

“Islamic Economics” Discourse and Sabahaddin Zaim

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Abstract

The founder mind of the Eurocentric movement, which realized a major transformation along with the route consisting of the Renaissance, Reform, Enlightenment and Industrial Revolution and which we call the modern era today, placed earthly prosperity in the main axis and the Economy as its provider. This huge transformation and shiny image had either direct or indirect impact on the remaining territory of the world. In this aspect, the Islamic landscape like many other landscapes spent the last two centuries faltering and continuously losing altitude in the face of this new rising power and engaged in numerous discussions to understand this process and tried to save the day with various improvements. However, the loss in altitude has been inescapable.

One of the areas open to discussion and reforms was the economy – in fact the modern world has structured itself on this political and ideological structure – while in Islamic geographical areas, the powers of fragmented geographies displayed impulsive solutions in order to understand the rising west and catch up with them. On the other hand, efforts were being spent to eliminate the concern regarding differences of the western paradigms mainly on civil platforms. The concern regarding ability to maintain an Islamic lifestyle in the modern world, which had mostly started on civilian platforms, generated the necessity to discuss economic relations that are part of daily lives within the framework of the new world. As the debates in the area of economy progressed, various ideas started to emerge. In this study, we have endeavored to assess these debates that were propagated within a historical process from the perspective of Sabahattin Zaim who is one of first scholars in Turkey in the area of Islamic economy.

Keywords: *Sabahattin Zaim, Islam, economy, Islamic economy*

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Introduction

The Environment Generated the “Islamic Economics” Discourse

Although philosophy of Islam and modernization movements² were often influenced (Abul Hassan, 2014: 125) theoretically by mainstream philosophy in the 18th and 19th centuries, Islam has continued its journey within a framework of different philosophies due to the comprehensive and versatile applications in terms of life and practices. Especially the state has performed dilettante studies through discussing the administration format of Islam within the framework of individual relationships and definitions as well as the framework of this administration with democracy and science and sought for evidence within the axis of the Koran and tradition to fit Islamic practices with what is modern which also continues.

The idea that the intellectual movement captured by the West with the Renaissance, reform and enlightenment processes moved the West forward and that for this reason the West became superior to the East (!) or progressed further necessitated to conduct studies regarding the western philosophy and consequently, generated ideas and discussion on how this transformation could be transferred and applied into the Islamic territories. Similarly, the reality that the essential power of the West was in its military and economic power and this in turn generated the philosophy of development and progress in countries, which are described as third world countries and the Islamic territory.

At this point, generally the powers in Islamic territory have transported their nations to the desired point with top to bottom modernization efforts. The search has continued in the civilian area often at the expense of conflict with power. Due to the attitude they displayed, the reality of the school of Islamic philosophy, which opposes and criticizes both the West and current local powers in addition to the toing and froing between different Islamic order applications and theories, have emerged in different territories.³

2 Modern thinking is a process, which started with the querying of religion incepted by the reform movements and the idea of returning to the origin – like the translation of the Bible into German by Luther and the attempt to make it understandable– and was formed with the contribution of democracy and social impact to affect the world of Islam in the 19th century.

3 The reflections of westernization on the last two centuries of the Ottoman era as well as the reflections in Egypt, which can also be accepted as an Ottoman territory, can

Efforts have been spent to understand the developments mainly embodied in the West and to understand the status of Muslim World. Perhaps, for the first time in history among Muslims, ideas were put forward with a view to questioning the inadequacy of what is Islam in the background to read again and retrospectively question Islamic values from a critical perspective and some different Islamic understandings were put in the forefront.⁴ During the modernization efforts, issues such as economic difficulties, human rights, women's rights, the right to elect and be elected caused serious discussion and even constitutional works were put on the agenda. All this has taken place mainly as preventive measures for reducing and dissolving external pressures and most of the time they have been touted as westernization. It can be said that all this is a manifestation of a complexity in terms of the West and an effort spent to reposition itself (Zaim, 1992: 121). By following the footsteps of traditional past or a completely new interpretation of the Koran (returning to the sources, a re-interpretation of the Koran, etc.), the efforts of the rising west to generate an Islamic reciprocation of what they had as of the 1970's gained momentum with the contribution of the Islamic states gained their independence after the Second World War. Especially as of the early 1980s, in the new neoliberal era, the pursuit of the Muslim World and intellectuals for economic order started to rise.

Consequently, in 1976, the 1st World Islamic Economic Congress (Zaim, 1992: 12) was organized and the pursuit started to resound in the Muslim World. as a matter of fact that studies in the Islamic World and in Turkey started to intensify after this year. For example, research centers were established in Malik Abdulaziz University in Jeddah, the Islamic Development Bank, International Islamic Banking and Economics Institute in Cyprus and the Islam Universities in Islamabad and Malaysia. In this study, we have focused especially on Islamic Banking and Finance issues and a number of studies that have been generated in this area in English, Arabic, Urdu and Turkish (Zaim, 1992: 13).

While the world of Islam was seeking to generate a way out with the pursuits of "Islamic economics", the West and especially the UK (Unit- give us clues in this aspect. The applications in Pakistan and the Islam State of Iran are important in terms of a more recent era.

4 This has emerged in criticism of tradition, querying social and marginal ideas such as the total renewal of tradition and the Koran.

ed Kingdom) (Dar, 2012: 116) was seeking possibilities of integrating the economic values held by Muslims both in the Islamic territories and those living in different Western countries integrated with the world system.⁵ “In this sense, the unofficial Islamic banking service in the United Kingdom started in the 1960s. By the 1990s, Islamic banking became official in the UK (Dar, 2012: 116).

There is no doubt that the issue has a meaning in terms of global economy and integration; however, as indicated before, there is also the dimension of fatwas or instructions about how and what to do as Muslim individuals who are obliged to sustain their daily lives in the center of the modern world. At this point, there is an ongoing issue about creating the boundaries to be drawn and establishing a system integrated with the entire world. The reality is that today states do not have the power to determine their economic policies themselves. When this has to be done on foreign ground in addition to the difficulties of maintaining their identities, opposite an overwhelming force into which various sudden and unstrained output is added. Thus, there is a possibility of losing the issue in the background without any solutions. Likewise, it is not so easy to separate between black and white in a secularized postmodern world. In fact some do not even find it necessary anymore. According to the West, the issue is not a matter of black and white anyway, but an issue of ‘functional or non-functional’. With the reflection of this perspective into the Muslim World, the discussions moved away from the grounds of Islamic economy and shifted to the axis of discussions regarding development, growth, progress, democracy and the subjects which were essential issues involved in the background. Speediness and the wannabe attitude generated by the desire to catch up with the West was translated into pragmatic acts with the intention of saving the day and after a while, the principles of the race were replaced by the race itself. From this point of view, discussions related to Islamic economy started to lose its significance.

5 As a matter of fact during the real production era, these western countries lead by the United Kingdom acquired a significant resource and market in terms of their own developments by adding the real assets (underground, over ground) of the countries classified as third world countries, all other countries apart from them as well as those in Muslim territory.

The Conceptualization of “Islamic Economics”: Ambiguous ground

In this study, the conceptualization of “Islamic economics” emerged as a process mainly in the second quarter of the 20th century in the Indian peninsula, which was generated by Muslim scholars in an attempt to overcome the traditional fiqh patterns of the socio-economic issues that modern Muslim societies were confronted with (Zaim, 1992: 11).

At this point, economic competition had been transported to the international dimension and the boundaries of the nation state had been trespassed which prevented the spell, the essence of the issue from being discussed; efforts were spent to formulate the issue merely on platforms gained through practice. It is also to be expected that this dimensional analysis was incomplete and misleading (Zaim, 2007: 483-484). The resulting chaotic epistemological and eclectic structure promulgated the danger that studies related to Islamic economy could orientate to populism (Akyol, 2011: 229).

Chapra, which is prominent in studies in the area of Islamic economics, underlines an important point here which he determines with the sentence “it is necessary to distinguish between Islamic economy and the Islamization of economy” (Chapra, 1991: 52). However, there is also no doubt that hasty diagnosis were made in discussions about Islamic economics from time to time with the impatience and enthusiasm to catch up with the west immediately. The ongoing quest has remained mostly superficial and is muddled with an illusion. During the negotiations of a paper, in which the views of Islam on fees were manifested, Zaim underlined superficiality and inexperience and said that “what we are talking about here are at the stage of materializing; they are raw materials. We cannot weave cloth with this” (İSAV, 1990: 143). This statement gives us an opinion regarding the weaknesses of superficial applications in which the ideas are generated with inadequate vision and material without prioritizing practical needs.

Once again, at this point, it is impossible to ignore opinions such as “Islam = capitalism-riba” and even riba (refers to interest in Islamic literature) cannot always be equaled with interest and that these are efforts to overcome the situation with the skills of an illusionist (Yılmaz, 1991: 134).

As an example of this haste and superficiality, another point must be

emphasized that Islam has been viewed as an alternative to various schools of thought that have receded or considered as losers such as leftwing / Marxists / communists, which have undertaken to defeat the savage capitalism of the West or which have been used for this purpose and Islam has been promoted to the position of new trainer to improve capitalism in the current unipolar world (Zaim, 1992: 46). The problem here is that “Islam has been viewed as a derivation of its own alternative views or adverse alternatives instead of an independent life and order.” (Karakoç, 2003: 9). At this point, considering the possible deviations that the Islamic economy discourse may reach, once again, it is appropriate to emphasize that pushing the essential character of the society model proposed by Islam into the background, by decorating a society resembling a western society with various Islamic motifs that the conscious or unconscious efforts to reconstruct a model, there is a likelihood of structuring an eclectic society model.⁶ In short, it is an important topic to discuss just how Islamic are the ‘eclectic weak based intellectual setups’ which emerge as a result of the efforts spent to formulate an Islamic version of everything (Haenni, 2011: 35; Salleh, 2014: 245-246). At the end of all these efforts spent, Islam is commodified with an understanding that addresses the market with everything clamped in the global acceptability of massification. Muslims have become customers who do not pass beyond being a consumer only (Haenni, 2011: 61).

The essential question which is overlooked or kept at arm’s length in discussions about Islamic economics, which is also a criticism of the economy based society model established by the western world, the question is why a society model in which economic activities are not the main element is not on the agenda and why are all discussions are based on the acceptance of the success (!) of the West.⁷ In the process of the modern world, economy is not a prominent determinant in all areas of both the Islamic societies and other societies, instead it is a part of daily life, an area

6 The point which must be underlined here is that the criticism made in this text are criticisms in terms of the philosophy of economy and theory. It is not done with the intention of finding daily solutions and fatwa for Muslims who live embedded with modern societies in the modern world and those whose habitats are under occupation to enable more Islamic living conditions. Although this issue is quite important, we believe that the essential problem consists of the upper view theoretically.

7 This question (problem) is understood from the statement by Karakoç which is as follows “Islam is a world view, way of life and style of civilization with an economic understanding, attitude and framework”. See Karakoç, 2003: 16.

where needs are fulfilled. Where the modern world puts economy into the center and its determinant axis into the forefront of this structure, this has become the ideology of modernism.

The question about where economy stands in Islam, there is a significant risk in answering the question with an evasive answer like “The importance given by Islam to economic welfare originates from essence of the divine inspiration” (Chapra, 1991: 19) or legitimizing the situation is a serious risk for the legitimization of modern economics. Of course Islam does not order us to experience distress and difficulty on earth and legitimizes taking advantage of worldly blessings. Yet it does criticize and forbids those who plunge into the world (Qur’an, Muddesir: 45) and gets pleasure from propagating (Qur’an, Tekasür, Shura: 1) and amassing (Qur’an, Tevbe, Shura: 34). In other words, economic success is not something that happens in spite of everything or a priority for human beings. It is not a saving recipe to describe human dignity as a priority with economic power and a Muslim as a human figure with vertebrae or an attitude and turn this into a figure with high adaptability. In fact, those who are economically weak are perceived as valueless today is because what is valuable is depicted as economic. The welfare of Islam is not one way. Islam recommends a multiple direction welfare society and it is important to define what welfare is and how it is measured.

Even to explain the emphasis on “material aspect” simply as an economic one in this sentence “Giving the same importance to both the material and spiritual aspects of life are a unique characteristic of the Islamic economy system” (Chapra, 1991: 23) is proof of the great pressure, which the modern economic philosophy system and the world perception holds our quest under. However, it is not only the material which is economic, it covers everything worldly. Furthermore, material and spiritual things don’t have the same importance. What is spiritual is a superior mind which limits/determines what is material.

Another issue frequently overlooked in discussions about Islamic economy is that Islamic economics is not a predetermined area of science and theory but the reflection of practice itself. Perhaps what is promulgated as Islamic economics is not only the absolute profit of one incurring procedure in an application or an application to the loss of another. If there is anything to discuss, it would be the method to be practiced. The essence

of the matter is that in the daily shopping of a Muslim individual, both the buyer and the seller emerge with a profit⁸. Perhaps, the Islamic one is dependent on capturing the altruistic perspective of the other. Without distancing itself from a society and social relations organized in a western sense with a priority on economy, without abandoning objectivized relationships and generating a fiction over it, how much will be understood from the Islamic point of the economic analysis that revealed that the existence of this practice is evident (Han, 1988: 11).⁹ Already the size of the structure affects the flexibility and therefore practical moves pertaining to locality are not introduced. The Wheel is so big that people disappear and the system gains a flow of its own. This ultimately leads to defeat by the man-made idol.¹⁰

The question asked at this point is what kind of a model Islam proposes? Another question which could be asked is whether a model is needed. There is no doubt that within the framework of both questions, the discussion will be carried to different directions. However, the real problem here is a secular generalizing (Özlem, 2002) tradition, which is not earth centered and world visionary, but discussed on the same platform and recommends one treatment for all. The modern world structures itself on a plane which is economy centered and human beings are the sole decision makers regarding everything happens on earth (Skirbekk & Gilje, 2011: 208). Firstly, this difference must be propounded. It must be seen that universal law, universal education, universal state model and the universal economic model proposed under the name of liberalism, freedom and individualism is far from reality, a one type imposition of the western paradigm (Özlem, 2006: 107). It is clear that the solution must be sought outside this axis.

At this point, generating a model resembling a western model will only push Muslims into a permanent market position. The West holds other elements other than economy to apply pressure to protect its economic

8 This profit is not a material profit and it should not be. The essence of the profit here is the consent of Allah.

9 In his views on Islamic Economy, Mannan takes a different stance by saying 'there is practically no difference between the Islamic Economy in terms of scarce resources and the modern economy'. See Mannan, 1973: 16.

10 This situation has been indicated by En-Neccar as 'property and money that have been disengaged from all affiliations and become an idol...' See En-Neccar, 1978: 15.

power as well as to rearrange the economic groundwork from time to time in line with its interests.¹¹ Thus, the Power of Modern World applies pressure on all territories, which remain outside this economic cycle. Another issue, which must not be overlooked, is that the success of the West has not been achieved solely through economic activities. In that case, the Islamic World is obliged to face this reality at least when they are generating philosophies. In this aspect, the main purpose is not to generate a similar opportunity as the western world generates, but perhaps to go beyond that on another platform. The West is aware of that the structure is indexed on capital and therefore it has legitimized all paths to achieve this capital and the religion allows this. However, a Muslim is obliged to maneuver within certain limits. Just like not all paths are legitimate, it is prohibited that assets are recycled among certain hands (Qur'an, Haṣr: 7).¹²

Thus, this wealth should be returned to the community in the form of alms, charity, tax, foundations and the mechanism of redistribution of wealth may also become possible with good operation. Islam considers property as merely a tool and escrow, whereas economic achievement is one of the main objectives for the West. In Islamic beliefs, not only property but the world is considered as a tool to access Allah. The existence of the world is for the afterlife. Naturally, Islam is not in favor of the indigency of the community. It favors strengthening the economic structure. However, this should not be done as it happens in the West, both where the economy is considered as a godlike power¹³ to which all leading paths are legitimized and where the economic structure favors the least amount of work to achieve the largest assets¹⁴. In other words, Islam cannot put dynamite to the foundations of society and humanity for the sole purpose of achieving a strong economic structure (Mutahhari, 1997: 15).

11 It is evident that the investment and superiority of the west initially in the military area as well as enables them to commission the application of adjustments on the system through international organizations (the United Nations, IMF, the World Bank, World Trade Organization etc.) in the international system cycle.

12 Religion and the World are two areas which do not intervene with one another, in other words the west is secular. The order is established not by religion but by mankind and his interests.

13 For example Hobbes differed from previous philosophers in that he did not view the state as a divine entity and formulated the state on the personal interests of the individual as a sort of divinity. See Aktan, 1994: 19.

14 This characteristics is nothing other than the "homo-economicus" of the liberal economy. See Turanlı, 2008: 66.

The fact that Allah wished convenience for people or that the Prophet was sent to the world as a sign of the Almighty's mercy which are emphasized in the Koran, which does not support the philosophy that the welfare of society consists of solely economic power and wealth. Considering such an interpretation from a western perspective, efforts spent to find corresponding issues to modern concepts in Islam cause the discussions to stray from the essential issues. In conclusion, Muslims have selected to compromise with the world system instead of conflicting/denying it with the idea that the system is unquestionable and unchangeable. In fact, from time to time, interpretations showing the market economy and the individual discourse in Islam appear to be parallel in the liberal world and serious efforts have been made to internalize western concepts.¹⁵ At times, the idea of "Islamic economy" is propounded as a product of such a perspective. This matter has been taken to further discussion by scholars who have generated an in-market interpretation of Islam.

'Islamic Economics' Discourse in Sabahattin Zaim

Sabahattin Zaim, who is a prominent major name in discussions of Islamic economics, emphasizes the necessity to act on a different platform. However, sometimes he has also encountered the difficulties of acting from an angle of the West. For example, he says that "Actually a fair order is sought in the social market economy. This order is available in the Islamic economy. Islamic economics are actually the free market economies that have been disciplined with ethics." (Zaim, 1992: 159). Naturally, we are aware of that Zaim does not mean a free independent market economy generated according to supply and demand. He himself indicates the emphasis of this distinction regarding a market organized in an ethical axis. However, the problem is that in terms of theorizing Islamic economy discussions, they have not imposed themselves as yet. Most of the time, they have been unable to establish a concept of their own. For this reason, they have complemented themselves over the others and been obliged to generate opportunities of existence in that conceptual world.

15 The sentence of Zaim "democracy is the administration of the virtuous" can be read on this plane.

However, Zaim, at this point, states that it would be pointless that Muslim countries adopt a system from any of the eastern or western block, the association of the economic system is one aspect and the social, political, moral etc. of societies is a holistic structure representing all aspects. According to him, dealing with only the economic aspect of a society is similar to dealing with the external part of that society, which is the visible part of the iceberg only. The western world has actually constructed the economic understanding on a social and cultural basis similar to the remaining part of the iceberg. There is no doubt that this is not appropriate for Islamic societies. For this reason, lacking the philosophical background and only applying a superficial imitation models imported into the world of Islam have not and will not be successful. Because the tissues do not match. It is evident from the example of the Ottomans, who dedicated the last two centuries for westernization, that this type of westernization cannot be a solution (Zaim, 1992: 156-157).

Modern economies are founded on the concepts of growth, progress and rationality. This growth and progress must be achieved in spite of everything. Therefore, it is also estranged from being a natural economic flow. While the economy itself is based on artificial dynamics, needs and functioning have also become artificial. In addition, the modern economy requires the concentration of capital in order to continue this operation. Accordingly, the capital investments are as qualified and strong as the size of the capital. For this reason, values which are in circulation in the economy should be as concentrated as possible. This operation challenges and delays the extension of the capital and welfare on the ground. In fact, liberal capital philosophers such as Hayek indicates without any hesitation that the redistribution of revenue is a 'mirage' which accommodates injustice, whereas operativity should be achieved 'its own accord as a natural order' without touching the market to realize justice (Günör, 2008: 78). The reason is that real growth and progress is essential. Welfare should be postponed if it is necessary. However, Islam says, "wealth must not be a commodity swirling among you" making a declaration in terms of distribution of wealth in society and has not presented evidence for this to be postponed or to make different interpretations (Qur'an, Şahr: 7). However, the principle of 'arm yourselves with the weapons of your enemy may cause various economic progress theories and their boundaries a mat-

ter of discussion (Chapra, 1991: 31). The hadith depicted by Imam Buhari recommends the relationship of two siblings instead of laborer-employees, which makes the modern explanation of the situation more difficult. If the general principles of Islam were laid out, perhaps the accumulation of large capital concentrations in an Islamic community would be impossible (Chapra, 1991: 37).

The application of this economic model introduces the necessity of a certain political and socio-cultural infrastructure. In this aspect, the West has concentrated on an economic and political system based on competition and power separation and called this management style democracy. With this pretext, the hegemony of a single structure has been tried to be avoided in the economic life and the political area as well as the sociocultural area. Zaim states that Islam achieved the principle of separation of powers from another aspect and formulizes his statement by those who hold worldly power in their hands cannot act in accordance with their worldly wishes as “Earthly power is controlled by divine power in Islam” (Zaim, 1992: 172).

He has continued by saying that ‘if there is a control mechanism in democracy; in this sense, this democracy is available in Islam. Earthly power is not uncontrolled power, there is control.’ (Zaim, 1992: 172).

Zaim defines Islamic economics as a “systematic efforts to analyze economic problems and human behavior from an Islamic perspective” (Zaim, 1992: 49). According to him, Islamic economy has religious roots since it is not a completely dependent application within the structure of religion (Zaim, 1992: 46). Despite all this, consequently, the Islamic economy is an economy and its priorities are economic problems and institutions. Furthermore, Zaim states that Islamic economy differs from secular economies because it is free from the values of these economies. According to Zaim, the western economy is not free of value as alleged and although those behind this economy deny this truth, they have their own value judgments. The contrary is not very feasible (Zaim, 1992: 47).

Hence, Zaim focuses on human being and his position on earth and he underlines that since Islamic economy is focused on ‘mankind’, all assessments must be made according to this principle. According to him, certainly Islamic economics is interested in the concept of assets and other economic elements. Yet the essential focus is human being (Zaim, 1992: 53). However,

attention must be drawn to the fact that the western economy also claims to be centered on mankind and the objective is to enhance freedom and welfare within this framework. The difference here is that the humanitarian social individual of Zaim¹⁶, is the egocentric human being in the western economy. In other words, whose existence is only himself who recognizes no other binding element other than his own conscience and mind; he himself is the supreme and final objective. For this reason, the concepts of freedom and economic welfare are interpreted within this framework (Çaha, 1999: 41).

In Zaim's statement, mankind does not harm nature or others to maximize benefits for himself because the task on earth is to ensure justice as a caliph. In other words, Zaim's mankind is responsible to obey the rules set by Allah. Acting upon this mankind, Zaim introduces the typology of a 'beautiful human' according to his own conceptualization. Affording to him, one the most important differences between the understanding of modern economy and Islamic economy is that Islam puts limits on what things should be like in general (Zaim, 1992: 1123-124), whereas the modern world is more abstract. The rights and wrongs, good and bad are seasonal. Islam on the other hand protects the traditions of society which are not in conflict with religion.¹⁷ The modern world on the other hand controls everything that is normal and general and nurtures the abnormal. Today, the modern world has legitimized and protects numerous abnormalities from homosexuality to nudism. For this reason, it has adopted the principle of steering what is available rather than what should be and enforce power through that. The benefit of the individual has exceeded that of society. Society has been sacrificed for the individual.¹⁸ The rights

16 At this point, Zaim underlines that the concept of social human being involves in the conceptualization of a different human being model which completely externalizes the individuality of socialism or communism and is an altruistic personality that is aware of his responsibility to Allah. Otherwise, Islam is not against private property. See Zaim, 1992: p. 49-55.

17 Essentially, interest is not legitimate in Judaism and Christianity either.

18 Under the title of extremism, freedoms such as people bequeathing their legacy to their pets, people marrying their dogs, the freedom of walking naked in the streets are imposed to society. See (online) 01.05. 2014, <http://arama.hurriyet.com.tr/arsivnews.aspx?id=7353080>, <http://www.haberler.com/10-milyon-avro-kediye-miras-kaldi-3183075-haberi/>, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/planet/19438328.asp>, <http://www.sabah.com.tr/Dunya/2013/11/23/mirasini-kedilerine-birakti>, <http://www.dagmedya.net/2014/04/25/nudizm-yasallasti-munihin-alti-bolgesinde-ciplak-gezme-gerbest/> <http://galeri.haberturk.com/yasam/galeri/437541-bu-sehirde-ciplak-gezme-gerbest>

of the individual are supreme to those of society; all values derive from the individual (Çetin, 2001: 221). From the perspective of Islam, neither the state nor the individual has absolute dominance. Both parties are obliged to observe the boundaries of Allah (Zaim, 1992: 170). In short, Islam is “value centered” while the modern world claims it is ‘neutral’ in terms of values (Zaim, 1992: 47). In this case, the ruling that ‘the individual free in his behavior and actions to the point when intervention by other incurs’ (Yayla, 1992: 149) is clinched.

According to Zaim, the economy area is a part of the whole Islam. Islam is a whole which covers the entire life of an individual. For this reason, various principles restricting the economic area must be derived from this whole. In this sense, the first principle of Islamic economics is obviously amalgamation. Monotheism calls on society as a whole to be organized around the unity of Allah. Economics should be perceived as the ethical and ideological subunit of an integral structure. Although it is an entity on its own, it maintains its characteristics of being an integral component within this integrated system (Zaim, 1992: 124). Zaim continues to handle the issues from this perspective and indicates that the second principle of Islamic economics is that it is formed by human beings as honorable creatures and that the target is mankind and that other essence is the principle of justice. Regardless of all this, Islam recognizes the right to own property, but it is not an absolute ownership; it is formulated within the framework of custodian logic. Zaim indicates that the prohibition of interest regarding the capital and assets of Islamic economics as another important restriction and underlines the alms institute repeatedly (Zaim, 1992: 124-126).

As Zaim displays the differences between Islamic economy structure and modern economic model, as mentioned above, he explains the ethical stance of the Muslim (*homo Islamicus*) regarding ‘worldly goods’ with a world philosophy. For example, according to Zaim, extension of the foundation culture¹⁹ in Islamic societies continues due to the sensitivity of Muslims/beautiful people to leave a gate of good deeds for themselves before their demise. Zaim continues to explain in this vein that the concept

19 Zaim points out that 17% of the territory in Anatolia of the Ottoman State during the era of the lawmakers belonged to foundations, See Zaim, 1992: p. 55.

of benefits in Islamic economics does not refer only to economic growth, but that it emphasizes ethical and social priorities as economic growth (Zaim, 1992: 53-55). According to him, a person with wealth/property is not a person with unlimited properties, but only a person to whom such property has been entrusted, who holds the right to make transactions on these properties. For this reason, the owner must refrain from exploiting or wasting such wealth and deem himself as the deputy of these assigned opportunities and use them for the benefit of society, people and nature. That is why interest/Riba is a sin in Islam. It generates exploitation and unearned gains. He believes that credit relationships in Islam should be sustained based on a system of profit-loss partnership and insists that the debiting and interest relationship of the modern economy structure are unjust (Zaim, 1992: 55). From this aspect, the 'profit + interest' formula of Adam Smith for profit is not valid for Zaim (Turanlı, 2008: 72).

Zaim references to the meaning and form of utilization of wealth and underlines that Islam has a structure, which initiates growth and development only within certain limitations and priorities axis (Zaim, 2005: 110-111, 109-117). For example, according to Zaim, idle wealth should be circulated with the alms institution. This prevents the wealth from remaining idle and initiates it into investment. It should be noted that the prohibition of waste and luxury in Islam will enhance savings in the Muslim society, which in turn will enhance investments and initiate growth (Zaim, 1992: 56).

Referring to all these elements, Zaim underlines that the understanding of benefits and rationality by Muslims is rather different from the meaning in the capitalist structure. He also emphasizes that this will open a revolutionary change in the regulation of the economic life. It is not rational work for oneself in this world, since it is more beneficial to live by taking the afterlife and other people into consideration (Zaim, 1992: 57). Zaim refers to the concept of needs within this framework as; "it is closely associated with the desires as well as the possibilities of people." (Zaim, 1992: 57). However, according to Zaim, it is possible to determine certain criteria and priorities in the definition of needs.

As a result, the society model and economic reflections will be rather different and some indicators used today will take a different status. Gross National Product (GNP) will have a different dimension in calculations, etc.

Zaim indicates that a Muslim cannot be a homo Economicus; he approaches the issue of how a Muslim person (beautiful human being, homo Islamicus) should be and how consumers, laborers, producers or employers should behave and refers directly to the Koran for solutions. According to Zaim, a Muslim consumer knows that consumption expenses are not only the function of income. He is aware of that there is an area determined by the orders of Allah and his prohibitions. He calls them 'commodity economic normative rules' (Zaim, 1992: 70). For example, a Muslim refrains from expenditures involving alcohol, gambling, adultery, luxury and pomp. They have been personally restricted by Allah. He avoids hypocritical behavior and spending. He takes the level of community life into account while meeting his needs and refrains from expenditure and behavior which might provoke the indigent and create envy in the community. He endeavors to live within his means as much as possible without incurring debts. Thus, the trend to save will increase in the Muslim community and savings will end up as investments. The Islamic economy saves assets, which have not transformed into investments through the alms procedure (Zaim, 1992: 72-73).

Zaim uses the classification of the production activities to be conducted in an economic model of a Muslim community by Gazali as follows:

- a) The production of essential commodities consist of commodities and services which provide the five fundamental characteristics as faith, life, mind, production and wealth of the owner as well as Muslim individualism.
- b) Production activities which facilitate and ease life,
- c) Increasing grace in the form of excerpts from the same production activities,
- d) Zaim explains and underlines that in these matters, essential commodities, production activities facilitating and easing the life or increase of grace manufacturing activities and their scope may show seasonal changes according to civilizations. In other words, things considered as luxuries yesterday may have become essential needs today.

Muslim producers can produce by taking these facts into consideration, but if they are obliged to choose between categories, in the case of conflict, the choice shall be in favor of the essential one. In this way, the efficiency of investments can be maximized (Zaim, 1992: 63-64).

Producers naturally base their gains on labor and profit-loss elements. Trouble free easy gains are not favored. The property of others is not covered. The afterlife will not be destroyed for temporary benefits. Increases in the cost of commodities shall not be incurred with cheating, stockpiling and injustice. For example, if a Muslim producer knows that a halal trade will become a tool of haram trade, he will abandon selling that commodity (El-Misri, 1989: 30-31).

Employers are aware of that the wealth and income they have achieved is not only the result of their labor, but a result of Allah's will and they do not forget the reality that other people have a right in their gains. The employer will not overwork a laborer beyond his capacity and will avoid cheating, speculation, profiteering, monopoly and bribery.

After manifesting what producer/employer and consumer behavior should be like, Zaim underlines that laborers should behave in a way which is beneficial for Muslims /beautiful people, and work for the livelihoods of their families. They also do the work they are doing in the best possible way in the knowledge that perseverance is appreciated in the presence of Allah. In short, regardless of whether it is the consumer or the laborer or the producer or employer, the orders of Allah will always be kept as a priority and they will show compassion to all creatures created by Allah and arrange their lives in accordance with this motto (Zaim, 1992: 70).

It is essential to perform an activity in the market order and capitalism in legal boundaries. From this aspect, if trafficking in women or alcohol or activities such as gambling, which disrupt the social structure, can be taxed and controlled, then there is no problem in doing those. Modern economy assesses similar activities as an economic resource even if they are corrupt and damaging (El-Misri, 1989: 18). The main purpose is nothing more than enchanting wealth and freedom (!) of individuals (Çağatay, 1958: 23). However, Muslims are obliged to ensure their livelihoods within the boundaries of their own ethics. In a modern economic order, investment slides towards what is profitable instead of what is ethical; profit is the primary target of the capitals in such economic systems (Lordoğlu, 1996:

10). For this reason, the market is channeled into supporting corruption in the long run. One of the most important elements we need to underline is that the final objective of the economic understanding of the West is the promise to resolve the economic problems of mankind and establish a heaven on earth. This is only a worldly target. At this point, they select science as their starting point. However, our final objective is to achieve the consent of Allah and generate solutions for Allah's consent to resolve the daily problems of people on earth which we accept as transitory. Anything to the contrary would be getting swept away with a secular perspective like the western economy (Han, 1988: 99). Actually, it is possible to say that what is a tool for us has become an objective for them (Han, 1988: 94).

For Zaim, who has based his perspective of the world and life as a Muslim, the human and economic approach is also determined by these basic principles. Today, the dominant paradigm of economic man (*homo-Economicus*) is being interest-orientated and holds individual economic interests at the forefront. On the other hand, according to Zaim, a Muslim person who has become involved in life as Muslim cannot base his economic understanding on this basis. He is a *homo-Islamicus* and not a *homo-Economicus* (Zaim, 2005: 112) and his intention is not only to maximize personal interests and gains in a material sense, but to achieve Allah's consent. According to Zaim, the motto of life is living right and using our ethical skills well.

From this perspective, rational choices in Islam steer a person to altruism rather than selfishness. Profit is not just something achieved in the world in a short time, but the consent of Allah both in the world and in the afterlife (Qur'an, Qasas: 60). Zaim indicates that structurally man is prone in thinking and apt about doing something regarding commodities in the world and underlines that actually these emotions are necessary for the development of mankind and the structuring of the earth. In addition, according to Zaim, these emotions must be controlled and disciplined and that balancing this activating dynamic is only possible when mankind gains a spiritual dimension (Zaim, 2007: 113).

The Muslim man/beautiful man is the one who has totaled this balance within himself. According to Zain, even the most perfect system can be exploited in the application phase by the human element. In that case, the beauty of the person is as important as the perfection of the sys-

tem. From this perspective, if a social order prioritizes the prominence of a society consisting of beautiful people, most of the current problems will rectify themselves. A society where a human profile consisting of people who do not steal, who do not covet the property of others, who defend rights as well as the rights of orphans, the indigent, those who have been left holding the short end of the stick is a society which has ensured achieving beauty as a community. Otherwise, no matter how perfect a system is established, mankind will generate a way out and the system is doomed to degenerate in the long run.

In this aspect, the society of Zaim is structured on mankind. According to Zaim, even if all the organizations are fully established, people will be operating these organizations (Zaim, 1992: 24) and this is why the level of the people will be the fundamental factors to determine the efficiency of these organizations. From this perspective, the conceptualization of 'beautiful human being' in all the discourse and texts shall be materialized to establish a system from micro to macro scale.

Islam does not act on the assumption that resources are scarce. God is the Almighty and God has created everyone's livelihood (Han, 1988: 11). Islam recommends brotherhood and cooperation beyond a system based on free competition. Islam's understanding of competition is not overpowering and there are limits set by Allah. These limits are the limits arising from the consciousness of Allah and the responsibility of being a Muslim. The interpretation of the West being sinners and selfish derives from the Christian infrastructure in terms of human beings. Everybody is born a sinner and is cleansed through baptism. On the contrary, human nature is essentially spotless although in time some contamination may incur in Islam. For this reason, mankind must review himself from time to time and establishment of self-criticism system is recommended. The understanding of the West in terms of the free market is an understanding comprised of selfish individuals. On the other hand, a Muslim is altruistic and does not want for his brother what he does not want for himself. For example, a Muslim will consider it unfair if through advertising a commodity which is of lesser quality or equal to another commodity is advertised as the same quality or better through packaging. The free market meant by Islam is a market where there is no unfairness, lawlessness, power or manipulation.

These are actually the restrictions alleged by modern economic discourse. However, today, the discourse of Adam Smith about free competition and the market are nothing more than a utopia.²⁰ The understanding of ethics accompanying liberalism will not allow it. Braudel explains the situation in this context: The existence of Liberal-capitalist ethics requires the strangulation of competition; operating a “monopoly” as a rule is mandatory. However, there is no such thing as completely eliminating the free market; the monopoly and the free market must co-exist. A competition which can be manipulated is always necessary. In this sense, market economy means ‘competition’ while capitalism coincides with ‘monopoly’. Monopoly means the integration of power, cheating and intelligence (Taşçı, 2012: 231).

On the other hand, current works within the framework of the concept of Islamic economics has focused more in the financial area. Even this is a proof of the priority given by Muslim groups to the works involving integration with the global capital. For example, it is established over production and growth instead of language, consumption and waste. Pomp and luxury are mostly off the agenda. At this point, Zaim emphasizes an important essence outside the general tendency that Islamic funds or the formations emerged as interest-free banks due to the ethical structure of Islam are underlined as formations that do not serve people in return for profit, but have emerged with an aim of serving them (Zaim, 1992: 37-38). This idea is the reflection of Islamic loan institutions.²¹

Conclusion: where is our back directed?

In conclusion, we are aware of that the Islamic economics discourse is a two way project against the modern world; one of these is that Islamic states must achieve a structure which is at least as developed as that of the West. There are Muslim philosophers, who have projects portraying Islamic sensitivities, believe that Islam should pioneer everything beautiful. Secondly, we believe that the West, the good intentions of which we cannot be quite sure of, which has captured profitability and productivity

20 Similar views have also been purported by Adam Smith. However, the situation which emerged as liberalism adopted a utilitarian attitude and it became impossible to apply these principles.

21 For a new study about this issue, please see Salih, 2014.

within itself is eager to integrate the rest of the world into the system and capture an increase in productivity. Furthermore, we believe that Islam has a unique structure of its own and it does not foresee an economic model which resembles that of the West. At the point reached today without changing the finance structure of the West or the current monetary system, it is difficult to speak about an institutional Islamic economic cycle within the aforementioned system (Ebussuud, 1980: 136). The dimensions of the executed work change with printing more money for commodities and selling/trading money for interest. It is clear that a reason which has established itself fully on a structure of 'economy for economy' is not a structure foreseen by Islam.

This does not mean that Muslims should fall behind non-Muslims states. However, it is not necessary to be like them and employ the ways they used to be successful. This success is not legitimate. The blood of millions is involved in the rise of the West; slaves, children, women, continents have been exploited. The West did not get where it is today with superior intellect. It got there because it activated its ability to be a nonhuman entity.

Muslims must manifest a different economic plane/paradigm/dimension from the West and its economic paradigm. The question that should be asked in here is: *What is the point of creating a society model in which economy is not the main element off the agenda?* It is evident that Islam will become more meaningful in a society where this question is raised.

Perhaps, the final things that can be said here is that most of the studies which have been manifested as Islamic economics had the intention of searching for something better and developing a more humanitarian perspective and generating an alternative secular approach which has been adjusted to accommodate features that are characteristic to being a Muslim (Khan, 2014: 33). This is nothing more than looking for a solution within the existing system. Zaim supports the intention of Kurt Dopher and transfers from him that the intention is not to criticize the economic understanding of the West and establish a kind of derivative, but to change the paradigm which is the essence completely (Zaim, 1992: 45).

Economy is a new science for the West also and no doubt it has become an ideology. The idea of Islamic economics has emerged as an ideology and has developed in the shadow of the nation state and the understanding the modern economy. It is not easy at all to step outside of an

understanding with an axis of competition and gain. Those, who manifest Islamic economics discourse as a criticism of this model, are mostly unaware of that they have been misguided into regeneration of a similar model in a more ethical format; in other words, what is being discussed recently is more about the wrongs of this system than the rights in which this search and establishment has been for the Islamic counterparts of the philosophy and the organizations. The concept of a more ethical economy gained prominence in the beginning of the 20th century and today, it has been revised according to various understandings with concepts such as labor ethics/working ethics. The reflex of Muslims has mostly been to handle the issue by supplementing parallel applications. In fact, there have been efforts to include interest within the system which is one of the most significant differences of Islam.

At this point, the conceptual infrastructure and philosophical background of modern formations have often been used in a haphazard way detached from their concepts. Furthermore the mistake of perceiving them at face value has been made. The most important concept of the modern world and perhaps the most functional way is democracy. Debating democracy and similar concepts is doubtlessly beyond the scope of this article. However, the question which needs to be asked is: Why were these words that are used with such ease invented in the secular world? There will be those who say that they were not invented and they have deep roots in the past. Some will even smile. In that case, let us use these concepts and ask once again which world are we listening to? Where have we turned our backs?

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