ON THE DISCOURSE OF ISLAMIC REVIVALISM: A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT

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İslamcı Hareketin Söylemi Üzerine Eleştirel Bir Değerlendirme

Özet

Bu çalışma genel olarak iki bölümden oluşmaktadır. İlk bölümde, müslüman dünyada tanık olunan İslamcı hareketi, buradaki Batılılaşma çabalarında ifade bulan modernizme karşı bir çeşit postmodern cevap olarak görme iddiası üzerinde durulmaktadır. Bu açıdan, Akbar Ahmed'in *Postmodernism and Islam* adlı yapıtındaki savları eleştirel bir bakışla ele alınarak, çalışmanın genel çatısı ortaya konmaktadır. İkinci bölümdeyse, konunun İslamcı hareketin metinleri ve entellektüalize edilişine yönelik olarak Türkiye özelindeki örnekler açısından incelenmesi hedeflenmektedir. Bu amaçla, iki İslami derginin, *Islam ve Taraf*ın, ve ayrıca İslami hareketin önde gelen aydınlarından biri olan Ali Bulaç'ın yazdıklarının bir değerlendirilmesi yapılmaktadır. Başta sözü edilen iddiaların eleştirel bir incelemesi üzerine kurulan bu değerlendirmeyle varılan sonuç, 1970'lerden bu yana yaşanan gelişmeleri "postmodern" tanımlamasıyla ele almanın sorunlu oluşuyla da bağlantılı olarak, İslamcı hareketin postmodern olarak nitelendirilemeyeceği ancak hareketin bizzat kendisinin modernist bir yapı üzerine inşa edildiğidir.

Abstract

This study is composed of mainly two parts. The first part aims at critically concentrating on the assertion that Islamic revivalism witnessed in the Muslim World is a kind of postmodern response to modernism as it presents itself in the Westernization attempts; Akbar Ahmed's claims in his *Postmodernism and Islam* are under consideration in that part in the way of drawing the general framework underlying the study. In the second part comes the particularization of the issue in the Turkish context with respect to textualization and intellectualization of Islamic revivalism in Turkey. For this purpose, an analysis of two Islamic periodicals, *Islam and Taraf*, and of an Islamic intellectual, namely Ali Bulaç, is attempted. Such analysis founded upon the critical evaluation of the assertion stated above helps to conclude that Islamic revivalism is not a postmodernist response for postmodernism is a problematic definition of the recent developments that have been taking place since the late 1970s, but it is itself based on the rather modernist premises.

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I. INTRODUCTION

It can be argued that the Muslim world, starting with the early 1980s, has witnessed a revival of Islam and Turkey is not an exception to this. Many scholars, like Richard Tapper and Akbar S. Ahmed, tend to see such revival as part of a wider twentieth century movement which can be called anti-materialism and/or postmodernism. Putting aside the fact that one should make reservations about naming the Islamic revivalism as postmodernist for the term postmodernism is itself problematic in terms of its definition, the question is whether one can claim that Islamic revivalism is a response to modernism, aiming at questioning its project projecting the world in a certain way. Of course, the argument that the period starting with 1980s (or, late 70s) is specifically important in terms of Islamic revivalism is open to discussion for, as Ruthven (in WATT, 1988: 44) points out,

> Since the end of the nineteenth century the problem of the dominant West, whether perceived as Christian, secular or atheist, has been the major preoccupation of thinkers and activists, and indeed of all those Muslims who have tried to work out the relevance of the Quranic message for their own generation.

Thus, it would not be false to say that an Islamic kind of response to Western modernism has had its roots in the 19th century. But it would not again be false to argue that such response has been increasingly attributed a more central role as the impact of the Western culture has become more apparent and social changes in the way of urbanization (and, perhaps more appropriate to say, globalization) have become more widespread with their relevant problems concerning the question of cultural identity. Concerning the Turkish case, it is a widely argued thing that 1950s and 60s, rather than 1980s, are the decisive years for the Islamist movement. The idea underlying this argument is that this was

the time that urbanization together with an immense migration from the rural areas to the big cities and Western impact have acquired an increasing rate, and that the Islamic element in the Turkish culture has had the chance of having its voice heard by the political power; the role of Democratic Party, which took the power in 1950s, is considered to be very important in this regard for it mobilized the religious dynamics in the society which are claimed to be kept silent and, even, under pressure by the one party regime, namely the rule of Republican People's Party, which was the sole bearer of the modernization attempts in Turkey. But as an Islamist intellectual, Ali Bulaç (1985) himself indicates, although 1950s and 60s are important in this sense, it is still not until the end of 1970s that Islamist claims had the opportunity to break with the nationalist and liberal right in Turkey and to realize their own potential in the political arena. Whatever one's own ideas concerning the importance of these different periods for the Islamist movements are, however, it can be argued that the role of Islam in defining the cultural identity in Turkey is not a very recent fact; it has a certain history combining in its present what it has been and what it will be. Thus, not sudden breaks with the past but rather certain periods constitute the critical moments in its history, and 1980s seem to be one of such critical periods.

In fact, the question that what is specific for the stated period is explored by Güneş-Ayata (1991) in a sense with regard to Turkish context for she suggests that the form of the Islamic revivalism has changed drastically in the recent years and that four fundamental characteristics differentiate its form from the earlier ones. One of these characteristics is that Islamic revivalism has involved more direct attacks on the secularism as a defining feature of the Turkish state and its demand in the way of an Islamic state has increased; i.e., its position via state has changed. Introduction of radical Islamic elements and the organization of revivalist groups are two other characteristics. Güneş-Ayata also states that the new movement of Islamic revivalism is a popular reaction but its intellectualization has a much more fierce tone than earlier ones and this is to the extent that revivalist groups have published up to forty-five periodicals in a month. Perhaps, one additional characteristics may also be considered apart from those which Güneş-Ayata indicates, that is, the organization of this revival specifically in the metropolitan centers such as İstanbul and Ankara.

Given this new positioning of Islamic revivalism in the terrain, the present study aims to concentrate on the discourse of it as presented in its textualization and intellectualization. In the light of this specific purpose we will first attempt to draw a general framework which is mainly based upon a critical evaluation of Akbar Ahmed's *Postmodernism and Islam*. Then comes the particularization of the issue more in the Turkish context through an analysis of two Islamic periodicals, one of which seems to be influenced directly from the leanings of a certain order and/or lodge and the other which involves more radical and activist elements.

We will also concentrate on the discourse of an Islamic intellectual, namely, of Ali Bulaç, who can be considered as one of the most prominent figures in the intellectualization of Islamist revivalism. Such concentration on textualization and intellectualization of Islamic revivalism in the present study, however, will always be on the footsteps of the general framework drawn.

II. A GENERAL FRAMEWORK: ISLAMIC REVIVALISM AS A RESPONSE FROM THE *'OTHER'*?

As stated before, many scholars like Tapper (1991) and Ahmed (1992) have the tendency to see the revival of Islam as a part of wider 20th century movements such as antimaterialism and postmodernism. Though Tapper is skeptic in this evaluation and avoids the statement of any certainty in that regard, Ahmed, in his *Postmodernism and Islam*, views the recent movement of revivalism as Islamic postmodernism, thus, he translates postmodernism into an Islamic context. According to him, it is possible to talk about Islamic postmodernism as well as Western postmodernism.

Ahmed indicates many features characterizing postmodernism such as the central role of media, importance of urban areas and juxtaposition of discourses (an eclecticism). Furthermore, he argues that postmodernism is specifically a middle class phenomenon whose power lies in knowledge and communication. But what is fundamental in the postmodernist age, according to him, is that it involves a questioning of the project of modernity which is typically *Western*. Thus, there is a loss of faith in the Western project of modernity and a spirit of pluralism is presupposed with respect to a rejection of any kind of understanding which views the world as a universal totality. This goes hand in hand with an alteration to the way in which a whole range of subjects -like art, literature, and science- is perceived. In other words, the state in the Western culture which involves a critical stance towards science, literature and art is taken by Ahmed as the postmodernist state, and it is argued that postmodernism implies looking for richness of meanings rather than the clarity and certainty of meaning. The postmodernist condition, in Ahmed's view, involves many levels of meaning and different combinations of focus, and it puts various attempts of self-discovery through self-knowledge into the scene. He relates this feature of postmodernism with ethno-religious revivalism and claims that the connection between postmodernism and ethno-religious revivalism -or fundamentalism, he says- needs to be explored by social and political scientists. Ahmed's (1992: 13) own argument regarding this connection is that:

> ... fundamentalism is the attempt to resolve how to live in a world of
> radical doubt. It is a dialogue with the times, a response to it. The

unsettling contradictions and tensions we note in the major world religions are a result of the transnational moves towards unity; the question of the multiple interpretation of religion is thus also raised. In fact, an argument can be made that ethno-religious revivalism is both cause and effect of postmodernism.

After sketching the defining features of postmodernism within these terms, Ahmed comes to particularize his consideration in Islam and deals with what he calls and celebrates as "Muslim entry into the postmodernist phase of history". Before concentrating on the question that what postmodernism means for Muslims, Ahmed first clarifies the Muslim modernism in the way of answering this question. He indicates that the definition of modernism for Muslims applies to a series of activities ranging from architecture to modes of dress, from Islamic thought to political action. According to him, the Muslim modernist phase had the imprint of European colonialism and three main responses to European modernism could be figured out in the Muslim world: the modernist Muslims wished to translate the elements of European civilization into their own context. But for many of the more conservative Muslims, such translation and incorporation had negative meanings. Most of the Muslims, on the other hand, tried to come up with a synthesis of their own position and that of the Europeans. Ahmed argues that leaders who looked to the West for inspiration in molding their societies, like Mohammed Ali Jinnah in Pakistan, Atatürk in Turkey, Shah in Iran and Amanullah in Afghanistan, took power in the Muslim world. These leaders translated 'modern' as a drive to acquire Western industry, technology and education though they were rather reluctant to discuss certain other Western institutions such as democracy and representative government. In many Muslim countries, the government became the standard bearer of modernity and the central concern was of subordination of religious belief though the aim was constructing a harmony between religion and modern thought. Thus, Ahmed attempts to conceptualize the Muslim modernism in terms of the modernization which took place in the Muslim countries and which followed several transformations ranging from modes of dress to the role of Islam. Then follows his conception of 'Islamic postmodernism'(AHMED, 1992: 32):

> If modern meant the product of Western education, technology and industrialization in the first flush of the post-colonial period, postmodern would mean a reversion to traditional Muslim values and a rejection of modernism. This would generate an entire range of Muslim responses from politics to clothes to architecture.

Given this stance, Ahmed concentrates on the process of Islamic resurgence which began in the 1970s and which has involved activities of an intellectual effervescence as well as of diplomatic conferences. These intellectual

activities have been underlined by an attempt towards an Islamization of knowledge for him, and have included studies of scholars in the areas varying from education to sociology and anthropology. He also draws attention to those studies, like that of Edward Said, which are critical of the Orientalist conception of Muslim world.

At that point, we will attempt to make a critical evaluation of Ahmed's assertions in the way of clarifying the position central in our study. First of all, Ahmed's usage of the concepts, postmodernism and postmodern (as well as modernism and modern) are ambiguous. He uses both in order to define and characterize a certain period. Although he accepts the use of the term postmodern instead of postmodernism since he defines rather a period, he insists on using the term postmodernism as an age in various places. Apart from this ambiguity in the usage of the terms, however, there is a more fundamental problem in the concept 'postmodernism' (or postmodern/ postmodernity) for it implies a break with the past. Although Ahmed himself states that many of the features characterizing modernism are continued in postmodernism, the prefix 'post-' in the word inherently denotes a rupture with the modern (and, of course, traditional) past. To polarize the concepts, modernism and postmodernism, has another risk of taking each term as if it has nothing to do with the other. Furthermore, he identifies postmodernist phase with richness of meanings (along with other characteristics) and modernist phase with claims for clarity of meaning but such identification disregards the fact that richness of meanings cannot automatically eliminates the claims for the clarity of such meanings.

As another point of consideration, we want to concentrate on the anti-Orientalist approach to Islam which Akbar Ahmed also directs attention in his book, *Postmodernism and Islam*, and which seems to intersect with the critical stance taken towards science, technology and industrialization as being originated in the West. Orientalism, which sees Islam as a kind of obstacle to modernization and evaluates the underdevelopment of the Muslim societies in that regard, has been criticized on the basis that it treats Islam as a kind of totalistic entity and reduces it to an essence independent from history consequently, there have appeared attempts to search for new approaches and concepts to explain Islam and the Middle East. These attempts have been underlined by an anti-Orientalist view and an emphasis on the specificity of Islam.[1] However, as İskender Savaşır (1985) points out, there is a danger implicit in these attempts: to insist on the specificity of Islam may mean a return

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1   We claim that such emphasis is also characteristic of Ahmed's work for when he deal with the modernization period in the Muslim world, he does not give an adequat explanation as regards to the question that why modernist leaders in the Muslim worl failed to come up with an harmony between religious belief and modernist thought. H seems to take Islam as having an essence incompatible with the modernist thought.

to the culturalist tendency found in Orientalism which reduces Islam to a unique essence. Put in other words, to emphasize the specificity of Islam and the Muslim world may easily turn into an explanatory account which takes Islam as being independent of any other consideration of time and place. This may, again, mean coming to terms with and legitimizing the discourse of Islamic revivalism in which 'the return to the Golden Ages of Islam' where the 'true' Islam was lived is the central theme and in which Islam is conceptualized as if it has an ahistorical essence. As Aziz el-Azmeh (1985) points out, however, the existence of a religion is always historical and Islam is not an exception to this. At least, a sociological and historical analysis of religion requires such understanding.

In relation with the above argument, we suggest, it is possible to argue that Ahmed seems to base his analysis on the West and Islam dualism; Modernity is taken by him as specifically Western and West/modern is opposed and compared to Islam and its tradition. Such opposition and the comparison found upon it can be criticized in very similar terms which Hodgson (1974) uses in his critique of ethno-centric Western view (the so-called, Orientalist view). Ahmed attributes certain inherent traits to these binary poles and takes them as totally independent entities. The mutual comprehension and the dialogue between them are either disregarded or regarded as something superficial as can be seen in his explanation concerning the modernization process that took place in the Muslim world: Ahmed seems to take modernization process as having no other effect than producing response and reaction to the West and its modernism (and Orientalism, of course). However, at least in the Turkish case, one should also see that such process has produced Westernized subjects who accept being Westernized as a positive asset as well as those who are critical of it and react against it. And, there are still many variatons in and combinations between these two that are of great importance in order to understand the modernization process in the Muslim Third World. Although such analysis is beyond the scope of this study, it is important to analyze, for instance, how the process has produced both those subjects who are nationalist and protectionist against the West but still regarding the modernization/ Westernization attempts as something positive, and those who are Westernized (many of them had their university and/or graduate education in the West) but critical of these attempts. The latter includes not only certain intellectuals of the Islamic revivalism but also some new intellectuals of the left in Turkey. Additionally, among the Islamist movements there are both the groups which totally reject anything that can be called Western and those that differentiate between Western science and technology and Islamic culture by accepting the former as neccessary to acquire under the condition that one has to preserve the Islamic core. In this view, science and technology are considered to be the universal and necessary dynamics of 'progress', and it is argued that if they are made to serve the

Islamic ends, the Muslim World will reach the same development level with the West and overcome its inferior position. Such attitude is still different than the ones that Ahmed considers when he mentioned about the Muslim leaders who looked to the West in moulding their societies. In order to see such differentiations, one should examine how the modernization process has constructed subjects in their plurality in the Muslim World. Otherwise, it is very possible to come up with an ethno-centric Oriental view by simply reversing the Orientalist categories of ethno-centric Western one (West vs. Islam; Western subjects vs. Muslims) and, facing the same danger of falsification of the one pole of the stated binary oppositions which would risk the analytical value of 'historical sociology'.

As a final point of consideration, we want to deal with Ahmed's conceptualization of postmodernist age as age of fundamentalisms. Although Ahmed tries to differentiate Islamic postmodernism (or rather, fundamentalism) from the Western one, he still seems to put the former in the same line with the latter. As Mutman (1992/93) indicates, however, the approach in the way of putting the Islamic fundamentalism on the same line with the other fundamentalisms in Western societies is always a limited one for they have different kind of relationship to the West. There is a historically specific process that counts for Islamic revivalism and that process may partly be understood in terms of the ethno-centric Western/ Orientalist discourse on the Muslim world as this discourse produces the images of it. The discourse of Orientalism marks the Orient as different, as its 'Other', which is thought in terms that it lacks what the West has. Furthermore, Orientalism as a discourse does not solely mean that the Orient is taken as the Other simply in language and in producing the image of it. Thus, as Mutman clearly points out, it is not simply that ethno-centric and Orientalist discourse is only of the West but that such discourse is also shared by the Other, the East. Thus, the discursive economy on the Orient binds both the Orient and the Occident at once. Mutman (1992/93: 175-176) takes the problematic of Islamic fundamentalism into the consideration in that respect and it is this consideration which we want to draw attention here:

> We will now look at a more specific site of Orientalism: The articulation of antagonism "West vs. Islam". Clearly enough, it is impossible to make sense of this antagonism unless it is placed within the economy of Orientalist discourse. Indeed, what is today called "Islam" is produced within such a discursive economy. This production of Islam by Orientalism is the consequence of a material, historical process characterized by an interruption. What we have to show is not only that the West is wrong or has false ideas and images about other cultures, but that what is today called Islamism is part and consequence of a history in which the West established its hegemony over the world.

Mutman then continues with an explanation of how Westernization/ modernization process in the Third World has divided society into two parts: Islamic and modernist. At first glance, this position may seem to be in parallels with Ahmed's one. But in an argumentation like that of Mutman, Islamic revivalism is not a mere question of response to modernism (modernity or modernization), but it is rather a part and consequence of it since "the act of Westernizing/modernizing is bound to Orientalize as well as Westernize, and traditionalize as well as modernize its subjects" (MUTMAN, 1992/93: 178). Thus, in Mutman's position, it becomes possible to deconstruct the Islamist discourse as one deconstructs the Westernist/Orientalist one though Ahmed's position tends to come up with a celebration of it as a response against the West.

In the way of deconstructing the Islamist discourse (specifically the post-colonial Islamist discourse), Mutman (1992/93: 182) points out to the moral and critical tone of it which simply reverses the Western hegemonic inscription and presents itself as an alternative to the modernism:

> ... an Islamic discourse constructed Westernist/modernist acts, interventions, and reforms by the state as the *symbol* of a loss of faith and authenticity, an act of betrayal, collaboration, snobbism, pretentiousness, mindless imitation, and so on. In this narrative, the questions that characterized the earlier radical nationalist arguments were reproduced in a strongly moral and critical thought and were given a specifically anti-Western dimension. Modernist/Westernist reform was increasingly transformed into an agent of Western imperialism, for everything modern, new, different came to signify the West. ... Western progress was considered as representing a false narrative, a fake and corrupt world from which one could cleanse oneself only by a return to authentic religious origins (with his original emphasis).

Thus it can be argued, in very similar terms with Chatterjee's consideration of 'nationalism', that Islamic revivalism is bound up with a simple reversal of the ethno-centric Westernist binary oppositions and it comes to define itself in terms that it has what the West lacks. We will argue at this point that such simple reversal of modernist binary oppositions can not come up with a production of knowledge that mark a break with etno-centricism and its sovereign Subject who establishes his sovereignty by differing the other. On the contrary we claim that it can only result in the emergence of new Subject (not subject as such) whose sovereignty is re-constituted in Islamic terms. It may well be said that anti-modernist and anti-Westernist discourse of Islamic fundamentalism, as a part and consequence of modernism, is paradoxically "a denial of its own conditions and terms, and a mode of cultural politics according to which culture has no other" (MUTMAN, 1992/93:189).

The following section attempts to elaborate on and illustrate these arguments by particularizing the issue in Turkish context and through a discussion on certain Islamic periodicals and an Islamist intellectual.

III. TEXTUALIZATION AND INTELLECTUALIZATION OF ISLAMIC REVIVALISM

A. On Islamic Periodicals [2]

In this section the attention is directed to certain periodicals promoting an Islamic world view. We should maintain, however, the periodicals chosen here are very limited in number especially if one thinks that Islamic revivalist groups publish up to forty-five periodicals in a month. Furthermore, because of the difficulty of drawing a general picture of the periodicals of which only a limited number is under consideration here, we will also refer to some studies that come up with a broader analysis on the issue at hand.

In a first look to Islamist periodicals and as stated in the studies of Güneş-Ayata, Ayata, and Çakır, one may easily conclude that an anti-Westernist outlook and the celebration of 'authentic' and/or 'true' Islam are the two central themes in these periodicals. The return to the Golden Ages of Islam where the 'true' and 'real' Islam was lived is always emphasized on the one hand. The anti-Westernist outlook, on the other hand, generally involves a critique of the Western world in terms of its **materialism**: A division between this world and other world, between matter and spirit is drawn and the West is criticized in terms that its materialism and this-worldliness have yielded the mentally sick and corrupt Western man/woman. Thus, the Western world is regarded to be in corruption and this corruption is seen in denying God as the final aim of everything. In spite of such common denominators as the celebration of 'true' Islam and anti-Westernism, however, there are some differentiations among the journals in their approach to modern science and technology. It can be claimed that there are mainly two different attitudes in that regard: one which criticizes the Western culture without a fierce rejection of its science and technology and, the other which presents a total rejection of the Western world together with its science and technology. We will limit our concentration here by drawing upon an example from each of these attitudes.

The periodical, *Islam*, can be taken as illustrative of the first attitude stated above. As maintained by Güneş-Ayata (1991), İslam considers the West as a

2 This part of the paper generally draws upon a study held in 1995 on two Islamist periodicals. Not any further study has been carried about these periodicals since then; thus, any changes in their general outlook and context are not under consideration here and the reader is expected to evaluate what is written in this part with respect to that certain period.

unique entity (to which another unique entity, Islam, is opposed) without any differentiation and argues that modern science and technology is the source of Western imperialism. However, *Islam*, also draws attention to the point that the West uses science and technology to create a sense of inferiority in the Muslim world; science and technology may also be used for Islamic ends according to the view presented in this periodical, since the knowledge acquired is valuable only if it is oriented towards a search for God. Moreover, *Islam*, has a highly positive attitude to information technology for it can serve to circulate Islamic knowledge. Similarly trade, Islamic banking, hard work to acquire wealth are all celebrated in *Islam*. As Ruşen Çakır (1990) indicates, the position of the journal can be summarized as promoting "modernization against modernism". Thus, the journal can be considered as an example of a more general Islamic attitute, mentioned briefly above, which differentiates between the Islamic culture and modern science and technology. It is very interesting to find out that the techno-determinist view, which considers science and technology as one of the main factors erasing the differences between cultures to a certain extent and combining different societies under the 'global culture' of the new world order, is reversed in this Islamic attitude. Science and technology are taken to be the motor-drives of 'progress' the superior position of the West is considered to be a product of its scientific and technological productivity but science and technology do not have a telos in themselves. They are rather regarded to be the means that can be put under the Islamic culture. So, it can be argued that culture in such attitute is considered not to be a variable dependent, albeit partly, on the stock of scientific and technological knowlwdge and its production but to be the core element giving the telos to the progress found upon such production.[3]

Furthermore, *Islam* presents a claim in the way that it has the knowledge

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3   The same attitute can be found not only in the view concerning modern science and technology but also in the one about media, advertisements and so on. For instance, it is possible to see an article which criticizes the corrupt Western culture (with its TV programs, advertisements and so on) together with a page of an advertisement of a 'supermarket'. Thus, it seems that all these are criticized because they serve to 'the corrupt Western culture' not because they are part of such culture. They are taken to be legitimate tools to promote Islamic culture as well; their importance lies not in themselves per se but in the ultimate aim under which they operate. Things become more complicate however, when, for example, one of the special issues of the journal is reserved for a critique of education in foreign languages but both the articles in that issue and the advertisements are full of the use of foreign words. If language is something more than the spoken words, a medium representing the world to the speaking subject but itself what the world is, then this situation deserves a separate discussion which goes beyond the limits of this study. To summarize very briefly here, it can be argued that such a situation denotes that these Islamists are themselves a part and product of the modernization process, or in a much broader sense, of what is called the globalization process.

of 'true' Islam. This claim can be revealed more directly in the articles of M. Esat Coşan (one of the leaders of the lodge, İskender Paşa Dergahı) for he mostly uses command-type sentences in calling the readers to the way of becoming the 'real' Muslims.

Another periodical, *Taraf*, can be taken as a representative of the second attitude stated above, that is, it rejects the Western world with its science and technology. In fact, the periodical presents the most radical position (it is one of the periodicals published by İBDA-C movement) in that regard for it attacks on everything Western and everything that is related to the West in one way or another.[4] Turkey is seen to be under the imperialist rule of the U.S. in that periodical and armed opposition against such imperialist rule and its collaborators in Turkey is celebrated. These collaborators are thought to be everywhere and this is to the extent that everybody who does not belong to the İBDA-C movement is considered to be one of **them**, to be one of the **enemies**. The use of **Us** and **They** in the articles in differing others from themselves is characteristic in that respect.

In fact, *Taraf* is like the extreme leftist periodicals of 1970s; this is so both in terms that it looks like these periodicals and that its themes such as the imperialism of the West, the exploitation taking place in the Third World and the collaborators of the West among the Third World bourgeoisie inevitably remind the Marxist-Leninist periodicals of 1970s which similarly celebrate armed opposition, apart from the fact that *Taraf* finds the final salvation not in the rule of the proletariat but in the Islamic order.

Finally, *Taraf*, unlike *Islam*, is not under the direct influence of the leanings of certain orders and/or lodges. But S. Mirzabeyoğlu is regarded to be the leader of İBDA-C movement and the periodical promotes his thoughts as illustrating how the 'true' Islam and a 'real' Muslim should be. Thus, in a very similar way to *Islam*, *Taraf* also has the claim to the so-called 'true' knowledge of Islam though this true Islam considered to be very different from the one celebrated in the pages of *Islam*.

B. On an Islamic Intellectual: Ali Bulaç

In this section, we will concentrate on an Islamist sociologist, Ali Bulaç, whose work we think can be considered as an attempt to the Islamization of

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4   Unlike *Islam*, *Taraf* points out to the relationship between capitalism and Western culture, and criticizes the very logic of mass media, advertisements and the like in terms of this relationship. So, in the binary opposition drawn between West and Islam, all these are subsumed under the category of "West". But if this binary opposition is itself Orientalist, then, what *Taraf* does can indeed be considered as a mere reversal of such Orientalist dualism.

sociological knowledge. To this end, I will also refer to studies of Meecker (1991) and Toprak (1985) who deal with the same work.

As Meecker states, Ali Bulaç in his book, *Çağdaş Kavramlar ve Düzenler*, has the aim of analyzing those political alternatives which are seen by Turkish youth as the only possible ones: capitalism, scientific socialism and fascism. Bulaç argues that capitalism has created the problem of class conflict and a consequent crisis for which scientific socialism and fascism have emerged in the way of searching for a solution. However, these two political systems, according to Ali Bulaç, have resulted in more severe social problems then those created by capitalism:

> Thus capitalism, a highly expensive and exploitative system, gives rise to vicious circle of political reaction and counter reactions which do not alleviate but instead exacerbate the social ills from which they arise. The result is the worldwide demoralization of society: Individuals have become dissolute, family life has disintegrated and women have been reduced to wage-labor. This moral degeneration is accompanied by a pathological form of foreign relations (MEECKER, 1991:189-219).

As can be expected Bulaç sees Islam as maintaining an alternative for overcoming the contemporary problems. However, he argues that there is a crisis in the Islamic world too: This is an intellectual crisis. In *Islam Dünyasında Düşünce Sorunları*, Bulaç criticizes the Muslim intellectuals in terms that they did not make a choice in the course of Westernization process since the nineteenth century between the alternative grounding the society totally on Islamic principles and that of denying Islam; consequently, they rather came to adopt Islam to the modern world. Bulaç evaluates Islamic liberalism and Islamic socialism as the products of this adaptation. His inspiration regarding the role of Muslim intellectual in contemporary Islamic society is that the Muslim intellectuals whose main concern is contemporary life and Muslim scholars who look to Quran, Hadith and Sharia should work together in a way guided by the devotion to God. In working together, they will be able to propose solutions to the problems of contemporary life in the way of right-thinking and right-acting.

In his third book, *Islam Dünyasında Toplumsal Değişme*, this time Bulaç engages with an analysis of cultural, political and economic changes that took place in the late Ottoman Empire and this analysis has the aim of illustrating the inadequacy of Westernist solutions for an Islamic society like Turkey.

It can be argued that, in each of these books, the modernity together with its claim to be universal is questioned in general and this general question is particularized in the Turkish context in terms of the modernization process that

took place in the society.[5] However, Bulaç's most clear and severe attack on the project of modernity seems to be found in his Din ve Modernizm. I think it would not be false to argue that this book is the most difficult one to summarize and generalize for Bulaç takes many themes of sociological agenda, ranging from family to marginal groups, women, into consideration there. Still the whole work can be summed up in terms of three main points of argumentation: Firstly, Bulaç deals with the negative aspects of modernity or, more appropriately, on the concrete problems created by modernity (since it seems there is no positive aspect of it for Bulaç). As a second point of argumentation, he comes up with some epistemological considerations as the real basis modernity. Finally, he concentrates on the alternative solutions to the modernity project among which he emphasizes postmodernism, and attempts to show how the 'Return of God' or the 'Return of Religion' in general but the 'Return of Islam' in particular has come to offer the 'real' and only solution for the whole humanity.

For the first point, it can be claimed that Bulaç's work reminds one Marx's concept of 'alienation' in certain parts and Weber's 'disenchanted world' in certain others. Besides, neither the Frankfurt School's nor the Dependency theorists' critique of modernity and capitalism is forgotten by Bulaç. For him, the modern man feels alienated in the bureaucratized and rationalized (disenchanted) world: the grand-scale bureaucratic institutions surround him everywhere and in every field of social life. Commodity-fetishism and the desire to consume are the sole drives for modern-man and, everything, even the most humanly values, are commodified for him to consume. Media and advertisements serve to keep that desire permanent. The result then is alienation for the valueless man of modern society. Feminism, homosexuality, anarchism are all the outcomes of such a value-free society though these movements somehow involve a reactionary force to the modernity and its institutions. According to Bulaç, destruction of the ecological balance is another disastrous outcome of

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5   Bulaç's questioning of modernity is founded upon the dualism of the West and Islam as this was also the case in the periodicals discussed above. In fact, such does not characterize only the periodicals and Isalmist intellectual deal with here. For instance, as Özdalga (1994: 17) indicates, this distinction can also be found in the writings of a relatively former Islamic intellectual, Necip Fazıl Kısakürek: "According to Necip Fazıl the West is the cause of all evil, the root of all moral disintegration, the most dangerous monster of our own time... the West not only carries the responsibility of its own social, cultural, and moral degeneration, it is also guilty of the disaster of the rest of the world. The roots behind the cultural decline that has hit the whole world is materialism, 'dry' rationalism, superficiality, lack of inner spirit, lack of religious belief. All these maladies emanated from the West". And, Necip Fazıl considers Islam as the true way of saving ourselves from such maladies, for turning back into our inner spirits. These themes can also be seen in Bulaç. But what is perhaps new in his work is that he transfers them into a sociological agenda; uses sociological concepts; and, comes up with an Islamization of sociological knowledge.

modernity. Commodification of everything and putting nature into the hands of science and technology in the way of supplying the man's desire to consume have increasingly destructed the eco-system. Bulaç furthers all these arguments by engaging with certain other issues like exploitation of the Third World, degeneration of city-life and so-on.[6]

As the real basis of such all such problems and of the modernity project in general, Bulaç states what he calls, by referring to Berger, the 'modern consciousness'. Here comes Bulaç's epistemological considerations. According to him, modern consciousness is founded upon the preference of what is functional and rational and this, in turn, is highly related with the fact the Catholic Church came to make a distinction between the profane/ secular and religious, thus a distinction between the physical world and the metaphysical one. Then this distinction was to be absolutized by the Cartesian philosophy and, modern man has started to concentrate himself solely on the physical world. Newtonian physics has furthered such philosophy since it has reduced the universe into a one huge machinery with its own rules and principles for which observation, calculation and measurement have become the criteria for the exactitude of modern science. In addition to modern science, Bulaç also engages with the question of modern technology. In fact, he reserves a great deal of his work for the critique of modern technology. He seems to derive a number of key elements constituting the modern consciousness from technological production. Among these are the divisibility of the fabric of reality into components and sequences, a problem-solving, functionalist or tinkering attitude toward life and an orientation of progressivity in the events (linear and evolutionary conception of time), Thus, according to Bulaç, positivist and functionalist understanding in modern science and technology fosters the modern mentality; with such mentality, instrumentality sets the standard for social life and modern man becomes the one who orders things as his standing-reserve. To this end, Bulaç criticizes the modern understanding of knowledge only in positivist and functionalist terms and comes to question the notion of Truth. As can be expected, his theme is very similar with post-modern critique at such points. Such is not the case characteristic only for Bulaç; as Sarıbay (1994) indicates, Islamic sociology and/or Islamization of sociological knowledge general shares much with the postmodern sociology in its critique of modernity. In fact, Islamic sociologists and intellectuals make frequent references to names such as Foucault, Illich and Feyerabend whose themes can be said to question the Western culture and its institutions and who are claimed to be the forerunners

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6   Indeed, Bulaç's intention to enter into every detail in considering the modernity and modern social life results in an eclectic explanatory framework. The book is rather a patch-work in which one finds from an immense number of sociologists and philosophers.

of postmodern critique. Ali Bulaç is not an exception in that regard; his *Din ve Modernizm* is full of such references. However, as Sarıbay also directs attention, though postmodern sociology attempts to question the Truth, Islamic sociology takes the Truth as unquestionable and total for it is the Truth of the God. Bulaç's final point of argumentation, i.e. his consideration of alternative solutions for the crisis created by modernity[7] and its form of consciousness, reveals this explicitly. He takes postmodernism into consideration in terms of its possibility of offering a solution and recognizes the fact that postmodern critique of modernity and its philosophical understanding share much with Islamic sociology. However, He also attacks on postmodernism for it celebrates the plurality of meanings and truths in the way of destructing the *Tevhid* and coming to terms with *Şirk*. Thus, Bulaç sees postmodernism as offering no solution other than chaos. For him, the only possible solution is religion; he claims that we have witnessed the return of religion in the recent years since the modern man has increasingly recognized that the lack of inner spirit that the materialism of modernity caused can only be compensated by religion. But he also argues that neither Christianity nor other world-religions can come up with a real alternative to the crisis of modern man; the only religion having such potential is Islam. According to him, not islam as such but the one that the 'true' Muslims live with respect to the rules of the 'real' Islam, i.e. the rules of Quran, Hadith and Sharia which are claimed to be the only guide of social life in the Golden Ages of Islam, will be the future of humanity. In relation to this, it can be argued that, in the Islamic sociology of Ali Bulaç, Islam is taken to be a religion for all times and places, a religion that its 'true' and 'authentic' content is out there waiting for realization.

This last consideration, I think, is highly related with the point made by Olivier Roy (1994) in terms that: Islamic revivalism accepts Islam as the most adequate and universal system but it attempts to adopt such view to a 'modern' object, **society**, which is defined within modernism and in which there is a difference between the spheres of social, political, economic and religious. Although Islamists tend to overcome this differentiation by arguing for a return to the idealized unity of the first Muslim **community** and regard the history of their society as something like a mistake, history is there and they can not escape from making the modern Muslim society the object of their discourse and activities.[8]

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7   Here, I want to state that Bulaç does not differentiate between his critique of modernity and of modernism as many other Islamic intellectuals and postmodern sociologists.

8   As for the final words to say about Bulaç, I want to draw attention again to the fact that his work is founded upon the dualisms that also characterize the periodicals discussed above: the dualisms of Occident and Orient, West and Islam, and modern and traditional. Besides, such dualisms usually render the use of the concepts of sociology which forms

IV. CONCLUDING REMARKS

In the present study, we have attempted to show that Islamic revivalism is a part and consequence of modernism and that the object of Islamist discourse is modern society. Thus, such revivalism is neither a movement which illustrates Islam's incompatible character with modernity as an Orientalist would argue nor a mere postmodern response which involves a break with modernism: The movement is itself grounded in modernism.

As we tried to illustrate in the analysis of the textualization and intellectualization of Islamic revivalism, the Orientalist and/or ethno-centric Westernist antagonism, i.e. West vs. Islam, binds the Islamic fundamentalism for it does not deconstruct such antagonism but is founded upon a mere reversal of it. Islamic revivalism renders its Other as the negative of what it has and what it does, and this is within the very discourse of Orientalism. Although the revivalist movements are products of the Orientalist discourse, they ground their existence on the rejection of this. They argue for an 'essence' of Islam, a 'true', 'authentic' Islam and claim that such Islam is an inseparable part of the **Turkish cultural identity.** But as Hall (1990), Chow (1993), and Spivak (1988) indicate, whether explicitly or implicitly, that there is no authentic and/or original stock of characteristics, qualities or whatever that counts for a community's (society's or nation's) cultural identity. Authenticity is itself a myth of any essentialist discourse. Thus, the fundamentalist and Islamist voice from the Third World does not (and can not) involve the authentic character of the Orient. These voices are themselves rooted in the history of modernization and its discourse. One can not find any original or authentic East and/or Islam for there is only the East and/or Islam which is situated historically and which can be understood only with respect to such history that drives out any search or concern for authenticity and originality. I suggest that Hodgson's *The Venture of Islam* offers us a good explanation of how Islam is situated historically and how its existence in society can only be comprehended with respect to its dialogue with other social and cultural elements.

Finally, we want to draw attention to that the claim for such authentic, true or real Islam brings the question of sovereign Subject into the agenda of discussion. The Subject of Islamic revivalism is not a subject as such but, as the above examples from the Islamist periodicals reveal, the sovereign Subject who has the power (or claim to power) of the observing gaze in the way of deciding what the true Islam and a real Muslim should be.

Bulaç's educational background (at least a part of it) but which he also seems to reject as a separate scientific discipline having its roots directly in modernity. For me, this constitutes another paradox for the most of the modern Muslim intellectuals.

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