The aim of this article is to explore the distinctiveness of İzmirli İsmail Hakkı (1869–1946) in the context of late Ottoman intellectual history and to suggest several implications of his thought on our understanding of debates on religion and modernization among Ottomans in the modern period. Studies on modern Islamic thought in the 19th and 20th centuries are mostly limited, especially in Western literature, to works dealing with a few well-known figures in the Arab world, such as Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh. However, a close investigation into several mostly neglected or yet uncovered thinkers of the Ottoman capital, Istanbul, can provide us with more interesting aspects of this period. The earlier interest of Istanbul ulama in modernization, their closer and more direct contact with Europeans, and the long historical experience of central Ottoman intelligentsia in similar reviving attempts are some of these aspects. This article aims to demonstrate that central Ottoman studies can make significant contributions to the current knowledge of the period, not only in political history, as has been the main focus so far, but also in religious and intellectual thought. It will show how a contact was established between modern European and Ottoman religious thought, in which ways the issue of modernization became an important topic in religious circles, and what kind of perceptions took place among them about its content and limits.

İsmail Hakkı is one of the prominent late-Ottoman personalities who took part in lively debates in Istanbul and discussed some of the hot topics and questions of his time. He was not the first Ottoman scholar to reexamine traditional Islamic thought in light of the challenges of modernization. However, he was one of the most comprehensive contributors to this effort. He and other moderate religious thinkers emerged as an alternative voice to the defenders of mere positivism in the process of the modernization of Ottoman thought, rejecting the notion of conflict both between Islamic tradition and modernization and between true religion and pure science. However, his most important contribution was attempting to reconstruct Islamic philosophical theology and to produce a new kalām book that would bring together the traditional historical heritage of this discipline and the developments of modern thought. Therefore, examining his
writings and comparing his views to his contemporaries’ will help to explore more deeply a group of lesser known Ottoman intellectuals who suggested that Islam and modernization were compatible.

The reason for addressing modernization in this study, and not modernity, is that “modern” here refers to a process of renewal or change, and it is not strictly connected to the philosophical context of “modernity” in the West. The modernization process had its origins in earlier centuries of Islamic and Ottoman intellectual history, but it accelerated in the 19th century.¹ All of the major world religions, including Judaism and Christianity, faced various challenges in this period while presenting their traditions to new generations. The Muslim world also underwent significant changes, with major educational reforms and the establishment of modern schools. One impact that modern education, the growing interest in modern science and thought, and cultural interactions had on the Ottoman intellectual milieu is that it helped the production of a group of radical modernists, who argued that faith and reason, religious beliefs and modern life, were incompatible. The alternative approach of İsmail Hakkı, however, suggested that within the Ottoman context, Islamic religious tradition could be understood and explained in modern terms. The importance of highlighting Hakkı lies in his being a scholar of Ottoman religious thought who at the same time had a close interest in modern developments and attempted to accomplish his modern project through a traditional discipline, kalâm.

In historical studies of modernization and cultural change, following Weberian analyses, societies or thinkers are easily classified into modern/traditional or progressive/backward dichotomies. As Zaman points out, this is because until recently scholars have tended to see a sharp contrast between tradition and modernity. Increasingly, however, such binary constructions have given way to the recognition that tradition is not necessarily a way of opposing societal transformation but can equally facilitate change.² The categories and dichotomies are asked to “be disaggregated to reveal the complexity, commonalities, and dynamic contradictions” in changing societies and their intellectuals.³ Modern, with all its openness and fluidity, has its own elements of tradition, and likewise tradition has its own flexibility. The very structure of both tradition and modernization is such that they cannot simply be reduced to a pair of opposites as each includes something from the other.⁴ This is because mechanisms of persistence are not utterly distinct from mechanisms of change. There is persistence in change to continue having required reforms, and there is change in persistence because the past needs to be recreated to be present and continuous.⁵ Therefore, the very idea of modernization includes its own tradition and becomes a culture.⁶

Rashid Rida, the Lebanese/Egyptian thinker, connects this integration of tradition and modernity to the natural and human life: “Among the created,” he says,"

new and old are relative. Every old creature was once new, and every new one will become old. As a folk proverb says: Whoever does not have a past, will not have a future . . . Renewal and renewing of the universe are among the divine general laws, generating order in our world and change and transformation in the phase of our existence. They operate [today] as they operated for our parents and grandparents. . . . Social, political, civic and religious renewal is necessary for human societies in accordance with their nature and level of readiness. They enable societies to progress through the stages of civilization and ascend on the path of science and knowledge. . . . The renewal of
religion means renewing its guidance, clarifying its truth and certitude, refuting innovations and extremism [by radical modernists].

This complex relation between religious/cultural tradition and modernization makes the study of late Ottoman Islamic intellectuals more interesting by comparing their approach to the all-inclusive Western approach. In fact, the overall neglect regarding the contribution of religious scholars to the question of modernization is mostly caused by the hitherto exclusive focus only on the radical secularist perception of modernization and the failure to see its dynamic interaction with the existing cultural factors of society. Ottoman society, by bringing together cultural elements from the East and the West, and by experiencing together the pursuit of both change and preservation, is a good example to illustrate the existence and availability of multiple ways and faces of modernization processes. The case of İsmail Hakkı provides special insights into different perceptions of modernization in the late Ottoman period as he was a figure who lived at a time when the variety of approaches to modernization touched broad segments of Ottoman society: he served not just as a witness to this process, but also as one of its agents. Focusing on Hakkı also helps to draw a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between the “old” and the “new” for a better comprehension of late Ottoman history in general. To place his thought in its larger Ottoman context, I will briefly introduce the major intellectual trends that emerged during Hakkı’s lifetime before discussing his main projects in the following sections.

THE IMPACT OF MODERNIZATION ON OTTOMANS AND THE EMERGENCE OF RADICAL MODERNIST AND RELIGIOUS INTELLECTUALS

Late Ottoman society underwent significant modernization, a process that was both caused and accelerated by the state reorganization program, tanzimat, beginning in 1839. The pressures for modernization grew out of the increasing number of travelers to Western European countries, the establishment of new institutions and schools, and the growing interest in modern science and thought, among other cultural factors. State officials increasingly believed in the need to make urgent changes in the Ottoman educational system and other administrative institutions. Historians continue to debate whether these changes were basically imitative of European institutions or adapted to Ottoman conditions.

In any case, the declaration of tanzimat and the willingness of officials to allow changes opened the way for the foundation of new schools and major educational reforms, including the establishment of new elementary, middle, and high schools, especially during the long reign of Abdülhamid II (1876–1909). This period coincides with the early career of İzmirli İsmail Hakkı. Hakkı received his primary education in these new schools (mekteb), first in İzmir then in Istanbul, along with his traditional madrasa learning. This twofold education presaged his attempts to reach an alternative modernization, as discussed below. At the same time, the Ottoman state also engaged in efforts to establish new higher educational institutions, beginning with the formation of professional engineering, medical, and military schools in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. This rapid educational movement culminated with a university,
Darülfünun, in Istanbul, which opened in 1900 and where Hakkı himself later served as a professor.11

Modern-educated Ottomans soon began to emphasize in their writings the importance of European sciences. Translations from European languages, mainly French, into Turkish and Arabic accelerated during this period. Modern sciences had already gained popularity among Ottomans when an encyclopedia of science was published for the first time in Ottoman Turkish and became a pioneer in the modernization of scientific terminology.12 Later other scientific periodicals followed to promote modern science among the Ottomans.13 Science was seen by many officials and learned figures as the only tool to solve the problems of the empire.14

However, the unexpected development was the emergence of popular materialism among a group of Ottomans. An elite group of Westernist intellectuals, such as Beşir Fuad, Abdullah Cevdet, and Baha Tevfik, adopted the 19th-century theories of German Vulgarmaterialismus from mostly the post-Feuerbach period of works.15 This group of radical elites believed in the supremacy of science in all aspects of life and proposed to take its foundations by adopting a completely European worldview, “with both its roses and thorns,” because there was no future without it.16 Nevertheless, to reach their goals some of them did not hesitate to use Islamic language and terminology as they realized that “without an Islamic guise, scientism would never take root among the masses.”17 They thought that if they had used Christian sources directly, Muslim minds would not allow them to enter their sphere. Therefore, the materialists named their leading journal İctihad, a central term of Islamic law, to emphasize their connection to their Islamic roots.18 Because their emphasis in Ottoman public space was mostly on science, and because they tried to hide their materialistic worldview behind an Islamic camouflage, I prefer to name their movement as “materialist scientism” instead of “scientific materialism,” the more common description of their sources in Western literature.

European sources of Ottoman materialism were mainly the French translations of the works of German materialists Ludwig Büchner and Ernst Haeckel, along with other French authors, such as Claude Bernard and Gustave Le Bon, known for their antireligious views and opposition to metaphysical discussions.19 Büchner and Haeckel were a part of the 19th-century movement of naturalist and biological materialism in Germany, which also affected other parts of Europe as the new scientific philosophy and the ideology of future. The movement also included scientists, such as Carl Vogt and Jacob Moleschott, and its ideas spread mostly through popular scientific journals.20 The preoccupation of radical modernist thinkers with mostly European materialist literature was “to the utter amazement of visiting foreign scholars.”21 Charles MacFarlane, a British traveler, who had visited Istanbul earlier in 1847–48 and been to Galatasaray Medical School (Mekteb-i Tibbiye), among other newly established schools, was one of the observers of this influence.22

Therefore, this connection of ideas shows that modernization of thought among the Ottomans cannot be analyzed independently from developments in modern European history. Werner Heisenberg in his Physics and Philosophy states that “the nineteenth century developed an extremely rigid frame for natural science, which created an open hostility towards religion.” The rigid framework, he points out, “is beginning to dissolve in the 20th century as a result of the relativity theory and quantum mechanics.”23
The openness of modern physics, Heisenberg suggests, may help to some extent to reconcile older traditions with new trends of thought.\textsuperscript{24} Heisenberg’s foresight was already realized after the mid-20th century through the criticisms of rigid scientism by post-Einsteinian rationalist scientists, such as Karl Popper, Thomas Khun, and Paul Feyerabend. This article will present how an Ottoman scholar tried to do a similar reconciliation from a philosophical–theological point of view.

How do we explain the rapid diffusion of materialism into Ottoman educated circles, apart from recognizing European influence and a general admiration of science among Ottoman intellectuals? What was the main motivation behind the Ottoman attraction to scientism in general and popular materialism in particular? Materialist thought was particularly influential among intellectuals because of their elitist approach to save society through a new design, by changing its cultural dimensions from above, and reconstructing a new social entity in order for it to be a part of the new civilization of Europe.\textsuperscript{25} Therefore, the exclusive, imposing, and future-designing understanding of materialistic (or positivistic) science was ideal for them. It also fitted the ambitions of the revolutionary Young Turks, the rising political group of that period, who, unlike the previous Young Ottoman movement, turned into a radical Westernist organization, and began to distance itself from religious culture. In fact, there was a close relation between Young Turks and the materialist elite, who were often politically affiliated with the group. This explains why “the Young Turk Weltanschauung, as it developed between 1889 and 1902, was vehemently antireligious, viewing religion as the greatest obstacle to human progress.”\textsuperscript{26} Although the Young Turks regarded religious thought as the main obstacle to what they deemed necessary philosophical and scientific progress, they were not successful either in creating a nonreligious Ottoman philosophical school based on Western thought.\textsuperscript{27}

However, the materialist elite was not the only group that focused on modern European thought. Extreme materialistic views may have sparked opposition, especially among religious circles, but they also kindled a general curiosity toward modern science and thought among readers. This growing interest in developments of European science pushed intellectuals and bureaucrats of various tendencies to discuss the need for modernization, although they disagreed with the materialists on its content and extent as well as its measures and methods.\textsuperscript{28} It is not surprising, therefore, that European criticisms of materialist scientism, such as Henri Poincaré’s critical relativism, Emile Boutroux’s scientific indeterminism, and Henri Bergson’s creationist and progressive evolutionism attracted the attention of certain Ottoman academicians, who translated these authors into Turkish as a response to the transmission of popular materialism into Ottoman language and culture.\textsuperscript{29}

Influenced by these further translations, the new generation of modern religious scholars had a chance to contact other sources of European thought and felt more confident to emphasize an alternative approach toward modernization. One should note that “religious scholars” in the Sunni Ottoman context would not refer to an institutional body of clerics but rather to a group of lay scholars who studied religious disciplines either in madrasas or modern institutions. They replaced the old ulama, who combined religious and scientific education in their traditional system. In fact, most scholars who somehow had a religious background and were worried about the materialistic aspect of modern thought became interested in issues of religion and modernization.\textsuperscript{30}
Consequently, just as the radical intellectuals had done, they translated some books from European thinkers, showing the rational and spiritual aspects of modern thought and the criticism of popular materialism by them. Therefore, they followed an alternative path of modernization that combined traditional heritage with modern ideas and methods, a path that had its roots in the earlier Young Ottoman movement in political thought in the 1860s and 1870s. The Young Ottomans, although advocating the adoption of industrialization and political reforms, rejected a cultural identification with the West. Their theories were partly of Islamic origin with modern interpretations, and they thought that modern institutions could not be adopted without basing them on deeper foundations. The failure of the first constitution and the strict state control on all intellectuals—including the ulama—during the Hamidian era pushed religious scholars to get more interested in modern discussions and to seek alliances with the radical modernist thinkers, who were mostly affiliated with the Young Turks, then in opposition. However, during the second constitutional period and the rule of the Young Turks through the Committee of Union and Progress (İttihat ve Terakki Fırkası), the difference between the two understandings of modernization surfaced and dominated the debates.

Unlike the radical members of the Young Turks and the materialists, according to the group that İsmail Hakkı belonged to, the true modernizer does not deny cultural heritage and works positively both to appraise the past and to determine the requirements of the future. To them, it is the duty of learned members of society to support the required changes. More interestingly, they saw no inherent value or identification for modernization: one can embrace it and thereby avoid stagnation by reappropriating old norms for new challenges. It is not restricted to the Western context, as already existed in the tradition of Islamic thought, although it was to a certain extent neglected in the latest phase of the premodern period. Some recent studies, unlike early Orientalist theses, also emphasize no direct connection between modernization and Westernization.

In keeping with this openness toward modernization of thought, the new generation of religious intellectuals began to call for reform (ıslah) in the traditional madrasa school system. They also called for methodological changes within the traditional Islamic disciplines of Qur'anic exegesis, Islamic law, and especially Muslim philosophical theology, in which Hakkı was most interested to meet the challenges of modern Western thought. One should remember that the issue of renovation (tajdid/tecdid) and revival (ihya’) in Islamic disciplines of learning is not exclusively modern but has deep historical roots. This familiarity offered precedents for 19th-century scholars of Islamic thought as they sought to meet the challenges of materialism.

It should also be noted that, although individuals in this group shared a view of Islamic thought as one of the indispensable forces in modernizing Ottoman culture, they did not represent a single voice; they debated the relationship of Islam to various modern realities among themselves and indeed disagreed on many issues. Despite the difficulties of making a classification among them, it is possible to divide them along three major lines: (1) the relatively modernist group of scholars, who gathered around the influential Strat-i Miustakim journal (1908–25), which was published the day after the declaration of the second constitutional revolution, and later was renamed Sebilürresad (Mehmed Akif [Ersoy], Elmalılı Hamdi [Yazır] and notably İzmirli İsmail Hakkı belong to this group); (2) the relatively conservative group of religious scholars who wrote mainly in the Beyanilhak journal (1908–12), which was edited by Şeyhülislam Mustafa Sabri
(1869–1954); and (3) scholars who combined Turkish-nationalist and modern religious views and grouped as contributors of İslam Mecmuası (1914–18) (disciples of the late, leading Ottoman sociologist and ideologue Ziya Gökalp, they included Halim Sabit, Seyyid Bey, Mehmed Şerafeddin [Yaltkaya], and Mansurizade Mehmed [Said]). All these groups, although different in their priorities and emphases, were united in reviving Islamic thought, rejecting materialistic theories, and considering the role of religious culture. Even though they differed on many levels, they had frequent interactions across “lines,” and there were even authors who wrote in all journals published by the above three subdivisions.

İZMİRLİ İSMAIL HAKKI AS A LATE OTTOMAN SCHOLAR

Born in 1869 in the city of İzmir, after which he was named, İzmirli İsmail Hakkı received his first education in his birthplace, in traditional madrasas and modern mektebs. As mentioned earlier, most of the learned men of Hakkı’s generation were educated both at new schools and through traditional training. Following his graduation from rüşdiye and some temporary teaching jobs in İzmir, he moved to Istanbul for his higher education, just at the time when Abdulhamid undertook his educational reform program. He attended the Teacher Training School (Darülmuallimin-i Aliye) and graduated from there in 1892. Simultaneously, he received private instructions from madrasa scholars and obtained the traditional diploma (icazetname) in Islamic studies. Among his teachers, two scholars influenced him the most, Ahmed Asım Bey, of Darülmuallimin, and Hafız Ahmed Şakir Efendi, of Fatih Madrasa. Hakkı described them as “two perfect masters that I loved very sincerely and benefited from most.”

Istanbul then became the center of Hakkı’s academic career for the rest of his life, and he worked as a teacher and administrator in various schools in the Ottoman capital. He was soon recognized for his superior performance and was elected a member of numerous scholarly commissions and committees, including the Society of Islamic Studies (Cemiyet-i Tedrisiye-i İslamiye). After the constitutional revolution of 1908, İsmail Hakkı became one of the most popular Islamic scholars of that period and was immersed in a busy academic life. He first was appointed as a professor in the theology department of the newly established Western-style university in Istanbul (Darülfünnun İlahiyat Fakültesi). Then, he was a member of two other important scholarly institutions when there were increasing demands for radical reforms in education. The first institute was founded to revise madrasa programs and set up modern madrasas in the empire (Darülhilafeti'l-aliye, 1916–23), and the second was established for solving current educational and religious questions and was led by the pro-constitutionalist Şeyhülislam Musa Kazım (Darülhikmeti'l-İslamiye, 1918–22). These two institutions brought together some major figures among late-Ottoman scholars and represented the chief intellectual bodies of the time.

Hakkı was also a member of another group that worked on the reorganization of Sufi orders (Cemiyet-i Sufiyye). Besides, he was involved in other official commissions seeking to standardize technical and scholarly terms and to revitalize the study of kalâm. He received many honors for his scholarly activities. His close friend Mehmed Akif introduced him to the modern Islamic circle that produced the journal Sebilürreşad, and he contributed numerous articles to this journal. Although Hakkı did not have
any political ambitions, he was, like many other late-Ottoman intellectuals of his time, registered as a member of the Committee of Union and Progress, which was one of the powerful players in Ottoman politics in the last period.

Ismail Hakkı’s scholarly activities continued, although less intensively, during the years of the Turkish republic. He first joined an editorial committee of scholarly publications appointed by the newly established government in Ankara (Tedkikat ve Te’lifat-i İslamiyye Heyet-i İlimiyyesi). Shortly after the announcement of political and social reforms by the Turkish government and the ban on traditional madrasa education in 1924, he returned to Istanbul as a professor at the reorganized and reopened Darülfünun. When Darülfünun was turned into Istanbul University in 1933, the theology department was closed, and he was moved to the Institute of Islamic Studies (İslam Tedkikleri Enstitüsü), a research institution with no teaching program. Hakkı retired from his job in 1935 and spent the last decade of his life doing individual research until his death at the age of 77 on 31 January 1946, during a visit to his son in Ankara.

İsmail Hakkı had a fine collection of books, many in manuscript, and before his death he gave them to the Süleymaniye Library in Istanbul, where they are now kept in a part of the library under his name. The section provides information about the main sources of his thought and also contains the manuscripts of his unpublished works.

In a statement describing his principles as a scholar, Hakkı claimed independence from all schools and authorities of thought in Islamic society. Not wanting to be seen as partisan, he said that he regarded no human, other than the Prophet, as faultless or innocent, and sought only the truth, wherever it be found. In his words, “I am not a strong supporter of any scholar. I don’t regard any scholar’s opinion as if it is from divine revelation! Just as I am not a strong supporter of Ibn Taymiyya, I am not a strong supporter of al-Ghazzali, either. I am neither a Hanbali, nor an Ashʿari. I would not follow Sufis or mutakallimān blindly. I side only with the truth!”

He was also careful, he said, not to share any opinion without clear evidence of its correctness, and not to accuse any group of heresy or apostasy. At the end of his declaration he mentioned that among the classical Muslim thinkers, al-Ghazzali’s works influenced him the most. For this reason, it would be inaccurate to call Hakkı a pure rationalist or neo-Mu‘tazilite, as some have characterized Muhammad Abduh and other modernist kalām reformers.

In fact, Hakkı was attracted to Islamic mysticism (tasawwuf) under the influence of his teacher Ahmed Asım Efendi while reading ibn al-ʿArabi’s Fusus al-hikam commentaries with him, and met with the Shadhili Sufi scholar Shaykh Husayn b. Muhammad Hasan al-Baghdadi al-Azhari, who gave him a hilafetname, a certificate authorizing him to spread the teachings of the Shadhiliyya order. However, he displayed little interest in mystical thought as an academic field in his works. The Shadhiliyya, although originally a North African order named after its Tunisian founder, Abu al-Hasan ‘Ali al-Shadhili (d. 1258), was known for its strict association with Sunni beliefs and focus on moral principles. Its combination of scholarship with spirituality and lesser formality might have attracted Hakkı. Moreover, Hakkı exchanged long discussions with Şeyh Saffet (Yetkin) (1866–1950) on the authority of the hadith mentioned in popular Sufi books. In the debate he insisted that most of the words attributed to the Prophet in Sufi books were not authentic but rather the Sufis’ own words and, therefore, could not be considered religious sources. Şeyh Saffet, a defender and follower of Sufism, was not happy with Hakkı’s remarks and accused him of ignoring the importance of Sufi literature in
religious culture. İsmail Hakki, however, considered the content of this popular literature as not relevant to his modernization project of Islamic thought. The debate led to the publication of several articles and books.\(^49\)

Because of his intensive concentration on metaphysics and *kalâm*, Hakki did not write on ethics separately, apart from chapters on theological ethics related to the issues of theodicy and the creation of evil.\(^50\) However, he was very interested in modern Western thought, especially in the great thinkers of metaphysical philosophy, like Descartes. In one of his books he even compared major Western philosophers with Muslim thinkers.\(^51\) In his magnum opus, *Yeni İlim-i Kelam* (The New Discipline of *Kalâm*), while giving examples of the differences between ancient and modern philosophies in the West, he referred to most modern philosophers, including some of his 19th-century contemporaries, such as John Stuart Mill, Ernst Renan, Henri Poincaré, and Emile Boutroux. His sources seem, however, to have been mostly textbooks or encyclopedias, though his bibliography included a few primary works of modern philosophy, like Rene Descartes’ *Discours de la méthode*, Auguste Comte’s *Cours de la philosophie positive*, and Gustave Le Bon’s *L’évolution de la matière*. Among contemporary Muslim thinkers, he included Muhammad Abduh’s *Risalat al-tawhid* and Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi’s *Barahin al-tawhid*\(^52\). In another book, he also referred to the Egyptian scholar Muhammad Lutfi Jun’a’s *Tarikh falsafat al-Islam fi al-Mashriq wa-l-Maghrib* (History of Islamic Philosophy in the East and the West) and the Indian modernist Sayyid Ameer Ali’s *The Spirit of Islam*, which he praises.\(^53\) The references to these thinkers, along with others whom he did not mention by name, show Hakki’s awareness not only of European currents of thought, but also of the modernist movement in other parts of the Muslim world. The ideas and writings of Muhammad Abduh and his teacher Jamal al-Din al-Afghani certainly had a great impact on the scholarly group of Hakki’s circle in Istanbul, as many articles by Abduh and al-Afghani were translated into Turkish in their journal *Sırat-ı Mustakim* and later in *Sebilürreşad*.

**İSMAİL HAKKI’S “NEW KALÂM” AND HIS OPPOSITION TO MATERIALIST SCIENTISM**

When Hakki started his career as a young teacher, the revitalization of *kalâm* was already discussed in terms of religion and modernity in the late Ottoman Empire and in other parts of the Muslim world. Some articles emphasized the urgent need to rewrite theological books according to the needs of their age. Ottoman defenders of modernizing *kalâm*, such as Abdüllatif Harputi and Şeyhülislam Musa Kazim, argued that the use of modern scientific and philosophical methodologies was necessary to strengthen faith in Islam and to bring its disciplines up to date. Harputi, for instance, pointed out that *kalâm* scholars (*mutakallimün*) of the early Islamic period examined classical philosophy when they believed it was necessary. Just as these early scholars had done, today’s *mutakallimün* should also examine philosophy through modern works and select what was needed from them and thereby found a new *ilm-i kelam*. According to Harputi, *kalâm* methodology had not remained constant throughout Islamic history and was now poised to enter a new stage of its history with the introduction of modern scientific methods.\(^54\) Harputi was especially interested in developments in modern astronomy, which was believed to challenge the traditional religious idea of the universe, and he therefore wrote a
separate treatise on the harmony of new astronomical data with the Qur’an and other sacred texts. Similarly, Musa Kazım, one of the last şeyhülislams of the Ottoman era, wrote an emphatic article on the need to reform kalâm, in which he accused ulama of blind rejection of Western ideas and of failing to meet the needs of the day. At the same time, in other parts of the Muslim world, Islamic scholars raised analogous points for reform in religious thought and contemporary kalâm using a similar methodology.

Why was kalâm so central to the modern revitalization of Islamic disciplines? Before answering this question, I will provide some detail about the historical evolution and the perception of this discipline in the pre- and early Ottoman period. The discipline of kalâm, or ‘ilm al-kalâm as it is called in Arabic, is a philosophically oriented theology within the general structure of Islamic thought. Through its historical development it differed from ‘aqīda (catechism), which is simply presentation of the matters of belief, and from usul al-din (the principles of faith), which clarify and defend Islamic religious doctrine, although some kalâm books carry these terms in their titles.

In the post-Ghazzalian period, beginning with Fakhr al-Din al-Razi (d. 606/1209) in the 12th century, Sunni kalâm absorbed the syntheses of Islamic philosophy and most of its metaphysical questions in a comprehensive way. Ibn Khaldun (d. 808/1406), the well-known historian of Islamic civilization, emphasized that following al-Razi, works of kalâm could not be differentiated from philosophy books. The mutakallimûn of this later period, who were called muta’akhkhirûn (the subsequents, compared with the mutaqaddimûn, the precedents), dealt with wider issues of metaphysics and science, introduced Aristotelian logic in their argumentation method, and began to quote Muslim philosophers in their works. For this reason, kalâm was called a discipline of general principles (al-‘ilm al-kulli) and was given the highest position (ashraf al-‘ulûm) in the hierarchy of Islamic sciences. ‘Adud al-Din al-Iji (d. 1355) and his commentator al-Sayyid al-Sharif al-Jurjani (d. 1413), who greatly influenced early Ottoman scholars, described how kalâm maintained its position as a general methodological base for other Islamic disciplines. According to these two scholars, the mutakallimûn, while building the theory of Islamic beliefs, ought to systematize kalâm’s own epistemology and ontology to keep it self-sufficient as the source and framework of other Islamic disciplines. Kalâm, therefore, was able to broaden its field of study and absorb most of the philosophical and metaphysical questions in its content from the 13th century on.

Early Ottoman scholars, such as Fenari (d. 1431), Hızır Bey (d. 1458), Hocazade (d. 1488), Hayali (d. 1470?), Kesteli (d. 1495), and Kemalpaşazade (d. 1534) continued this approach and wrote commentaries on the works of Sunni philosophical kalâm of muta’akhkhirûn rather than mutaqaddimûn. Therefore, kalâm maintained its high position in the Ottoman madrasas in the 15th and the 16th centuries. Although some Ottoman scholars opposed the study of kalâm because of its philosophical content, it continued to be one of the major disciplines of Ottoman scholarship up through the works of Beyazızade Ahmed (d. 1687), Abdülkarid Arif (d. 1713), Yanyalı Esad (d. 1730), Akkirmâni Mehmed (d. 1760), and Gelenbevi İsmail (d. 1791).

However, in the 19th century, according to Hakki, traditional kalâm teaching lost its richness and dynamism because the texts of the field were less sophisticated books that did not meet the new conditions of modernization and the challenges of scientific materialism. However, Hakki’s generation was fully aware of the traditional importance of this field in Islamic intellectual history, its close relationship with philosophy, and its
flexibility in borrowing new methodologies and absorbing new ideas. Therefore, they rediscovered kalām as the most convenient discipline for their attempts to revitalize Islamic religious thought so that it might meet the challenges of modern philosophy and science.

In a series of articles in the journal Sebilürresad, and in his major book Yeni ʿİlm-i Kelam, Hakkı joined the modernization efforts of his contemporaries and focused on the importance of rational thinking in general and the contribution of kalām to Islamic thought in particular. As evidence of the necessity for change in both the method and content of kalām, İsmail Hakkı lists examples of similar changes in the history of kalām. In the 12th century, Fakhr al-Din Razi’s kalām, for example, replaced Baqillani’s kalām because of the inadequacy of Baqillani’s system vis-à-vis the new philosophical methodology of kalām in Razi’s age. Therefore, Razi’s kalām was also to be replaced with a new formulation when it no longer met the needs of the age. Because Aristotelian philosophy, on which Razi depended, had collapsed in recent centuries, and a new, modern philosophy had emerged, Hakkı argues, Razi’s kalām was no longer adequate. Therefore, the scholars of new kalām, he says, should examine modern philosophy and select new ideas, arguments, and methods from various thinkers, provided that they fit the system of kalām thought, while rejecting the materialistic ideas that were inappropriate to Islam.

Moreover, scholars of new kalām, he suggests, should also stop using outdated scholastic methods that were no longer understood by the new generation; instead, they should use the logic and method of modern thinkers such as Descartes. Underlying this approach was Hakkı’s belief that the methods and presuppositions of kalām were changeable from age to age, although its essentials and principles remained the same. In fact, Hakkı’s methodology led him to prefer rational interpretations in some theological issues. For instance, although he accepts the existence of miracles, he does not give great weight to these supernatural factors in his evaluation of Muhammad’s prophethood. For evidence of the truth of the Prophet’s mission, he takes, rather, a rationalist approach, referring to the civilizing effects of Islam on tribal Arab communities and later Muslim societies. Likewise, he wrote an essay questioning eternal punishment in the hereafter, using both rationalist and religious evidence. He reminds his colleagues that if methodological changes did not take place, people with modern educations would not find the Islamic message satisfying.

Aware of the integration of traditional muta’akhkhirūn kalām with Muslim syntheses of ancient and medieval philosophy, Hakki does not hesitate to reconcile his new kalām with modern philosophy (felsefe-i cedide). Instead of the views of ancient philosophers, such as Thales, Anaxagoras, Empedokles, Democritus, Socrates, Aristotle, Epicures, Zenon, Pyron, Plotinus, and Porphyry, which were discussed in traditional kalām, he suggests that the scholar of new kalām needs to examine and select, when useful, the ideas of modern Western thinkers, such as Bacon, Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Locke, Malebranche, Hume, Condillac, Kant, Hegel, Auguste Comte, Hamilton, Stuart Mill, Spencer, Paul Janet, and Bergson. Similarly, instead of focusing on ancient schools such as Peripatetics and Stoicism, much more attention should be paid to modern schools of thought, such as rationalism, neomaterialism, positivism, spiritualism, and others. In this way, kalām would conform to contemporary philosophical subjects and develop according to contemporary needs. Because of his keen interest in philosophy, Hakki,
unlike the conservative ulama of his time, also praises the Muslim philosophers al-Farabi (d. 950) and Avicenna (d. 1037) for their great contributions to ancient philosophy, their synthesis of Aristotelian and neo-Platonist philosophy, and their innovations in philosophical methodology and thought. In one of his last works, he criticizes Peyami Safa, a contemporary Turkish writer, for undermining the Muslim contribution to philosophy by attributing the whole history of philosophy to Aristotle and presenting philosophy as a Greek miracle.75

However, the main purpose of Hakkı’s writing a new kalâm book was to respond to the challenges of modern materialist thought. In fact, some earlier Ottoman religious thinkers, such as İsmail Ferid, Filibeli Ahmed Hilmi, and Harputizade Hacı Mustafa, had already written refutations against the materialists, who were called maddiyum.76 İzmirli İsmail Hakkı, however, put his criticisms in a larger theological context as in his effort to reconstruct a modern kalâm theory in accordance with the requirements and developments of the new age. In his Yeni İlim-i Kelam, he gives a brief history of materialists from ancient pre-Socratic thinkers to the late modern, saying that in the modern times materialism reemerged partly with the ideas of Hobbes in England and of Gassendi in France by the 17th century. Some of the French Encyclopedists of the 18th century, such as Baron d’Holbach, La Mettrie, and Helvetius, he points out, strengthened materialistic views; however, the real spread of materialism occurred in the mid-19th century, as scholars of medicine and biology mostly converted to the materialist school. In Germany, Feuerbach prepared the foundations of the school, while later Moleschott, Büchner, and Vogt represented the neomaterialist movement.77

The neomaterialists, Hakkı explains, regarded “the knowledge about God” as “the enemy of knowledge,” whereas they saw no beginning for matter and motion.78 However, in Hakkı’s view, although materialists presented their ideas in a scientific context, they actually did not have respect for true scientific research and did not follow a scientific methodology in their conclusions. He is surprised how some people could accept their “nonsense views” (safsata), which are, to him, against physical experiments and observations. Hakkı criticizes materialists for holding onto a mechanistic approach to natural laws despite recent, contrary developments in physical and astronomical sciences. Materialists, he says, base their principles of nature on a strict determinism instead of teleological voluntarism while explaining human psychological realities through mental functions of the body, thereby totally denying all spiritual dimensions of life.79

Highlighting the main points of his criticism of the materialists, Hakkı emphasizes that matter (madde), which is the main and only source of existence in scientific materialism, loses its place and importance in modern physics in favor of energy; therefore, it would not be appropriate to regard matter as an eternal and indisputable source of existence. Matter, in fact, cannot move on its own without an external force or mover, so it always needs a cause to function. The great philosophers like Spinoza, Hegel, and Schopenhauer, unlike the materialists, base their systematic thought on nonmaterial metaphysical concepts, such as substance, thought, or will. Even empiricist philosophers, like Berkeley and Hume, he argues, did not uphold a purely materialistic worldview.

Moreover, Hakkı states that the neomaterialists see their views on science as unchangeable because scientific theories were not bound to change over the course of time. Referring to certain unnamed English philosophers, he suggests, “Today’s truths could always be tomorrow’s total ignorance.”80 Nevertheless, Hakkı argues, the so-called deterministic
Alternative Approaches to Modernization in the Late Ottoman

Theories of materialism have already been challenged by the new discoveries of French scientists Henri Poincaré and Emil Boutroux, who suggested rather an indeterministic state in the laws of nature. The other major mistake of the materialists, according to Hakki, was their underestimation of higher concepts of philosophy, including reasoning, consciousness, and so on. This simplistic approach, which has nothing to do with science, he concludes, cannot establish the foundations of a systematic thought. Therefore, especially following recent attacks by August Comte and the positivists on their views, he claims, “Today materialists are not valued in Europe any more. Materialism is disappearing day by day. In the contemporary age, the evolution of thought enters a way that gives the spiritual realities quite a large space.”

İsmail Hakki seems to be aware of both the decline of popular materialism during the first quarter of the 20th century and some of the criticisms against it by contemporary European thinkers. Instead of making religious comments against materialist ideas, he tries to review and criticize them from a philosophical point of view. In fact, when Hakki enters into theological debates, he generally uses weak arguments. For instance, in his challenge to the materialist view about the impossibility of observing divine existence, Hakki counters with the same impossibility of observing subatomic particles. However, he does seem quite consistent, in general, in disputing the views of materialists from a philosophical point of view and in highlighting some of their incoherences.

Despite promoting the use of philosophical discussions, İsmail Hakki did not find it appropriate to include the pure natural sciences (tabi’iyyat) and astronomy (felekiyyat) in his proposed new kalâm. According to Hakki, an intensive use of scientific theories and terminology would require such frequent renovation of kalâm texts that it risked surpassing its philosophical content. Moreover, science in the Middle Ages was contained within philosophy; therefore, when earlier mutakallimûn imported and synthesized philosophical questions in their texts, they inevitably had to deal with scientific questions of their time. However, because science had gained its independence from philosophy and developed through experimental methods in modern times, kalâm should not delve into scientific questions. It might only indirectly refer to some recent conclusions of science about particular questions when needed. Accordingly, in Yeni İlm-i Kelam he touched upon some aspects of atomic physics, evolutionary biology, and recent theories of science among other subjects. I should note that the aim of this article is not to present the entirety of Hakki’s views and criticisms, but only to give some examples of how he constructed his modern religious thought and how he dealt with the challenges of materialist scientism that gained popularity among many Ottoman intellectuals during his lifetime. Therefore, other issues need to be addressed in his writings.

Another important matter that occupied Hakki, albeit to a lesser extent, was Comtean positivism (isbatîye), which was the other influential movement among radical Ottoman thinkers, such as Ahmed Rıza. The positivists did not consider any source of knowledge other than physical senses, Hakki explains, and therefore denied the ability of human rational faculty to discover any absolute or transcendental notion. Contrary to the positivists, he questions the unique role of senses, emphasizing that human knowledge could not be limited to the sensible world. He also disagrees with the rejection of unknown realities as well as the underestimation of the capacity of reasoning, arguing that ignoring questions related to the beginning and the end of existence would be a total loss for human knowledge. Although he emphasizes the existence of methods of believing
in, or reaching, ideas through inner conscience (vicdan) or other spiritual perceptions without rational argumentation, he does not see them as causes for the exclusion of reason in epistemology. Hakkı, in fact, finds Comte’s division of the history of science into three periods quite amazing (mahirane), but he does not agree with him about the closeness of the age of religion and metaphysics. He argues that August Comte, who was the founding father of positivism, ironically turned to establish a new “religion of humanity.”

It should be remembered that social and biological theories of 19th-century European materialism and positivism had a broad impact on many Ottoman thinkers through numerous translations. What is peculiar about Hakkı is that he suggested that it was the task of new kalâm to deal with the views of these schools and respond to them in a systematic philosophical way. He regarded kalâm as the most appropriate traditional source to combine religious and philosophical thoughts and to apply modern methods to present its principles in accordance with contemporary conceptions. Kalâm also provided him an opportunity to discuss and reject materialist and positivist movements, which he considered as destructive challenges to Ottoman religious culture.

CRITICISM OF İSMAIL HAKKI’S “NEW KALÂM” BY OTHER OTTOMAN SCHOLARS

İsmail Hakkı’s attempt to rewrite kalâm attracted criticism from Ottoman scholars who objected to the use of modern philosophy in Islamic discourse. The influential journal of the day, Sebilürreşad, ran an interview with Hakkı exploring his project of Yeni İlim-i Kelam.88 The interview should have generally received positive responses because the project was relevant to the modern attitude of contemporary intellectuals, and it also kept clear links with historical tradition, as will be discussed below. However, the interview drew strong criticism from Hüseyin Kazım Kadri (1870–1934), a scholarly minded politician with a Salafi tendency in matters of faith, who usually used the penname Şeyh Muhsin-i Fani el-Zahiri.89 Hakkı responded to Kadri’s critique, and the two men exchanged a series of essays in the journal Sebilürreşad.90

Although Kadri did not use harsh language toward Hakkı and called him “cherished and respected teacher” (muazzez ve muhterem üstad), he did enter into a serious debate with him. In his critique of Hakkı, Kadri expresses his disappointment and sorrow with Hakkı’s attempts to revitalize kalâm in accordance with contemporary thought. Although he accepts the need for Muslim scholars to write new books and contribute to Islamic intellectual tradition, he believes that new scholarship should be restricted to commentaries and translations of the Qur’an written by a joint group of experts, without any Western influence. Kadri mentions that earlier he had also asked Şeyhülislam Musa Kazım92 to give up a similar attempt to reform kalâm. Yet, in Kadri’s opinion, Musa Kazım’s call for reformed kalâm education was less harmful than Hakkı’s Yeni İlm-i Kelam, possibly because Musa Kazım’s reform remained only a vague proposal whereas Hakkı’s was more specific.

The new kalâm, in Kadri’s opinion, would reintroduce useless theological disputes that had been abandoned for centuries to the darkness of history. The invention of kalâm, as well as the translation of philosophical books from Greek into Arabic, was a mistake of 9th-century Abbasid caliphs, whose methods of governing introduced many
negative trends into Islam, such as the translation of Greek philosophical works. Muslim philosophers referred to Plato as “the divine Plato” (eflatun-i ilahi), Aristotle as “the first teacher” (muallim-i evvel), and Galen as “guide” (imam)—terms that ought to be reserved for Islamic figures, in Kadri’s view. Even the term “kalām” (derived from the Arabic word for “speech”) was patterned after the Greek word “logos,” which had nothing to do with Islam. For the new kalām to introduce the modern European thought of Locke, Malbranche, Kant, Descartes, and Comte, as well as probabilism, positivism, materialism, dogmatism, and so on, was just as pointless, according to Kadri, as the original kalām’s introduction of ancient Greek thought. He urges Muslim scholars to concentrate on legal and Qur’anic studies rather than theology or philosophy. What society needs, especially the young generation, in Kadri’s opinion, is a contemporary catechism (ilmihal), and not kalām. Kadri emphasizes that great Muslim scholars of the past—Abu Hanifa, Shafi’i, Ahmad b. Hanbal, Ibn Taymiyya, and Ibn Kayyim al-Jawziyya—had also criticized kalām.

As is obvious from his writings, Kadri was not only against Hakki’s revival attempts, but was also an opponent of kalām per se, both in the past and the present. In an earlier work he gave many examples of how debates over kalām involved disputes that had caused confusion and disorder in Muslim society. The best solution for contemporary problems, Kadri thought, was to return to the original understanding of Islam by removing the alien cultural influences on Muslim societies that had accrued over centuries. Apart from his opposition to the revival of kalām, Kadri was also against any sort of contact with Western philosophy. He strongly emphasized the materialistic aspects of modern thought and the need for strengthening the spiritual values of Islam against the possible challenges of Western ideas in the 19th century. According to Kadri, Islamic faith does not need, in any aspect, to be strengthened with Western philosophical ideas.

However, although Kadri opposed the ideological bases of Western modernity as most contemporaneous religious thinkers did, he did not reject necessary changes and transformations in his society. He described two opposite attitudes toward modernization in late Ottoman society, one a revolutionary change in modes of thought defended by the Westernized elite, and the other a conservative traditionalism represented by the majority of people. Kadri considered this situation a terrible dualism and social danger for the future. He believed that Islam did not justify a static society that blindly imitated past centuries; on the contrary, it included principles of change and renovation. If Qur’anic principles were used properly, natural and desirable transitions would occur normally in society. Therefore, he rejected both the adoption of Western thought as an ideology for modernization of Ottoman society and traditional stasis, which was caused by historical negligence of Islamic sources and the practices of Islam.

The main difference between Kadri and Hakki, therefore, seems to be the following: Hakki wanted to use philosophy in general and modern philosophy in particular to create a new language and method for contemporary kalām. He regarded this new kalām as an alternative for Ottoman society in its modernization process to the adoption of contemporary European thought, which included materialism and positivism. However, Kadri was suspicious about this kind of integration of philosophy into Islamic disciplines. Philosophical ideas, even through kalām, according to Kadri, had degenerated the purity and clarity of Islamic thought in the past and would cause even more confusions and divisions among Muslims in the future. This is a view with which Hakki
completely disagreed, regarding it as a fear without ground. Another late Ottoman scholar, Dardağlızade Ahmed Nazif, also entered the discussion, supporting Hakkı against Kadri.95

İSMAİL HAKKI’S RESERVATIONS ABOUT SOME MODERN OTTOMAN ATTEMPTS TO REFORM ISLAMIC LAW

Next to his criticisms of modern European materialism and positivism, İsmail Hakkı also had reservations about some modernist views of Ottoman thinkers, especially sociological approaches to Islam, most famously represented in the work of Ziya Gökalp and members of his circle such as Halim Sabit and Mustafa Şerif, who proposed their ideas in their periodical Islam Mecmuası.96 Gökalp’s group was known for Turkish-nationalist tendency in politics and for modernist interpretations in Islamic methodological thought to establish principles for a secular legal system. Among many of his modernist efforts, one of Gökalp’s proposals was particularly disputed by Hakkı. Gökalp proposed that the principles of Islamic law (usûl al-fiqh) be reformed according to modern sociological principles such as Emile Durkheim’s theories of the function of religion in generating social solidarity. Gökalp’s project, which he called the “social interpretation of the principles of Islamic law” (ictimai usul-i fıkıh), gave a new emphasis to cultural traditions (‘urf/örf) as an important basis for Islamic law. The other part of Islamic law, which included theological details of faith and worship, was described as the “scriptual principles of law” (nassi usul-i fıkıh). Even the Qur’anic verses and Prophetic traditions that related to the social aspects of life, in this approach, were seen as based on cultural traditions. Moreover, Islamic legal and methodological terms were redefined in accordance with modern conditions.97

Although Hakkı defends modernization in the field of fiqh, as in other Islamic disciplines, he insists that the classical bases of the field should remain constant. In a series of articles criticizing Gökalp, Hakkı argues that cultural traditions (örf), although indeed regarded as one of the sources, are actually secondary in importance to revelation and prophetic traditions, and therefore cannot be an essential basis for reformed Islamic law. The definition of örf by Gökalp, according to Hakkı, offers cultural sources a much larger authority than they actually have, and therefore replaces the main source of Islamic law with the less important one. If cultural phenomena were granted too great a role above Islamic scripture, Hakkı emphasizes, then some personal opinion that is rooted in cultural thought would replace the sacred sources of religion. In that case, Islamic law would not fully represent the will of God. Hakkı also criticizes the idea of distinctions between parts of Islamic law as they were integrated and connected to each other. He concludes that application of classical methodological principles of Islamic law in a modern way was sufficient to solve current social questions; therefore, sociological interpretation of those principles to produce a new legal theory is needless. He suggests that his opposition to the ictimai usul-i fıkıh attempt does not exclude or reject the need for a new contemporary methodology of Islamic law, but it should not be alien to traditional methodology and not be based on weak personal opinions.98

In addition, Hakkı objected to incorporation of rational thought into matters of pure religious doctrine. Following the distinction between kalâm and creedal issues (‘aqā’id), he did not allow any speculative method in the latter.99 In ‘aqā’id texts, the subjects of
creed and the principles of religion are presented without going into rational proofs and scholastic debates on them. On issues of creed, rational argumentation and dialectical thinking were inappropriate, he argued, because knowledge of religious creed came only through revelation. In this he departed from the classical literature on kalām, which sometimes applied rational argumentation even to these creedal subjects. Therefore, Hakkı’s son and biographer, Celaleddin İzmirli, describes him as a critically minded Islamic scholar with a Salafi tendency with regard to religion and as a rationalist thinker with regard to philosophical issues.

Moreover, Hakkı criticized some other modern approaches of Islamic thought by contemporaneous thinkers. For instance, on the question of the existence of God, İsmail Hakkı defended classical philosophical methods, such as ontological, cosmological, and teleological arguments, against modern criticisms. The major Western critic of these arguments was the Enlightenment philosopher Kant, who as a theist thinker did not deny the existence of God but found classical argumentation methods inadequate for proving it. Kant based his theory of transcendental divine existence on moral principles rather than metaphysical ones. Indian Muslim thinker Muhammad Iqbal (1876–1938) also shared this criticism and raised doubts about the capacity of reason to reach definitive conclusions on metaphysical issues. In Hakkı’s approach, because there was an absolute unity between the existence and the idea of God, the ontological argument had a strong foundation. He argued that the deterministic relation of cause and effect was true not only in physical experience but also in philosophical theory; therefore, nothing was wrong with using it in a metaphysical context. He did not agree with modern critics of the teleological argument either. Kant and other critics argued that teleology proved to be only a designer, and not a creator of the universe. İsmail Hakkı preferred the ancient view that creation and its design could not be divided from each other. Creation was possible only with a proper design, and only its creator could design such a huge universe; therefore the designer of the world was its creator. Even the theory of evolution, although used by materialists as proof against the existence of God, displayed a careful design by God in the maintenance of life. That is why, according to Hakkı, evolutionary thought existed in the works of early Islamic philosophers such as ibn Miskawayh, Jalal al-Din al-Rumi, and İbrahim Hakkı Erzurumi.

**Conclusion**

The failure of old-style ulama to provide any real alternative to radical Ottoman elites in the late 19th and early 20th centuries is one of the most important aspects of the rise of new Muslim intellectuals like İzmirli İsmail Hakkı. His intellectual circle could be regarded as “neo-ulama,” or religious modernists who worked hard to understand the above-mentioned changes in Ottoman society and to reach new syntheses in their reinterpretation of Islamic thought. They also wanted to minimize the influence of materialistic aspects of Western philosophy on Ottoman thought and culture. Contemporary science or philosophy was valuable for this group; what was opposed was a possible conflict between scientific/philosophical thought and religion, or more simply modernization without religion and traditional culture. Modern criticisms of metaphysics, the atheism of some radical Enlightenment thinkers, the popular materialism of 19th-century
scientists, and sociopsychological approaches to religion were the main concerns of Hakkı and the emerging Ottoman religious intellectuals.

As a leading figure of this circle, İsmail Hakkı, although acknowledging the necessity of modernization in religious disciplines, focused mainly and wrote extensively on modern Islamic theology, or what he called “new kalâm,” and addressed the intellectual questions of his time. His intellectual activity manifested both continuity and change in Ottoman Islamic thought and dialogue between two intellectual worlds. He used new terminology in kalâm and tried to use equivalents of modern philosophical terms to respond to new cultural challenges and to present an alternative modernization of thought to the scientific materialist or radical modernist one. However, he considered his attempt within the continuous tradition of renovation in the history of Islamic thought, comparable to al-Baqillani and al-Razi’s earlier efforts to reform kalâm. Therefore, his attempt, although it has not been highlighted in contemporary Islamic studies and has remained almost unknown, nonetheless demonstrates that the central-Ottoman scholarly environment in Istanbul was quite lively in terms of modern Islamic thought. Hakkı’s accommodation of his modern approach within traditional Ottoman Islamic culture also helps us to reconsider the simplistic dichotomous approach when dealing with complex and interactive relations between modern and traditional culture in Islamic, as well as general, intellectual history.

Hakkı’s “new kalâm” sought to reconstruct traditional Islamic sources using modern Western methodology, drawing selectively from philosophical and scientific thought. He adopted certain Western theories of the age, such as evolution, and rejected others, such as materialism. His criticism of German scientific materialism, as well as Comtean positivism in a philosophical context, shows his interest in Western philosophy and the intellectual debates that took place in his age. Within kalâm, he defended certain classical approaches, such as the link between revelation and rational argumentation, and rejected others, such as the applicability of rational argumentation to creedal issues like predestination. At the same time, Hakkı combined a variety of Islamic intellectual traditions, drawing on various schools of thought, including theologians, philosophers, Salafis, and Sufis. İsmail Hakkı and his group of thinkers during the Hamidian and constitutional eras seem to follow the steps of the Young Ottomans in presenting traditional cultural heritage by means of modern methods; however, Hakkı’s generation focused more on Islamic and philosophical disciplines. The introduction of modern political and intellectual ideas like constitutionalism, parliamentarism, and civilization by means of traditional Islamic terminology by the Young Ottomans was an encouraging model for modern religious thinkers to rethink many questions of Islamic disciplines and to consider revitalizing their role in modernizing Ottoman society.

Yet, the debates in which Hakki participated during the final years of the Ottoman Empire did not grow into a new school of thought immediately after the establishment of the modern Turkish state. Hakki was not a philosopher, nor a founder of a theoretical school, but rather a beginner of an effort in a relatively pluralistic environment in the empire’s last decade. The political conditions of the early republican period did not allow for intellectual diversity in academic circles; as such, because of the official adoption of the radical path of modernization, the efforts of Hakki and his colleagues effectively ceased. However, the radical approach of the new state caused a growing dissatisfaction in this modernizing but historically religious society. Although approving necessary changes since the 19th century, people were nonetheless dissatisfied with superimposed
Alternative Approaches to Modernization in the Late Ottoman

elitist practices of modernization and demanded freedom to express their cultural and religious preferences and views.

Therefore, Hakkı and his circle’s opposition to materialist and positivist scientism, although it did not stop official support for the radical modernization program in the early republican era, did motivate in the long run a resistance in middle-class society to exclusion of religion from educational and public spheres. The activities of social movements and Sufi orders were another aspect of this resistance. As Hanioğlu puts it, “the average Muslim has proven far more resistant to the dull mantras of ‘science’ and ‘progress’ than the believers in an elitist transformation could ever have imagined.”

Under public pressure, democratic steps were finally taken by the mid-20th century, and religion reemerged as a social factor in Turkish society. The return of the prayer call (ezan) in its original Arabic form was the most symbolic change in this regard. Moreover, the resumption of Islamic studies and its teaching allowed religion to have a place in academic and intellectual life.

This development was also connected to the fact that the experience of modernization led to a reawakening of existing social and cultural traditions, including religion, in both European and Muslim societies around the same time. Of course, there was a remarkable decrease in the authority of religion in some spheres of modern life, but as Waardenburg suggests, this development gave rise to the revitalization of values and a new awareness of cultural tradition and identity. Recent observations indicate that modernization has brought existing religious traditions back into the limelight and under discussion. A leading sociologist of religion, Peter Berger, argues that the proposition that modernity necessarily leads to a decline of religion needs to be reconsidered. Giving the examples of Catholic and Islamic movements, Berger emphasizes that the modern and contemporary Islamic intellectual revival “is by no means restricted to the less modernized or ‘backward’ sectors of society,” as some still would like to think. “On the contrary, it is very strong in cities with a high degree of modernization, and in several countries, it is particularly visible among people with Western-style higher education—in Egypt and Turkey.”

The current presence of a conservative religious, but at the same time reformist and pro-Western, government in Turkey has its roots in efforts of scholars like İzmirli İsmail Hakkı and their early proposals for alternative conceptualizations of modernization. Numerous articles and books by contemporary Turkish scholars, some of which are referred to in this article, point to a growing interest in İsmail Hakkı’s thought and that of others like him. Likewise, the recent rediscovery of the new kalām and contemporary fiqh discussions in Turkish Islamic studies proves his importance for understanding developments in the history of modern Ottoman and Turkish religious thought.

NOTES

Author’s note: The earliest version of this article was a paper given at the University of California, Los Angeles, during a conference on “Religion and Society in the Late Ottoman Empire” (April 2002). I thank the participants of the conference, especially Geoffrey Symcox, Jim Gelvin, John O. Voll, David D. Commins, Dina R. Khoury, and Kent Schull for their questions and comments. The scholarly environment of the Institute of Advanced Study in Princeton during the year of 2002–03 allowed me to extend my research into an article, where fellow members Charles Kurzman and Leslie Peirce contributed to my work greatly by reading the text and offering valuable suggestions regarding its improvement. At the same time, M. Sükru Hanioğlu of Princeton University generously answered my questions on a subject that is very close to his area of
experts. Through our correspondence and telephone conversations, I also benefited immensely from the vast knowledge of Engin D. Akarlı, who read the paper and led me to a deeper look into late Ottoman thought. I am also indebted to the three anonymous referees of *IJMES* for their careful examination of the article and their guidance about its structure and content. Without their feedback, and the coordinating editorial expertise of Judith Tucker, the article would not enjoy its present scope. Lastly, I thank Janet Klein for offering her time to proofread the final version with great attention. Needless to say, all shortcomings in this article belong to me.


10Similar muhendishane, tbbiyye, and harbiye schools were established in the humanities after the Tanzimat, following the French model of *grandes écoles*, such as The School of Political Science (Mekteb-i Mülikiyet, 1859), Lycée de Galatasaray (Mekteb-i Sultani, 1868), The Law School (Mekteb-i Hukuk, 1880). Even in Paris an Ottoman school, the Mekteb-i Osmani, was founded in 1857 to prepare students sent there by the state for French education. For information on these early professional schools by some Western authors who either taught there or saw them in their visit, see Giambattista Toderini, *Letteratura Turchesca* (Venezia: Presso G. Storti, 1787); Charles MacFarlane, *Turkey and Its Destiny: The Result of Journeys Made in 1847 and 1848 to Examine into the State of That Country* (London: J. Murray, 1850).


12Bashoca İshak Efenidi, the Chief-instructor of Engineering School, published by the mid-19th century his four-volume encyclopedia entitled *Mecmua-yi Ulum-i Riyaziye*, which dealt with new approaches to

11*Mecmua-yi Fünun* (1863–67), a monthly periodical of Münif Paşa’s *Cemiyyet-i ˙Ilmiye-i Osmaniye* (Ottoman Scientific Society), and *Mecmua-yi Ulum* (1879–80) of Hoca Tahasin Efendi’s *Cemiyyet-i ˙Ilmiye* (Scientific Society) are among other similar publications to be named.

12For the perception and admiration of modern European science by the late Ottomans with an emphasis on a specific case, see Berrak Burçak, “A Remedy for All Ills, Healing the ‘Sick Man of Europe’: A Case for Ottoman Scientism (Seyyid Mustafa)” (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2005).


16*Cevdet* was published by Abdullah Cevdet in Istanbul between 1904 and 1928 with some interruptions and title changes.


18For more details on the history and views of those so-called scientific materialists, see Frederick Gregory, *Scientific Materialism in Nineteenth Century Germany* (Dordrecht/Boston: D. Riddel, 1977); Léo Freuler, “Le matérialisme natureliste ou vulgaire et la Naturvissenschaftaliche Weltanschauung,” in *La Crise de la philosophie au XIXe siecle* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1997), 55–86.

19M. Şükru Hanioğlu, *The Young Turks in Opposition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 12–13. Admiration of modern science and overlooking of its Islamic past were not limited to the materialists. Even a nonmaterialist such as Şemseddin Sami Fraşeri writes in one of his articles, “For just as we cannot cure even malaria with the medicine of Ibn Sina, so we cannot operate a railroad engine or steamship, nor use the telegraph, with the chemistry of Jahiz and the wisdom of Ibn Sina. For this reason, if we wish to become civilized, we must do so by borrowing science and technology from the contemporary civilization of Europe, and leave the study of the works of Islamic scholars to the students of history and antiquity.” See Şemseddin Sami Fraşeri, “Medeniyyet-i cedidenin ümem-i ˙Islamiyye‘ye nakli,“ *Güneş* 1 (1883): 179–84. For its English translation, see Kurzman (ed.), *Modernist Islam*, 150.

20He wrote in his account, “It was long since I had seen such a collection of downright materialism. A young Turk, seemingly about twenty years of age, was sitting cross-legged in a corner of the room, reading that manual of atheism, the ‘Système de la Nature!’ Another of the students showed his proficiency in French and philosophy, by quoting passages from Diderot’s *Jaques le Fataliste* . . . Cabanés’s *Rapport de Physique et du Morale de l’Homme* occupied a conspicuous place on the shelves. I no longer wondered it should be commonly said that every student who came out of Galata Serai, after keeping the full term, came out always a materialist. . . .” See MacFarlane, *Turkey and Its Destiny*, 2:270–71.


23Kaluçzade İ. Hakki proposes this design project in a dream form, in which “[t]he present medreses will be abolished and a perfect medrese of Literary Sciences on the model of the College de France will


28For instance, members of the newly established translation offices, such as Te’lîf ve Terçeûme Dairesi, began to translate certain classics of European modernism, such as the work of Descartes. See Rene Descartes, Usul Hakkinda Nutuk (Discourse de la méthode), trans. Ibrahim Edhem (Istanbul: Mahmud Bey Matbaasi, 1894); Abbe E. Barbe, Tarih-i Felsefe (Histoire de la philosophie), trans. Bohor Israil (Istanbul: Matbaa-i Amire, 1914); Alexis Bertrand, Mebadi-i Felsefe-i Ilmiyye ve Felsefe-i Ahlakiyye (Lexique de philosophie), trans. Salih Zeki (Istanbul: Matbaa-i Amire, 1915).


30The advent of new religious intellectuals in the 19th century is often identified with Ahmed Cevdet Paşa (1822–95), who is considered to be the earliest type of modern-oriented traditional scholar in the late Ottoman Empire. By standardizing the language of religious thought, using footnotes in his works, and making reference to Western civilization, he was one of the leading figures of modernization in late Ottoman religious thought. He himself spoke of a “new era” (çığır) that began with him in Ottoman scholarship. Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, Tezakir, ed. Cavid Baysun (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1986), 4:72. Perhaps the most important symbolic exercise of the new era regarding religious thought was the modern project of codifying Islamic civil law (mecelle) in 1869–76.


32Halîl İnâlcık, From Empire to Republic: Essays on Ottoman and Turkish Social History (Istanbul: Isis Press, 1995), 149.


34After a very short period of good relations with the CUP, religious thinkers began to declare their opposition and wrote critical articles in their journals, like Bryanûhak and Sîrat-ı Müstakim. This was followed by CUP policies to diminish the role of religion in many aspects of social life (Hanoğlu, Preparation for Revolution, 306–8).


36Cf. John O. Voll, “The Mistaken Identification of ‘The West’ with ‘Modernity,’” American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences 13 (1996): 1–12. Jacques Waardenburg points out that, although modernity has often been linked to Western liberalism and democracy, there is no reason that modernity should refer only to the West. In fact, modernity can occur in different societies and cultures. As it is observed, many societies reformulate their cultural–religious traditions to function within new conditions, and each has its
Alternative Approaches to Modernization in the Late Ottoman


38 For example, the renowned 11th-century scholar al-Ghazzali titled one of his last books *Ihya ‘ulum al-din* (The Revival of Islamic Disciplines), which was written when he returned from a period of seclusion because of his dissatisfaction with the educational system and intellectual establishment of his age. Similar attempts took place in late medieval and premodern times with a variety of objectives.

39 For example, comparing the views of Mehmed Şemsettin (Günlaltay) and Şeyhîîslâm Mustafa Sabri could be a good case to know about differences in their approaches. For an anthology of selective writings of various members of this group, see İsmail Kara, *Türkiye’de İslâmîcîlîk Düşüncesi I–II* (İstanbul: Risale, 1986, 1987).


42 For Darülhikmah and its activities, see Hamit Er, *Medreseden Mektebe Geçiş Sürecinde Darülhilaf Medreseleri* (İstanbul: Rağbet Yayınları, 2003); and for Darülhikme, its foundation and members, see Sadık Albayrak, *Son Devrin Din Akademisi: Darü’l-Hikmet-i-İslamiye* (İstanbul: İz Yayınları, 1998).

43 On the life and works of İsmail Hakki, see a short biography by his son, Celaleddin İzmirli, *İzmirli İsmail Hakki: Hayatı Eserleri, Görüşleri* (İstanbul: İnsan Yayınları, 2000).


49 İzmirli İsmail Hakki, *Ahlak ve Tassavuf Kitaplarindaki Hadislerin Sıhhati* (İstanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 1997).

50 In an unpublished work, Hakki translated a short chapter on ethics from Émile Boirac’s *Cours élémentaire de la philosophie* (see İsmail Hakki, *Mühîîlas Islâm-i Ahlak*, MS, Süleymaniye Library, İzmirli, no. 3762), but apart from that, he appears not to have any separate book on ethical philosophy.

51 On the life and works of İsmail Hakki, see a short biography by his son, Celaleddin İzmirli, *İzmirli İsmail Hakki: Hayatı Eserleri, Görüşleri* (İstanbul: İnsan Yayınları, 2000).

52 See the bibliography of İzmirli İsmail Hakki, *Yeni Îlim-i Kelam* (İstanbul: Evkaf-i İslamiye Matbaası, 1920).


54 See the bibliography of İzmirli İsmail Hakki, *Yeni Îlim-i Kelam* (İstanbul: Evkaf-i İslamiye Matbaası, 1920).


57 For an overview and further details on late Ottoman *kalâm*, as compared with similar movements in Egypt and India at the same time, see M. Sait Özervarlı, *Muhassal al-kalam wa-l-hikma* (Ankara: Editions Ministère de la culture, 1990), 1–53.


64 Taşköprüzade Ahmed Efendi, *Mevcu’at al-ulam*, translated into Turkish by his son, Taşköprüzade Mehmed Efendi (İstanbul: İldam Matbaası, 1895), 1:597, 615.


66 Ismail Hakki planned his work in three chapters, but he was unable to complete the third one on prophecy and eschatology.


69 Hakki, *Yeni IIm-i Kelam*, 59.


71 See his *Narah Ebêdiyet ve Devami Hakkinda Tedâkit* (İstanbul: Darülfûnûn Matbaası, 1923).

72 Hakki, *Yeni IIm-i Kelam*, 1:11–12.


74 Hakki, “İslam’da Felsefe; Yeni IIm-i Kelam,” *Seyhürrüşad* 14 (1914), 43.


76 See Ismail Ferid, *İbât-ı mezheb-i maddiyyan* (İzmir: Ahmed Celadet ve Şüreka Matbaası, 1894); Fülebi Şebenderzade Ahmed Hâli, *Allah’ın Inkar Mımkân mıdır? Yahud Hzur-ı Fende Meselik-i Kuﬁr* (İstanbul: Hikmet Matbaası-i İslamiyesi, 1909), and his *Hzur-ı Aki u Fende Maddiyyan Mesleki-Dalaleti* (İstanbul: Darü’l-İhlafe, 1913); Harputizade Haci Mustafa, *Red ve İsbat* (İstanbul: Hikmet Matbaası-i İslamiyesi, 1911).
According to Hilmi, the more developed English society did not let materialist views spread in their nation as they did in continental Europe.

Hilmi also accuses the materialists of not only excluding religion, but also leaving no room for doing philosophy (ibid., 109). However, he says that, although they appear to reject metaphysical philosophy, they could not escape involving themselves in the same issues, as they claim the eternity of matter, which could not be proven by physical science (ibid., 72–74). A larger refutation against the materialists was later produced by İsmail Fenni (Erçuğrul), Maddiyyan Mezhebinin İsmihlali (n.p.; Orhaniye Matbaası, 1928).

Hakki, Yeni İlim-i Kelam, 2:73.

Hakki, Muhsasal al-kalam wa-l-hikmah, 16; and Yeni İlim-i Kelam, 1:19. İsmail Hakki also considered it inappropriate to interpret Qur’anic verses as scientific statements about the physical universe, because the Qur’an was revealed not to give scientific information, but to strengthen the faith of believers (Yeni İlim-i Kelam, 1:15–16).

Hakki, Yeni İlim-i Kelam, 1:283–84, 2:49–58, and 63–75.

Ibid., 2:79–83. For history and personalities of Ottoman/Turkish positivism, see Murtaza Korlaelçi, Pozitivizmin Türkiye’ye Girişi ve ilk Etkileri (İstanbul: İnsan Yayımları, 1986).


On Hüseyin Kazim Kadri, see his Meşratiyetten Cumhuriyete Naturlarım, ed. İsmail Kara (İstanbul: Dergah, 2000) and Sevki (ed.), Hüseyin Kazım Bey (İstanbul: Matbaa-i Ebüzziya, 1935).


Şeyh Muhsin-i Fani, İstikbale Doğrı (İstanbul: Ahmed İhsan ve Şürekası, 1913), 6–7, 10–12.

One of the influential and controversial grand mufti (seyhülsسلام) of the late period, for bibliographic sources on him, see note 56.

Şeyh Muhsin-i Fani ez-Zahiri, Yırıncı Asırdı İslamiyet (İstanbul: Evkaf-ı İslamiyye Matbaası, 1923), 6–18.

Şeyh Muhsin-i Fani ez-Zahiri, Yırıncı Asırdı İslamiyet, 52–62.


Ziya Gökalp’s views were supported in similar articles written by Halim Sabit and Mustafa Şerefe in later issues of the same journal. Gökalp’s attempt in faqih was applied in the same journal to kalâm by Mehmed Şerafeddin (Yaltkaya). See M. Sait Özervarlı, “Son Dönem Osmanlı Düşüncesinde Arayışlar: Mehmed Şerafeddin’in ‘İcimai İlim-i Kelam’”), İslam Araştırmaları Dergisi 3 (1999): 157–70.

İsmail Hakki’s series of articles on this discussion were titled as “Fıkıh ve Fetava,” “Orfün Nazar-i Şer’deki Mevkii,” and finally “İcimai Usul-i Fıkha İhtiyaç Var mı?” (in Sebibürreşad, 12:292–98) are transliterated and reproduced by Recep Şentürk in Modernleşme ve Toplumbilim (İstanbul: İz Yayımcılığı, 1996), 339–429. For a comprehensive study of this discussion between the Gökalp school and İsmail Hakki, see Sami Erdem, Tanzimat Sonrası Osmanlı Fıkha Usulü Kayramları ve Modern Yaklaşımlar (PhD diss., Marmara University, 2003), 116 ff. The discussion was poorly summarized earlier by Abdülkadir Şener,

99 For instance, the creedal treatises by al-Tahawi or Omar al-Nasafi are considered within the ‘aqīdā genre of Islamic theological literature and are not regarded as philosophical kalām texts.


104 Hakkı, *Yeni İlm-i Kalam*, 1:229, 2:6, 49–58.


