bursevi's writings illustrate Sufism's concern with human potential so well that I have argued in this dissertation that his Sufi anthropology can be considered a "Humanism before 'Humanism,'" according to Tony Davies' definition.[7] As such, the example of Bursevi's Humanism argues against the conception of Humanism as inherently Western, secular, and modern.[8] This dissertation has likewise contested the notion of Religious Humanism as exclusively Judeo-Christian.[9] On the basis of the evidence provided in the previous chapters, I have argued that a great deal of Bursevi's Sufi anthropology constitutes an Islamic, Religious Humanism "before 'Humanism.'"

This dissertation has also scrutinized the exclusivistic, elitist, and misogynistic elements of Bursevi's Sufi anthropology, which are antithetical to his Humanism. To make sense of these apparent equivocations, the dissertation drew on the works of theorists such as Michel Foucault, Władysław Tatarkiewicz, Thomas Hurka, Tony Davies, Sa'diyya Shaikh, and Richard H. Jones, to expose how Humanist discourse can be used for very anti-humanist ends.[10] I have argued in this regard that there is an aspect of Bursevi's Sufi anthropology that is clearly anti-humanist, despite being articulated in humanistic terms.

---

[7] Davies, *Humanism*, 68.

[8] Andrew Wernick, *Auguste Comte and the Religion of Humanity*: *The Post-Theistic Program of French Social Theory* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001; 2003), 2-5, 153-155; Andrew Copson, "What is Humanism?" in *The Wiley Blackwell Handbook of Humanism*, Andrew Copson and A.C. Grayling Eds. (Malden: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 3-4.

[9] See: Shaw, Franklin, Kaasa, and Buzicky Eds., *Readings in Christian Humanism*, 231-232, 248-250, 375-76; R. William Franklin and Joseph M. Shaw, *The Case for Christian Humanism* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1991); Jens Zimmermann Ed., *Re-Envisioning Christian Humanism*: *Education and the Restoration of Humanity* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2017); Martin Buber, *A Believing Humanism,* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1967), 117-120.

[10] See: Michel Foucault, "Truth, Power and the Self: An Interview with Michel Foucault," in *Technologies of the Self*, Luther Martin, Huck Gutman, and Patrick Hutton Eds., (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 15; Władysław Tatarkiewicz, *On Perfection,* Janusz Kuczyński Ed., Christopher Kasparek Trans. (Warsaw: Warsaw University Press, 1992), 12-13, 34. Thomas Hurka, *Perfectionism* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 3-4, 55-58; Sa'diyya Shaikh, *In Search of "Al-Insān*:" Sufism, Islamic Law, and Gender, in *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 77 (2009): 785; Richard H. Jones, *Philosophy of Mysticism*: *Raids on the Ineffable* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2016), 289-293, 303-305

A primary contention of this dissertation has been that that Bursevi's Anti-Humanism is the reverse or "flip side" of his Humanism, so to speak. Not unlike the ways in which the *Ode to Joy* furthered interests that were antithetical to the spirit of its lyrics, the political aspect of Bursevi's Sufi Humanism was in Omid Safi's terms an attempt to "re-arrange of the world."[11] Bursevi's Humanism was based on idealized and perfectionistic depiction of humankind. His Anti-Humanism was applied to those who could not embody this ideal. Bursevi conceived of his Sufi anthropology at the height of what Baki Tezcan describes as the "Second Ottoman Empire" (c. 987-1238/1580-1823). It was a time in which an Ottoman Civil Society emerged that challenged the former, hegemonic rule of the Sultanate. Civil strife, wars with European powers, famine, plagues, natural disasters, and a even "mini ice age" ravaged Ottoman society of this time.[12] In response to the turmoil of the times, messianic preachers, puritanical Kadizadelis, and reformist Sufis advanced their own political agendas.[13] In Bursevi's writings, these catastrophes are blamed on societal corruption caused by capricious religious officials, state functionaries, and corrupt Sufis. In addition, the Sultanate itself did not make good on its promise to further the moral vision of Sufism and ensure public wellbeing as promised by Osman I (r. 1299-1323/4) to Şeyh Edebali (d. 726/1326).[14] Later, Sultans also did not heed Bursevi's Celveti predecessors Aziz Mahmut Hüdayi (d. 1038/1628) and Osman Fazlı Atparazri (d. 1102/1691). Thus, in order to restore Ottoman society to this God-sanctioned ideal, Bursevi argued for a re-arrangement of

---

[11] Omid Safi, *The Politics of Knowledge in Premodern Islam*: *Negotiating Ideology and Religious Inquiry* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 128-129.

[12] Baki Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire*: *Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern* World (Cambridge and New York; Cambridge University Press, 2010: 2012), 9-11; Sam White, *The Climate of Rebellion in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 126-130, 187-227.

[13] Madeline C. Zilfi, "The Kadizadelis: Discordant Revivalism in Seventeeth-Century Istanbul," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* (1986): 251-255; Krstić, *Contested Conversions to Islam*, 115, 117, 174; Tijana Krstić, *Contested Conversions to Islam*: *Narratives of Religious Change in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 75-97.

[14] Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*: *The Construction of the Ottoman State* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), 87-88, 123-129, 132-133.

power to support the "Perfect Men." Merve Tabur's notion of Bursevi's "politics of balance" describes part of this re-arrangement.[15] Beyond this, Kamelia Atanasova has brought to light the full scope of Bursevi's "re-ordering" of the world to serve the Perfect Men, and himself as the Axis of the Age.[16]

Previous scholarship has by and large ignored the political dimension of Bursevi's writings. In response, Tabur and Atanasova have done much to elucidate his political theories. Their scholarship casts Bursevi as a rather Machiavellian figure. For them, than serve an idealistic end, Sufism was merely the means to achieve Bursevi's political agenda. For Tabur and Atanasova, Bursevi coopted Sufism, just as the Ottoman Sultans had coopted of Sufi theology. Despotic Sultanates from the Great Seljuks (r. 1037-1194) to the Egyptian Mamluks (r. 1225-1517) and the Ottomans were aware of the ideological potential of Sufi theology. They used Sufis and Sufism to convince their subjects that their interests were being met under a benevolent despotism.[17] Especially after the 10th-11th/16th century, Sultans such as the Safavid Shāh Ismā ʿīl, the Ottoman Süleyman I, the Mughal Akbar the Great (r. 1556-1605), the Saʿadian Aḥmad al-Manṣūr (r. 1578-1607), and used the ideological apparatus of Sufi theology to style themselves "Perfect Men," who functioned both as rulers and as shaykhs over their subjects.[18] By doing so, they effectively circumvented the Sufis on whom they previously relied for political legitimacy. The Ottoman Sultanate was particularly indebted to Sufi ideology. By Bursevi's time,

---

[15] Merve Tabur, "İsmail Hakkı Bursevi and the Politics of Balance" M.A. Thesis, Boǧaziçi University, Istanbul, 2011, 11, 60, 107-110.

[16] Kamelia Atanasova, "The Sufi as the Axis of the World: Representations of Religious Authority in the Works of Ismail Hakki Bursevi (1653-1725)," Doctoral Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, 2016, 75, 85, 94, 150.

[17] Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, 63, 156, 198; Safi, *The Politics of Knowledge in Premodern Islam*, xxvi-xxvii; Nathan Hofer, *The Popularisation of Sufism in Ayyubid and Mamluk Egypt 1173-1325* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 24, 61.

[18] A. Afzar Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*: *Sacred Kingship and Sainthood in Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012; 2014), 1-6, 8. Said Amier Arjomand, *The Shadow of God & The Hidden Imam*: *Religion, Political Order, and Societal Change in Shiʿite Iran from the Beginning to 1890* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), 79-82.

it had largely monopolized for itself Sufi concepts such as *khalīfa* and *al-insān al-kāmil*.[19]

According to Tabur and Atanasova, Bursevi acknowledged the hegemony of the Sultanate. He

made an attempt to argue for greater enfranchisement of Sufis with himself as their leader.

I have argued in this dissertation that Bursevi was more than a political opportunist.

Rather, what I have called his "Society of Perfect Men" and "Despotism of the Perfect Man"

were ideological concepts rooted in his Sufi anthropology. In this, Bursevi was not unique as a

religious reformer. In earlier times, the Andalusian Sufi reformer Abū-l-Qāsim Ibn Qasi (d.

546/1151) took control of the Algarve region in Portugal. His rebellion was meant to restore a

divinely-ordained social and political order enjoyed for the benefit of all believers.[20] Closer to

Bursevi's era, the Safavid Shāh Ismāʿīl considered himself the successor to Imām ʿAlī ibn Abī

Ṭālib (d. 21/661), and called himself the *mahdī*. He endeavored to create an empire that would

usher in the Day of Judgment.[21] Bursevi's near contemporary Niyaz-i Misri (d. 1106/1694) was

also convinced of his prophethood and messiahood. He felt it his prophetic duty to denounce the

Ottoman State and called instead for the enthronement of the Crimean Giray Dynasty (c. 1427-

1783) under his guidance. As scholar of Ottoman Sufism Paul Ballanfat describes it, Niyaz-i

Misri strove to lead a regime that was to bring about the "end of politics" under his rule, and

create a paradise on earth.[22] Similarly for Bursevi, Sufism with all of its universalism and belief

in human potential was not to be confined to wasted on arcane discourse. Rather, it needed to be

made a into a socio-political reality for the good of humanity.

---

[19] Hüseyin Yılmaz, *Caliphate Redefined*: *The Mystical Turn in Ottoman Political Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 13, 16, 97-107.

[20] David Raymond Goodrich, *A Ṣūfī Revolt in Portugal*: *Ibn Qasī and his Kitāb khalʿ al-naʿlayn*, PhD Dissertation Faculty of Political Science Columbia University, New York, 1978, 15-19.

[21] Arjomand, *The Shadow of God & The Hidden Imam*: 68, 77-82; Rula Jurdi Abisaab, *Converting Persia*: *Religion and Power in the Safavid Empire* (London and New York: I.B. Taurus, 2004; 2015), 10-13.

[22] Paul Ballanfat, *Messianisme et sainteté*: *Les poèmes du mystique ottoman Niyazi Misri* (1618-1694) (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2012), 55-58, 135-147, 264-282.

Bursevi espoused a universalist Sufi anthropology in which the human species in its entirety was considered theomorphic. Upon closer scrutiny, however, Bursevi viewed humanity in light of his own concept of the "human potential." For him, real humanity connoted a society of true human beings, male Sufi Adamites, to the exclusion of inhuman humans and sub-human women. His Utopia of the Society of Perfect Men catered ostensibly to all potential Adamites, but in reality included only true human beings. The only way that this Society could be made into a reality on Earth was through the Despotism of the Perfect Man lead by an actualized Adamite *khalīfa*. This spiritual *khilāfa* would function as the "true Sultanate" in contrast to the temporal, "shadow Sultanate" over which it would exercise guidance. Power that was once exercised over Osman I by Şeyh Edebali, symbolized by the "sword-girding ceremony" (Tur. *kılıç alayı*) of the Ottoman Sultan throughout the years, would be restored to the Adamite *khalīfa* as Perfect Man.[23]

II. If It Were Implemented, What Would The Despotism Look Like?

What would have happened if Bursevi had convinced his benefactor and confidant the Grand Vizier Neveşehirli Damat İbrahim Paşa (r. 1718-1730) to accept his political theory? What might have occurred if Sultan Ahmet III (r. 1703-1730) had submitted to Bursevi as *khalīfa*? In one scenario, the Ottoman Sultanate might have had a chance to gain a new kind of ideological legitimacy. By framing state interests as "humanitarian," Ahmet III might have been able to convince members of the *ilmiye*, *vaizan* preachers, even anti-regime Sufis to rally to the cause of the Sultanate. However, according to another scenario, because they had no experience in actual governance, Bursevi and his followers might have caused utter chaos. Despite ruling through the "Shadow Sultanate," the "True Sultanate" might have made disastrous decisions.

---

[23] Abdülkadir Özcan, s.v. "Kılıç Alayı," *İslam Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul: Türk Diyanet Vakfı, İslam Araştırmalar Merkezi, 2002), 25.408.

They might have created a terrifying despotism that arbitrarily declared who was a "true human" and who was an "inhuman human." Since the vast majority of non-Muslim Ottoman subjects could not meet the criteria of Bursevi's ideal of the Perfect Man, Ottoman society would be in even greater turmoil.[24]

III. The Significance of this Study and Possibilities for Further Research

Despite the work accomplished in this dissertation, the opportunities for further research into Bursevi's writings, life, and times abound. To support or problematize the conclusions of this work, it would be beneficial to examine as much of Bursevi's voluminous œuvre as possible. A diachronic analysis of his Sufi anthropological writings in light of his biography would especially add nuance to this dissertation's conclusions. To what extent was Bursevi indebted to his contemporary Sufis? Comparing Bursevi's writings with those of contemporary Ottoman Sufi theologians such as Niyaz-i Misri, Sun'ullah Gaybi Efendi (d. 1087/1676), Selami Ali (d. 1692), and others would make it easier to answer this question. Beyond the Ottoman context, examining Bursevi's discourses in light of the works of near contemporaneous, like-minded Muslims such as Molla Sadra (d. 1640) or Shāh Walī Allāh Dihlawī (d. 1762) would also be of benefit. A greater investigation into Bursevi's source material would also shed much light on his Sufism as a whole. Much has been written on the ways in which Ibn al-'Arabi's discourses have been used in political contexts. However, there has not been much scholarship on his actual political views. Ibn al-'Arabi authored a work of politics, entitled *Al-Tadbīrat al-ilāhīya fī-iṣlāḥ al-mamlakat al-insānīya* ("'Divine Governance: A Work concerning the Reformation of the Human Realm"). Aziz Mahmut Hüdayi seems to have written a commentary on the work, and Bursevi most likely

---

[24] See: Benjamin Braude, "Foundation Myhts of the Millet System," in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, Benjamin Braude Ed. (Boulder: Lynne Reinner Publishers, 2012) 69-88.

read it over the course of his career.[25] Examining works such as *Al-Tadbīrat al-ilāhīya* in

addition to other treatises would add much to the existing work on Bursevi. Finally, it is clear

that Bursevi's works were popular in the Ottoman Empire after his passing. Manuscript archives

from Morocco and West Africa to Iran, Iraq, and the Subcontinent contain many copies of *Rūḥ

al-bayān*, most likely in a format that contains only the Arabic text of the tri-lingual work. The

work was copied even after its first printing in 1911-1920.[26] Exploring the possible link between

Bursevi's writings such as *Rūḥ al-bayān* and the emergence of Neo-Sufism in the Ottoman

context and beyond would be a worthy study.

Ismail Hakki Bursevi was one of the most significant Sufi theologians of Ottoman

history. Without a doubt, his Sufi anthropology is one of the most complex and problematic in

Sufism. Like *Ode to Joy* and its adoption as an ideological symbol, his writings celebrate

humankind in universalist terms such that they might be considered exemplary of Islamic

Humanism. They also limit belonging to "humanity" to a small, elite few in a manner that is

certainly anti-humanistic. His theoretical politics so rooted in his Sufi anthropology are

unprecedented in depth and scope. All in all, the richness of Bursevi's life and writings deserve a

great deal more scholarship than is possible in a dissertation. It is hoped that future studies do

justice to this remarkable figure not as a "Perfect Man" paragon of Neo-Ottomanism, nor as a

political opportunist for whom Sufi theology was secondary. Ideally, Bursevi should be studied

as reflective of a major problem within Sufi discourse. For as a Muslim Humanist of the

Ottoman Empire and formulator of the Politicization of the Perfect Man, Bursevi emblemizes the

---

[25] Muḥī al-Dīn ibn al-ʿArabī, *Al-Tadbīrat al-ilāhīya fī-iṣlāh al-mamlakat al-insānīya*, Muḥammad ʿAlī Bayḍūn Ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutūb al-ʿIlmīya, 2003); Idem., *Divine Governance of the Human Kingdom*, Shaykh Tosun Bayrak al-Jerrahi al-Halveti Trans. (Louisville: Fons Vitae, 1997).

[26] For a list of available manuscripts of the copies of *Rūḥ al-bayān*, see: *Al-Fihris al-shāmil li-l-turāth al-ʿarabī al-islāmī al-makhṭūt: vol. 2*: *ʿUlūm al-qurʾān: makhṭūṭāt al-tafsīr [wa-ʿulūmihi]* (Amman: Muʾassasa Āl al-Bayt, 1987-1989), 1:747-750

tension between spirituality and temporal authority—*walāya* and *wilāya* in Vincent J. Cornell's

terms—characteristic of Sufism as a whole.

Bibliography

Unedited Primary Sources

Bursevi. İsmail Hakkı. *Kitâbü'l-izzi'l-âdemî* (*Kitāb al-ʿizz al-ādamī*). Istanbul: Süleymaniyye Kütuphanesi, 34 Atif Ef., no. 1420/8.

———. *Rūḥ al-bayān fī tafsīr al-Qurʾān*. Bursa: Bursa Eski Eserler Kütüphanesi (BEYBEK), Genel (GE), ms. no. 12-27.

Edited Primary Sources

Abbas, Kassem Mouhammed. *Abū Yazīd al-Basṭāmī: al-majmuʿah al-ṣūfiyyah al-kāmilah*. Damascus: Al-Madā, 2004.

Abdel-Kader, Dr. Ali Hassan. *The Life, Personality and Writings of Al-Junayd, A Study of a Third/Ninth Century Mystic with an Edition and Translations of his writings*. London: Luzac & Company LTD, 1976.

Bursevi, İsmail Hakkı / Al-Burūsawī. Ismāʿīl Haqqī. *Divan*. Edited by Dr. Murat Yurtsever. Bursa: Arasta Yayınları, 2000.

———. *İdarecilere Öğütler* (*Sülükü'l Mülük*). Edited by Mustafa Utku. Bursa: Uludağ Yayınları, 2015.

———. *Kırk Hadis Şerhi*, *Şerh-i Hadis-i Erbain*, Edited by Mustafa Utku. Bursa: Uludağ Yayınları, 1999.

———. *Kitabü'n-Netice*. Edited by Ali Namlı and İmdat Yavaş. Istanbul: İnsan Yayınları, 1997.

———. *Rūḥ al-Bayān fī tafsīr al-qurʾān* 10 vols. Beirut, Dār al-Kutūb al-ʿIlmīya, 2003.

———. *Tafsīr Rūḥ al-Bayān li-l-Shaykh Ismāʿīl Haqqī al-Burūsawī*. 10 vols. Edited by Muḥammad Ṣāʾim ibn ʿUthmān Bay. Istanbul: unknown, 1330-1339/1911-1920.

———. *Varlığın Dili*: *İbn Meşiş Salavatı ve şerhi*. Edited by Nedim Tan. Istanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 2014.

Ibn Abī Ṭālib, ʿAlī. *Nahj al-balāgha.* Edited by Muḥammad ʿAbduh. Cairo: Dār al-Fajr li-l-Turāth, 2005.

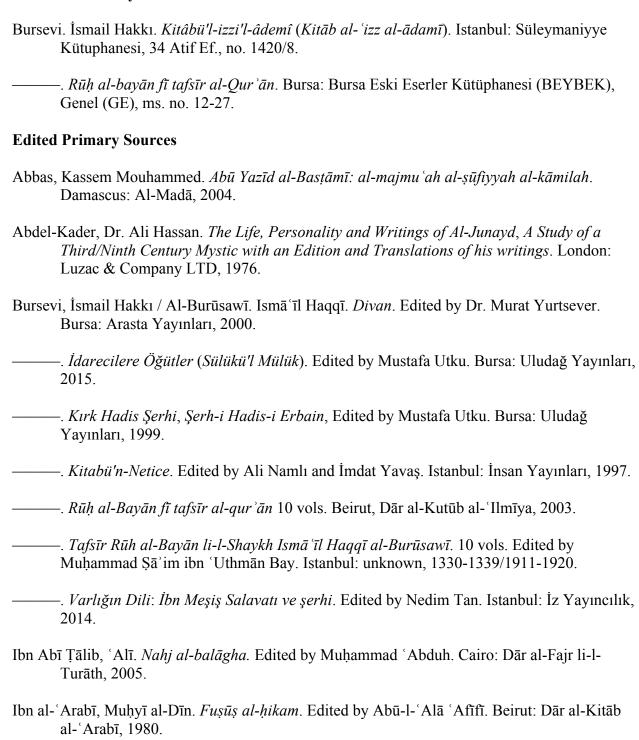Ibn al-ʿArabī, Muḥyī al-Dīn. *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*. Edited by Abū-l-ʿAlā ʿAfīfī. Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1980.

———. *Al-Tadbīrat al-ilāhīya fī-iṣlāh al-mamlakat al-insānīya.* Edited by Muḥammad ʿAlī Bayḍūn. Beirut: Dār al-Kutūb al-ʿIlmīya, 2003

Jāmī, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān. *Mathnawī-yi haft awrang*. Edited by Murtaḍā Mudarris Gīlānī. Tehran: Kitāb-Furūsh-i Saʿdī, 1337/1958.

Al-Jurjānī. ʿAlī. *Kitāb al-taʿrīfāt*. Edited by Gustav Flügel. Leipzig: FCG Vogelii, 1845.

Al-Kāshānī, ʿAbd al-Razzāq. *Muʾjam iṣṭalāḥāt al-ṣūfīya*. Edited by Dr. ʿAbd al-ʿĀl Shāhīn. Cairo: Dār al-Manār, 1988.

Kargılı. Abdullah. "İsmail Hakkı Bursevi'nin Kitabü'l-Hucceti'l Baliğa Adlı Eseri: İnceleme-Metin." M.A. Thesis. Istanbul University. Istanbul, 2011.

Papan-Matin, Firoozeh. *The Unveiling of Secrets* (*Kashf al-asrār*): *The Visionary Autobiography of Rūzbihān al-Baqlī.* Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2005.

Rūmī, Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī. *The Mathnawí of Jalálu'ddín Rúmí*. 10 vols. Edited and translated by Reynold A. Nicholson. London: Luzac & Co, 1939.

Saʿadī, Muṣliḥ al-Dīn. *Būstān-i Saʿdī*, Edited by Doctor Ghulām-Ḥusayn Yusūfī. Tehran: Intishārāt-i Anjuman-i Ustādān-i Zabān ve Adabiyyāt-i Fārsī, 1985.

Al-Sakhāwī, Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Raḥmān. *Al- Maqāṣid al-ḥasana fī bayān kathīr min al-aḥādīth al-mushtahara ʿalā al-alsin.* Edited by Muḥammad ʿUthmān al-Khusht. Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1985.

Söğüt, Engin. "İsmâil Hakkı Bursevî'nin Kenz-i Mahfî Risâlesi Muhtevâ ve Tahlîli." M.A. Thesis. Marmara University, Istanbul. 2007.

Secondary Sources

Abisaab, Rula Jurdi. *Converting Persia*: *Religion and Power in the Safavid Empire.* London and New York: I.B. Taurus, 2004; 2015.

Addas. Claude. *Ibn 'Arabī ou la quete du Soufre Rouge.* Paris: Editions Gallimard. 1989.

Ahmed, Shahab. *What is Islam*? *The Importance of Being Islamic*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016.

Aïni.Mehemmed-Ali. Aini. Mehmet-Ali. *Ismaïl Hakki: philosophe mystique 1653-1725.* Paris: Geuthner, 1933.

Aksoy. Ömer Asım. *Atasözleri ve Deyimler Sözlüğü*: *Deyimler Sözlüğü.* Istanbul: İnkilap Kitabevi, 1995.

Al-Azmeh, Aziz. "Utopia and Islamic Political Thought." In *History of Political Thought* 11 (1990): 9-19.

Algar, Hamid. *Jami*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Alparslan. Ali. *Ünlü Türk hattatları.* Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı, 1992.

Andrews. Walter G. Najaat Black, Mehmet Kalpaklı, editors and translators. *Ottoman Lyric Poetry*: *An Anthology.* Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997.

Anjum. Ovamir. "Mystical Authority and Governmentality in Medieval Islam." *Sufism and Society*: *Arrangements of the Mystical in the Muslim World*, 1200-1800. Edited by John Curry and Erik Ohlander. London and New York: Routledge, 2012.

Arjomand. Said Amier. *The Shadow of God & The Hidden* Imam: *Religion, Political Order, and Societal Change in Shiʿite Iran from the Beginning to 1890.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984.

Arkoun, Mohammed. *Miskawayh, philosophe et historien: contribution à l'étude de l'Humanisme arabe au 4e-10e siècle.* Paris: Librarie philosophique J. Vrin, 1970.

Arpaguş. Hatice K. "The Position of Woman in the Creation: A Qur'anic Perspective." *Muslima Theology*: *The Voices of Muslim Women Theologians*. Edited by Ednan Slan, Marcia Hermansen, and Elif Medeni. Bern: Peter Lang AG, 2013.

Artan, Tülay. "Arts and Architecture." In *The Cambridge History of Turkey*: *Volume 3. The Later Ottoman Empire*, *1603-1839*. Edited by Suraiya N. Faroqhi. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2006. Pp. 408-480.

Aščerić-Todd. Ines. *Dervishes and Islam in Bosnia*: *Sufi Dimensions to the Formation of Bosnian Muslim Society.* Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2015.

Aşkar. Mustafa. *Tasavvuf Tarihi Literatürü.* Istanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 2001; 2015.

Atanasova, Kamelia. "The Sufi as the Axis of the World: Representations of Religious Authority in the Works of Ismail Hakki Bursevi (1653-1725)." Doctoral Dissertation. University of Pennsylvania. Philadelphia, 2016.

Awliya, Nizam al-Din. *Morals for the Heart*. Translated by Bruce B. Lawrence. Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1992.

Aydın. Mehmet S. S.v. "Anayasa." In *İslam Ansiklopedisi*. Istanbul: Türk Diyanet Vakfı, İslam Araştırmalar Merkezi, 1991.

———. S.v. "İnsân-ı Kâmil." In *İslam Ansiklopedisi*. Istanbul: Türk Diyanet Vakfı, İslam Araştırmalar Merkezi, 1988; 2000.

Badawī. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān. "L'Humanisme dans le pensée arabe." In *Studia Islamica* 6 (1956): 67-100.

Baer. Marc David. *Honored by the Glory of Islam*: *Conversion and Conquest in Ottoman Europe.* Oxford and New York. Oxford University Press, 2008.

Balfour. Arthur James. *Theism and Humanism*. New York: Hodder and Stoughton, 1915.

Ballanfat, Paul. *Messianisme et Sainteté*: *Les poèmes du mystique ottoman Niyazi Misri* (1618-1694). Paris: L'Harmattan, 2012.

———. "La Prophétologie dans le *'Ayn al-hayât, tafsîr attribué à Najm al-dîn Kubrâ.*" In *Mystique musulmane – Parcours en compagnie d'un chercheur: Roger Deladrière, Actes du colloque du 9 mars 2001, Université Jean-Moulin à Lyon*. Paris: Cariscript, 2002.

———. *Unité et spiritualité*: *Le courant Melâmî-Hamzevî dans L'Empire ottoman*. Paris: L'Harmattan, 2013.

Barbir. Karl K. *Ottoman Rule in Damascus, 1708-1758.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016.

Başkal. Zekeriya. *Yunus Emre*: *The Sufi Poet in Love*. Clifton: Blue Dome Press, 2010.

Behar. Cem. "The Ottoman Musical Tradition." In op. cit. *The Cambridge History of Turkey*: *Volume* 3, *The Later Ottoman Empire, 1603-1839*. Pp. 393-407.

Ben-Zaken, Avner. "The Heavens of the Sky and the Heavens of the Heart: The Ottoman Cultural Context for the Introduction of post-Copernican Astronomy." In *The British Journal for the History of Science*, 37 (2004): 1-28.

Bisaha. Nancy. *Creating East and West*: *Renaissance Humanists and the Ottoman Turks.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004.

Black. Antony. *The History of Islamic Political Thought*: *From the Prophet to the Present*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001; 2011.

Bolay. Süleyman Hayri. S.v. "Âdem." In *İslam Ansiklopedisi*. Istanbul: Türk Diyanet Vakfı, İslam Araştırmalar Merkezi, 1988.

Bonner. Michael. *Jihad in Islamic History*: *Doctrines and Practice.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006.

Böwering. Gerhard. "Ensān-e Kāmel." In *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, online edition, 1998; 2011, available at http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/ensan-e-kamel (accessed on 7 December 2017).

Braude. Benjamin. "Foundation Myths of the Millet System." In *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*. Edited by Benjamin Braude. Boulder: Lynne Reinner Publishers, 2012. Pp. 69-88

Brown. Jonathan A.C. *Hadith: Muhammad's Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World.* Oxford and New York: Oneworld. 2009.

Buber. Martin. *A Believing Humanism.* New York: Simon and Schuster, 1967.

Buch. Esteban. *Beethoven's Ninth*: *A Political History*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003.

Butler. Daren. "With More Islamic Schooling, Erdogan Aims to Reshape Turkey." Reuters, January 25, 2018, , accessed March 21, 2018, https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/turkey-erdogan-education/.

Çağırcı. Mustafa. S.v. "İbrâhim Hakkı Erzurûmî." In *İslam Ansiklopedisi*. Istanbul: Türk Diyanet Vakfı, İslam Araştırmalar Merkezi, 1988; 2000.

Can. Betül. "Tanzimat Öncesi Osmanlı Medreselerinde Arapça Öğretim Yöntemleri." In *Ekev Akademi Dergisi* 44 (2010): 305-320.

Cantemir. Dimitrie. *The History of the Growth and Decay of the Othman Empire*. Translated by Nicholas Tindal. London: J.J. and P. Knapton, 1734-35.

Chittick. William C. "The Five Divine Presences: From Al-Qūnawī to al-Qayṣarī." In *The Muslim World* 72 (1982): 107-128.

———. *The Self-Disclosure of God*: *Principles of Ibn al-'Arabi's Cosmology*. Albany: The State University of New York Press, 1998.

———."The School of Ibn ʿArabī," In *The History of Islamic Philosophy*: *From its Origin to the Present, Philosophy in the Land of Prophecy*. Edited by Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman. London and New York: Routledge, 1996.

———. *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*: *Ibn al-ʿArabī's Metaphysics of Imagination*. Albany: The State University of New York Press, 1989.

———. *The Sufi Path of Love*: *The Spiritual Teachings of Rumi*. Albany: The State University of New York Press, 1984.

Chodkiewicz. Michel. *Seal of the Saints*: *Prophethood and Sainthood in the Doctrine of Ibn 'Arabi*. Translated by Liadain Sherrard. Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1993.

Cornell. Rkia Elaroui. "Rabi'a from Narrative to Myth: The Tropics of Identity of a Muslim Woman Saint." Doctoral dissertation. Vrije Universiteit. Amsterdam, 2013.

Cornell. Vincent J. *Realm of the Saint*: *Power and Authority in Moroccan Sufism*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998.

Cornell. Svante E. "The Islamization of Turkey: Erdoğan's Education Reforms." In *The Turkey Analyst,* 8 (2015).

Cook. David. *Understanding Jihad*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005.

Cook. Hamilton. "'Beyond Love Mysticism:' Yūnus Emre's Sufi Theology of Selfhood." In *Journal of Sufi Studies* 6 (2017): 47-81.

Cooper. David E. *The Measure of Things*: *Humanism, Humility, and Mystery*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Copson. Andrew. "What is Humanism?" In *The Wiley Blackwell Handbook of Humanism*. Edited by Andrew Copson and A.C. Grayling. Malden: Wiley Blackwell, 2015.

Curry. John J. *The Transformation of Muslim Mystical Thought in the Ottoman Empire*: *The Rise of the Halveti Order, 1350-1650*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010.

Davies. Tony. *Humanism*. London and New York: Routledge, 2008.

De Sondy. Amanullah. *The Crisis of Islamic Masculinities*. London: Bloomsbury, 2013.

Dorroll. Philip. "Shar'ia and the Secular in Modern Turkey." In *Contemporary Islam* 11 (2017): 123-135.

Doğan. Abdurrahman. *Kütahyalı Sunullah Gaybi*: *Hayatı, fikirleri, eserleri*. Istanbul: Önde Matbaacılık, 2001.

Elias. Jamal J. *The Throne Carrier of God*: *The Life and Thought of ʿAlāʾ ad-dawla as-Simnānī*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995.

Elkaisy-Friemuth. Maha. *God and Humans in Islamic Thought*: *ʿAbd al-Jabbār, Ibn Sīnā, and al-Ghazālī*. London and New York: Routledge, 2006.

Efendi. Seyyid Mustafa Rasim. *Tasavvuf Sözlüğü*: *Istılahat-ı İnsan-ı Kamil*. Istanbul: Insan Yayınları, 2013.

Ernst. Carl W. *Ruzbihan Baqli*: *Mysticism and Rhetoric of Sainthood in Persian Sufism*. London and New York: Routledge, 1996.

Fleischer. Cornell H. *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire*: *The Historian Mustafa Âli* (*1541-1600*). Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986.

Finkel. Caroline. *Osman's Dream: The History of the Ottoman Empire.* New York: Basic Books, 2005.

Foucault. Michel. *Dits et écrits*: 1954-1988. 4 vols. Paris: Gallimard, 1994.
———. *Les mots et les choses*: *une archéologie des sciences humaines*. Paris: Gallimard, 1996.

———. *Surveiller et punir.* Paris: Gallimard, 1975.

———. "Truth, Power and the Self: An Interview with Michel Foucault." In *Technologies of the Self.* Edited by Luther Martin, Huck Gutman, and Patrick Hutton. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988. Pp. 9-16.

———. "What is Enlightenment?" In *The Foucault Reader.* Edited by Paul Rabinow. New York: Pantheon Books. 1984. Pp. 32-51.

Franklin. R. William. Joseph M. Shaw. *The Case for Christian Humanism*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1991.

Frazer. Nancy. "Michel Foucault: A 'Young Conservative?'" In *Critique and Power*. Edited by M. Kelly. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994.

Freeden. Michael. "Eugenics and Progressive Thought: A Study in Ideological Affinity." In *The Historical Journal* 22 (1979): 645-671.

Graham. Daniel W., editor and translator. *The Texts of Early Greek Philosophy*: *The Complete Fragments and Selected Testimonies of the Major Presocratics*. 2 vols. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Gibb. E.J.W. *A History of Ottoman Poetry*. 6 vols. London: Luzac and Co., 1900-1909.

Grayling. A.C. *The God Argument*: *The Case against Religion and for Humanism.* New York: Bloomsbury, 2013.

Green. Nile. *Sufism*: *A Global History*. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.

Goodman. Lenn E. *Islamic Humanism.* Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Goodrich. David Raymond. "A Sufi Revolt in Portugal: Ibn Qasī and his *Kitāb khalʿ al-naʿlayn*." Doctoral Dissertation. Columbia University. New York, 1978.

Gölpinarlı. Abdülbaki. *Mevlana'dan sonra Mevlevilik.* Istanbul: İnkilap Kitabevi, 1953; 2009.

Guillaume. Alfred. *The Life of Muhammad*: *A Translation of Sirat Rasūl Allāh by Ibn Ishaq*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Gullo. Matthew T. "Turkish Foreign Policy: Neo-Ottomanism and the Future of Turkey's

Relations with the West." Master's Thesis. Duke University. Durham. NC, 2012.

Hobbes. Thomas. *Leviathan*. Edited by J.C.A. Gaskin. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.

"Humanism and Its Aspirations: Humanist Manifesto III, a Successor to the Humanist Manifesto of 1933," American Humanist Association, January 1, 2003, accessed January 24, 2018, https://americanhumanist.org/what-is-humanism/manifesto3/.

Hoffman-Ladd. Valerie J. "Mysticism and Sexuality in Sufi Thought and Life." In *Mystics Quarterly* 18 (1992): 82-93.

Hazer. Dursun. "Osmanlı Medreselerinde Arapça Öğretimi ve Okutulan Ders Kitapları." In *Gazi Üniversitesi Çorum İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 1 (2002): 274-293.

Hale. William. Ergun Özbudun. *Islamism, Democracy and Liberalism in Turkey*: *The Case of the AKP*. London and New York: Routledge, 2010.

Han-Pile. Béatrice. "'The 'Death of Man:' Foucault and Anti Humanism." In *Focault and Philosophy*. Edited by Timothy O'Leary and Christopher Falzon. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell Publishing. 2010. Pp. 118-143.

Heidegger. Martin. "Letter on Humanism (1946)." In *Pathmarks* (Ger. *Wegmarken*). Edited by William McNeill, translated by Frank A. Capuzzi. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Hoel. Nina. Sa'diyya Shaikh. "Sexing Islamic Theology: Theorising Women's Experience and Gender through ʿabd-Allah and khalīfah." In *Journal for Islamic Studies* 33 (2013): 127-150.

Hofer. Nathan *The Popularisation of Sufism in Ayyubid and Mamluk Egypt 1173-1325*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015.

Hökelekli. Hayati. S.v. "*Fıtrat*," *İslam Ansiklopedisi*. Istanbul: Türk Diyanet Vakfı, İslam Araştırmalar Merkezi, 1996.

Holbrook. Victoria Rowe. "Ibn 'Arabi and Ottoman Dervish Traditions: The Melami Supra-Order (Part One)," *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society* 9 (1991): 18-35.

Homerin. Th. Emil. *From Arab Poet to Muslim Saint*: *Ibn al-Fāriḍ*, *His Verse*, *and His Shrine*. Cairo and New York: The American University in Cairo Press, 2001.

Al-Hujwīrī. ʿAlī ibn ʿUthmān al-Jullābī. *Kashf al-maḥjūb*, "The Revelation of the Veiled:" An Early Persian Treatise on Sufism. Translated by Reynold A. Nicholson. Warminster: The E.J.W.Gibb Memorial Trust, 2000.

Hurka. Thomas. *Perfectionism*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.

Huxley. Julian. *If I Were Dictator*. London, UK: Methuen, 1934.

Ibn al-ʿArabī. Muḥī al-Dīn. *Divine Governance of the Human Kingdom*. Translated by Shaykh Tosun Bayrak al-Jerrahi al-Halveti. Louisville: Fons Vitae, 1997.

Ilıç. Slobodan. S.v. "Lâmekânî Hüseyin Efendi." In *İslam Ansiklopedisi*. Istanbul: Türk Diyanet Vakfı,, İslam Araştırmaları Merkezi, 1988; 2003.

İnalcık. Halil. "Fatih, Fetih ve İstanbul'un Yeniden İnşası." In *Dünya Kenti İstanbul / Istanbul-World City.* Edited by Afife Batur. Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı ve Yapı Kredi Bankası Yayınları, 1997.

İnbaşı. Mehmet. "The City of Skopje and its Demographic Structure in the 19th Century." *Turkish Review of Balkan Studies* 8 (2003): 279-300.

Ingram, David. "Foucault and Habermas." In *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2006. Pp. 240-284.

İrepoğlu. Gül. *Levni*: *Painting, Poetry, Colour*. Istanbul: Society of Friends of Topkapı Palace Museum, 1999.

Izutsu. Toshihiko. *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qurʾān.* Montreal and Ithaca: McGill and Queen's University Press, 2002.

———. *God and Man in the Qur'an*: *Semantics of the Qur'anic Weltanschauung*. Tokyo and Petaling Jaya: Islamic Book Trust, 2008.

Jones. Richard H. *Philosophy of Mysticism*: *Raids on the Ineffable*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2016.

Al-Juwaynī. Imām al-Ḥaramayn. *A Guide to Conclusive Proofs for the Principles of Belief (Kitāb al-irshād ilā qawāṭiʿ al-adilla fī-uṣūl al-iʿtiqād)*. Translated by Dr. Paul E. Walker. Reading: Garnet Publishing, 2001.

Kaçar. Mustafa. S.v. "Hezarfen Ahmed Çelebi." In *İslam Ansiklopedisi.* Istanbul: Türk Diyanet Vakfı, İslam Araştırmalar Merkezi, 1998.

Kafadar. Cemal. *Between Two Worlds*: *The Construction of the Ottoman State.* Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996.

Kagan. Shelley. "Equality and Desert." In *What Do We Deserve? A Reader on Justice and Desert*. Edited by Louis P. Pojman and Owen McLeod. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press. 1999. Pp. 298-315.

———. *The Geometry of Desert.* Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Kara. İhsan. "İbnü'l-Arabi'nin Tasavvuf İstılahlarına Etkisi ve Seyyid Mustafa Rasim Efendi'nin *Istılahat-ı İnsan-ı Kamil*'i Örneği." In *Tasavvuf* 23 (2009): 583-600.

Kara. Mustafa. *Bursa'da Tarikatlar ve Tekkeler.* Bursa: Bursa Büyükşehir Belediyesi Yayınları, 2012.

———. *Metinlerle Osnalılarda Tasavvuf ve Tarikatlar.* Bursa: Sır Yayıncılık, 2008.

Karamustafa. Ahmet T. *Sufism*: *The Formative Period*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007.

Kemikli. Bilal. *Sun'ullah-ı Gaybi Divanı.* Istanbul: H Yayınları, 2017.

Key. Alexander. "The Applicability of the Term 'Humanism' to Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī (d. 1023)." In *Studia Islamica* (2005): 71-112.

Kiros. Teodros. "Zera Yacob and Traditional Ethiopian Philosophy." In *A Companion to African Philosophy*. Edited by Kwasi Wiredu. Malden: Wiley Blackwell Publishing. 2004. Pp. 183-191.

Kisner. Matthew J. *Spinoza on Human Freedom*: *Reason, Autonomy, and the Good Life*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

Klemm. David E. William Schwiker. *Religion and the Human Future*: *An Essay on Theological Humanism*. Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell Publishers, 2008.

Kolker. Robert P. *Stanley Kubrick's A Clockwork Orange*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Köprülü. Mehmed Fuad. *Early Mystics in Turkish Literature*. Edited and translated by Gary Leiser and Robert Dankoff. London and New York: Routledge, 2006.

Köprülü. Orhan F. S.v. "çavuş." *İslam Ansiklopedisi.* Istanbul: Türk Diyanet Vakfı, İslam Araştırmalar Merkezi, 1993.

Kraemer. Joel. *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam*: *The Cultural Revolution during the Buyid Age*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992.

Kramers. J.H. C.E. Bosworth. *EI2*, S.v. "Sulṭān."

Krstić. Tijana. *Contested Conversions to Islam*: *Narratives of Religious Change in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011.

Kubrâ. Najm al-Dîn. *Les Eclosions de la beauté et les parfums de la majesté*: *Fawâtih al-jamâl wa fawâ'ih al jalâl*. Edited and translated by Paul Ballanfat. Nimes: Editions de l'éclat, 2001.

Küçük. B. Harun. "Natural Philosophy and Politics in the Eighteenth Century: Esad of Ioannina and Greek Aristotelianism at the Ottoman Court." In *The Journal of Ottoman Studies* / *Osmanlı Araştırmaları* 41 (2013): 125-158.

Kugle. Scott. *Sufis & Saints' Bodies*: *Mysticism*, *Corporeality*, & *Sacred Power in Islam*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007.

Lévinas. Emmanuel. *Humanism of the Other*. Translated by Nidra Poller. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2005.

Levy. David Benjamin. *Beethoven*: *The Ninth Symphony*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003.

Lewis. Franklin D. *Rumi*: *Past and Present, East and West: The Life, Teachings, and Poetry of Jalâl al-Din Rumi*. Oxford and New York: Oneworld Publications Ltd., 2000; 2008.,

Lipton. Gregory A. *Rethinking Ibn 'Arabi*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2018.

Little. John T. "*Al-Insān al-Kāmil*: The Perfect Man according to Ibn al-ʿArabī." In *The Muslim World* 77 (1987): 43-54.

Lowry. Heath W. *Ottoman Bursa in Travel Accounts*. Bloomington: Indiana University Ottoman and Modern Turkish Studies Publications, 2003.

Makdisi. George. *The Rise of Humanism and the Christian West* with *Special Reference to Scholasticism*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1990.

Malamud. Margret. "Gender and Spiritual Self-Fashioning: The Master-Disciple Relationship in Classical Sufism." In *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 64 (1996): 89-117.

Manuel. Frank E. Fritzie P. Manuel. *Utopian Thought in the Western World*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979.

March. Andrew F. "Taking People as They Are: Islam as a 'Realistic Utopia' in the Political Theory of Sayyid Qutb,." In *The American Political Science Review* 104 (2010): 189-207.

Marcotte. Roxanne D. "Šaḥrūr, the Status of Women, and Polygamy in Islam." In *Oriente Moderno* 81 (2001): 313-328.

Maritain. Jacques. *True Humanism*. Translated by M.R. Adamson. London: The Centenary Press, 1941.

Meisami. Julie Scott. *Medieval Persian Courtly Poetry.* Princeton: Princeton University Press. 1987; 2014.

Melchert. Christopher. "God Created Adam in His Image," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 13 (2011): 113-124.

Mernissi. Fatima. *Women and Islam*: *An Historical and Theological Enquiry*. Translated by Mary Jo Lakeland. Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1991.

Michot. Yahya M. "Sufi Love and Light in Tillo: Ibrāhīm Ḥaqqı Erẓurūmī (d. 1194/1780). In *The Muslim World* 105 (2015): 322-367.

Misra. Kundan. *Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, the Humanist Agenda and Scientific Method*: *The Unity of Humanism, Theism and Science*. Sydney, Australia: Kundan Misra, 2012.

Moin. A. Afzar. *The Millennial Sovereign*: *Sacred Kingship and Sainthood in Islam.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2012; 2014.

Mojaddedi. Jawid. *Beyond Dogma*: *Rumi's Teachings on Friendship with God and Early Sufi Theories.* Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Namlı. Ali. "İsmail Hakkı Bursevi Hazretlerinin Hayatı ve Eserleri." In İsmail Hakkı Bursevi. *Ruhu'l Beyan*: *Kur'an Meali ve Tefsiri*. 26 vols. Edited and translated by H. Kamil Yılmaz, Ömer Çelik, Süleyman Derin, Mehmet Toprak, Surat Sülün and Hüseyin Kayapınar. Istanbul: Erkam Yayınları, 2008. Pp. 1:9-62.

Namlı. Ali. *İsmail Hakkı Bursevi*: *Hayatı, Eserleri, Tarikat Anlayışı*. Istanbul: İnsan Yayınları, 2001.

Nasr. Seyyed Hossein. Caner K. Dağli. Maria Massi Dakake. Joseph. E. B. Lumbard. Mohammed Rustom, editors and translators. *The Study Quran*: *A New Translation and Commentary.* New York: HarperCollins, 2015.

Nauert. Charles G. *Humanism and the Culture of Renaissance Europe.* Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Neumann. Christoph K. "Political and Diplomatic Developments." In *The Cambridge History of Turkey: Volume 3: The Later Ottoman Empire, 1603-1839*. Edited by Suraiya N. Faroqhi. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. Pp. 44-65.

Neuwirth. Angelika. "Images and Metaphors in the Introductory Sections of the Makkan Sūras." In *Approaches to the Qurʾān*, Edited by G.R. Hawting and Abdul-Kader A. Shareef. London and New York: Routledge, 1993. Pp. 3-37.

Nicholson. Reynold A. *Studies in Islamic Mysticism*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1921.

Ocak. Ahmet Yaşar. S.v. "Geyikli Baba." In *Islam Ansiklopedisi.* Istanbul: Türk Diyanet Vakfı,, İslam Araştırmaları Merkezi, 1988; 1996.

Özcan. Abdülkadir. S.v. "Kılıç Alayı." In *İslam Ansiklopedisi.* Istanbul: Türk Diyanet Vakfı, İslam Araştırmalar Merkezi, 2002.

———. *Zübde-i Vekayiat, Tahlil ve Metin.* Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1995.

Özen. Şükrü. S.v. "Tütün." In *İslam Ansiklopedisi.* Istanbul: Türk Diyanet Vakfı, İslam Araştırmalar Merkezi, 2012.

Pamuk. Şevket. *A Monetary History of the Ottoman Empire.* Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Pasternack. Carol Braun. "Ruling Masculinities: From Adam to Apollonius of Tyre in Corpus 201b." In *Intersections of Gender, Religion, and Ethnicity in the Middle Ages*. Edited by Cordelia Beattie and Kirsten A. Fenton. London: Palgrave MacMillan. 2011. Pp. 36-41.

Phillips. Paul T. "One World, One Faith: The Quest for Unity in Julian Huxley's Religion of Evolutionary Humanism." In *Journal of the History of Ideas* 4 (2007): 613-633.

Al-Qārī. Nūr al-Dīn ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad ibn Sulṭān Molla ʿAlī. *Al-Asrār al-marfūʿa fī al-akhbār al- mawḍūʿa*. Edited by Muḥammad ibn Luṭfī al-Ṣabbāgh. Beirut; Damascus: Al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1986.

Rashdall. Hastings. *Theory of Good and Evil*: *A Treatise on Moral Philosophy.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907.

Redhouse. Sir James W. *A Turkish and English Lexicon*: *Shewing in English the Significations of the Turkish Terms*. Beirut: Librarie du Liban, 1987.

Reichmut. Stefan. Jörn Rüsen, Aladdin Sarhan, editors. *Humanism and Muslim Culture*: *Historical Heritage and Contemporary Challenges*. Goettingen and Taipei: V&R University Press GmbH and National Taiwan University Press, 2012.

Reisman. David C. "Al-Fārābī and the Philosophical Curriculum." In *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2005. Pp. 52-72.

Reynolds. Dwight F. "Biographical Traditions: Early Prototypes." In *Autobiography in the Arabic Literary Tradition*. Edited by Dwight F. Reynolds. Berkely: University of California Press. 2001. Pp. 36-38.

———."Introduction." In *Autobiography in the Arabic Literary Tradition*. Edited by Dwight F. Reynolds. Berkely: University of California Press. 2001. Pp. 1-17.

Ridgeon. Lloyd. *Persian Metaphysics and Mysticism*: *Selected Works of ʿAzīz Nasafī*. Abingdon and New York: Curzon Press, 2002.

Rizvi. Sajjad H. "The Existential Breath of *al-raḥmān* and the Munificent Grace of *al-raḥīm*: The *Tafsīr sūrat al- fātiḥa* of Jāmī and the School of Ibn ʿArabī." In *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 8 (2006): 58-87.

Rosseau. Jean-Jacques. *The Basic Political Writings*. Edited and translated by Donald A. Cress. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2012.

Rustom. Mohammed. "Rumi's Metaphysics of the Heart." In *Mawlana Rumi Review* 1 (2010): 69-79.

Safi. Omid. *The Politics of Knowledge in Premodern Islam*: *Negotiating Ideology and Religious Inquiry*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006.

Sands. Kristin Zahra. *Ṣūfī Commentaries on the Qurʾān in Classical Islam.* London and New York: Routledge, 2006.

Sartre. Jean-Paul. *Existentialism is a Humanism*. Translated by Carol Macomber. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007.

Scattolin. Giuseppe. "Realization of the 'Self' (*anā*) in Islamic Mysticism: 'Umar ibn al-Fāriḍ (576/1181- 632/1235). In *Annali dell'Università degli studi di Napoli "L'Orientale." Rivista del Dipartimento di Studi Asiatici e del Dipartimento di Studi e Ricerche su Africa e Paesi Arabi* 56 (1996): 14-32.

Schacht. J. *EI2*. S.v. "Ikrima."

Schimmel. Annamarie. *Mystical Dimensions of Islam.* Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1975.

Schimmel. Annemarie. *My Soul is a Woman*: *The Feminine in Islam*. Translated by Susan H. Ray. New York: Continuum Press, 1997.

Scholem. Gershom. *Sabbatai Sevi: The Mystical Messiah 1626-1676*. Translated by R.J. Zwi Werblowsky. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973.

Segal. Howard P. *Utopias*: *A Brief History from Ancient Writings to Virtual Communities*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.

Sells. Michael. *Early Islamic Mysticism: Sufi, Qur'an, Mi'raj, Poetic and Theological Writings*. Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1996.

Şemseddin. Mehmed. *Bursa dergahları*: *Yadigar-ı Şemsi I-II*. Edited by Mustafa Kara and Kadir Altansoy. Bursa: Uludağ Yayınları, 1997.

Shaikh. Sa'diyya. "In Search of *'Al-Insān*:' Sufism, Islamic Law, and Gender." In *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 77 (2009): 781-822.

———. *Sufi Narratives of Intimacy*: *Ibn 'Arabi*, *Gender*, *and Sexuality.* Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2012.

Sharpe. Andrew. "Foucault's Monsters, the Abnormal Individual, and the Challenge of English Law." In *Journal of Historical Sociology* 20 (2007): 384-403.

Shaw. Joseph M. R.W. Franklin. Harris Kaasa. Charles W. Buzicky, editors. *Readings in Christian Humanism.* Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1982; 2009.

Sirriyeh. Elizabeth. *Sufi Visionary of Ottoman Damascus*: *ʿAbd al-Ghani al-Nabulusi*, *1641-1731.* London and New York: Routledge, 2005.

Şişman. Çengiz. *The Burden of Silence*: *Sabbatai Sevi and the Evolution of the Ottoman-Turkish Dönmes.* Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2015.

Solak. Osman Nuri. *Kültür Hazinelerimiz Yazmaları Çalıştayı II*: *İnebey Yazma Eser Kütüphanesi ve Yazma Eser Terminolojisi.* Bursa: Osmangazi Belediyesi, 2017.

Soper. Kate. *Humanism and Anti-Humanism.* London: Hutchinson and Co., 1986.

Soucek. Svat. *A History of Inner Asia*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Spuler. Bertold. *Persian Historiography and Geography*. Translated by M. Ismail Marcinkowski. Singapore: Pustaka Nasional Pte Ltd., 2003.

Stewart. Devin J. "Poetic License in the Qur'an: Ibn al-Ṣāʾigh al-Ḥanafī's *Iḥkām al-rāy fī aḥkām al-ay*." In *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 9 (2009): 1-56.

Streusand. Douglas E. *Islamic Gunpowder Empires*: *Ottomans*, *Safavids*, *and Mughals*. Boulder: Westview Press, 2010.

Tabur. Merve. "İsmail Hakkı Bursevi and the Politics of Balance." M.A. Thesis. Boğaziçi University. Istanbul, 2011.

Tatarkiewicz. Władysław. *On Perfection.* Edited by Janusz Kuczyński, translated by Christopher Kasparek. Warsaw: Warsaw University Press, 1992.

Terzioğlu. Derin. "Man in the Image of God in the Image of the Times: Sufi Self-Narratives and the Diary of Niyāzī-i Mışrī (1618-1694)" In *Sutdia Islamica* 94 (2002): 139-165.

———."Sufis in the Age of State-Building and Confessionalization." In *The Ottoman World*. Edited by Christine Woodhead. London and New York: Routledge, 2012.

Tezcan. Baki. *The Second Ottoman Empire*: *Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press. 2010; 2012.

Al-Thaʿlabī. Abū Isḥāq Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm. *ʿArāʾis al-majālis fī-qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ or "Lives of the Prophets.*" Translated by William M. Brinner. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2002.

Todd. Richard. *The Sufi Doctrine of Man*: *Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī*'s *Metaphysical Anthropology.* Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2014.

Todorov. Tzvetan. *Imperfect Garden*: *The Legacy of Humanism*. Translated by Carol Cosman. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002.

Tor, D.G. S.v. "sultan." *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought*. Edited by Gerhard Böwering. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013.

Topal. Alp Eren. "Against Influence: Ziya Gökalp in Context and Tradition." In *Journal of Islamic Studies* 28 (2017): 283-310.

Turyan. Hasan. *Bir Kamil İnsan*: *İsmail Hakkı Bursevi Hazretleri.* Bursa: Merassa Yayınları, 2006.

Üftâde. Hazret-i Pîr-i. *Le Dîvân*. Translated by Paul Ballanfat. Paris: Les Deux Oceans, 2002.

Unknown. *Al-Fihris al-shāmil li-l-turāth al-ʿarabī al- islāmī al-makhṭūt: vol. 2*: *ʿUlūm al-qurʾān: makhṭūṭāt al-tafsīr* [*wa-ʿulūmihi*]. Amman: Muʾassasa Āl al-Bayt, 1987-1989.

Uyar. Mesut. Edward J. Erickson. *A Military History of the Ottomans*: *From Osman to Atatürk.* Santa Barbara: Praeger Security International, 2009.

Uyl. Douglas Den. *God*, *Man*, *and Well-Being*: *Spinoza's Modern Humanism*. Bern: Peter Lang Publishing Group, 2008.

Vajda. G. *EI2*. S.v. "Ḥām."

Van Donzel, E. *EI2*. S.v. "Mudjaddid."

Vernon. Mark. *Understand Humanism*. Blacklick: McGraw Hill, 2010.

Von Hammer-Purgstall. Joseph. *Geschichte der Osmanischen Dichtkunst.* Pesth: Conrad Adolph Hartleben's Verlag, 1838.

Watson. William J. "İbrahim Müteferrika and Turkish Incunablua." In *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 88 (1968): 435-441.

Watt. Montgomery. *EI2*. S.v. "Abū Djahl."

Wernick. Andrew. *Auguste Comte and the Religion of Humanity*: *The Post-Theistic Program of French Social Theory*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001; 2003.

Woodhead. Christine. "Ottoman Languages." In *The Ottoman World*. Edited by Christine Woodhead. London and New York: Routledge. 2011. Pp. 143-159.

Woodward. Mark. *Java*, *Indonesia*, *and Islam*. London and New York: Springer, 2011.

White. Sam. *The Climate of Rebellion in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

Würsch, Renate. "Humanism and Mysticism-Inspirations from Islam." In *Humanism and Muslim Culture*: *Historical Heritage and Contemporary Challenges*. Edited by Stefan Reichmut, Jörn Rüsen, and Aladdin Sarhan. Goettingen and Taipei: V&R unipress GmbH and National Taiwan University Press. 2012. Pp. 89-101.

Yakut. Esra. *Şeyhülislamlık*: *Yenileşme Döneminde Devlet ve Din*. Istanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2005.

Yıldız, Sakıb. *L'Exégète turc Ismâ'il Haqqî Bursawî, sa vie, ses œuvres et la méthode dans son Tafsîr Rûh al- Bayân* (1063-1137/1653-1725). Doctoral dissertation. Sorbonne University. Paris, 1972.

———. "Türk Müfessiri İsma'il Hakkı Burûsevi'nin Hayatı." In *Atatürk Üniversitesi İslami İlimler Fakültesi Dergisi* 1 (1975).

Yılmaz. Hasan Kamil. *Azîz Mahmûd Hüdâyi ve Celvetiyye tarikatı*. Istanbul: Erkam Yayınları, 1982.

Yılmaz. Hüseyin. *Caliphate Redefined*: *The Mystical Turn in Ottoman Political Thought*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018.

Yücesoy. Hayrettin. "Political Anarchism, Dissent, and Marginal Groups in the Early Ninth Century: The Ṣūfîs of the Muʿtazila Revisted." In *The Lineaments of Islam*: *Studies in Honor of Fred McGraw Donner*. Leiden: E.J. Brill. 2012. Pp. 61-84.

Zilfi. Madeline C. "The Kadizadelis: Discordant Revivalism in Seventeeth-Century Istanbul." In *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* (1986): 251-269.

———. *The Politics of Piety*: *The Ottoman Ulema in the Post-Classical Age* (*1600-1800*). Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1988

Zimmermann. Jens, editor. *Re-Envisioning Christian Humanism*: *Education and the Restoration of Humanity*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2017.