


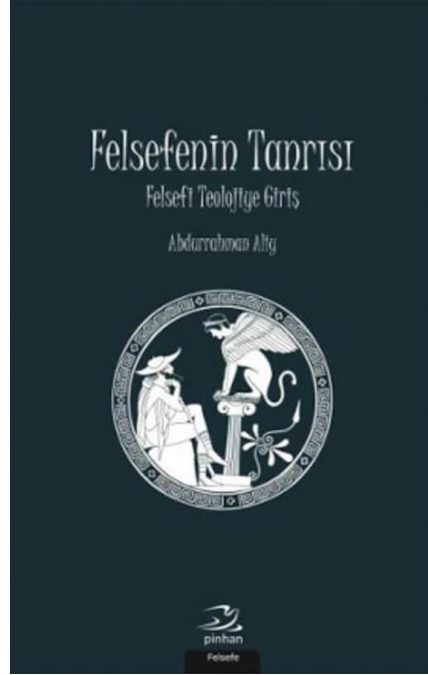
Abdurrahman Aliy, *Felsefenin Tanrısı: Felsefi Teolojiye Giriş*
[*The God of Philosophy: An Introduction to Philosophical*
Theology] (İstanbul: Pinhan Yayıncılık, 2020), 129 pp.

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Book Review

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God has been one of the most fundamental subjects of both philosophy and theology. As it can be seen when we look at the history of thought, while God was a central issue in some periods, sometimes it lost its value. But this issue has always preserved its eternity. Abdurrahman Aliy has prepared a very concise and fruitful book, *The God of Philosophy: An Introduction to Philosophical Theology*, that introduces a theology that takes philosophy as a method, that is, philosophical theology, in today's world where there are intense thoughts that criticize the possibility of talking about God, both philosophically and religiously.



In his introductory article titled *Subject and Method*, Aliy first examines whether the philosophy of religion studies should be

done in the theology or philosophy department. More importantly, it draws attention to the problems of how the philosophy of religion is made and how it should be done. It touches on some problems related to the philosophy of religion.

In his first chapter called *Four Concepts from the History of Philosophy*, Aliy deals with the concepts of religion, theology, natural theology and philosophy of religion in a philosophy-centered manner. Scientifically, he draws attention to the fact that these four concepts are independent research areas. In the chapter, he summarizes how the four concepts in question have been understood in the history of philosophy, in chronological order.

In the First Chapter, Aliy first deals with the concept of *religion*. He points out that a common definition of religion cannot be made. He examines the origins of the word "Religion" in different languages and aims to show how difficult it is to come up with a superior concept that will include all religions. He aims to show the changes in the perception of "religion" by conveying the religious perceptions of various philosophers from the Middle Ages to the 20th century.

The title of *Theology* first reaches a definition based on the origin of theology. It makes a distinction between mythical theology, philosophical theology and religious theology, and deals with this distinction through the main thinkers or ideas, starting from Ancient Greece.

In the title of *Natural Theology*, he starts from the distinction between natural theology and supernatural religious theology. It defines natural theology, as in the previous two titles, it deals with the basic thoughts of philosophers in chronological terms.

The title of *Philosophy of Religion* reveals the connection of this field as a discipline with natural theology discussions. It shows how the philosophy of religion, which was not considered as a separate discipline, in the beginning, underwent a meaning change through thinkers.

In Chapter Two, entitled *The Possibility of Philosophical Theology*, Aliy questions what philosophical theology is, its relationship with religious theology, and the possibility of philosophical theology. For this purpose, he divides the Second Chapter into titles: “Philosophical Theology: Philosophy or Theology?”; “Philosophy and Theology: Relationship or Conflict?”; “Is Philosophical Theology Possible?”.

Philosophical Theology: Philosophy? Theology? In its title, Aliy first explains theology based on the origin of the word, and then through the thoughts of Plato and Aristotle. He then makes definitions by adding the concepts of “natural” and “philosophy” to theology. He draws attention to the fact that God is one of the most fundamental subjects of both religion and philosophy and begins to examine philosophical theology in more detail. He says that philosophical theology consists of two groups of words: *Philosophy* and *talking about God*. He points out that there is tension between these two groups.

Philosophy and Theology: Relationship or Conflict? In its title, it talks about how the relationship between philosophy and theology is, taking into account the concepts of philosophy and theology. In particular, it conveys the attitudes of 20th-century thinkers towards philosophical theology.

Is Philosophical Theology Possible? In the third title, Aliy, refers to the tension between philosophy and theology, based on the conceptual analysis of philosophical theology. Aliy says that this tension is very important in terms of the possibility of philosophical theology. Because the way we make sense of this tension will show how philosophical theology will progress. At this point, Aliy deals with some forms of thinking such as dialectic and negative theology, questions the consistency of these thoughts and evaluates the possibility of philosophical theology within this framework.

In Chapter Three, *Are Faith, Theology, and Philosophy Talking About the Same God*, Aliy questions the possibility of talking about God. Examines aspects of faith and religious and philosophical

theology in speaking about God. As in Chapter Two, he divides the text into subheadings: *The One Subject of Philosophical Theology: Talking About God?*; *Talking About God: Should We Be Silent?*; *God of Faith, Theology, Philosophy: Is the Difference in God or Speech?*

In this chapter, Aliy draws attention to how important an issue God has been since the beginning of philosophy. Expressing that the origins of philosophical theology are in Ancient Greece and discussing this situation in more detail in the last part of the book, Aliy states that what reveals philosophical theology; argues that there is an ultimate reality and that this reality can be reached by philosophy. According to Aliy, although the center of thought sometimes changes, God has always been a topic of discussion. For example, the concept of God was discussed in metaphysics in ancient times, in the light and determination of revelation in the Middle Ages, and philosophical understanding in the New Age. He gives examples not only in his historical adventure but also from contemporary thinkers and currents of thought. It examines currents of thought such as practical atheism or nihilism. He says that these movements bring up the issues of not believing in God, forgetting Him, and living as if he does not exist. For this reason, according to Aliy, it means that the questioning of religion or philosophy about God should be philosophically re-examined and emphasized.

Aliy, who attaches special importance to philosophical theology in this respect, also points out that in the post-metaphysical period, very sharp criticisms were made of the philosophical doctrine of God. According to him, the focus of criticism is that the questions about God and the Divine in classical metaphysical discussions are empty and meaningless. According to Aliy, this is basically a speech problem.

Aliy, in *Talking About God: Should We Be Silent*, primarily refers to the relationship between everyday language and religious language. He states that the words we use when thinking about or addressing God are not very different from everyday language.

However, he says that our language in daily life is full of contradictory expressions and we do not see this as a problem. However, he states that we cannot reach this linguistic comfort in daily life in the religious field. According to Aliy, at this point, he encounters two big problems: What is the possibility of talking about God? What should be the language of speaking about God within the framework of this possibility?

Before answering these questions, Aliy mentions some criticisms of religion. These are psychological, epistemic and logical criticisms. Aliy draws attention to the logical criticisms of religion in terms of being a direct subject of philosophical theology and laying the groundwork for the discussion of the possibility of talking about God. Because, according to Aliy, logically, critics of religion argue that religious expressions are contradictory with each other. That's why they see faith as paradoxical. Seeing religion as a paradoxical field means that religion is not a talkable field. In this direction, Aliy, quoting from Brümmer, mentions three limits to talking about God:

- a. Religious boundaries: We can talk about God in awe in front of him, within the knowledge of religion.
- b. Epistemological boundaries: The limits of our knowledge of God determine the limits of our talk about him.
- c. Semantic limits: It is inevitable for all words used in the context of faith to undergo semantic shifts. We talk about God in everyday language, but on the other hand, we say that their meanings are very different.

According to Aliy, in the context of the possibility of talking about God, semantic boundaries concern us the most. There are also three views on what constitutes semantic boundaries: *the infinite qualitative difference between God and humans, the analogy between God and humans, the metaphorical language we use when talking about God.*

Aliy analyzes and interprets these three approaches. In this direction, it questions where the difference between the god of faith, religious theology and philosophical theology comes from.

Is the God of faith and philosophy different? Or does such a controversy arise because they use different forms of expression when talking about God? Ali argues that both disciplines initially started from the God of Faith but differed from each other in terms of method.

Towards the end of the third chapter, he mentions the importance of religious reason through the concepts of *idololatrie* and *iconoclasmus* and emphasizes the importance of philosophical reason or philosophical theology in understanding and speaking God.

Aliy emphasizes that talking about God is closely related to the discussion of the personality of the god. For this reason, the third chapter called the *Personality of God Debate* examines the question of whether God is understood as a person. He states that the issue of the personality of God has always been discussed in religions and philosophy, and especially Christian theology is dominant in this regard.

Aliy draws attention to the fact that the basis of the personality of God is the relationship between God and his creations. Because, according to him, while emphasizing the transcendence of God, on the other hand, he is in a relationship with the world he created; creates a dichotomy between the creator and the created. In attempting to respond to this duality, some ideas have envisioned God as a person. They thought that God, who gives orders and imposes prohibitions, should be only one person. This approach laid the groundwork for anthropomorphism. Although this issue was highly debated both in the Middle Ages and in the modern period, philosophical theology has always been distant from personification.

At the end of the chapter, Aliy deals with four of the ideas that are put forward to establish the relationship between God and the finite world: *monism*, *dualism*, *pantheism* and *creation*. He examines these thoughts and makes criticisms in line with the purpose of the work.

In the last chapter called *Philosophical Theology in Antiquity*, Aliy deals with examples of philosophical theology in Ancient Greek thought. Because, according to Aliy, religious thought plays a big role at the beginning of philosophical thought. While ancient Greek thought came to terms with the Greek religion, philosophical-theological questions came to the fore.

In the mentioned showdown, Aliy primarily addresses the problem of unity and origin (*arche*). He cites the answers given to the questions of origin and unity of religious/mythological thinking with examples from the narratives of Homer and Heseidos. Afterward, he turns his gaze to philosophy, which is based on reason. He says that the answer to the Arche problem is now sought through reason, and follows the traces of philosophical theology, starting with the pre-Socratic thinkers.

Drawing attention to thinkers such as Thales, Heraclitus, and Xenophon, he draws attention to the fact that arche, the first cause or origin, is not a dead material element, but is described as divine. From this point of view, Aliy argues that perhaps the first problem of philosophy, the problem of arche, lays the groundwork for philosophical theology.

After the pre-Socratic thinkers, Aliy deals with philosophical theology in the context of Plato's and Aristotle's thoughts. He examines Plato's understanding of God and *ideas*, saying that with Plato, a more systematic and clear-cut theology began to be put forward. He emphasizes the importance of Aristotle in terms of philosophical theology with a quote from Gadamer: "The teaching of God is the pinnacle of Aristotelian philosophy." He points out that Aristotle's naming of the divine as "first philosophy" or *protosophia* opens the door to philosophical theology. Explaining Aristotle's unmoved mover (proton kinoun akineton) understanding, he emphasizes Aristotle's effects on both religious theology and philosophical theology. At the end of the work, he concludes his work by addressing the problems related to Aristotle's concept of God.

To appreciate the value of Aliy's work and to understand the

importance of the work, we need to grasp the thought of our age well. Today, when everything is tried to be overcome, talking about God is seen as a rather meaningless and unnecessary occupation. Saying that metaphysics cannot be a science because it is not based on experience, Kant made it difficult to talk about God through reason. Many later thinkers also went this way and said that it is not necessary to talk about God but to remain silent. This critical attitude has not only disabled the possibility of religious theology but also led to the thought that philosophy and theology cannot come together. However, it is inevitable that philosophy and religion, which permeate every aspect of life, encounter each other. Treating belief and reason as two completely independent fields causes many problems. The belief that cannot be associated with reason easily makes the individual aggressive, incompatible, and uncompromising. For this reason, some points need to be grasped rationally.

At this point, Aliy's book questions the possibility of a philosophy-based theology that comprehends the cultural and social problems of the age, respond to the needs of individuals and society and is based on reason rather than dogmatic. As Aliy states in the title "Subject-Method", it offers a theoretical introduction to philosophical theology, which aims to talk about God and does not do it based on revelation. He builds a religious understanding based on people, against the thoughts that shut us down by saying that people should be silent about metaphysical issues.