

TJSS

İSTANBUL TOPKAPI ÜNİVERSİTESİ
İSTANBUL TOPKAPI UNIVERSITY
Topkapı Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi
Topkapı Journal of Social Sciences

Topkapı Journal of Social Science, Vol. 1, No. 2, 2022

Book Review / Kitap İncelemesi

Let's Change Lanes: The Lessons of Coronavirus - Edgar Morin

Yolumuzu Değiştirelim: Koronavirüsün Öğrettikleri - Edgar Morin

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ABSTRACT

Humanity has been struggling with a pandemic that has been effective in the economic, political and social fields of the world for the last two years. Although there are many reasons for the spread of the coronavirus on a global scale shortly after its emergence in Wuhan, China in October 2019, scientists have explained the emergence of the epidemic in such a short time with interdependence and globalization. Edgar Morin's book Let's Change Lanes: The Lessons of Coronavirus is about the social impacts and emerging problems of the pandemic caused by the coronavirus. In this study, Morin claims that new world order is possible based on humanism, based on the experience of uncertainty created by the coronavirus pandemic and the teachings of the future crisis. In this respect, we will focus on the book's evaluations of what a new world order is.

Anahtar Kelimeler: globalization, Coronavirus (Covid-19), neoliberalism, humanism

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ÖZ

İnsanlık son iki yıldır dünyanın ekonomik, siyasi ve sosyal alanlarında etkili olan bir pandemi ile mücadele ediyor. Koronavirüsün, Ekim 2019'da Çin'in Vuhan kentinde ortaya çıkmasından kısa bir süre sonra küresel ölçekte yayılmasının birçok nedeni olmasına rağmen bilim insanları, bu kadar kısa sürede pandeminin ortaya çıkmasını karşılıklı bağımlılık ve küreselleşmeyle açıklamışlardır. Edgar Morin'in Yolumuzu Değiştirelim: Koronavirüs'ün Öğrettikleri (Let's Change Lanes: The Lessons of Coronavirus) adlı kitabı, koronavirüsün neden olduğu pandeminin sosyal etkileri ve ortaya çıkan sorunları hakkındadır. Morin bu çalışmada, koronavirüs pandemisinin yarattığı belirsizlik deneyimine ve gelecekteki krizin öğretilerine dayanarak hümanizm temelinde yeni bir dünya düzeninin mümkün olduğunu iddia etmektedir. Bu açıdan kitabı yeni bir dünya düzeninin ne olduğu konusundaki değerlendirmeleri üzerinde duracağız.

Keywords: küreselleşme, Koronavirüs (Kovit-19), neoliberalizm, hümanizm

The book named *Let's Change Lanes- the lessons of coronavirus*, originally named *Changeons de voie: Les leçons du coronavirus* in French, was published in 2020. It was written by Edgar Morin first presented as a short biography with the criminology of the political and sociological changes that occurred in both his life and the world order. At this point, the author states that it has become the usual way for him to expect unexpected change and to anticipate unpredictable changes. In the preface part of the book, he asks many questions to attract the reader to think about the conditions of existence, the uncertainty of our lives, and the relationship between death and life. The author states that interdisciplinary thinking is important in solving human problems in times of social crisis. Who are we? Where do we come from? Where are we going? Morin men-

tions that the effects of the coronavirus should be properly evaluated as an exercise before new crises are encountered in the future. The author emphasizes in this work that it is necessary to look at it from a new perspective on what the coronavirus has taught humanity. Simultaneously, he states that by taking lessons from the problems and identifying the deficiencies of the current system, determining a new path in the future will guide humanity.

This book consists of three chapters. In the first chapter, Morin writes about what happened during the crisis and the lessons to be learned under the title "15 Lessons Taught by the Coronavirus." In the second chapter, he reveals his purpose in writing the book under the title of "Post-Coronavirus Struggles." In the third chapter,

under the title of “Changing the Way,” he mentions that after the coronavirus epidemic, humanity needed a new political thought and a new management approach.

In the first chapter, he states that humanity becomes more “the owner of nature” destroying viruses and making the world safe with technological and economic developments, disappearing with coronavirus crisis. At this point, it claims that it is confronted with the fact that its helplessness despite pain and death has surrendered to the movement of nature. He emphasizes that societies, which realize the consumption threshold of modern life with quarantine restrictions, question something in an intellectual sense by classifying what is necessary and what is not in consumption, which raises awareness. He mentions that the shock effect of the first periods of the crisis caught the public authorities unprepared and states that social solidarity tries to compensate for the weakness of the authority in the supply of masks and other health materials. In addition to this, Morin states that the impact of social inequalities experienced in quarantine brutally striking the face of human beings makes the system questionable for individuals.

According to Morin, it is the Meadows Report published in 1972 that explains the basis of today’s problems and warns humanity with foresight. This report is the starting perspective to understand today’s problems. Morin emphasizes that human dominance over nature ended with the emergence of viruses in the 2000s, and human fragility against nature came to light again. Morin points out that globalization has progressed only on the global market and economic development in the way of interdependence and international cooperation since the 1980s, he states that the differences in the way countries cope with epidemics are a completely new experi-

ence. He mentions that the understanding of public authority should also change in this regard. Administrations that perceive people as a resource and administrations that perceive people as a value have approached the epidemic differently and have applied various measures that can be defined as a rigid or flexible quarantine process.

Morin claims that even democratic governments are in a dilemma in terms of protecting public health during the epidemic, and the most important reason for this is that health services are seen as cost-generating public services. The competitive free markets that emerged with globalization have a positive effect on the health systems based on privatization policies. Therefore, the author states that the crisis has exposed the weaknesses of a policy that favors capital over labor and sacrifice measures for profitability and competition.

He states that neoliberal policies aggravate social inequalities during the epidemic even more than they are. He also claims that neoliberalism bases politics entirely on the economy, and the whole economy on free competition. In the first chapter, the author touches upon the problems caused by neoliberal policies during the crisis and offers the reader the opportunity to evaluate the source of the problem with its political, economic, social and ecological consequences. Talking about the serious drawbacks of globalization in the fields of health and food, which are vital for societies, he claims that national policies are necessary for both issues. Competence at the national level indicates that society should cope with the crisis in the first period. However, he emphasized the importance of maintaining international solidarity and cooperation in the fight against this globalized crisis in terms of the interdependence brought by the system in terms of solving the problem. The

topics covered in the first chapter are the problems experienced in the coronavirus epidemic in general and the sources of these problems. In the first chapter, Morin creates a framework for us to think about the secondary and tertiary crises created by the epidemic and tries to make the reader think through cause-effect relationships.

In the second chapter, Morin focuses on whether the post-coronavirus events are a collapse or an innovative transformation under the title “Post-Coronavirus Struggles.” He states that regression emerged because of competitive approaches due to neoliberalism forming the framework of national and international policies in the early 1980s and the costs being determinant of social policies. He points out that this problem became more visible in social life in the 2000s. Morin claims that neoliberal policies harm humanity’s habitat. Therefore, the author mentions in the introduction part of the book that adopting humanism is a new hope to stop crises.

In the third chapter, under the title of “Changing the Way,” after the coronavirus pandemic, the author mentions that humanity needed a new political thought and a new management approach. This should be a gradual and complementary way that takes its values from the basic principles of the Republic, namely, freedom, equality and fraternity, rather than a violent revolution that will wipe out the past. In this chapter, unlike the other two chapters, the author mentions that humanity should look from a different perspective in solving problems. It emphasizes that the previous global and centralized administrations should now be partially abandoned. At this point, he emphasizes the importance of the interdisciplinary thinking system. This process is possible with both universal and national awareness that continues gradually in the social, political, economic, and ecological fields that are transforming

from neoliberalism to humanism. Morin emphasizes the importance of social transformation at all stages of a process from globalization to humanization. He argues that the consciousness of solidarity and international cooperation and the sense of belonging will also provide the way to nationalization from worldliness. Therefore, to prevent ecological deterioration, to meet people’s need for healthy food, to take necessary measures at the national level for diseases that may pose a risk to health in the future, to support the humane living conditions of working people, to prevent racist approaches by making the necessary regulations on immigrants, to take measures to prioritize public health in the use of technology, all of them can only achieve with humanism. The author mentions that the main issue is the hegemony of quality rather than the hegemony of quantity. Morin states that the civilization policy should be a humanity policy and this is only possible by achieving a concise, qualitative quality of life. While the policy of humanity preserves the unity and diversity of people, the awareness of belonging to the human community will contribute to the ecological policy, and in this case, a new civilization policy will emerge. The basis of civilization, ecology and human policy will also develop under the influence of humanism and offer a better life to humanity.

Morin emphasizes the importance of social transformation at all stages of the process from globalization to humanization. He argues that the consciousness of solidarity and international cooperation and the sense of belonging will also provide the way to nationalization from worldliness. Therefore, to prevent ecological deterioration, to meet people’s need for healthy food, to take necessary measures at the national level for diseases that may pose a risk to health in the future, to support the humane living conditions of working people,

to prevent racist approaches by making the necessary regulations on immigrants, to take measures to prioritize public health in the use of technology, all these arguments can be achieved by humanism. The author mentions that the main issue is the hegemony of quality rather than the hegemony of quantity. Expressing that reaching us from the egocentrism of modern life is possible with social solidarity and cooperation, Morin states that the civilization policy should be human-based and this is only possible by achieving a concise, qualitative quality of life. While the policy of humanity preserves the unity and diversity of people, the awareness of belonging to the human community will contribute to the ecological policy, and in this case, a new civilization policy will emerge. The basis of civilization, environmental policies and human policies will also develop under the influence of humanism and offer a better life to humanity.

In this book, Morin focuses on how a new world order should be after the coronavirus and makes an important contribution to the literature by suggesting examples from various disciplines. The most important difference between this book and other studies written on the post-coronavirus period is the writer's suggestions on how to turn the crisis into an opportunity and that humanity should think about the collapse of modern life and take a new path for humanity. The author points out that finding a new way is a difficult process in terms of the uncertainty of the future, lists the qualities of hope, and states that the new way for humanity continues and offers a new perspective to the whole society.

At the stage of explaining the pandemic process, the author supports the problem in terms of both knowledge level and life experience and the framework of the solution proposals to the problem with

various historical and concrete examples. However, the author's transition between paragraphs and his command of terminology is also very successful. Additionally, he made enough efforts to inform the reader by describing humanism, which he mentioned as a solution proposal throughout the book, in detail in the last chapter.

As a critique, the author leaves the reader's curiosity about what a new path is to the last chapter. Additionally, the author's complex and intense expression of the new way in the last part of the book is not balanced in terms of the composition of the work and causes intense intellectual effort for the reader. As a reader, the author's suggestions in terms of the uncertainty of the future confuse minds since they vary over more than one topic. The author maintains his optimism that problems will be solved based on equality, solidarity and cooperation with humanism, but he does not fully outline the path he has put forward. Morin mentions the existence of a regional organization that is more authorized instead of an organization such as the United Nations and states that the new road design should be shaped under the authority of this organization. However, it does not inform the reader in detail about what authoritarianism at the national level is and how it should be.

In conclusion, Morin warns humanity that the alienation of man from human beings and the alienation of human beings from nature are real risks despite the possibility of encountering new crises. Additionally, he argues that human values and international cooperation will be a guide in the uncertainty of the future. From this point of view, he states that problem-solving management and political understanding will be shaped by human values at both national and international levels. In this respect, the book is valuable in terms of

its interdisciplinary evaluation of the post-coronavirus period.

Edgar Morin who was born in 1922, is a sociologist, philosopher, emeritus research director at the CNRS and the author of more than sixty books. His books are translated into numerous languages and rewarded with thirty-eight honorary doctorates, and his ideas exerted a great influence on contemporary international thinking. Sabah Abouessalam, urban sociologist, lecturer, is scientific director of the UNESCO “Complexity” chair.

References

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