İLÂHİYAT FAKÜLTESİ DERGİSİ

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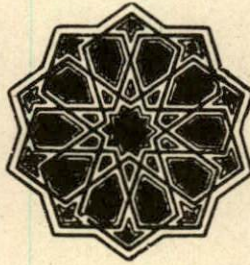
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İÇİNDEKİLER

THE IDEA OF UNIVERSALITY AND ITS REFLECTIONS IN THE ISLAMIC WORLD*

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In this paper we will, first, deal with the conditions which hoisted Islam up the scene of an alternative system and then tackle the religious and sociological basis of this system which make it universal. And after that we will analyze the opposite thesis of these universal foundations. And beside the functions which are given to Islam and Islamic World to fulfill, we will deal with the functions which Islam itself has to fulfill to survive. But primarily we should analyse the developments that gave Islam rise to the scene as an alternative universal system.

A- ISLAM IN VIEW OF SEARCHING FOR NEW SYSTEMS

Unipolar world which came about after the collapse of dipolar world system has undertaken to propagate its ideology into whole fields under the name of 'The New World Order'. The concept of 'The New World Order', though has a new content, in fact, is not new in that it ideologically aims at extension and wants to find new colonial areas.

For example the same desire was exist in the Ottoman Empire as "The World Order (Nizamu'l-'Alem)" and in Roman Empire as "Pax Romana", but naturally the content of these conceptions were rather different. While the former was aiming at carrying peace and stability to humanity, the latter carried torture and unstability. In fact, it's the right of every powerful civilization to carry itself

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through all over the world, and sometimes this becomes inevitable result of being a powerful civilization.

But, at that point the values or concepts free from values must carefully be analyzed and conceptions which will lead humanity to a nothingness or a cliff be resisted. In this context, two statements which are exist in the Torah should seriously be interrogated in that to what extent are these statements form a basis for a new world order and motivate it. It's said in the Torah that: "The Jews will dominate over the word and Jerusalem will be the center of the world and swords of the nations will be transformed into slingshots" and "The sons of Samuel (i.e. Muslims) will be banished to the depths of the desert."

Conceptions of current universality have a direct relation with the mechanical philosophy which reached its summit at eighteenth century and with sixteenth century mechanism which gave birth the former. This mechanism had given man a technical dominance and superiority over the world. This understanding showed itself in the nineteenth century as an international interest conflict carried out by Western countries in consistent with the colonial structure of this century.

Since 'the new world order', offical name of providing colonial areas both in 19. century and now, is a result of imperialistic and capitalistic world view, it is free from the values Islam propogates for all. Under this name of "civilizing mission" and "white man's burden" the West supposed to provide a background for themselves.

Mechanism which gained some economical and social success under the name of capitalism and imperialism perceived the nature as a big machine. And this point of view led the West to exploit and use the nature together with its contents in a deplorable way.

The colonical gains the machine provided to the western world are now by universalistic claims being endeavored to be legalized in cultural areas. The unique reason led the West on the Indian Sub-Continent, to Africa in short to the colonized areas, is to carry machine domination to more extreme points, not the desire of preaching the Bible teachings to human beings by following the command of Jesus in this respect. For the West has not the qualification of preaching the ethical rules of the Bible to humanity. But, they used

religion, i.e. Christianity as a means of exploiting the colonized are-
as more easily and to provide full blown colonialism. We can see
that in a statement of an African native, he says: "When the west-
erners came to Africa there was Bible in their hands and lands in
ours; but now our lands are in their hands and the Bible is in ours".

Those who claim relevancy to the Bible which says "Give your
coat to whom that has taken your jacket" has taken, in the name of
milenarism, an utopia, all main livings of human beings. For this
reason, there is no any relationship, beyond the similarity of name,
i.e. Christianity, between Jesus of Nazareth who transmitted the
Bible to the Jews in Aramaic and those enemies of humanity who
have cultured Christianity of Europe and read Bible in Latin.

Islam as a modus vivendi had many times encountered with
alien systems. But none of these confrontations had a permanent in-
fluence on Islam and Muslim community as much as Western's.
For this we could fix to main reasons: 1- Scientific and technologi-
cal superiority of the west and, 2- Lack of technology in Islamic
countries and inferiority complex arouse from this lack. Some Mus-
lims today regard the European impact on the Islamic world as be-
ginning with the Crusades. Some others, claim that the main mod-
ern impact followed on the transoceanic expansion of Europe
which began in the 15. century. This latter has more measure of
truth than the former. In any case, because of this effect, especially
since the end of the 18. century the problem of the dominant west,
whether perceived as Christian or pseudo Christian, profane or
atheist, has been the main preoccupation of Muslim thinkers and
activists.[1] Superiority of the West has shown itself in many forms.
"Even when Islamic countries were not ruled by Europeans, there
was usually considerable pressure on them to act as the Europeans
wanted. One of the important results of this process was that many
parts of the Islamic world became integrated into the global (that's
European or Western) economic system. This eventually came
to mean in some cases that they had the function of providing
raw materials for Europe and in return received manufactured
goods"[2]. As a consequence of this situation Europe, exploited

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1. See for a similar appreciation to; Malisa Ruthven, Islam in the World, Harmons-
worth, 1984, p.289.
2. William Montgomery Watt, Islamic Fundamentalism and Modernity, London,
1989, p.45.

and used her colonies as an engine for its own capitalistic de-
velopment.

In the present century in Islamic countries which escaped from
de facto colonialism, Islam has entered a development process and
after the collapse of socialism, one of the two alternatives, and also
one's observation that capitalism is not remedial for the humanity,
it became an alternative system. The political developments that
make Islam so prominent in current public awareness are also re-
flected in an increasing number of scholarly publications investi-
gating the apparent resurgence revival, and political expression of
the tradition in human action. Accordingly, some books and papers
began to be published to analyze this political aspect of Islam.
While in some cases the approach to the phenomena's Islamic or re-
ligious dimension is superficial, a number of scholars have made
valuable contributions to understanding the religious meanings of
more recent movements and developments[3].

Some researchers have, on purpose, presented Islam under
some frightening titles such as fundamentalism and radicalism.
This attitude has been supported politically by some western coun-
tries. Explicitly, as well as implicitly, Islam is depicted in the me-
dia and even academic literature as the religion of war, vengeance
and destruction- as a force that is inimical to the orderly conduct of
international relations and the progress of society and politics. Is-
lam is viewed as hostile to democracy, minority rights, and wom-
en's welfare. This put away both some westerners who began to re-
gard Islam as an alternative system and Muslims themselves from
Islam.* By failing to distinguish between political reaction and cul-
tural conflict, the West has turned Islam into a cultural demon- the
antithesis of the West. Yet, if we leave aside the politics, first of all,

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3. Some instances of these are:
   - Esposite, J.L., Islam and Development: Religion and Sociopolitical Change, Syracu-
se University Press (1980).
   - Esposito, J.L., Voices of Resurgent Islam, Oxford, 1983.
   - Mortimer, E., Faith and Power: The Politics of Islam, London 1892.
   - Pipes, Daniel, In the Path of God Islam and Political Power, New York, Basic Bo-
oks, (1983)
   - Sivan, E., Radical Islam Medieval Theology and Politics, N. Heaven 1985.
   - Watt, Montgomery, Islamic Fundamentalism and Modernity, London 1989.
   - Lawrance, Bruce, Defenders of God, New York, McMillian, 1990.
   * For the analyses of these attitudes see John L. Esposito, The Islamic Threat: Myth
or Reality? New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.

the West has to respect the cultural background of Islam to which it indebted much. By their attitudes these researchers make Islam a political target for the westerners. Some of these researchers at the same time are the policy makers of these countries. Of these researchers Samuel P. Huntingtion in his recent article[4] tries to predict the scenario of the New World Order that will have to be tackled by the West. He divides the world with regard to current civilizations (i.e. Western. Islamic, Confucianism, Hindu, Buddhist, Latin American, and possibly African). He after that narrows the list of enemies to two civilizations: Confucianism and Islam. Ideologically speaking there remain only one enemy on the horizon: Islam. The West is justifying his policy according to this assumption.

In spite of all these and other enterprises aiming at impeding the Islamic development, Islam went on to develop in its own way. This development is not due to the oil incomes or orther economical improvements as claimed by Daniel Pipes or other theoreticians. Daniel Pipes, in a chapter entitled "Oil and Islamic Resurgence" in 'Islamic Resurgence in the Arap World', asks: "What has influenced Muslims to turn increasingly to Islam as a political bond and a social ideal?" In reply, he uses Saudi and Libyan activities in the Arab world as bases for his analyses. He argues that their oil exports, more than anything else, have caused the recent Islamic resurgence[5]. Daniel Pipes concludes his study as follows: So long as the price and comsumption of oil remains high, they will continue to enjoy wealth and power; but when energy needs change, the oil based wealth that fuels so much of the Islamic resurgence will decline. Current waves of Islamic activism will die along with the OPEC boom. More than any single factor, the oil market will determine how long the Islamic resurgence lasts[6]. But, at least, the Gulf War has proven that Pipes was mistaken in connecting the rise in oil prices to Islamic revivalism.

These theories no longer have any value. The fact is that Islam and Muslim communities after a standstill period began to raise

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4. Samuel Huntington, The Clash of Civilizations, Foreign Affairs, 77: 3.

5. Mohamed Karbal, Western Scholarship and the Islamic Resurgence in the Arab World, AJISS, Spring 1993, No.1, p.52.

6. Daniel Pipes, "Oil Wealth and Islamic Resurgence", in Islamic Resurgence in the Arab World, ed. A Dassouki (New York: Preager, 1982), 51.

their voice. Faults made by these theoreticians are that they tried to explain this fact from an individual and local aspect. Yet the point to be kept in mind is that there is a civilizations clash in the world and to neglect this aspect will lead as astray from the main point.

The lack of technology in the Islamic countries will in no way, prevent this development. Since the concept of 'modern technology' which is the main characteristics of western civilization will be no longer a sufficient condition of being a civilization. And the civilization which will be established in the future will not be a technological civilization. Just like the distinctions of foundations on which ancient civilizations had based. Then there are many elements which give the civilization its main characteristics different from those of others.

We know that the inferiority complex that Muslims have in their heart is completely arising from the West's technology, not from it's thought. Yet keeping the above reality in view, Muslims must give this complex up. It should not be forgotten that Europe had suffered the same complex erst while versus Islam.

As is known in Europe itself, first of all, there was an impact of Islam on the European powers trough the advance of the Ottoman Empire as far as Hungary. This advance had ceased by 1550, yet, and towards the end of the 17. century it was the turn of Europeans to advance as a result of a new superiority in military technology. By the end of the eighteenth century the Ottomans had become well aware of their inferiority to the Europeans in many practical matters. After that within the ruling class many had been eager for reform. This complex had began in military field but extended itself in many various fields.

But today Islam could again present itself with confidence, which arise from the fact that it established a civilization in history. The point to be pleased that Muslim communities today could regard themselves in a place where they raise their voices for alternative solutions for humanity.

Muslims must have a clear realization of the character of this aspect of Islamic resurgence or new identity which is urgently needed and know that the essential mission to be carried at that point is an inevitable duty of them rather than Islam. The following hadith of the Prophet must have implied this reality: "Islam is more

needful to a community, than a community to Islam". For, a religion which has not been practiced or lived within a community can't have a practical worth even if it owns all supreme values. Appearing with the claim to establish a civilization requires some universal necessary basis to realize that. Now let us have a glance over these basis, i.e. values.

B- VALUES THAT MAKE ISLAM UNIVERSAL

Universality in the context of religion means "relevancy to all humanity", "calling them to same reality" and that of philosophy and ideology it expresses a system in which center human being is perceived as a source of knowledge. As Islam claims universality, it must have universal foundations which support this claim.

The Western world and its religious representative Vatican that has become uneasy from the Islamic development after the bankruptcy of the utopic comunist paradigm have undertaken pereventing Islam of being accepted universally. For, this world, i.e. the West has always regarded Islam as a rival. For this reason most of the western observers don't call on the West to understand, compromise, and accommodate Islam, but to confront, conquer, and control the Muslim world. To them, one way of realizing that is to exploit differences and conflicts among Islamic states and thus to limit their expansion in all aspects. Today Muslim-Christian dialog in a way plays a prominent role in this control[7].

When the west on the one hand has undertaken these activities, it had propagated the locality of Islam on the other. An argument presented by the Christians is that: As Islam hold other heavenly religions true, it can't be said that Islam is a universal religion. Otherwise it would deny other religions. An instance of this enterprise was shown in the Sub-Continent. William Muir in India in 1850's was advocating to the Christians to recite the texts from Quran relating the Jesus when they argue with the Muslims.

But for two reasons Islam has regarded the other religions as true: 1- Islam's self confidence, and 2- Islam's regarding itself as the last link which complete the chain of religions. Sayyid Qutb de-

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7. German ambassador to Morocca Murad Hoffman beside other controversial issues analyzes this problem in his book "Der Islam als Alternative" (Islam as an alternative) Munich: Eugen Diederichs, 1992.

fines it in a somewhat rhetorical manner with reference to the covenant concluded between God and the Israelites (see. S.2:38/40): "And Islam with which Muhammed came is nothing but the eternal religion in its final form; it is end of the message and covenant of God relative to the first men; it spreads its wing over the past and takes man by the hand into the future; it unites the Old Testament, the New Testament and the Last Covenant (= The Quran).[8] And even some modernists give evidence of an exceptional liberality in this respect and include in the list of prophets divine messengers not in possession of the Scriptures like Rama, Krishna[9], Buddha, Confucius[10] and Zarathustra[11].

Quoting this points we can analyze the bases which make Islam universal:

1- The Holy Quran regards all values which has sprung up from the source of revelation as Islamic values and Prophets as Muslim prophets. Then all prophets, including the big ones, primarily have transmitted Islam and Islamic values to humanity. Following up the theory that man is a Muslim by nature and that the idea of God's unity is "easier to be had than water" the modernists maintain emphatically Islam as the universal religion for and from all times: "God's religion is one, without, discontinuance (naskh) and without any discrimination between the prophets; by the Quran it is called Islam[12].

In this context God calls Abrahman as a Muslim: "Abraham was not a Jew Nor yet a Christian; But he was true in Faith, and bowed his will to God's, (Which is Islam), and he joined not gods with God.[13]

And also for the followers of the Moses uses this name: "But thou dost wreak thy vengeance on us simply because we believed in the signs of our Lord when they reached us! Our Lord! Pour out on us patience and constancy, and take our souls unto Thee as Muslims (Who bow to Thy Will)[14].

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8. Sayyid Qutb, Fi Zılali'l-Quran, Vol.I, p.36.
9. Mirza Abu'l-Fadl, The Life of Muhammad, 1910, 198.
10. Tantawi Cavhari, al-Cavahir, III, 45.
11. Abdulkadir al-Mağribi, Tefsir-i Cüz'i Tabaraka, 95.
12. S.3: 19.
13. S.3: 67.
14. S.7: 126.

The common principles which don't vary in these religions are first monotheism and then ethical rules. For this reason principles which are variable are not universal. In contrast, constant principles are universal ones. Sometimes lawful and unlawful things vary according to the psychological manner of the people. An instance of this situation can be seen in S.3: 50: "(I (Jesus) have come to you to attest the law which was before me. And to make lawful to you part of what was (before) forbidden to you; I have come to you with a sign from your Lord. So fear God and obey me). Of these which Jesus confirms are universal and constant values, and which doesn't are canonical regulations and this latter may vary. But this universality in monotheism and in ethical principles doesn't mean that there can't be any common denominator in laws. But these canons accord with the variatons of environment in which men of various climes and ages have lived and with the variations of man's development in history. The Quran denotes these variations by the terms **shar'** or **minhaj.**" For every age and country God has ordained a special form which suitably conformed to man's situation and need... Had God willed, He would have made a unified nation and community of all mankind, and no variation of thought or practice would have appeared; but we know that God did not so wish. His wisdom demanded that various states of thought and practice be created"[15] The following Juristical principle shows that various Shariahs may benefit each other: "The Sharia of those who prior to us is also Sharia for us".

2- Islam considers itself with its general and universal principles sufficient for all times and places. A Quranic verse expresses this reality as follows: "This day have I perfected your religion for you. Completed my favour upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion.[16]

This verse signifies that Muslim scholars who have to search for new economical, political, etc. alternatives must primarily keep in their mind that all alternatives present within the religion and not outside of it. These alternatives make Islam dynamic and permanent. Otherwise if it were stable and without any alternative then it

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15. Quoted in Ernest Hahn, 'Mavlana Abu'l-Kalam Azad's Concept of Religion and Religions According to His Tarcuman-ul-Quran: A Critique. Unpublished thesis for M.Th. Mc Gill University, Montreal, 1965, p.19.
    16. S.5: 3.

would either be replaced by other systems and faded away in a short time.

3- The Holy Our'an presents Islam as a last religion and his prophet Mohammed as the last prophet, that's the seal of the prophets. Islam and its prophet cover both their time and before and after this time. This is the time dimension of its universality. On the other hand Islam has an ability to present solutions for all places. And this is the place dimension of its universality. No verses of the Quran does imply any ad interim reality. But each verse in the Quran implies a permanent and universal reality.

4- Islam grants respect and privilege to non-Muslim dhimmi subjects and to whom application is made for safety (müste'men) because it's a universal religion that views each individual in exactly the same way: a descendant of Adam, who came from dust, with some special characteristics that distinguish him/her from others. This is why Islam attaches such importance to all relationships and particularly to ties binding followers of the Abrahamic religions Judaism, Christianism, Islam-and to the rest of humanity. Ultimately, this diversity is to be used as a means of mutual recognition and acquaintance among the children of Adam[17]. But this process ought to be operate under the principle of the Quran that "Let there be no compulsion in religion[18].

C- SINE QUA NON CONDITION OF BEING UNIVERSAL

a- The Conception of Knowledge

Islam not only did claimed universality but also laid down some cognitive foundations to realize that. For this reason Islam has completely rejected authoritarianism (i.e. accepting some outhorities as a source of knowledge such as Church, Bible, etc.) and instead relied on collective human reason, as a source of knowledge. Authority of only one person or institution prevents universality and leads to locality. By accepting collective and empirical reason as a source of knowledge Islam has prevented ones' being unique authority in knowledge. Then human being is not a measure for everything.

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17. Taha J. al- 'Alvani, Naturalization and the Rights of Citizenzs, The American Journal Social Sciences. Spring 1994, No: 1, p.73.
18. S.2: 25.

While Islam is propagating a God-centered universal civilization philosophical and ideological universalism are propagating the Anthropological age's dictum that "human is measure for everything". To accept man as a source of knowledge means that there could not be any common true knowledge, since this leads to relativity. In this context there is a large similarity between the Sophistic age and that of Enlightenment: Bot have arisen after a metaphysical and philosophical age and dealt with political and social matters rather than philosophical. They claimed that community, ethical rules and political institutions are the products of human being himself. Therefore the institutions that are the product of man can again be changed and varied by man.

Universalism and its intersecting concept humanism by placing the human to the center of everything try to escape from the dogmatism in the sense that I. Kant tried to realize. Essence, that's the inner face of being (noumenon) is denied. But this kind of philosophy leads eventually to timid philosophies such as agnostizm and solipsizm.

But whether in the field of philosophy or other, one, to achieve supreme values, has to be motivated by a supreme value, a transcendent Being. For this reason while Quran on the one hand accepts human reason as a source of knowledge, supports it by the revelation on the other. A concurrent line of thought in liberal Protestant theology has been asserted by Paul Tillich as follows: "Reason doesn't resist revelation. It asks for revelation, for revelation means the reintegration of reason"[19]

The field of revelation is so large that amply embraces the sphere of reason. Reason has a fragmentary view of life. But a mind, enlightened by revelation, sees the reality of an undivided life. Similarly Mazharuddin Sıddıki says: "Revelation is only reason operating at a deeper level"[20]

The epistemological guidance of Quran, that's revelation, contributes man in two ways:

1- It present man ensured, reliable data, and knowledge, and 2- Shows man the formal ways of exact thinking.

19. Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology, 1951, I, p.94.
20. J.M.S. Baljon, Kur'an Yorumunda Çağdaş Yönelimler, Tran. Şaban Ali Düzgün, Ankara 1994, s.84.

b- The Matter of Common Denominator

Muslims communities are being tried to be attracted to nonre-
ligious movements. Since some dissatisfactions such as wars and
emigrations have been attributed to religion, the post-medieval re-
actionary thought had instead sought to establish a natural religion.
Nowadays some conceptions such as humanity, universalism and
cosmopolitizm, that are in a sense try to realize what the natural rel-
gion tried to do are being propagated. These concepts try to break
off ones relevancy with the religion and place him in an utopical
concept that's world citizenship. A pro-universalizm scholar and
prominent theologian of the Sub-Continent Abul Kalam Azad
pointing out that universalizm assumes the unity of religions as
well as human beings themselves, says: "When we teach a child ge-
ography, we don't start by saying that he is an inhabitant of the
earth, but on the contrary we start by instilling in his mind that he is
from Delhi, and Delhi is in India, and India is in Asia, and Asia is
in the Eastern Hemisphere... the idea of this membership of the hu-
man species remains a mere abstraction"[21] And in consistent with
these statements, as we know, he resisted Pakistan's being a separ-
ate state.

Azad calls this unifying concept as **din-i ilahi.** This concept, to
him, is identical with what all religions basically accept to be good
(ma'ruf) and evil (munkar). Azad assigns as a key concept for his
din-i ilahi a Quranic concept: **al-huda.** The concept al-Huda, the
basis of universal religion, to Azad, was exist, also, at the basis of
pre-Islamic heavenly religions. Thus he tries to prove the theory of
"Urmonotheismus" of Wilhelm Schmidt in the Quran. The verse he
uses is that: "Mankind was one single nation...) (S.2: 213).

Another common denominator is the concept of **'salihat'.**
When commenting the verse "Except such as have faith and do
righteous deeds"[22] Mohammed Abduh says: "These works to be
found among nations in the possession of a prophetic shari'a, as
well as among nations to whom no prophet was sent, since the prin-
ciples of salihat are universal; hence they are indicated by the Holy
Book as bi'l-ma'ruf.[23]

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21. Abu'l-Kalam Azad, Speeches of Mavlana Azad, 1956, 150.
22. S.103: 3.
23. Muhammed Abduh, Tafsir-i Sura al-Asr 19.

We also, know that Quran in another verse summons the People of Book to a common denominator: "Say." O People of the Book! Come to common terms as between us and you: That we worship none but God; that we associate no partners with him; that we erect not, from among ourselves, lords and patrons other than God. If then they turn back, say ye: "Bear witness that we (at least) are Muslims (bowing to God's will)"[24]

The common denominator to which the Holy Quran call the people is certainly an Islamic denominator. Namely there is a relevancy with a religion. Then, any claim, religious or cultural, which will melt Islam in the same crucible with other systems and destruct its essence must be rejected.

Although the Quran summons the people to a common term, it doesn't want them to unite. For, God doesn't want a unified humanity, contrary to that He desires distinct identities which agree each other as is shown in the following verse: "O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other (not that you may despise (each other)..."[25]

Every community should preserve its identity and with this identity ought to contribute to development process of humanity. Then, the theories that break off one's relation with religion and placed him in a ideological or cultural term such as universalism or comsopolitizm can not have a logical or religious worth.