

Cultural Heritage and Contemporary Change  
Series IIA, Islam, Volume 18

**Change and Essence:  
Dialectical Relations between  
Change and Continuity in the Turkish  
Intellectual Tradition**

Edited by  
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The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy

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Washington, D.C. 20064

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Printed in the United States of America

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication**

Change and essence : dialectical relations between change and continuity in the Turkish intellectual tradition / edited by Sinasi Gunduz, Cafer S. Yaran.

p.cm. – (Cultural heritage and contemporary change. Series IIA Islam; vol. 18)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Turkey—Intellectual Life. 2. Philosophy, Islamic. 3. Islam—Turkey. 4. Islam—Doctrines. I. Gunduz, Sinasi II. Yaran, Cafer S. III. Series.

DR432.C49 2005  
297.2'09651—dc21

2005008871  
CIP

ISBN 1-56518-222-7 (pbk.)

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## Introduction

Although it is usual to begin the history of consciousness concerning the dialectic between change and essence with the ancient philosophy of the 5th century B.C., the very phenomenon of the essence and change goes back much earlier in the history of being and particularly of human beings. All creatures live their life within the limits of their potential in relation to change and essence. Human beings have change and essence potentials not only from the ontological point of view, but also from the axiological perspective as free, intelligent, and developing beings. Essence is the essential and continuing factor which makes us to be and keeps us what we are both ontologically and axiologically. Change is the way or law of our differentiation and particular development based upon our essence.

Essence and change are not oppositional or mutually exclusion dichotomic poles. In contrast, both are necessary for us and complementary to one another. For the creatures like us, who are in need of various types of development, essence alone without change would mean the lack of any development and evolution; on the other hand, so-called development efforts without essence would result in evaporation and extinction. What is natural and is also needed in the cultural world is change in essence and essence in change.

However, history shows that people cannot always keep this equilibrium; sometimes they maximize essence and minimize change, while at the other times they do the reverse. After a long period of considerable balance between essence and change, Turkish intellectual and cultural life began to emphasize and maximize essential traditional values, educational methods and governmental systems in the late centuries of the Otoman Empire. Towards the second half of the nineteenth century Turkish intellectuals sensed the danger, and started to emphasize change in the directions of Islamization, nationalization, or Westernization. In the twentieth century, the emphasis on change, particularly in the direction of the latter two, gained revolutionary momentum with the foundation of the Turkish Republic.

In the twentieth century, the Turkish people had both bitter and sweet experiences of rapid change in political, cultural, and intellectual life. Sometimes, as in the first half of the century, some inclined to an extremely positivist education and materialist ideologies for the sake of progress to catch up with Western civilization; and sometimes, as in the second half of the century. At other times they inclined toward an excessively political Islam and fundamentalist interpretations for the sake of freedom from the impact of Western culture.

Such intellectual tensions and clashes in the process of rapid change have naturally caused problems, but they have also taught many lessons. Nowadays the Turkish people seems to be much nearer to the point of equilibrium or synthesis between change and essence. For example, on the one hand, most advocates of so-called political Islam now defend conservative democratic policies, actively support interreligious dialogue, and also protect the rights of the other; on the other hand, some social democrat leftist parties have started to defend a concept of 'lay respect for belief', and also show unusual religious sensitivity in the face of recently increasing missionary activities fearing that religion will be weakened. Most of both the leftist and the rightist parties, together with the majority of the people, to do their best to enter the European Union as its first mainly Muslim country.

Such new developments and orientations in the political and cultural life of Turkey have a close relationship with recent Turkish intellectual developments and efforts. The chapters of this

work provide detailed information, analysis and interpretation of this intellectual background as well as of the current change-essence dialectic within the recent Turkish world.

Chapter I, by Cafer S. Yaran, "Non-Exclusivist Attitudes Towards the Other Religions in Recent Turkish Theology and Philosophy of Religion," describes how religious exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism figure in contemporary Turkish debate (1980s onward). Yaran relates in detail the inclusivist arguments represented by Suleyman Ates (Koranic scholar) and the exclusivist arguments represented by Talat Kocyigit (scholar of the Prophetic Tradition, *Hadith*). Yaran then relates how younger scholars, many in 'philosophy of religion', continue the debate, most of them favoring inclusivism because they consider pluralism a violation of the Divine 'essence'.

Chapter II, by Sinasi Gunduz, "From Apology to Phenomenology: The Contemporary State of Studies of History of Religions in Turkey," supplies, first, what are the historical "roots" for Turkish scholars studying 'philosophy of religions': *milal* and *nihal*, genres of Islamic polemical works (11th cent. and onwards) and *kisasi anbiya* (narratives of the prophets). Gunduz then describes the last period of the Ottoman Empire (1875-), when the States's policy of westernization introduced 'history of religions' into the *madrasahs* (educational institutions). Next he recounts the period of the modern Turkish Republic, when 'history of religions' became one of the state's instruments of 'Turkification' (of Islam). Lastly he describes the period of the 1990s (and ongoing), when 'philosophy of religion' introduces a mode which is less apologetic (of Islam) and more neutral.

Chapter III, by Mustafa Koylu, "Religious Education in Modern Turkey," explains how, with the establishment of the Republic (1923), the tensions between Islam and secularism came to a head. Koylu relates the Republic's draconian imposition of secularism, and the subjection of Islamic activity to the Department of Religious Affairs. The ongoing religious devotion of the Muslim population demanded a clergy, so the government produced but controlled the imams (Islamic Higher Institute, etc., from 1959 onwards). In 1982 governmental policy changed and Islamic education flourished, but in 1997 further governmental alteration induced a reversal. Koylu ends with suggestions that would serve the people's religious needs, protect Islam from abuse by unscrupulous religionists, and prioritize the quality rather than the quantity of the clergy.

Chapter IV, by Yasin Aktay, "The Historicist Dispute in Turkish-Islamic Theology," shows how historicism enables an uncovering of the racist subtext of Western orientalism, and also provides an instrument for the adaptation of Islam to modernity. After demonstrating, also, how the Republic's political agenda instrumentalized one version of historicism, Aktay summarizes the work of Hasan Hanafi, Ilhami Guler ('historicism between theology and anthropology'), Fazlur Rahman's 'soft historicism', and that of other adept modern Turkish historicists. Aktay describes a contemporary 'Islamic Renaissance' of scholarship driven by historicism, and argues that it will continue to play a "comprehensive role" in ongoing Muslim thought.

Chapter V, by Nuray Mert, "Early Conservative Political Thought in Turkey: The Case of a Conservative Periodical, *TurkDusuncesi*," maintains that political conservatism in the technical sense was first enabled in Turkey with the arrival of a multi-party system in the 1950s. Mert exposites the political program of *Turk Dusuncesi* and its founding editor, Peyami Safa, which attempted to define religion in alternative national terms and to revise the Jacobin traits of Republicanism. Mert argues that Turkish conservatism moderates and channels the popular resentment against the Kemalan Revolution, offering an alternative ground of political legitimacy and social affinity.

Chapter VI, Omer Aydin, "*Kalam* between Tradition and Change: The Emphasis on Understanding of Classical Islamic Theology in Relation to Western Intellectual Effects," reviews medieval Ottoman theology (largely Asharite), and then passes to the influence of Western thought on *kalam* (Muslim theology) from the Reform Declaration (1839) onwards. Aydin supplies a very useful and extensive list of 19th and early 20th century *kalam* scholars, each figure accompanied by a précis of his works. He then analyzes in detail two founding figures of the "new Islamic Theology," Abdullatif Harputi and Sehbenderzade Filibeli Ahmed Hilmi, both of whom maintain that Western innovation and methodology should be adapted by Islamic theology but only insofar as the Revelation which is the Islamic faith is not violated.

Chapter VII, by Omer Mahir Alper, "The Conceptions of Islamic Philosophy in Turkey," explains and analyzes the three modern trends in Islamic Philosophy, (1) Islamism (which promotes Islamization of society in all fields), (2) Turkism (which makes "Turkishness" its ultimate point of reference, and (3) Westernism (which wants to produce a Turkish analogue of an ideal Western society). For each of these movements, Alper critiques a prominent representative scholar, Ismail Hakki Izmirli for Islamism, Hilmi Ziya Ulken for Turkism, and Macit Gokberk for Westernism. Izmirli, whom Alper favors, shows Islamic Philosophy is creative in its own right, and not a mere appropriation of Greek philosophy. Ulken, Alper argues, denigrates the Turkish Islamic rationalists and plays up Turkey's Islamic Mystical School, simply because the latter is more clearly an indigenous Turkish development. Gokberk, Alper argues, falls into the trap of naively accepting the Western orientalist myth about Turkish philosophy.

Chapter VIII, by Burhanettin Tatar, "The Hermeneutical Turn in Recent Turkish Intellectual Thought," studies the Turkish responses to modern Germanic hermeneutics. After distinguishing three responses, the Descriptive and historical, the Critical and reactional, and the Hermeneutical, Tatar focuses on the Hermeneutical, which he defines as studies which discover "hermeneutical aspects of Turkish or Islamic thought by staging them as a play with Western hermeneutical conceptions." Tatar critiques the Turkish hermeneut, Kamiran Birand very carefully: Birand tries to retain both a Schleiermachiian/Diltheyan recovery of the author's intention and a more Gadamerian engagement with the text itself. With an equal finesse, Tatar critiques two other Turkish hermeneuts, Dogan Ozlem and Yasin Aktay.

# Chapter I

## Non-Exclusivist Attitudes towards Other Religions in Recent Turkish Theology and Philosophy of Religion

Cafer S. Yaran

### Introduction

One can say that almost every great religion has some scriptural expressions which are open to understanding and interpretation both from the exclusivist and from the inclusivist or pluralist perspectives. Depending upon the historical and cultural conditions, or by the strong effect of the religious interpretations of certain leading scholars or mystics, one of these approaches seems to be the truer one than the others, and may become widespread and even the dominant tradition in that cultural geography. This is true for the history of Muslim Turks, too. For, as we shall see later, the Qur'an includes various verses in relation to other religions, some of which may be interpreted by various scholars differently. In this case, there always have to be both exclusivists and inclusivists or pluralists in Turkish history, as well as in the histories of other nations.

However, some scholars argue that a radical exclusivism has not been a dominant tradition among the Turks; by contrast, they have usually been non-exclusivist and tolerant towards the other religions and their adherents. For, since they lived a nomadic life in a very wide geography for a very long time in previous history, they met with many different religions and cultures. In addition, an important part of the main roads of world trade passed through the Turkish countries, and this gave the Turks the opportunity to meet with many merchants from various religions and cultures, too. Moreover, from Middle Asia to the Middle East, Anatolia and Balkans, the Turks usually lived in a multi-national, multi-cultural and multi-religious society. This pluralist environment led them to a tolerant and to some extent pluralist attitude and behaviour towards the other religions. It was not an easily changing attitude, but was a continuing tradition of the ages. The testimony of the famous travelers of the Middle Ages gives sufficient evidence to show this tolerant attitude.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, Turkish religiosity usually represented a mystical or 'Sufistic' character, which carries a more tolerant and more pluralistic dimension in almost all the great religious traditions. Such great Muslim mystics as Mawlana Jalal al-Din al-Rumi, Muhyi al-Din Ibn Arabi, and Yunus Emre lived in Anatolia and had a permanent effect on Anatolian history, culture, and especially religiosity.<sup>2</sup> Their views in this matter are so original and well-known that even contemporary Western pluralists like John Hick quote several times their ideas such as, "The lamps are different, but the Light is the same".<sup>3</sup>

Recent discussions among Turkish theologians concerning other religions focus mainly on two platforms, namely, on the Qur'an, and on the philosophy of religion. The discussions based on the Qur'an seem to be historically earlier and more furious than the ones based on the philosophy of religion. The most interesting and illuminating debate was carried out between two famous, and now retired, professors of Turkey working in the same Faculty of Theology in Ankara for a long time. They are Professor Süleyman Ates, who was formerly the president of the Presidency of Religious Affairs of Turkey and has many books on Qur'anic Commentary (*Tafseer*), and Professor Talat Kocyyigit, who has several works on the Prophetic Tradition (*Hadith*). In this paper, we will describe their theological debate first, and then we will pass into the discussions in the field of philosophy of religion; and at the end of each section, we will try to make short evaluations from our own perspective.

## Recent Theological Debates over the Monopolism of Paradise

First, Ates wrote an article entitled "*Cennet Kimsenin Tekelinde Degildir*" [Paradise is Not a Monopoly of Anybody]<sup>4</sup> against some critics to defend his views concerning the other religions in his previously published eight volumes of Qur'anic commentary.<sup>5</sup> Then, Professor Kocyigit published an article to reply to Ates and refute his ideas and arguments, entitled "*Cennet Mü'minlerin Tekelindedir*" [Paradise is the Monopoly of [Muslim] Believers].<sup>6</sup> Finally, Ateş replied to Koçyigit and defended his own ideas as strictly as before in an article entitled "*Cennet Tekelcisi mi?*" [Can We Monopolize Paradise?].<sup>7</sup> Now we will summarize these articles particularly from the perspective of change, and of essence, in relation to the other religions.

### *Paradise is Not the Monopoly of Anybody*

Even though he does not do so, we can summarize as follows the main ideas of Ates, item by item, to better understand and analyze them:

1. According to the Qur'an, Ates points out, there are three conditions to enter into Paradise; and these are to believe in God without attributing him a partner (*shirk*), to believe in the hereafter without any doubt, and to do good deeds (good and useful actions for this world and the world to come).<sup>8</sup> In the Qur'an, Paradise has been promised to every adherent of any divine religion who has these conditions. He offers the following Qur'anic verse (2: 62; cf. 5: 69) as the proof of his view. "Those who believe (in the Qur'an), and those who follow the Jewish (scriptures), and the Christians and the Sabians, any who believe in Allah, and the Last Day, and work righteousness, shall have their reward with their Lord, and on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve."

Ates argues that Muslims have made a similar mistake on this issue, as Jews and Christians had made before.<sup>9</sup> Each adherent of these two religions had claimed that only they would go to the Paradise, as the Qur'an points out (2: 111): "And they say: 'None shall enter Paradise unless he be a Jew or a Christian'. Those are their (vain) desires. Say: 'Produce your proof if ye are truthful.'" Now some Muslims have asserted similar exclusivist or monopolist views concerning Paradise. The Qur'anic principle in the following verses (4: 123-24), however, is very clear and obvious. "Not your desires, nor those of the People of the Book (can prevail): whoever works evil, will be requited accordingly. Nor will he find, besides Allah, any protector or helper. If any do deeds of righteousness, - be they male or female - and have faith, they will enter Heaven, and not the least injustice will be done to them."

2. The Qur'an does not condemn the adherents of any religion to Hell totally, and says that there are good people and bad people among every religious community, and the good ones will enter Paradise.<sup>10</sup> For example, the Qur'an says about Jews in a verse (5: 66) that "there is from among them a party of the right course: But many of them follow a course that is evil." Ates quotes some other verses; and for him, these show the general laws of Allah, the divine principle on this issue:

Not all of them are alike: Of the People of the Book are a portion that stand (for the right); they rehearse the Signs of Allah all night long, and they prostrate themselves in adoration. They believe in Allah, and the Last Day; they enjoin what is right, and forbid what is wrong; and they hasten (in emulation) in (all) good works: They are in the ranks of the righteous. Of the good that they do, nothing will be rejected of them; for Allah knoweth well those that do right. (3: 113-115)

He adds that the Qur'an does not also say that every Muslim who says he or she believes Muhammad the Last Prophet will enter into Paradise.<sup>11</sup> For faith does not consist in their words alone. The Qur'an tells of many attributes of the Muslim believers who will enter paradise as in the example of this verse (13: 22). "Those who patiently persevere, seeking the countenance of their Lord; establish regular prayers; spend, out of (the gifts) We have bestowed for their sustenance, secretly and openly; and return evil with good: for such there is the final attainment of the (eternal) Home."

3. The term Islam is not only the name of the last religion, but also the common name of all the divine religions from Adam to Muhammad. Although their proper names are different in various languages, the soul of all the divine religions is the same; and it is called Islam. The Qur'an uses the terms Islam and Muslim for the religions of the entire body of prophets. Especially the prophet Abraham embodies the symbol of Islam and Muslim in the Qur'anic verses (e.g.: 22: 78). "He has chosen you, and has imposed no difficulties on you in religion; it is the religion of your father Abraham. It is He Who has named you Muslims, both before and in this (Revelation); ..."

The nature of the message and mission of all the prophets is the same. All of them called human beings to worship Allah, to believe in the Last Day, and to do good deeds. Therefore, whatever the last religion is, the first religion was that, too.<sup>12</sup>

4. The mission of the Prophet Muhammad is not to invent a new religion, but to return the monotheistic religion of Abraham back to its original purity and to follow it. It is addressed to the Prophet Muhammad in the Qur'an (46: 9) like this: "Say: 'I am not an innovation among the messengers, nor do I know what will be done with me or with you. I follow but that which is revealed to me by inspiration; I am but a warner open and clear.'" That means, according to Ates, he has not founded a new religion, but the path of his predecessors has been revealed to him, and that he follows therefore the path of this revelation. In their original identity, Judaism and Christianity were also the religion of unity or monotheism brought by Abraham.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, after mentioning several previous prophets, it is said to the prophet Muhammad in the Qur'an (6: 90) as follows: "Those were the (prophets) who received Allah's guidance. Follow the guidance they received; ..."

5. The Qur'an does not abolish, as some scholars think, but affirms the previous revealed books, the Bible and the Gospel. And the books affirmed by the Qur'an are not the ones which were not present at the time of the revelation of the Qur'an, but on the contrary, they are the books which were at the hands of the People of the Book at that time. For the Qur'an says (2: 41) to the People of the Book: "Believe in what I reveal, confirming the revelation which is with you ..."

The Torah, the Gospel and the Qur'an are revelations which confirm each other mutually. Due to the equality of their essence, the Qur'an refers to the previous Holy Scriptures with respect, and invites the People of the Book to follow (practice) the commands of their Holy Scripture righteously.<sup>14</sup>

6. According to Ates, the People of the Book do not need to leave their religion in terms of the Qur'an; what the Qur'an asks of them is just to leave some beliefs that are contrary to divine unity or monotheism, and to give up some excesses in religion. It says in this context, for example: "O People of the Book! Commit no excesses in your religion: nor say of Allah aught but the truth. Christ Jesus the Son of Mary was (no more than) a Messenger of Allah, and His Word, which He bestowed on Mary, and a spirit proceeding from Him: so believe in Allah and His Messengers. Say not 'Three': desist: It will be better for you: For Allah is One God: Glory be to Him: (Far Exalted is He) above having a son. To Him belong all things in the heavens and on earth." (4: 171; see also 3: 64, 5: 71-73)

In addition, according to Ates, anyone from the People of the Book who heard the prophethood of Muhammad is required to believe in the fact that he was a prophet receiving revelation from the Real, and that the Qur'an was the revelation of the Real. If they accept these, even if they remain in their own religion, they will be happy in the hereafter – unless they become polytheists. It is not necessary for them to leave their religion and to become Muslim. The Qur'an praises the People of the Book who remained in their own religion but also acknowledged that Muhammad was the Prophet and the Qur'an was the revelation from God.<sup>15</sup> He brings up these Qur'anic verses (28: 52-54) as evidence of his view: "Those to whom We sent the Book before this, - they do believe in this (Revelation); and when it is recited to them, they say: 'We believe therein, for it is the Truth from our Lord: Indeed we have been Muslims (Bowing to Allah's Will) from before this.' Twice will they be given their reward, for that they have persevered, that they avert evil with good ..."

### *Paradise Is the Monopoly of the [Muslim] Believers*

Talat Kocyigit writes a paper negatively critiquing the paper of Ates cited and summarized above, and publishes it in the same periodical in the same year.<sup>16</sup> According to Kocyigit, Ates's views are contrary to Islam and even dangerous for it. Therefore, he says that he wants to evaluate Ates's paper with respect to errors in it, with a purpose of removing wrong beliefs and convictions which it may plant in the reader.<sup>17</sup> Although Kocyigit does not criticize Ates item by item, we would like to summarize his criticisms, too, correlating them to the views of Ates which we summarized above. Kocyigit argues:

1. When Ates asserts that the doors of Paradise are open to everybody, whether they be Jews, Christians or Sabians, he does not take in their proper contexts the two Qur'anic verses (al-Baqarah 62, and al-Maidah 69) which he adduces as evidence, and he does not examine where and for what purpose these verses were revealed. The case of these verses is closely related to the Kur'anic method of invitation to Islam. For the first principle to invite people who are unbelievers is certainly faith in God, and then belief in the hereafter. The ultimate aim of the invitation, however, is to unite the whole human race in the religion that the Last Prophet Muhammad announced.<sup>18</sup>

2. Kocyigit argues that Ates cannot allow a Jew or a Christian who does not believe the *whole* teaching of the angels, books and prophets of God to enter into Paradise: just because some Kur'anic verses mention only faith in God and in the hereafter to enter into Paradise is not enough reason. The way that goes to Paradise passes through belief in God's angels, books and prophets, without making any discrimination among them, as well as belief in God's existence and the hereafter. Someone who omits this complete way goes into Hell, not into Paradise. God assigned Paradise only to the Muslim believers. If someone who does not believe in the Prophet Muhammad and the Kur'an, can enter Paradise, what sort of difference would be left between belief and blasphemy, believer and unbeliever?<sup>19</sup>

3. The religion of Islam is no longer the religion announced by Noah nor the religion proclaimed by Abraham, Moses, and Jesus. Islam is the religion that God the Almighty defined in the Qur'an (5: 3): "This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed My favour upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion" and invited all the human beings to it. Is it reasonable to assert that one may be contented with the old, deficient, and defective one when the new, complete, and perfect one comes?<sup>20</sup>

4. For Kocyigit, Ates makes his biggest mistake when he tries to explain the Qur'anic verse (4: 163), "We have sent thee inspiration, as We sent it to Noah and the Messengers after him ... ." Ates explained it in the direction of his own view, saying that God inspired Muhammed with the

same teachings He inspired in Noah. Whereas, what is really described in the verse is not *what* was inspired in them, but *how* it was inspired in them. God inspired both of them in the same way. However, there is certainly a difference between what was inspired in Noah and what was inspired in Muhammad. Indeed, he, Muhammad, invited people to believe in him and in the Qur'an, which were not in the inspiration sent to Noah.<sup>21</sup>

5. Kocyigit argues that presumably no Jew or Christian scholar defended the present Bible and Gospel in terms of the Qur'an as much as Ates did. And presumably again, no Jew or Christian scholar, he says, dared to claim the Bible and Gospel were far from any possible distortion (*tahrif*), as was claimed in this article. Whereas, Ates himself was also defending the opposite ideas in his previous books, that is to say, the idea that the Bible was subject to a lot of distortion over time. In fact, all the other revealed books except the Qur'an, because of the fact that they were not written down at the very moment when they were revealed, and because—as a result—some of them were forgotten and some of them were distorted, include errors and just some crumbs of truth.<sup>22</sup>

6. According to Kocyigit, Jews and Christians must be Muslim in order to be able to enter into Paradise. The Prophet Muhammad invited everybody, Jew, Christian, or whomever, to believe in him and in the Qur'an. When Ates says that the People of the Book may enter into Paradise while remaining in their own religions if they accept the prophethood of Muhammad and the fact that the Qur'an is a revelation from God, he is just trying to save appearances. Muhammad was sent to the whole of humanity and invited all of them to leave their other religions and enter Islam. And as indicated in the Qur'an (3: 85), "If anyone desires a religion other than Islam (submission to Allah) never will it be accepted of him; and in the Hereafter he will be in the ranks of those who are lost." In addition, for Kocyigit, sole belief in the Prophet is not enough; obedience to him is also required. For it is said in the Qur'an (3: 32): "Say: 'Obey Allah and His Messenger': But if they turn back, Allah loveth not those who reject Faith." Faith and obedience are complementary to each other and it is not possible one without the other. Kocyigit also says Islam is built on faith and action (or deed, *amal*), and one cannot talk about faith without action. And true action can only be practiced through obedience to the Prophet Muhammad, and so through being a Muslim.<sup>23</sup>

Suleyman Ates immediately answers these criticisms in the same journal. We may summarize them in the same order above, item by item. The title of his article was "*Cennet Tekelcisi mi*" ("Can We Monopolize Paradise?").

### *Can We Monopolize Paradise?*

1. When he defends himself, Ates repeats that Paradise is a property of God and He can allow anyone whom he wishes to enter there. According to Ates, with his views that the Paradise belongs to the Muslim believers, Kocyigit uses the logic of the People of the Book who supposed that Paradise was specifically for them, as the Qur'an mentions (2: 111-12): "And they say: 'None shall enter Paradise unless He be a Jew or a Christian.' Those are their (vain) desires. Say: 'Produce your proof if ye are truthful.' Nay, - whoever submits his whole self to Allah and is a doer of good, - he will get his reward with his Lord; on such shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve." This logic is wrong; and nobody can say that Paradise is the monopoly of one particular group among human beings.<sup>24</sup>

2. According to Ates, leaving the People of the Book aside, some Kur'anic verses indicate that if Allah wishes he can even allow the polytheists to enter Paradise. The verse in the Qur'an (17: 54) is addressed to polytheists: "It is your Lord that knoweth you best: If He please, He

granteth you mercy, or if He please, punishment: We have not sent thee to be a disposer of their affairs for them." From this verse, it is understood that God, if He wishes, will allow even the polytheists to enter into Paradise. Who can interfere in His will?<sup>25</sup>

3. Ates insists in his earlier view that God sent all the prophets to teach monotheism. All of them brought the same religion. Isn't it said in the Qur'an (21: 92), he asks, after enumerating various prophets that "Verily, this Ummah of yours is a single Ummah and I am your Lord and Cherisher: therefore serve Me (and no other)." In addition, it is also said to the Prophet Muhammad in the Qur'an (41: 43) that "Nothing is said to thee that was not said to the messengers before thee: ..." Therefore, although languages are different, the content of the messages sent to the prophets is the same.<sup>26</sup>

4. According to Ates, Kocyigit possibly read his article with some prejudices. Otherwise, he would see the fact that he wrote both in his criticized article and in his previous books that anyone who heard the prophethood of Muhammad needs to accept that he is a prophet and to support him. I would like to insist that, he says, a Christian, too, if he or she has *heard* the teaching, must believe in the prophethood of Muhammad and must come to the version of monotheism he brought. Islam behaved toward such people with tolerance and supplied them freedom of worship in their churches.<sup>27</sup>

5. When it comes to the discussion of distortion in the Bible, Ates replies that the Qur'an accepts the Bible that was present at the time of the revelation of the Qur'an as true. However, he says, this does not mean that there has not been any distortion in the Bible and the Gospel. The Qur'an affirms the Bible of its own time. But later much change entered into that Book.<sup>28</sup>

6. About the last discussion, whether the People of the Book must or must not convert to Islam to enter into Paradise, Ates invites his critic to think more 'critically'. Is it easy, he asks, to leave his or her religion for someone who was born, for example, in Brazil or Mexico and was brought up as a Christian? I wonder, he says, whether someone who is a Muslim because he was born in a Muslim environment would leave his religion if he were not brought up in such a Muslim environment. Now, will the Lord of the worlds send all of the people who were brought up in a Jewish or Christian environment to Hell without making any differentiations? The Ultimate Reality says in the Qur'an (38: 28) that He will make the difference: "Shall We treat those who believe and work deeds of righteousness, the same as those who do mischief on earth? Shall We treat those who guard against evil, the same as those who turn aside from the right?" Therefore, God will reward human beings who know and worship Him in accordance with the law of creation.<sup>29</sup>

One can say about this debate that the two scholars, as we have seen, did not make any reference to the recently popular and problematic terminology of religious diversity fiercely discussed in contemporary Western thought. They neither use the technical terms such as religious exclusivism, inclusivism, pluralism, nor mention any Western pluralist theologians like W. Cantwell Smith or John Hick. The debate takes place, rather, completely on the basis of Islamic sources, especially the Qur'anic verses. This case shows that the first well-known debate about religious diversity and salvation in recent Turkish theological thought has been realized by internal Islamic dynamics, rather than by external discussions of religious pluralism in recent Western theology and philosophy of religion.

Some younger theologians keep this debate, with which we deal below, going in the same direction. It may be said before dealing with their complementary ideas that while Kocyigit's views are a kind of religious or Islamic exclusivism, some opinions of Ates associate with Islamic versions of religious inclusivism and some other of his opinions associate with religious pluralism.

For example, his idea that every revealed religion is Islam and any adherent of these revealed religions is considered Muslim causes one to call the inclusivist idea of "anonymous Christianity"<sup>30</sup> for adherents of 'other religions'. On the other hand, his emphasis on the role of being born and brought up in one particular religious environment reminds one of the same emphasis made by pluralists such as John Hick<sup>31</sup>. For this reason, both of them invite people to think about the salvation of others as sympathetically as possible.

One can also say that, in these discussions, Ates obviously shows his deep knowledge of the Qur'an as a Qur'anic commentator, but Kocyigit does not make enough reference even to the traditions of the Prophet, the Hadiths, to defend his ideas as a Hadith scholar. Although he has some good points, he bases his main idea from the first sentence to the last on the concept of action or deed (*amal*), and maintains that one cannot speak of faith without having action, namely, regular prayers and other practical religious duties. Whereas, this is not right for the majority of Muslim scholars; for the majority action is not a necessary part of faith. If it were a necessary part of faith and of salvation, most Muslims could not be saved in the eschatological sense. Thus, Ates seems to be in a stronger and more convincing position in the discussion. This does not mean, however, that he is completely right in all that he advocates. The topic is very delicate and needs knowledge in detail. But one can supply as an example Ates's opinion that the Bible was not distorted or changed at the time contemporary to the Qur'an, the seventh century; but that it changed later: this position does not seem reasonable either from the perspective of the Qur'an or from the viewpoint of the historical data. But his main thesis that Paradise or salvation does not belong entirely to the adherents of one particular religion, whether it be Judaism, Christianity or Islam, and that God Himself is the final and ultimate decision-maker about who deserves to enter into Paradise seems to be quite right both from the Qur'anic viewpoint and from the humane perspective.

Both Ates and Kocyigit now have followers among the younger generation of theologians. For example, Osman Guner, who works on the tradition of the Prophet, the Hadith, like Kocyigit, defends similar ideas in the same direction but with a more moderate and open-minded attitude. He mainly emphasizes the importance of Islamic invitation to monotheism and frequently quotes a Qur'anic verse (3: 64): "Say: O People of the Book! Come to common terms as between us and you: That we worship none but Allah; that we associate no partners with Him; that we erect not, from among ourselves, lords and patrons other than Allah." For him, Muslims have enough theoretical and practical experience to live with the others in tolerance and peace.<sup>32</sup>

As Ates himself continued to advocate his views in his later works,<sup>33</sup> some younger scholars of the Qur'anic commentary follow in his footsteps. They usually advocate similar ideas in more detail. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that they deal not only with Paradise but also with war and peace in this world. They seem to see a correlation between exclusivistic interpretations of the past and the case of war against the other. According to them, some Muslim scholars in history saw the polytheists and adherents of other religions as a potential enemy against whom the Muslims should fight. However, this was a misinterpretation and misrepresentation; for the Qur'an has many verses of tolerance and peace. It is said in the Qur'an (41: 34), for example, "Nor can Goodness and Evil be equal. Repel (Evil) with what is better: Then will he between thee and whoever was hatred, becoming as it were thy friend and intimate!" Therefore, the basic principle of Islam, of which the original name means 'peace', should be to search for the ground of dialogue and for union in a common core.<sup>34</sup> After seeing that there is a more non-exclusivist and more peaceful trend among the younger generations of theologians as well as the eminent scholars of the present and the past, we can pass now to a treatment of the non-exclusivist developments in the field of philosophy of religion in recent Turkish thought.

## Non-Exclusivist Trends in Recent Turkish Philosophy of Religion

'Philosophy of Religion' has been taught in the faculties of theology in Turkey for about thirty years. The most important philosopher in this field in Turkey is Mehmet S. Aydin, who taught it for several years in different universities before his retirement, and currently is a State Minister in the Turkish Parliament. According to Aydin, we find the first and purest form of the call to an inter-religious dialogue, which is in demand today, in the Qur'an. The Qur'an recognizes the right of existence for the other religions, and guarantees the freedom of religion and conscience. It does not stop there, either, but invites the other people to be able to find common universal points and to be able to come to that point indicated in a verse (3: 64): "...Come to common terms as between us and you: That we worship none but Allah; ..."35

Islam, for Aydin, has an inclusivist character rather than an exclusivist one because of the fact that it considers itself as the same religion as a chain of revealed religions from the Prophet Adam to the Prophet Muhammad. Thus, it is an open religion and carries a historical universality in its essence. This openness constitutes a general framework needed for dialogue and tolerance.<sup>36</sup> The Qur'an expresses the necessary ethical principles of living together in an obvious form (49: 13): "O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise each other). Verily the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you...."

Aydin sees both similarities and differences among the religions. Judaism, Christianity and Islam belong to the same family of religions. However, this does not mean that the concept of religion is used in the same sense in all these three religions.<sup>37</sup> Islam criticizes some points, in the other religions, which it does not consider as true. It is not afraid of being criticized as well. It encourages inter-religious dialogue and shows how to arrive at common points. It is a slander to claim that Islam was spread by force. The history of Islam is full of pages to be proud of from the perspective of religious tolerance.<sup>38</sup>

When it comes to the present day situation, according to Aydin, the Islamic world and the Western world have a common ground in wanting to succeed in living together. Their two worlds have succeeded in many things by drawing from the same sources and taking from each other. The three historical periods which blinded capacity to see this common ground are (1) the period of the Crusades, (2) the period of colonialism, and (3) the politics carried out at the end of the twentieth century, especially in cultural politics.<sup>39</sup> Many institutions and associations, which feed on historical prejudices coming from the past ages, the passion of exploitation, and ideological severity, still conserve these obstacles. In fact, although there are some serious annoyances which derive from some of the modern Western values, there has never been an enmity against Judaism or Christianity per se as religions in the Islamic world. The Qur'an itself wants to build bridges of peace and security between the Muslims and the People of the Book. To build new bridges and to produce new knowledge free from the old prejudices, there is an urgent need to common plans, projects, and institutions.<sup>40</sup>

In addition to these, for Aydin, we should leave the theological quarrels aside, and try to develop a global religious ethics to lay the foundation of globalization. We should strengthen our hearts, as well as our heads. This cannot be managed by a concept such as one 'global' religion, because there cannot be such a ridiculous thing as a 'global' religion constructed by choosing some things from each religion. However, there may be a global theology, and most importantly there can certainly be a global ethics. For such an ethics to be realized everyone must do whatever he or she can.<sup>41</sup>

Aydin's non-exclusivist approach towards the other religions seems to be followed by some other philosophers of religion in Turkey.<sup>42</sup> As a philosopher of religion, we feel the same way and write in the same direction.<sup>43</sup> The religious or Islamic non-exclusivism (Islamic versions of inclusivism or pluralism) is not a new paradigm for Muslims, at least for those who lived in Anatolia. However, various direct or indirect reasons such as theological ignorance, political wars, or economic exploitations can sometimes make one people more exclusivist and even an enemy of the other. It is obvious that the ethical and spiritual evolution of humanity does not go hand in hand with the scientific and technological developments. This may mean that theologians and religious philosophers of any tradition often cannot do their duty properly and waste their time in useless quarrels with each other rather than making an effort to contribute to the spiritual evolution of humanity and to world peace as a whole. Nevertheless, it is very pleasant that there is a positive trend in this respect all over the world; and as we have already seen, the Turkish theologians and philosophers of religion are willing to build new bridges to contribute to the ethical and spiritual development of all humanity with their non-exclusivist religio-philosophical thoughts and historical experiences. It seems that radical, exclusivist ideas concerning the other religions have been "changing" in recent Turkish theology and philosophy of religion in a non-exclusivist direction; but it also seems that theologians and philosophers are not willing to be too 'radical' and reductively pluralist, because they want to protect belief in the divine "essence" and the specific aim of Islam and all the *Abrahamic* religions.

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## Notes

1 See for the details, Unver Gunay, "*Turklerin Dini Tarihinde ve Kulturunde Cogulculuk ve Hosgoru*" [Pluralism and Tolerance in the Religious History and Culture of the Turks], *Erciyes Universitesi Ilahiyat Fakultesi Dergisi*, Vol. 10, (1998), pp. 53-66.

2 See for the details, Cafer Sadik Yaran, "Ibn Arabi, Mevlana ve Yunus Emre'ye Göre 'Oteki'nin Durumu" [The Situation of 'the Other' according to Ibn al-Arabi, Mawlana, and Yunus Emre], in Cafer Sadik yaran (ed.), *Islam ve Oteki: Dinlerin Dogruluk, Kurtaricilik ve Bir Arada Yasama Sorunu*, [Islam and the Other: The Problem of Truth, Salvation, and Living Together among the Religions], (Istanbul: Kaknus, 2001), pp. 307-350.

3 See, for example, John Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion: Human Responses to the Transcendent*, (London: Macmillan, 1989), p. 233.

4 Suleyman Ates, "Cennet Kimsenin Tekelinde Degildir" [Paradise is not the Monopoly of Anybody], *Islami Arastirmalar: Journal of Islamic Research*, Vol. 3, Num. 1, January 1989, pp. 7-24.

5 Süleyman Ates, *Yuce Kur'an'in Cagdas Tefsiri* [Contemporary Commentary of the High Qur'an], 12 volumes, (Istanbul: Yeni Ufuklar Nesriyat, 1997), vol. 1, pp. 174-76.

6 Talat Kocuyigit, "Cennet Mu'minlerin Tekelindedir" [Paradise is the Monopoly of the [Muslim] Believers], *Islami Arastirmalar: Journal of Islamic Research*, Vol. 3, Num. 3, July 1989, pp. 85-94.

7 Suleyman Ates, "Cennet Tekelcisi mi?" [Can We Monopolize Paradise?], *Islami Arastirmalar: Journal of Islamic Research*, Vol. 4, Num. 1, January 1990, pp. 29-37.

- 8 Ates, "Cennet Kimsenin Tekelinde Degildir", pp. 7, 8, 12.
- 9 Ates, Ibid., p. 8.
- 10 Ates, Ibid., p. 12.
- 11 Ates, Ibid., p. 13.
- 12 Ates, Ibid., pp. 7-9.
- 13 Ates, Ibid., p. 9. See also, Suleyman Ates, "The Attitude of the Koran Towards the Divine Religions", *Kur'an Mesaji* [The Message of the Qur'an], Year: 2, Num. 22, 23, 24, 1999-2000, p. 58.
- 14 Ates, "Cennet Kimsenin Tekelinde Degildir", p. 9-10. See also, Ates, "The Attitude of the Koran Towards the Divine Religions", pp. 51, 64.
- 15 Ates, "Cennet Kimsenin Tekelinde Degildir", pp. 14-15, 23-24.
- 16 Talat Kocyigit, "Cennet Mü'minlerin Tekelindedir" [The Paradise is in the Monopoly of the [Muslim] Believers], *Islami Arastirmalar: Journal of Islamic Research*, Volume: 3, Num: 3, July 1989, pp. 85-94.
- 17 Kocyigit, Ibid., p. 87.
- 18 Kocyigit, Ibid., pp. 88-89.
- 19 Kocyigit, Ibid., p. 90.
- 20 Kocyigit, Ibid., p. 89.
- 21 Kocyigit, Ibid., p. 88.
- 22 Kocyigit, Ibid., pp. 87, 93.
- 23 Kocyigit, Ibid., pp. 85, 90, 92.
- 24 Suleyman Ates, "Cennet Tekelcisi mi?" [Can We Monopolize Paradise?], *Islami Arastirmalar: Journal of Islamic Research*, Vol. 4, Num. 1, January 1990, p. 29.
- 25 Ates, Ibid., p. 29.
- 26 Ates, Ibid., p. 31.
- 27 Ates, Ibid., pp. 30, 32.
- 28 Ates, Ibid., p. 34.
- 29 Ates, Ibid., p. 37.
- 30 See for this idea, Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations* (Baltimore: Helicon Press, London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1966), Vol. 5, p. 131.
- 31 See for similar ideas of Hick, John Hick, *Philosophy of Religion* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1990), pp. 109-10.
- 32 Osman Guner, "Hz. Peygamber'in 'Oteki'ne Bakisi", ["The Prophet's View of 'The Other'"], in *Islam ve Oteki: Dinlerin, Dogruluk, Kurtaricilik ve Bir Arada Yasama Sorunu*, [Islam and the Other: The Problem of Truth, Salvation and Living Together among the Religions], ed. by Cafer S. Yaran, (Istanbul: Kaknus, 2001), pp. 222, 266, 270.
- 33 See, for example, Suleyman Ates, "The Attitude of the Koran Towards the Divine Religions", *Kur'an Mesaji* [The Message of the Qur'an], Year: 2, Num. 22, 23, 24, 1999-2000, pp. 51-72.
- 34 Mehmet Okuyan, Mustafa Ozturk, "Kur'an Verilerine Gore 'Oteki'nin Konumu", [The Position of 'The Other' in Accordance with the Qur'anic Data], in *Islam ve Oteki: Dinlerin, Dogruluk, Kurtaricilik ve Bir Arada Yasama Sorunu*, [Islam and the Other: The Problem of Truth, Salvation and Living Together among the Religions], ed. by Cafer S. Yaran, (Istanbul: Kaknus, 2001), pp. 186-93. See also, Hidayet Aydar, *Kur'an-i Kerim'in Tercumesi Mes'alesi*, [The Problem of the Translation of the Holy Qur'an], (Istanbul: Kur'an Okulu Yayincilik, 1996), 143-45.

35 Mehmet S. Aydin, *Islamin Evrenselligi: Makaleler 3*, [*The Universality of Islam: Article 3*], (Istanbul: Ufuk Kitaplari, 2000), p. 25.

36 Mehmet S. Aydin, *Ice Kritik Bakis: Din-Felsefe-Laiklik*, [Critical Outlook on the Inside: Religion-Philosophy-Secularism], (Istanbul: Iyiadam Yayincilik, 1999), p. 173.

37 Mehmet S. Aydin, *Din Felsefesi*, [*Philosophy of Religion*], (Ankara: Selcuk Yayinlari, 1992), p. 5. See also, Aydin, *Nicin?* [*Why?*], (Istanbul: Zaman Kitap, 2002), p. 40.

38 Aydin, *Ice Kritik Bakis*, p. 177.

39 Aydin, *Nicin?*, p. 19.

40 Aydin, *Nicin?*, pp. 120-21.

41 Aydin, *Islamin Evrenselligi*, pp. 197-99; *Nicin?*, pp. 14-15.

42 See, for example, Hanifi Ozcan, *Maturidi'de Dini Cogulculuk*, [Religious Pluralism in Maturidi], (Istanbul: M. U. Ilahiyat Fakultesi Vakfi Yayinlari, 1995).

43 Cafer S. Yaran, "*Dinsel Kapsayicilik*", [Religious Inclusivism], "*John Hick'in Din Felsefesinde Dinsel Cogulculuk*" [Religious Pluralism in John Hick's Philosophy of Religion], and "*Ibn Arabi, Mevlana ve Yunus Emre'ye Göre 'Oteki'nin Durumu*", [The Position of 'The Other' in Accordance with Ibn Arabi, Mawlana, and Yunus Emre], in *Islam ve Oteki: Dinlerin, Dogruluk, Kurtaricilik ve Bir Arada Yasama Sorunu*, [Islam and the Other: The Problem of Truth, Salvation and Living Together among the Religions], ed. by Cafer S. Yaran, (Istanbul: Kaknus, 2001).

## Chapter II

# **From Apology to Phenomenology: The Current State of the Studies of the History of Religions in Turkey**

Sinasi Gunduz

Being a shelter for various cultural and religious traditions throughout history Anatolia or the 'little Asia' of antiquity has a unique characteristic in the world. Various belief systems from monotheism to paganism lived side by side in Anatolia: we know that the pagan religion of the Harranians survived alongside such monotheist traditions as Islam, Judaism and Christianity until the second half of the 13th century AD when the Mongols encamped against Harran, the last pagan city in the Middle East, in 1259-1260 and destroyed the last of the temples of star and planet worshipping.<sup>1</sup> As for Judaism and Christianity, we know that already in the pre-Christian period the Jewish Diasporas, though small in number, settled in various cities of Anatolia like Antioch, Ephesus and Tarsus. Likewise the Jewish communities such as the Rabbinics and Karaims have continued their survival in Anatolia up to the present. We also know that a considerable number of Jewish refugees from Spain (al-Andalus) came to the Western cities of the Ottoman Empire in the late 15th century, because in Spain they were forced to either become Christians or leave their homes. Anatolia has also historical importance for the Christians because various important centers of the Christian history such as Antioch, Istanbul and Ephesus are in Anatolia. St Paul, the greatest early theologian of Christianity, was born in Tarsus and chose Antioch as a base for his activities. He also carried out his three important missionary activities mainly in the settlements of Anatolia. Moreover, it is known that the first Christian city-state was in Edessa where after the king Abgar the Great accepted Christianity the Edessans followed their king and left paganism for Christianity. Various eastern Christian churches lived in Anatolia and followers of almost all of these churches such as the Greek Orthodox, Armenian and the monophysite Syriac Church have survived, though small in number, until today. Finally Anatolia has also great importance from the Islamic perspective since from the early period of Islamic history Anatolia came under Muslim domination and Islam spread greatly among the people. Especially after the Muslim Turkish clans rushed into Anatolia from the 10th century AD onward, Islamization of Anatolia—with the exception of Byzantium which survived until the second part of the 15th century—was mostly completed.

In spite of Turkey's rich religious and cultural inheritance and historical importance for many religions, it is sad to say that the scholarly discipline of the history of religions has not developed enough in Turkish academic circles. As we will see, various reasons for this can be given, such as the characteristics of the Turkish educational system and the traditional Muslim approach towards other religious and cultural traditions, an approach which is apologetical and refutational. However, the history of religion as a scholarly branch in the Turkish educational system is quite new and from the late 19th century onwards the studies of history of religion have passed through various phases of development, usually depending upon the changing perspectives of intellectual understanding and the educational policies of the state. This study aims to describe the historical process of study of history of religions in Turkey and to analyze the phases of these studies. These phases are mainly the traditional, apologetic, nationalist and phenomenological approaches to the history of religions.

**Historical Roots/References of the History of Religion among the Turkish Intelligentsia**

The study of the non-Islamic religions carried out by Muslim scholars started in a period which could be reckoned as very early. The Muslims were interested in other belief systems mainly because of the non-Muslim citizens of the Islamic empire. There were also many Christians, Zoroastrians, Jews, etc., who converted to become Muslim and who brought their cultural tradition, including some of their beliefs and customs to the new faith. Moreover, the Muslim scholars needed to explain the verses of the Qur'an which spoke of religions other than Islam. All of these caused the Muslim scholars to examine non-Islamic religions and to describe their belief systems, cults and rituals. The Muslim scholars therefore first tried to give some information about the other religions in their studies of the commentaries of the Qur'an and the historical works.<sup>2</sup> As time passed, some particular works were written by the Muslim writers on other religious traditions. Among them we can mention Ibn Kalbi's (c. d. 826) *kitab al-asnam* which describes Arab paganism at the time of the Qur'an, Muhammad ibn al-Huzayl's (d. 840) *kitab al-majus*, which gives a description of Zoroastrianism, and al-Biruni's (d. 1050) *tahkik ma li al-hind* which is about various Indian sectarian movements and *asar al-baqiyah an-al-qurun al-haliyah*, a book concerned with various religious and sectarian movements, as examples. It is also possible to add to these literatures the polemical works of refutation. Many Muslim scholars have written some polemical books against non-Islamic religions like Christianity. Ibn Taymiyyah's (d. 1328) *al-jawab al-sahih li man baddala din al-masih* is an example of these polemical works.

Also the literature of *milal* and *nihal* must be mentioned among the works of history of religions which were composed by Muslim scholars during medieval times. Together with the literatures of so-called *kisasi anbiya* (the stories of the prophets), the books of *milal* and *nihal* are the main references of the studies of history of religion in Turkey. The literatures of *milal* and *nihal* include various scholarly works on non-Islamic cultural, philosophical and religious traditions. The books of this literature concentrate on two aims: to describe non-Islamic beliefs, cults and rituals as well as philosophical thoughts, and to defend the true path and faith, i.e., Islam, against these wrong traditions. Therefore the core of these literatures is based on refutation of others. Here *milal* means the understanding of true believers while *nihal* includes all wrong and heretical traditions.

It is possible to compare the literatures of *milal* and *nihal* of the Islamic tradition to the apologetical works of so-called apostolic/patristic literatures of Christianity. Both literatures aim to defend the true belief system and to refute heresies, apostasy and all other wrongs. So the apologetic approach is the main characteristic of these literatures. Also the polemical approach against other traditions is seen in these literatures when they are described. The writers take the stand that they belong to orthodoxy and warn the reader against the wrong ways they point out. The 'others' are therefore considered as heresiological works.

Many examples of the literatures of *milal* and *nihal* could be given. For example it is possible to mention Ibn Hazm's (d. 1064) *kitab al-fasl fi al-milal wa al-ahwai wa al-nihal*, al-Shahrastani's (d. 1153) *kitab al-milal wa al-nihal*, Abu Bakr al-Baqillani's (d. 1012) *al-milal wa al-nihal*, Abu Muzaffar al-Asfarani's (d. 1078) *al-milal wa al-nihal* and Abd al-Qahir al-Baghdadi's (d. 1037) *al-farq bayn al-firaq*. All of these are important sources of the history of religions since they include precious information about the religions and some philosophical movements of the time to which the books belong. Especially al-Shahrastani's book is quite important for it differs from the others due to its precise systematic. This book can be considered the first 'history of religion' in world religious literature, as E. Sharp has rightly stated.<sup>3</sup> Again, the information given by al-Biruni on various Indian and Jewish sects is quite precious for researchers of today since it is sometimes the only reference for some of these traditions.

The apologetic approach of *milal* and *nihal* literatures has in great extent been a reference for the studies of 'history of religions' in Turkey. The Islamic perspective has long been so effective in examining the other religious systems that the Islamic sources (not the first hand sources of related subjects) were usually used. So the studies of the history of religions focused not on giving objective descriptions of the religious traditions but on emphasizing the superiority of Islam over the other religions.

Besides the works in the category of *milal* and *nihal*, the literatures of *kisasi anbiya* have also been influential upon the historians of religions in Turkey. It is possible to find examples of these literatures in the early Islamic period. For example Ibn Qutayba's (d. 270 AH) *al-ma'arif*, al-Tabari's (d. 923) *tarih* and al-Maqdisi's (d. 1113) *al-bad wa al-tarikh* could be considered among these literatures though they do not have the title of *kisasi anbiya*. These works, beginning with the subject of the creation of the first man, Adam, talk about the history of the prophets and of the major rulers from the Muslim perspective. On the other hand, the books with the title of *kisasi anbiya* belong to a quite late period. Many examples of the latter can be adduced. For example, Ahmad Cevdet Pasa's (d. 1895) *kisasi anbiya ve tavarikhu khulafa*<sup>4</sup> includes the history of the Ottomans as well as the history of the prophets. The literatures of *kisasi anbiya* use some information of Christian and Jewish tradition as well when they talk about certain prophets and historical persons. However, they do not use the Christian or Jewish sources *directly* since they take this information from other Islamic sources.

The literatures of *kisasi anbiya* concentrate on human history from the Islamic point of view. According to this point of view the struggle between reality and wrongfulness has always been the center of this history. God has sent many prophets, one by one, to humanity to call them to the true path that is Islam.

As a whole both the literatures of *milal* and *nihal* and that of *kisasi anbiya* are apologetic works aiming to defend the truth and to refute wrongfulness. However, among them some books of al-Biruni and al-Shahrastani contain important information about some of the non-Islamic belief-systems, information which is still used as reference by modern researchers.

## **The Studies of History and Comparative Religion in the Last Period of the Ottoman Empire**

It is a pity that, though the peoples of various religious and ethnic backgrounds lived together in the Ottoman Empire for hundreds of years, academic courses concerned with non-Islamic religions and cultures did not occur in the schools and other educational institutions. Likewise, it seems as if the works of Muslim scholars were not interested in non-Islamic religions for a long time. It is only the last quarter of the 19th century when some courses which could be considered related to the 'history of religions' began, and these took place among the other courses of the *madrasahs* (the Ottoman educational institutions) which were generally concerned with Islamic disciplines like *tafsir* and *hadith*. The course of "tarihi umumi wa ilmi esatir al-awwalin" (the general history and science of myths of the ancients) was added to the curriculum of the Darulfünun Edebiyat Fakültesi (Darulfunun Faculty of Arts) in Istanbul. After the declaration of the Second 'Mesrutiyet' (a continuation of the reform program of Westernization), *tarihki adyan* (history of religions) took place in the curriculum of this faculty. From this period onwards, the course of 'history of religions' was taught in various *madrasahs*/educational institutions in Istanbul. At the beginning of the 20th century such educational institutions as Medresetul Vaizin, Medresetul Irsad and Süleymaniye had the history of religions in their curriculum. The students of Süleymaniye have also taken the course in 'Türk Dini Tarihi' (the history of the religion of the

Turks), which includes alongside 'history of religion' the religious history of Turkish tribes throughout history.

It is possible to discuss many reasons why the educational institutions started to teach the history of religion from the end of the 19th century onwards. Among these reasons the most important one seems to be the state policy of 'Westernization'. As is known, from the second half of the 19th century there began to some extent a process of Westernization in various areas, including education. Persons who had had their education in various European countries played a leading role in this process. While the content of some courses was revised, new ones were also added to the list. Therefore some courses which aimed at studying and teaching other cultures and religious traditions appeared alongside the traditional courses in the curriculum of the *madrasahs*.

When we take into consideration the content of the first books concerned with religious traditions, it is understood that they reflect somehow the Western intellectual understanding. The writers widely used in their books the Western sources though they usually did not give any specific reference.<sup>5</sup> *Esatir*, a book on mythology, written by Semseddin Sami, which is generally accepted to be the first Turkish book in the 'history of religions', is such a work. Although Sami does not give any sources, with a few exceptions such as Herodotus, he uses information from the Western sources concerning the myths of various peoples of the world, especially those of the ancient Romans and Greeks. It appears that the education of Sami in a Greek school in Yanya influenced Sami's intellectual approach.

In spite of Western influence it is noticeable that Sami is dependent upon the traditional Muslim approach of true and wrong (*haq* and *batil*) of religious traditions. He consequently emphasizes this approach in his book to warn the readers about the other religious systems he categorizes as *batil*.<sup>6</sup> Also Sami states that he has taken the term *Esatir*, the title of the book, from the Qur'anic statement of *esatir al-awwalin*,<sup>7</sup> and remarks that he uses the title in its meaning as 'myths'.<sup>8</sup>

While Sami's *Esatir* and the course of '*ilmi esatir al-awwalin*' were particularly interested in the myths, the books with a title of *tarikhi adyan* (history of religions) and the courses with the same title concentrated on giving a description of religious traditions from a systematic perspective.

Another reason why Muslim scholars needed to compose some books on other belief systems and likewise why the educational institutions saw it necessary to teach history of religions, is the activity of the missionary boards and societies. It is well known that from the second half of the 19th century many schools and educational institutions were founded by missionaries throughout the Middle East where generally the Ottomans governed. Even in the heart of the Ottomans, i.e., in Istanbul, some schools and colleges like Robert College, opened where an education according to the Western Christian tradition was given. Besides these educational activities the missionaries were quite active especially among the Christian and Jewish minorities (also in a later period among the Muslim population). It is certain that all of these activities caused the Muslim scholars to study non-Islamic religions, and the schools and institutions governed by the State to add courses which taught the other religious traditions.

After the publication of Semsettin Sami's *Esatir*, which is generally accepted as the first Turkish book on the history of religions, in 1295 (AD 1878) many books appeared with the title of *tarikhi adyan*, composed by various writers. They were usually prepared as textbooks in the course on the history of religions. Among them we can mention the works composed by Ahmet Midhat<sup>9</sup>, Mahmud Esat<sup>10</sup>, Es'ad bey<sup>11</sup> and Mehmed Semseddin.<sup>12</sup> Particularly Ahmed Midhat's *tarikhi adyan* is worth mentioning since it is the first book in Turkish with the title of

'History of Religions'. Ahmed Midhat seems to be strictly devoted to the traditional Muslim perspective. He therefore states at the beginning of his book that Islam is the last religion of God, and Muhammad is the last of the prophets (*hatam al-nabiyyin*). He also reflects the tradition of *kisasianbiya* literature in his book; so, he gives a history of the prophets and then a description of non-Islamic religious traditions.

Among the literatures with the title of *tarikhi adyan* Mehmet Semseddin's work differs from the others. Semseddin's book is noticeable because its content parallels the 'history of religions' composed in the West. His book includes many topics, including various terms and concepts related to 'history of religions', the categorization of the religions, the origin/origins of the religions and the descriptions of various religions. But in the matter of topics which the book includes, the book seems incomplete.

When we have a look at the studies of history of religions before the foundation of modern Turkey, we see that the studies of history of religions somehow reflect the intellectual, cultural and political changes in the society; and understanding depends, of course, upon these changes. We notice in this period, two different understandings: One of them is the traditional understanding of religion and society. This understanding, which appears as Islamization and unity in terms of the Ottoman identity, from a sociological outlook can be seen as an effort to conserve the traditional understanding, and so, maintains that an understanding of Islam as Turkey's religious 'centre' is (and must continue to be) the base of the society. As far as the studies of the history of religions are concerned, this understanding has been the background of apologetical, polemical and refutational approaches, vis-a-vis others. To see the other belief systems as the negative side of the binary of truth and wrongfulness (or *haq* and *batil*) and to refute them as 'wrong', has been a general characteristic of these studies. Therefore it is usually not possible to see an objective description or examination of religious cults and rituals in these studies. Ahmed Midhat's book could be given as an example of such an apologetic mode. The book emphasizes at the very beginning the main approach of the writer, as treated above.

The second approach is so-called 'Westernization', which takes Western intellectual and cultural understanding as a base. In the studies of this kind, it seems that the Western ideas and theories have been influential. As an example of this we can talk about Mehmed Semseddin. Semseddin, who was educated for a short while at Lausanne University in Switzerland, seems to have been influenced by positivism, a popular philosophy of that time, and also by the theories of religion of various Western scholars like Durkheim, Schwartz and Jastrow. Semseddin reflected positivistic ideas in his book on the history of religions.

To sum up, we see a common dilemma of Turkish intelligentsia of the last period of the Ottoman Empire in the study of history of religions in particular, a dilemma reflecting the conflict between the tradition which tries to preserve the essence based upon a traditional Muslim perspective, and the 'change' which takes the Western understanding as a base.

### **The History of Religions in the Modern Turkish Republic**

During the period of the Republic, the studies of the history of religions showed some changes parallel to both policies of the state and the reformation of the Turkish educational system. In the first years of the Republic the course of '*türk tarihi dinisi wa tarikhi adyan*' (Turkish religious history and history of religions) was given in Süleymaniye madrasah, a course which had already been transferred to the faculty of theology.

Two basic approaches, the policy of Westernization and of Turkish nationalism, have been an influence on the policies of the modern Turkish Republic. Hence, the state determined the policies of education and religion, taking these two approaches as a base. During the Ottoman Empire, unity under the Ottoman identity, not Turkish nationalism, had been accepted as a basic common point to supply the unity of the peoples from different nationalities and even different religious background. However, during the Republican period, Turkish nationalism was accepted as the determining principle for state policies. Therefore, this principle affected the understanding of religion alongside other policies of the state. Concerning this there were two important steps: One of them was to revise Islamic cults and rituals, to which the majority of the people were devoted, according to the Turkish nationalism. In doing this, the aim was to create, as it were, a national version of Islam, resembling the national churches of Christianity founded especially after the Reformation. This attempt, the proposition of a Turkish version of Islam, resembled in many ways the 'reform' attempted by Anglicanism, a Christian reform movement based upon English nationalism, carried out by theologians like Cranmer and Cromwell from the time of Henry VIII onwards. However, as far as the consequence of these two attempts is concerned, they differ since Cromwell's reforms resulted in producing Anglicanism while the attempt of the modern Turkish state to create a Turkish interpretation of Islam failed. The main reason for this is the fundamental difference between Islam and Christianity, as Mortimer rightly states.<sup>13</sup>

In the direction of this policy of religion, various steps were undertaken. For example, religious texts including the Qur'an were translated into Turkish, some Islamic rituals such as the call to prayer (*adhan*) and the Friday sermon (*hutbah*), were commanded to be given in Turkish, and the Institute of Religious Affairs was founded to represent and teach the formal understanding of Islam to the people. Likewise the school of '*imam-hatip*' and the faculty of theology were planned so as to move and implement the same policy.<sup>14</sup>

Another activity carried out in the direction of Turkish nationalism was to concentrate on the studies of history, language and religion of the Turks before and after Islam. Some studies were undertaken on how various nations and cultures from ancient Egypt to the continent of America were influenced by the Turkish language, culture and religious tradition. For example, a theory called "The Theory of Sun-Language" which was quite popular in the first years of the Turkish Republic is interesting. This theory claims that humanity from the pre-historic times onwards accepted the sun as a fundamental being of everything and therefore they called it "*ag*". The theory also claimed that the sun was the first totem of humanity, and that sun-worshipping was practiced in various religious cults and rituals, including that of the monotheistic traditions. Taking this theory as a base, some historians and scholars of the Turkish language also tried to find the terms and concepts of Turkish origin in other languages. They also tried to clear the Turkish language from foreign terminology, especially from Arabic and Persian.

The policy of Westernization of the state has also been an influence on the studies of both Islam and non-Islamic religions during the time of the Republic. The goal of Westernization, organized by intellectuals who were mostly educated in the West during the last period of the Ottomans, was the accepted policy of state in the Republican period and some arrangements appropriate for this policy were effected in education. The most noticeable feature in this new policy of education was to take secularism as a base and to try to constitute unity in education through the government's educational policies. In fulfilling these aims the Turkish governments revised the educational system as a whole, abandoning traditional *madrasahs* and replacing them with modern schools and institutes in the Western style, changing the character of Arabic script, adopting the Latin alphabet, etc. Likewise, traditional approaches of a dogmatic,

apologetic/defensive and refutational character were abandoned and replaced with an educational system based upon (at least in theory) research, objectivism and positive reason. In implementation of this policy of unity in education, the *madrasahs* as well as the missionary schools were either closed or transferred to the new educational system.

A noticeable progress for the study of the history of religions under this policy of education is the foundation of Islam Tetkikleri Enstitüsü (the Institute of Islamic Researches) which was founded in the Faculty of Arts of Istanbul University after the closing of Süleymaniye madrasah which was already transformed into the Faculty of Theology. Founded in 1933 this Institute was closed in 1941, but reopened in 1950 under the chairmanship of Zeki Velidi Togan, a foresighted scholar who tried his best to see that a scholarly mind-set took root among Turkish intelligentsia.<sup>15</sup> The Institute, where such scholars as M. Hamidullah and F. Sezgin worked as full-time or part-time researchers, had important aims concerning the studies of Islam and non-Islamic religions. The fundamental aim was to educate the scholars of Islam as specialists in this field as counterparts to the Western 'orientalists'. Concerning the other religions the goal was to educate scholars who had the ability to carry on research in various religious traditions from first-hand sources, examining their scriptures and other texts in the original languages, and who would be as objective in their studies as possible. Both the head of the Institute and its researchers and lecturers, most of whom were educated in the West, played important roles in the activities of this Institute towards the fulfillment of its aims.

The Institute of Islamic Research, which later changed its name to Islam Arastirmalari Enstitüsü (the Institute of Studies of Islam), carried out some academic activities in fulfillment of the aims mentioned above. Besides the conferences and seminars given by Western scholars, the Institute organized some congresses and symposia and also published the periodical *Islam Tetkikleri Enstitüsü Dergisi* (the *Journal of the Institute of Islamic Research*), of which the first issue was published in 1953. All of these activities are quite important for the studies of Turkish scholars, embodying a transition period from the traditional understanding of religion based on apologetic approaches to the Western styles of studies of religious cults and rituals.

An important person who must be cited concerning the studies of history of religions during this time is Hilmi Ömer Budda (d. 1952). Educated in the West in the fields of sociology and history of religions, Budda has been a lecturer in *Darülfünun İlahiyat Fakültesi* and from 1949 onward in the Faculty of Theology of Ankara University. Budda is the first scholar to use the phenomenological method in his studies, examining various religious phenomena from a descriptive point of view. Budda in his book on the history of religions<sup>16</sup> especially concentrated on Indian and Chinese religions. It is said that Atatürk, the founder of the modern Turkish Republic, wanted him to compose a particular study of Buddhism, and the surname of Budda was given to him because of this order. Budda has also done many studies of various phenomena and cults of religious traditions, such as the ritual of sacrifice and the belief in the flood.<sup>17</sup>

Budda worked in the Faculty of Theology of Ankara University as the head of the department of history of religions for three years from 1949 to 1952. After him in 1954 a German scholar, Annemarie Schimmel, became the head of the department and continued to hold the position for five years. Schimmel enabled the scholarly methods of the Western intelligentsia in the studies of religion to take root among Turkish scholars. She also published some works in Turkish in this field. Her textbook of the history of religions<sup>18</sup> has been a good example for later books with similar content.

As many scholars stated,<sup>19</sup> with Hikmet Tanyu (d. 1992) the study of the history of religions has entered a new period. Having his doctorate in the field of history of religions (1959), Tanyu

educated many postgraduate students in the 'history of religions'. Being an uncompromising Turkish nationalist and jailed for a short while<sup>20</sup> because of the ideology of *Turan* (an ideology which aims at the political unity of Turks throughout the whole world), Tanyu reflected his ideological perspective in his studies. He tried his best for his students to adopt Turkish nationalism. He especially concentrated on religious subjects somehow involving Turkish culture and history. He tried to enlighten the religious and cultural history of the Turks. Consequently, his studies of the history of religions are actually "Turkish cultural history," as rightly stated by B. Adam.<sup>21</sup>

After Buddha and Schimmel, both of whom had tried to plant the descriptive phenomenological method among the scholars of history of religions, Tanyu revived the nationalistic perspective of the first years of the Republic.<sup>22</sup> Besides his nationalistic points of view he also continued—especially in his later studies such as *Islam Dininin Düşmanlari ve Allah'a Inananlar (The Enemies of the Religion of Islam and Believers in Allah)*<sup>23</sup>—the traditional Muslim attitude of a polemical apologetic approach to others. An important discussion Tanyu carried out is about the nature of the ancient (or traditional) religion of the Turks. He has written many books against the theories of some Western and Turkish scholars that maintain the ancient Turkish religion was Shamanism. He defended in his books<sup>24</sup> the notion that the ancient religion of the Turks had a monotheistic character based upon the belief in a God of Heaven<sup>25</sup>. Moreover, Tanyu has done some work on other religions such as Judaism, especially from the perspective of their relation to the Turks and Turkish culture.<sup>26</sup> Finally, he has also done some studies on the religious sects and movements which are interested in Turkey and which have, Tanyu thinks, harmful intentions/aims against Turkey and Turkish people<sup>27</sup>. Tanyu encouraged his students to study in such subjects particular.

When we look at Tanyu's studies and activities in history of religions as a whole, we see that Tanyu, who enabled the number of historians of religion to increase in the faculties of theology, appropriated a defensive polemical and apologetical approach with a strict nationalistic perspective in his studies; and he advised his students to continue this approach in their own studies.

After Tanyu, studies of the history of religions in the direction of Turkish cultural history continued and intensified, mainly via the studies carried out by Tanyu's students, who came to be called the "Tanyu School".<sup>28</sup> Many studies in the context of cultural history and anthropology have therefore been done on various Turkish clans and tribes such as Gagauzs, Karays, Cuvass, etc., by scholars who work in the departments of history of religions of the faculties of theology in Turkish universities. Moreover, the studies on the relationship of various belief systems to Turkish culture and on the belief in God in ancient/traditional Turkish religion have continued. Following the Tanyu tradition, S. Kuzgun, for example, argued in his books that the religious tradition of the ancient Turks was the monotheistic religion of *hanif*, a religious tradition belonging to the patriarch Abraham according to Muslim sources. He claimed that this monotheistic religion of Abraham was probably taught to Turks by a certain prophet, either Zulkarnayn or one of Abraham's sons.<sup>29</sup> Kuzgun has also seen a connection between other monotheistic religion-founders and the Turkish culture. Following some medieval Muslim sources he, for instance, maintained that Zoroaster could have belonged to a Turkish tribe.<sup>30</sup>

It is noticeable in the studies of the history of religions carried out in the faculties of theology, roughly from 1950 to 1990, that the academicians have taken into consideration some theological concerns and the role of the faculty of theology in Turkey which was designated by the policies of the state. Also the contemporary needs of the Turkish people were taken into consideration in the studies of religion. During this period, besides the cultural and religious history of the Turks,

researchers were inclined to study such subjects as the religious minorities in Turkey, the medieval Muslim scholars related to the history of religions such as al-Biruni, al-Shahrastani and Ibn Hazm and their works, the comparison of the Qur'an to the Bible in the context of various subjects, and some religious sects and movements such as Jehovah's Witnesses, Sabbataists, etc. who are believed to have evil intentions and aims and want to carry out harmful activities against Turkey.

The studies done in this period mostly included encyclopedic information on related subjects, and are far from being works of specialization. Hence, they were generally not significant. In such studies the writers usually held traditional approaches to religious beliefs and traditions when they wanted to do an evaluation. Especially in comparative studies they were eager to defend Islamic beliefs and cults against the others; so, apologetic and polemical approaches were adopted. In the studies of non-Islamic religions and cultures, first hand sources mostly were neglected unless there were Turkish translations or translations into another language the researchers knew. Instead of using first hand sources of religious traditions, Muslim sources were used to describe and evaluate them. When the scriptures of religions were used as references, the writers generally referred to the Turkish translations if available. For example, in the studies of Christian and Jewish theology and also in the studies of certain concepts of the Bible, the Turkish translation of the Bible was usually used as the reference, since the writers were unable to read and understand the classical languages of the Bible and its classical translations involving Latin and ancient Greek. Naturally, this caused these studies to be very simple and superficial.

Another noticeable characteristic of the discipline of the 'history of religions' in this period is that the researchers were generally interested in not specific but many subjects though only at the encyclopedic level of information. Some even thought and defended the idea that a historian of religions should carry on 'general studies' of the religious traditions. They also argued that the scholar should have knowledge of all religious traditions, and they did not approve of a scholar studying only one particular subject. This understanding also echoed in the courses of the history of religions in graduate and postgraduate levels. The same point also applies in the learning of the classical Western and Semitic languages so important for the study of Middle Eastern religions including Judaism and Christianity. The teaching of these languages was long neglected until recent times when courses in basic Hebrew, Latin and ancient Greek were included in the curriculum of the departments of the history of religions in some universities.

Parallel to all of these situations, studies of the 'history of religions' which were carried out by Turkish scholars were quite 'behind' those carried out by Western scholars. Likewise the Turkish scholars of this period generally stayed away from international scholarly activities in the history of religions and could not prepare publications for an international milieu. This situation is, of course, an indication of how far the studies of history of religions in Turkey were removed from the level in the West.

Two important reasons can be broached, as to why the 'history of religions' in Turkey did not develop enough, compared to the West, and why the Turkish historians of religions stayed away from international scholarly activities: One concerns the characteristics of faculties of theology in Turkey where the history of religions is constituted as a department. It is known that these faculties were founded in order to educate persons intended for religious service to the Muslim majority, most of whom belong to the Sunni school of Islam; furthermore, these same persons were intended to represent the religious ideology determined by the state. In other words, these faculties were not concerned with a general theology of religion but of Islam, particularly Sunni Islam. Because of this characteristic only the Muslim students and lecturers in the main were interested in these faculties while non-Muslim students and lecturers naturally stayed away from them, even though

there was no legal prohibition.<sup>31</sup> The education in these faculties was largely concerned with so-called Islamic sciences. Concerning these disciplines an education with an apologetic character was usually given to the students. Due to these characteristics of the faculties of theology, not only non-Muslims but also the followers of heterodox Islam such as the Alawites, who do not belong to the Sunni school, avoided these faculties. They assume that in these faculties only references to Sunni Islam established the base of the Islamic education.

This situation of the faculties of theology has undoubtedly affected the studies of the history of religions. Like the scholars of other disciplines of the faculty, the historians of religions accepted themselves as dependent upon the Sunni version of Islam and reflected this in their works. They also sometimes preferred the identity of 'Muslim theologian' to that of 'historian of religions'.

The second reason why the Turkish historians of religions stayed away from international activities involves their training. Unlike their colleagues in the West, Turkish scholars have mostly a background in Islamic theology, not a background in linguistics, anthropology, philosophy or cultural history. From the secondary school level onward, most of them have been educated in a curriculum based on received teaching. This education, of course, had great influence on their later approaches to religion.

In spite of these negativities, an important development in the field of the history of religions in Turkey took place after the 1990s, when many postgraduate students were sent to Western universities to study history of religions. After their return to Turkey, a serious revival in the studies of the history of religions began. In this new period, among many others Ekrem Sarikcioglu in particular, himself educated in Germany in the history of religions, played an important role in elevating studies to the Western level. Using a descriptive phenomenological method in his studies, Sarikcioglu encouraged researchers to leave traditional approaches and take up internationally accepted methods in examining religious cults and rituals. He also showed examples of the usage of these methods in his studies.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, Sarikcioglu organized the first symposium of studies of Turkish historians of religions in 1992. The papers read in this symposium were also published in a symposium book.<sup>33</sup> As a final point, Sarikcioglu composed a textbook in phenomenology of religion that is the first in Turkish<sup>34</sup> and tried his best to plant this method in the studies of religions in Turkey.

In this new period the historians of religions have tried to focus on some special areas, aiming to be specialists in certain subjects. Consequently, many successful studies of various religious traditions such as the history, theology and sects of Christianity, Indian religions, Mandaeism and other Gnostic religious traditions were carried out. Parallel to this, the historians of religions began to attend international scholarly activities in their specialties and produce international publications in various Western languages.

Another important development of this period is the foundation of the Turkish Association of the History of Religions (*Türkiye Dinler Tarihi Derneği*), centered in Ankara. Having very recently joined the International Association of History of Religions, this Turkish association organizes once every two years a national or sometimes international symposium, the papers of which are published in a series with a title of *Dinler Tarihi Arastirmalari*.<sup>35</sup> Also a periodical of cultures, beliefs and mythology called *Milel ve Nihal: Inanc, Kültür ve Mitoloji Arastirmalari Dergisi* (*Milel & Nihal: Journal for Research on Culture, Belief and Mythology*)<sup>36</sup> has been an important contribution to the studies of history of religions. As an electronic journal published semi-annually by the editorial board of [dinlertarihi.com](http://dinlertarihi.com), *Milel ve Nihal* aims to promote the study of history of religions and religious beliefs and cults throughout world.

The history of religion is becoming quite popular year by year in Turkey. This is mainly due to the changing of Turkey's traditional approaches and international policies which cause Turkey to become a much more mixed society of various cultures and religions. It looks like the monopoly of scholars of faculties of theology in history of religions is also beginning to be broken since some persons outside these faculties are also getting involved in the studies of the history of religions. For example, various volumes on Buddhism, Hinduism, Spiritualism, Zoroastrianism, Yezidism, etc., have been published by scholars who are not theologians of Islam. Also, various publishing companies show great interest in the studies of well-known Western historians of religions such as Eliade and Pettazzoni, and publish the translations of their books in Turkish. I hope that all of these improvements in the 'history of religions' in Turkey will bring about a better future for studies in this field.

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#### **NOTES**

1 See J.B. Segal, *Edessa and Harran*, London 1963, p.25; D.C. Rice, "Medieval Harran: Studies on its Topography and Monuments I", *Anatolian Studies*, 2, 1952, p.45.

2 Among them we can, for example, mention al-Tabari's *tafsir* where al-Tabari narrates all the information he had, concerning the religions and religious beliefs and rituals when he explains the related verses of the Qur'an.

3 E.J. Sharp, *Comparative Religion: A History*, London: Duckworth 1975, p.11.

4 Istanbul 1884-1889.

5 This is also due to the traditional writing method of the Muslims in medieval times. Until roughly the 20th century Muslim writers did not use the footnote technique in their books.

6 *Al-An'am*, 25; *al-Anfal*, 31.

7 ... It looks like the course of *ilmi asatiri awwalin*, taught in Darulfünun Faculty of Arts, took its name from the same lines of the Qur'an.

8 Semseddin Sami, *Esatir*, ikinci baski, Istanbul: Mihran Matbaasi 1311, p.7.

9 Ahmed Mithat Efendi, *Tarikhi Adyan*, Istanbul 1328.

10 Mahmud Es'ad Seydissehri, *Tarikhi Adyan*, Istanbul 1330.

11 Esad Bey, *Tarikhi Adyan*, Istanbul 1336.

12 Mehmed Semseddin, *Tarikhi Adyan*, Istanbul: Kanaat Matbaasi 1338.

13 See E. Mortimer, *Faith and Power: The Politics of Islam*, Faber and Faber 1982, pp. 126-158.

14 The attempts and activities to interpret Islam according to Turkish nationalism and to produce a Turkish version of Islam go on even today. Besides the academic activities which focus on this attempt some societies and non governmental organizations carry out various activities in this direction.

15 For Togan's ideas and activities see, B. Gökçir, "Western Attitudes towards the Origins of the Qur'an," PhD Thesis, Manchester University Department of Middle Eastern Studies 2002, pp. 173-177.

16 Hilmi Ömer (Budda), *Dinler Tarihi*, Istanbul 1935.

17 Various articles written by Buddha on the ritual of sacrifice and the belief in the flood which were published in the journal of Darülfünun İlahiyat Fakültesi were collected and republished in a volume by B.Z. Coban. See Hilmi Omer Buddha, *Kurban ve Tufan Üzerine Makaleler*, Haz. B.Z. Coban, İstanbul: İnsan 2003.

18 A. Schimmel, *Dinler Tarihine Giriş*, Ankara 1955.

19 See A. Küçük, "Prof. Dr. Hikmet Tanyu'nun Hayati, Eserleri ve Fikirleri", *Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* (hereafter *AÜİFD*), XXXVI, 1997, p.503; M. Aydın, *Dinler Tarihine Giriş*, Konya 2002, p.29.

20 See Küçük, "Prof. Dr. Hikmet Tanyu'nun Hayati, Eserleri ve Fikirleri", p.499.

21 B. Adam, "Prof. Dr. Hikmet Tanyu'dan Günümüze Dinler Tarihi Çalışmaları", *AÜİFD*, XXXVI, 1997, p.510.

22 Among Tanyu's publications there also appear some works (especially his doctorate and associate professorship dissertations) from the phenomenological perspective. See H. Tanyu, *Ankara ve Cevresinde Adak ve Adak Yerleri*, Ankara 1967; idem, *Türklerde Tasla İlgili İnanclar*, Ankara 1968; idem, *Dinler Tarihi Arastirmalari*, Ankara 1973.

23 İstanbul 1989.

24 H. Tanyu, *Türklerin Dini Tarihcesi*, İstanbul 1978; idem, *İslamliktan Önce Türklerde Tek Tanrı İnancı*, Ankara 1980.

25 This view was already defended by Z. Gökalp, a Turkish nationalist at the beginning of the 20th century. See H. Güngör, "Prof. Dr. Hikmet Tanyu'nun Türk Dini Tarihi Çalışmalarına Katkisi", *Dinler Tarihi Arastirmalari I*, Ankara 1998, p.55.

26 As an example of this, see, H. Tanyu, *Tarih Boyunca Yahudiler ve Türkler*, (2 vols), İstanbul 1976.

27 See, for example, H. Tanyu, *Yehova Sahitleri*, Ankara 1973.

28 Küçük, "Prof. Dr. Hikmet Tanyu'nun Hayati, Eserleri ve Fikirleri", p.504.

29 See S. Kuzgun, *İslam Kaynaklarına Göre Hz. İbrahim ve Hanıflık*, Ankara 1985, pp. 160-162; idem, *Dinler Tarihi Dersleri*, Kayseri 1993, pp. 62f.

30 See S. Kuzgun, "İslam Tarihi Kaynaklarına Göre Nevruz Bayramı", *Türk Kültüründe Nevruz Uluslararası Bilgi Söleni (Sempozyumu) Bildirileri*, Ankara 1995, pp.106f.

31 Exceptionally, from time to time the faculties of theology in big cities like İstanbul and Ankara had a few non-Muslim students and lecturers.

32 See for example E. Sarıkcıoğlu, *Dinlerde Mehdi Tasavvurları*, Samsun 1997; idem, "Sayentoloji Mezhebi Kurucusu ve Öğretisi", *OMÜ İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, 1, 1986, pp. 3-39, 2, 1987, pp. 3-34; E. Sarıkcıoğlu, S. Gündüz, Y. Ünal, *Dinlerde Yükseliş Motifleri*, Ankara 1996.

33 *Türkiye I. Dinler Tarihi Arastirmalari Sempozyumu (24-25 Eylül 1992)*, Samsun 1992.

34 E. Sarıkcıoğlu, *Din Fenomenolojisi*, Isparta 2003. Sarıkcıoğlu also tried to do his best to be as objective as he could when writing on religions. For example, when he composed the textbook on world religions, he first sent the text to various religious community leaders (or formal organizations if available), then, after taking their views and criticism, if any, they revised the text and published the book. That is why his book of the history of religions (*Baslangıctan Günümüze Dinler Tarihi*, Isparta 1999) is the most objective work in the period of the Republic.

35 Already three books in this series have been published.

36 <http://www.dinlertarihi.com/dergi/dergiindex.htm>

## Chapter III

# Religious Education in Modern Turkey

Mustafa Köylü

One of the most controversial issues in Turkey has been the question of religious education since the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923. It is continuing to be a serious problem even today. Several answers can be given to this important question. However, to me, the most important problem concerning this matter is the understanding of secularism. Some people advocate that if the state is a secular state, then the state should not intervene in religion at all. The state and religious issues should be separated completely from each other. The majority of the people claim that if the overwhelming population of Turkey is Muslim, then the state cannot ignore the teaching of Islam: indeed, the teaching of religion at schools must be the main duty of the state. Thus, religious education should be compulsory at public and private schools, men of religion should be educated at state schools by the state and the religious needs of the people should be met.

If the state accepts itself as a secular one, does it have any right to intervene in the religious beliefs and practices of people? Does not this kind of application violate the principle of secularism? What about other people who have different religions and beliefs? Whatever people think and whatever the applications in other countries are, it is a fact that religious matters in Turkey have been under the control of the state since the establishment of the Republic, and it seems that the state will continue to organize, teach, and administer all religious issues in Turkey.

There are a number of agents and institutions that contribute to the teaching of Islam in Turkey. Broadly speaking, we can divide these agents and institutions into four categories: 1) The first category includes the official religious education offered by the specialist religion teachers at public and private schools from the fourth to the 11th grades under the control of the Ministry of National Education. The second category involves common or informal religious education offered by the Presidency of Religious Affairs through the mosques, Qur'anic courses, and publishing materials. The third category belongs to the mass media including TV channels (both private and state) and newspapers, books, magazines and communication networks. The fourth category contains various religious groups and their efforts related to the teaching of religion. Thus, it can be said that while the first two agencies are under the control of the state, the other two are mostly civil and independent religious teaching agencies.

In this paper, I will deal mostly with the first two categories, that is, religion teaching that is under the control of the state. In this context, the paper consists of three main parts. The first part briefly examines the historical development of religion in the lives of Turks. The second part focuses on the religious institutions offering religious education, and the third part discusses the present situation and future trends.

### **A Short History of the Development of Religious Lives among the Turkish People**

In order to understand correctly and more comprehensively the developments of religious education in Turkey, it is necessary to supply some information about the religious history of the Turkish nation. Before becoming Muslims, Turks experienced various beliefs and practices. In their original Central Asian homelands they followed Shamanistic practices; and they came into

contact with Buddhism, Manicheism and Nestorian Christianity in the course of time. However, when they started moving westward and encountered Arabs, they met Islam, which made the greater impact upon them and thereby changed the course of history.

The War of Manzikert (Malazgirt), which took place between the Seljuks under Alparslan and the Byzantines in 1071, near Lake Van in Eastern Anatolia, became a turning point in Turkish history. This victory opened to the Turkish people the doors of Anatolia. Seljuk dominance in Anatolia lasted two centuries, and established a brilliant Anatolian civilization which still has influence upon events today.

After the Seljuks were defeated by the Mongols, the Ottomans gained dominance in Anatolia and established an empire in 1299 in Western Anatolia bordering on the Byzantine territory: this empire lasted more than six centuries. During this period, while the Ottomans recognized all religious differences, they did not distinguish between members of any religion on racial grounds. So, Turks, Arabs and Kurds were all treated as members of the Islamic community. The Ottomans lived their golden age between 1451 and 1566 and achieved their greatest glories in this period.<sup>1</sup> They regarded this success as a divine reward for their services to Islam. Manifestations of their Islamic faith were evident in all aspects of their lives. As a result of this understanding, they adopted the Arabic script, they established educational systems according to the Islamic teaching, and they built magnificent mosques. They excelled in many arts. More importantly, they were at the top level among their contemporaries in science and technology.

However, for both internal and external reasons, the Empire began to decline from the beginning of the seventeenth century.<sup>2</sup> Thus, when the Ottoman Empire's armed forces began to weaken and loose the battles against the West, they had to contact the West, particularly the French. As a result of this confrontation, French ideas on political philosophy and the place of religion in the state began to penetrate Turkey. Those ideas and growing European interferences in Ottoman affairs led Turkish intellectuals to debate what should be the Ottoman response to the challenge of the West.

At this point, while some Turkish intellectuals grasped the concept of nationalism and argued that religion could be regarded as a matter for the private belief of the individual, the others held the view that Islam should be involved in every aspect of life and form the foundation of the state and society. However, this belief, nationalism and reducing religion to only the private belief of the individual, met fierce resistance. Overall, three rival remedies were offered for the empire's ills, each offering a different basis on which unity might be achieved. In 1904, these were listed as: Ottomanism—a common citizenship and loyalty of all subjects of the empire without regard to religion or race, as had been the case in the past; Islamism (pan-Islamism)—the union of all Muslim people in the world; and Turkism (or pan-Turkism)—the unity of people speaking Turkish languages. The Young Turks, who were educated mostly in the West, wrestled with these concepts after the 1908 Revolution, but it turned out that neither Ottomanism nor Islamism could prevail against the rising tide of nationalism which caused the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and led Turkish people to establish a new state, a secular, democratic, lawful, and social state called the Republic of Turkey.<sup>3</sup> Of course, this main change in the structure of the state affected religious life and the religious education of Turkish people.

### **The Beginning of Secularization**

Defeat in the First World War left Turkey without an empire. Since the Sultan and his government in Istanbul were subservient to Allied demands and regarded opposition as hopeless,

the last Sultan Mehmed Wahidattin sent Mustafa Kemal (1881-1938, the founder of the Republic of Turkey) who later received the name of Atatürk, to Anatolia to liberate Turkey and Turkish people from the invaders. On 23 April 1920, the Grand National Assembly was established and Mustafa Kemal was elected as the president of the Assembly, and the following statement of faith was proclaimed to the world: "Sovereignty belongs unconditionally to the nation. The GNA (Grand National Assembly) is the true and sole representative of the nation. Legislative authority and executive power are manifested and concentrated in the GNA."<sup>4</sup> After this time, the new Turkish GNA in Ankara was to give its decisions concerning political, social, cultural and religious issues of Turkish people. Using his prestige and power, Mustafa Kemal won the War of Turkish Independence. It must be here noted that the independence movement of 1919-1922 was strongly religious in character.<sup>5</sup> Its aims were to liberate "Islamic lands" and "Islamic populations" from foreign rule, and its declaration were addressed to "Muslim compatriots."<sup>6</sup> In order to achieve his aims, Mustafa Kemal tried to cultivate the support of the *ulema* (Muslim scholars), the brotherhoods (dervishes) and Anatolian people.<sup>7</sup> As Lewis pointed out, "One-fifth of the members of the first GNA belonged to the class of professional men of religion..."<sup>8</sup> It also included ten leading *seyhs* (the various Sufi leaders).<sup>9</sup> Even the GNA had accepted Islam as the religion of the Turkish State on 20 April 1924.<sup>10</sup>

While the new Assembly gave a great importance to the religion of Islam and its various practices and *ulema*,<sup>11</sup> later when the Ankara government defeated the Greeks on November 1, 1922, it announced the abolition of the sultanate, alleging that the sultan had discredited his authority by siding with the enemy. Later upon the suggestion of M. Kemal, the caliphate was abolished as a necessary consequence of the abolition of the sultanate on March 3, 1924. After this date, all members of the Ottoman dynasty including sultan Abdulmecid, the last caliph of the Muslim world, were forever forbidden to reside within the frontiers of the Turkish Republic.<sup>12</sup>

After the sultanate and the caliphate were abolished, and the Republic of Turkey was established as a new state (on October 29, 1923), there was no reason not to begin other changes for secularizing Turkey. At this context, many important changes were made to secularize Turkey. In 1924, the Law of Unified Education was accepted. As a consequence of this law, all *madradas* (the Ottoman Islamic High Schools) were closed. The new state prohibited the dervish orders and closed their lodges; adopted European headgear and dress (1925); accepted the Western legal codes and the Western international calendar and system of weights and measures (1926); changed Arabic letters to Latin characters and removed Islam from the Constitution as the religion of the Turkish State (1928); ended the instruction of Arabic and Persian at elementary and secondary schools (1929); granted the right to vote and to hold public office to women (1930-1935); closed the *imams* and preachers' schools and the faculty of divinity in Istanbul which had all been established in 1924, under the new educational system (1933); and finally adopted laicism and evolutionism as two of the basic principles of the amended Turkish Constitution (1937).<sup>13</sup>

The most important changes made in the affairs of the state were the acceptance of secularism. As Nyrop wrote: "As Islam had formed the identity of Ottoman subject and empire, so secularism would form the identity of the new Turkish man and nation."<sup>14</sup> The Ministry of Interior at the time explained this principle as follows: "We say that ... religions should stay in the internal forum (conscience) and places of worship and should not be mixed with material life and worldly concerns."<sup>15</sup> With the introduction of secularism, religion was separated from the legal, educational and cultural life of the Turkish people. The state not only declared itself as a secular state, but also took some severe precautions to control and direct religious affairs and to keep them out of the political sphere.<sup>16</sup> Turkish secularism was not only concerned about clearing the state

apparatus of religious influence, but also with restricting the influence of religion as a belief system.<sup>17</sup>

The reform of secularism showed its effects on people immediately. During this period, there was a notable decline in public worship and traditional Muslim feasts and observances. While most members of the *ulema* were pensioned,<sup>18</sup> against those who did not want to accept the reforms of Atatürk, the authorities took very immediate and strong measures.<sup>19</sup> Every *imam* who did not sing the new *adhan* (call for prayer in Turkish) was liable to imprisonment and after 2 June 1941 even the recitation of the Arabic wording on any occasion could be punished.<sup>20</sup> Through these reforms, Islam, in the words of Bernard Lewis, "had been made a department of the state; the *ulema* had become minor religious servants."<sup>21</sup>

### *The Law of Unified Education (on 3 March, 1924)*

One of the most important decisions concerning religious education in Turkey made on March 3, 1924 was related to the unification of the educational system. Before the Republic of Turkey was established, three kinds of education were offered to the students in the Ottoman Empire: 1) The students of *madrasas* who closed their eyes to the modern developments of the world (though this behavior is far from the essence and dynamism of Islam), and evaluated other students as non-religious. 2) The students of new schools opened by some western countries, schools which groomed their students in Western culture and argued that the religion of Islam is the cause of the backwardness of the Ottoman Empire. 3) The students of "missionary thinking" whose teachers were foreigners and other minority groups in the land of the Ottoman Empire. All of these groups behaved towards each other as enemies, accusing each other of being nonreligious, bigots, and traitors.<sup>22</sup>

All educational systems which had prevailed in Turkey were to be unified so as to produce the students who had the same thinking, aims and objectives. As a result of the Law of Unified Education enacted in 1924, 479 *madrasas* with a total enrollment of 18,000 were closed,<sup>23</sup> and, in 1928, courses on religion were completely abolished in the urban areas.<sup>24</sup> However, while religious education was forbidden in urban schools, it was not forbidden in rural schools. As Szyliowicz pointed out: "There it remained a part of the curriculum though it was placed within the framework of a liberal philosophy emphasizing respect for different beliefs, avoidance of fanaticism and fatalism, and the importance of good citizenship."<sup>25</sup>

Meantime, it must be mentioned that one of the articles of the Law of Unified Education was to open a new theological faculty in Istanbul. Thus, a new faculty was set up in Istanbul in 1924. However, the members of this faculty did not delay in preparing a report calling for innovations that were unacceptable to the majority of Muslims in Turkey. Those innovations included the introduction of pews and instrumental music into the mosques; the retention of shoes on the feet during worship, and the use of the Turkish instead of Arabic language in the services.<sup>26</sup> Although the report was not easily enacted at the time into legislation, the recommendation to use Turkish in place of Arabic whenever possible was carried out. It was prescribed that the Qur'an was to be used in Turkish translation, and the call to prayer to be given in Turkish. As a result of this change, the Turkish word for God, *Tanrı*, was substituted for the Arabic Allah.<sup>27</sup>

Although during the first years of the Republic in 1924, some thirty training schools for *imams* and preachers were left open, in 1932 only two of them were still working and those, too, had to be closed for lack of teachers and students. As a result of these developments, the

faculty of divinity that was set up in 1924 was closed in 1933.<sup>28</sup> Thus, religious education was largely diminished in all institutions between 1924-1933.

Although some strict measures against religious instruction and traditional values of the Muslim people were taken by the state in the early years of the Republic, this situation did not continue for a long time, for "in the popular mind, to be a Turk implies accepting Islam."<sup>29</sup> Turkish people had given such importance to Islam that since 1530 the readers had recited the Qur'an continuously in round-the-clock-shifts in Topkapi Palace in Istanbul until 1922 (392 years), when this was forbidden by the new state.

## **Religious Instruction and Education in Religious Institutions**

### *The Presidency of Religious Affairs*

While religious education at schools was banned and the faculty of divinity was closed, a new religious office called "Department of Religious Affairs" was set up under direct control of the prime minister in 1924. The purpose of the Presidency of Religious Affairs was defined as follows: "To direct the affairs pertaining to the beliefs of the Muslim religion and to the foundation of worship and morals; to enlighten the population on the subject of religion and to administer places of worship."<sup>30</sup> In fact, its task, as Norton and Mardin have said, was to ensure that religion was to be used in the service of the state—a complete reversal of the old Ottoman concept that the purpose of government was to implement the will of Allah, and to control all training for religious offices as well as the salaries and appointments of all religious officials.<sup>31</sup> In addition to these services, it publishes religious books, journals against Christian missionary activities, biographies of Muslim leaders and thinkers, and confrontation of Muslim and Western thinkers. Furthermore, the Presidency of Religious Affairs authors and publishes official sermons for delivery on Friday prayers by local preachers and is in charge of organizing the pilgrimage for Turkish Muslims.

As Ali Bardakoglu, who is the new president of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet*), says, the Presidency of Religious Affairs has three characteristics: First, it is a public, civil and independent institution. By structure, the *Diyanet* is a public institution; it is a part of the state machinery and the bureaucratic system. Although some people advocate that this position of *Diyanet* is contradictory to the principle of secularism, the state itself appoints and pays the salaries of all staffs belonging to the *Diyanet*. As far as I know, this is a unique application compared with both the western and eastern countries. Second, the *Diyanet* is an independent institution. It is an independent institution because it enjoys freedom in scholarly activities, in intellectual discussions of Islamic issues, in the production of religious knowledge and its dissemination to the public. Third, it is a civil institution. Since it was established to meet the religious needs of Muslim believers, it has to meet these needs freely in light of authentic sources. The *Diyanet* tries to pursue moderate ideas and to ensure social peace and trust. Thus, it avoids producing extreme ideas. It does not despise what the people believe and practice. In this context, it does not have a policy of imposing a particular model of religiosity on people. It always takes into account the demands of people and traditional forms belonging to the people. It promotes a religiosity based on scholarship, sound knowledge and interpretation. In fact, this makes *Diyanet* rather different from an academic institution.<sup>32</sup>

### *Imam and Preacher Schools*

After abolition of the Ottoman Caliphate, closing of the *madrasas* and establishing a unified, secular, state-system education in 1924, the state had opened a faculty of divinity in Istanbul and some six *Imam* and Preacher Schools in various parts of the country. However, all of them were closed in 1932. Thus, there was no official religious education in Turkey until 1949. Although some courses were offered to prepare *imams* to serve at mosques and to meet the religious needs of the people for a ten-month duration between 1948 and 1949, it was not enough. It had come to such a point that there was no *imam* to serve the funeral prayers and services in many places in the country. Because of these frustrated religious needs of the people and because of the nonreligious practices implemented by the Republican Public Party until the 1950s, the Democratic Party evaluated this chance very well and opened new *Imam* and Preachers schools whose training programs were four years long, based upon elementary schools in 1951. Three years later, in 1954, the years of training were extended to eight years, four years of which were middle school and the other part high school.

Since people liked these schools very much, they themselves raised funds for buying the grounds and construction of buildings. Therefore, the number of these schools began to increase very rapidly. For example, while there were only sixteen *Imam* and Preacher Schools in various parts of Turkey in 1956, this number rose to 320 by 1977, 380 in 1983 and reached approximately 398 in 1994-1995, with a total of 436, 528 students.<sup>33</sup> Every city and town had an *Imam* and Preacher School which had more students than its capacity. The students of these schools not only become *imams* for the mosques but also enter the various faculties of universities.

While the state itself opened the first *Imam* and Preacher School, it has not left them alone: it has taken some serious precautions in the matter of these schools and their students throughout the Republic's history. First of all, these schools were (are) under the supervision and control of the Ministry of Education. Thus, the Ministry of Education prepares these schools' programs, appoints their teachers and controls all their educational activities, just as it does the secular schools. Their principals, especially in the early years, were carefully selected, able men who had usually been trained almost exclusively in the liberal arts and had had little if any formal religious education.<sup>34</sup> Secondly, the state has not given an equal access to the students of these schools into the universities. In the earlier years, they were not even allowed to enter the faculty of theology in Ankara where they would constitute a most useful element.<sup>35</sup> Later on, they were allowed entrance but only or mostly to the faculties of theology. Thirdly, although people want to establish more *Imam* and Preacher Schools voluntarily, the state has stopped their expansion since 1983. Fourthly, while all students belonging to other high schools can enter into military schools and police academics, these doors are completely closed for the students of *Imam* and Preacher schools.

### *Faculties of Theology*

As Lewis has pointed out, since the lack of men with a serious religious education gave scope to fanatics and illiterates in the religious revival, the government decided to establish a Faculty of Theology at Ankara, the capital city of Turkey, in 1949.<sup>36</sup> However, according to the foreigner observer Lewis, it had several features which must be taken into account; for example, unlike its predecessor, it was not in Istanbul, the old religious and cultural center, with its great mosques, libraries and traditions, but in Ankara, the new city, the heart of Republican Turkey and the seat of the government. Unlike old *madrasas*, it was a part of the university, and therefore ultimately under the control of the Ministry of Education.<sup>37</sup> Its program did not contain pure Islamic

subjects, but mostly was related to History of Religion, Psychology and Sociology of Religion and Philosophy.<sup>38</sup> More interestingly, even though it was a religious faculty—as Schimmel who taught at this faculty for many years, observed— "Prayer was not offered regularly, and fasting was not observed by all members of the staff..."<sup>39</sup>

Then, what were the functions and purposes of this new faculty of theology? In fact, Article 163 which passed on the very day when the law for this faculty took place shows its limitations: It stipulated that "any individual creating or participating in any association whose aims involve organizing the judicial, social, economic or political order on religious bases is liable to from two to seven years in prison. The use of religion for political or personal objectives, as well as the use of religious sentiment with a view to weakening the principle of secularism is an offense for which prison terms of from one to five years may be imposed."<sup>40</sup>

The Minister of Education announced at the opening of the new Faculty: "It will be worthy of the Atatürk Revolution and will not work in the spirit of the *madrasas*, but will work against reactionary trends..." Professor Yavuz Abadan of the Faculty of Law at Ankara declared on June 16, 1949: "The Faculty of Divinity cannot ever be a center to inspire religious feeling, but simply a teaching institution which carries on research in an objective manner on the historical, sociological, and intellectual development of all religions."<sup>41</sup> The committee on religious education also described the purpose of the institution as furthering the understanding of Islam in light of contemporary science and social principles: "... for instance, taking into consideration the fact that the Qur'anic prescription of cutting off a thief's hand is no longer practiced, it should show how other Qur'anic prescriptions have been invalidated under changing circumstances. It must interpret the Qur'an in the context of present legal and social institutions."<sup>42</sup> Therefore, Reed wrote, "So far as is known, the new Faculty of Divinity at Ankara is the only modern institution of its type in the Muslim World."<sup>43</sup> This new faculty's aim was to produce religion teachers for high schools, preachers for the mosques, *mufitis* for the towns and cities and young scholars who would make scientific researches at the Faculty.<sup>44</sup>

Since the faculty of divinity could not response to the needs of religion teachers at high schools where religious education was introduced and the numbers of *imam* and preacher schools increased, the new Islamic Higher Institutions began to open in 1959 and onwards. These Islamic Higher Institutions had more religious character than the faculty of divinity of Ankara. Their aims were: 1) to produce religion teachers for middle and high schools as well as *imam* and preacher schools, 2) to meet the needs of the Presidency of Religious Affairs by producing *mufitis* and preachers.<sup>45</sup>

In the late 1980s, there were eight Islamic Higher Institutions and one faculty of Divinity at Ankara and one at Erzurum, the Academy of Islamic Sciences. Thus, there were ten higher Islamic institutions in the 1980s in Turkey. However, with the Constitution of 1982, all of these Islamic Higher Institutions were transformed into faculties of Divinity. In the 1990s new faculties of theologies continued to be opened and the number of these faculties reached 24. While these faculties reached their peak in 1997 in terms of their student numbers and faculty members, after that date they began to lose their importance in the society. Thus, while during the first years of the faculty of divinity at Ankara, there were between 70 and 90 students,<sup>46</sup> this number reached tens of thousands in 1990s. The Higher Learning Institute (YÖK) made a new arrangement for the faculties of theology in 1997. According to this new arrangement, the faculties of theology were divided into two programs: The program of Undergraduate Theology and the Program of Primary Schools Teachers for the course in the "Culture of Religion and Knowledge of Ethics."

## *Religion Courses*

It is a fact that the principle of secularism has affected religious education at schools very negatively throughout the history of the Republic. Although the Grand National Assembly did not take any negative decisions concerning religion courses, these courses first were abolished from the cities' schools and later on from the villages' schools in 1931 and 1939 respectively.<sup>47</sup> Thus, religion courses were completely absent from the general educational system of Turkey between the years 1931-1949.<sup>48</sup> However, because of some developments such as the fear of spreading Communism, the lack of spiritual power, and the increase of immoral behaviors among young generations, even some deputies belonging to the Republic People's Party began to discuss the necessity and importance of religion courses at public schools. As a result of these social needs, religion courses were introduced to the fourth and fifth grades as an elective course with the permission of parents of the child in 1949. Although this course was elective and upon the desire of parents of the students, the Minister of Education of that time explained this situation as follows: "Those parents who did not want their children to take the religion course had to give a petition to the school, but only one professor from Ankara brought a letter concerning the religion course to me. I expected that Alawi people would not make their children take this course, however, but in fact all Alawi people including some Armanies from Sivas sent their children to take this course."<sup>49</sup>

Although Turkish people gave a great importance to the teaching of religion to their children, these courses were not compulsory, but depended on the desire of parents of the students. Moreover, while this course was added to the school program, it would be taught Saturday afternoon when the school was closed and it would not affect the status of having a passing grade. In addition, as Münir Kostas points out, the course book was prepared in so modern a version that neither Meccan nor Damascan Muslims could understand it easily.<sup>50</sup> These developments continued in the next years of the Republic and the religion courses were added to the first two years of middle schools in 1956. Upon thousands of letters coming from the people and two hundred petitions from deputies of the Grand National Assembly, the government decided to include religion courses for the first and second grades of high schools for one hour a week.<sup>51</sup> This regulation continued until 1982.

However, these courses were far from meeting the needs of religious knowledge and practice of the students. There were some reasons for the ineffectiveness of this course. First of all, religious courses were not compulsory, but dependent on the consent of parents. Worse, it was not those who did not want their children to take religious courses who had to apply to the school, but those who wanted their children to take this course who had to go to school and register such a course for their children. Therefore, since most of the parents could not travel to their child's school or did not know what they should do, their children could not take such a course. Secondly, religion teachers did not offer these courses; rather, those who had no formal training in Islam taught these courses. In addition to this, some of them might even be against religion and religious values. Thus, they did not teach anything about religion even when these courses were made compulsory. Thirdly, these courses mostly aimed at teaching the social and spiritual values of religion; they were not concerned with practice. The students were not allowed to practice what they learned at schools, for the state did not give permission to open mosques or religious places at schools. As Mardin said, "This instruction was seen as a thin and useless propaganda course which had been placed in the same slot as music and physical education."<sup>52</sup>

The most important decision concerning religion courses in Turkey was made in the Constitution of 1982. From the establishment of the Republic to the acceptance of the Constitution of 1982, the religion courses were either elective, or put just in some grades or taught on weekends. Thus, a true religious education could not be given to the students. But, in 1982, for the first time in the history of the Republic the religion courses were made compulsory for all students from the fourth grade of primary schools to the last grade of high schools. Thus, two hours credit from the fourth to eighth grades, and one credit course for the high schools' students, have been compulsory, like other courses, per week. The other important point is that now religion teachers teach most of these courses. This regulation has remained in effect for all private and public schools.

### *Qur'anic Courses*

With the permission to open an official institution of religious education in 1950s, the Qur'anic courses which for the most part taught Qur'anic reading and gave religious knowledge for those who did not go to the official religious schools began to spread all over the country. In the beginning there were two types of officially recognized courses: Those taught by teachers in government payroll positions and those taught by teachers paid with locally solicited funds.<sup>53</sup> Since the 1950s, both the number of professional teachers of the Qur'anic courses and their students have increased very rapidly. For example, while in 1968 there were a total of 3,216 officially recognized Qur'anic courses having more than 32,000 students enrolled, in the 1980-81 school year, there were 2,773 Qur'anic courses with 80,911 students.<sup>54</sup> Three years later the enrollment rose to 102,523 students in 3,047 Quranic courses. It must be noted here that unlike the previous Quranic courses, the Presidency of Religious Affairs currently administers all of them.

### **Present Situation and Future Trends of Religious Education in Turkey**

So far I have tried to examine religious education from various aspects since the establishment of the Republic. From this short historical examination, it can be easily seen that religious education has been the most controversial and problematic issue throughout the history of the Republic and that it will continue to be a serious problem in the future too.

Broadly speaking, religious education is offered in two channels today: Formal and informal or common religious education. Formal religious instruction includes religion courses offered at public and private schools from the fourth grade of primary schools to the last grade of high schools, religious education offered by *Imam* and preacher schools and faculties of theologies; informal religious education covers basically the religious services offered by the Presidency of Religious Affairs through mosques and Quranic courses.

When we look at the matter historically, it can be seen that great developments have been seen in religious education since the establishment of the Republic of Turkey. The following numbers indicate this fact. For example, while there were only sixteen *Imam* and Preacher Schools in various parts of Turkey in 1956, this number rose to 320 by 1977, 380 in 1983 and reached approximately 500 in 1990s, numbering 500,000 students. In the late 1990s, there was an *Imam* and Preacher schools in almost every city and town.

The same developments hold for faculties of theology. While during the first years of the faculty of divinity at Ankara, there were between 70 and 90 students,<sup>55</sup> this number reached tens of thousands in 1990s. As of 1999, there were 14,608 students of whom 4,910 were female and 8,688 male students in 22 faculties of theology. In 1997-98 academic year, 1537 students graduated

from these faculties. Again, as of 1999 there were 166 professors, 115 associate professors, 226 assistant professors, 181 lecturers, 394 research assistants, 59 lectors, and 17 specialists who were teaching in these faculties. While 1,128 was male, 30 were female, teaching on the staffs of these faculties.<sup>56</sup>

Informal or common religious education is as important as the formal religious education offered at public schools. When we compare the informal religious education of today with that of the early days of the Republic, it can be said that a great development has taken place during this time. For example, while there were 28,705 mosques in Turkey in 1927,<sup>57</sup> this number rose from 42,744 in 1947 to 54,667 in 1984.<sup>58</sup> Currently, every year an average of 2,000 new mosques are built by people in Turkey. As of 2003, there were 75,941 mosques of which 65,886 had an *imam*.<sup>59</sup> This is a huge number and has tremendous effects on the religious education of Turkish people. The mosques are not only places where the five daily prayers are performed: they are at the same time educational settings. Through sermons delivered by *imams* at mosques on Fridays and other holy days and nights, people have a chance to gain religious knowledge as well as social and cultural values.

The other important informal religious foci are the Quranic courses. As of 1997, there were 1,432,417 students attending the Quranic courses offered by *Imams* at mosques during the summer time and there were 18,993 students going to evening Quranic courses.<sup>60</sup> In addition to the seasonal Quranic courses, as of 2003 there were 118,335 students attending Quranic courses the educational duration of which continues at least several years.<sup>61</sup>

However, it must be noted here that while the number of all religious institutions rapidly increased in 1990s, since 1997 these numbers have begun to fall drastically because of some political reasons and the influence of the armed forces. The intervention of the armed forces with a political agenda in 1997 became a turning point in the matters of religious education and religious institutions.<sup>62</sup> With the acceptance of the continuous (uninterrupted) eight years of compulsory education, the number of enrollments in *Imam* and Preacher Schools fell drastically. As I said before, while in the 1990s the number of *Imam* and Preacher Schools' students was about 500,000, today this number has fallen to 60,000. Many *Imam* and Preacher Schools were closed as happened in the first years of the Republic. The number of Faculties of Theologies' students also began to fall very rapidly. While 100-250 students approximately could enroll in the first grades of faculties of theology in 1990s, now just 30-50 students can register for the first grades of these faculties. Some faculties of theology cannot even register students.

In short, the number of students in all Quranic courses, *Imam* and Preacher Schools, and Faculties of Theology has continued to fall drastically since 1997. There are, of course, some reasons for this decline. First of all, religious education and religious institutions were not prized for their own worth. Religious issues have always become a political tool throughout the history of Republic. Instead of following a realistic and reasonable way, some politicians and political parties used, even abused the religious needs of people. Secondly, some groups always looked at religious issues and religious institutions with suspicion. They saw the students of *Imam* and Preacher Schools as the enemies of secularism and the regime of the Republic. Thirdly, the students of *Imam* and Preacher Schools have not had equal rights with the students of other high schools. Even today, they cannot enter any faculty except faculties of theology.<sup>63</sup>

All of these effects, of course, weaken the motivation of the students attending these schools and worry many sincere Muslim people. More importantly, if these negative applications continue, there shall develop a great need for *imams*, and religion teachers for the schools in the near future.

## Conclusion

It is understood from this short investigation that the question of religious education will continue to be a serious matter, as it was in the past in Turkey. It seems that neither the state compromises its secularist understanding nor do the people give up easily their religious understanding and life style. In order to produce good citizens and ensure peace in society, a sound and reasonable religious education should be offered the people in both formal and informal ways. In fact, this is one of the basic duties of the state. However, this should not give an excuse for anyone or any group to abuse the religious needs of people. Religious institutions such as *imam* and preacher schools and faculties of theology should continue their education and take students according to the needs of the country. More importantly, they should give priority to the quality of students instead of their quantity,—in light of modern developments and needs.

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## Notes

1 See for more information about social and technological advances during the Ottoman Empire, Ziya Kazici, *Islam Müesseseleri Tarihi*, Istanbul Kayihan Yayinlari, 1991, pp. 217-270; Hüseyin Atay, *Osmanlilarda Yüksek Din Egitimi*, Istanbul: Dergah Yayinlari, 1983, pp. 75-130.

2 Amiran Kurtkan Bilgiseven, *Egitim Sosyolojisi*, Istanbul: Türk Dünyasi Arastirmalari Vakfi Yayinlari, 1987, pp. 188-198.

3 J. D. Norton, "The Turks and Islam," in *The World's Religions*, Steward Sutherland and Others, ed. (Boston: G.K. Hall and Co., 1988), pp. 390-398; Recai Dogan, *Islamcilarin Egitim ve Ogretim Gorüsleri*, Ankara, 1999, pp. 11-32; Bilgiseven, *ibid.*, pp. 200-217.

4 Geoffrey Lewis, *Turkey* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger Pub., 1965), p. 64.

5 For more information on how Mustafa Kemal used religion as a strong motivation for Turkish people: Osman Zümrüt, *Atatürk'ün Yolculugu*, Samsun 1999, pp. 45-72.

6 Bernard Lewis, *The Emergency of Modern Turkey*, 2nd ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 402.

7 Serif Mardin, "Turkey: Islam and Westernization," in *Religions and Societies: Asia and Middle East*, ed. Carlo Caldarola (Berlin and New York: Mouton Pub., 1982), s. 178.

8 Lewis, *The Emergency of Modern Turkey*, p. 402.

9 *Ibid.*, p. 409.

10 Lewis, *Turkey*, p. 84. However, the Assembly deleted from the Constitution the reference to Islam as the official religion of the State on 10 April, 1928.

11 See, Cemal Kutay, *Kurtulusun ve Cumhuriyetin Manevi Mimarlari*, Ankara: Diyanet Isleri Bakanligi Yayinlari, (n.d). Especially chapters 5, 8, and 9-12.

12 Lord Kinross, *Atatürk: A Biography of Mustafa Kemal, Father of Modern Turkey* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1965) , p. 439; Lewis, *Turkey*, p. 83; Harry N. Howard, *The Partition of Turkey* (New York: USA.: 1966), p. 335.

13 Howard A. Reed, "Revival of Islam in Secular Turkey," *The Middle East Journal*, vol 8, pt 3 (1954), p. 269.

14 Richard F. Nyrop, *Area Handbook for the Republic of Turkey*, 2nd ed. (Washington D.C.: 1973), p. 120.

15 Mardin, "Turkey: Islam and Westernization," p. 180.

16 For this purpose, a criminal code passed by the GNA in 1926, which lays down penalties for those "who, by misuse of religion, religious sentiments, or things in that area religiously considered as holy, in any way incite the people to action prejudicial to the security of the state, or form associations for this purpose... Political associations on the basis of religion and religious sentiments may not be formed (Article 163)." The same code prescribes punishments for religious leaders and preachers, who, in the course of their functions, bring the administration, laws, or executive actions of the government into disrepute, or incite to disobedience (Arts. 241 and 242) or who conduct religious celebrations and processions outside recognized places of worship (Art. 529) Lewis, *The Emergency of Modern Turkey*, p. 412.

17 Elisabeth Ozdalga, "On Islamic Revivalism and Radicalism in Turkey," *The Influence on the Frankfurt School on Contemporary Theology*, A. James Reimer, ed. (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1992), p. 332.

18 Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel Kural, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, vol II (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 385.

19 See Mardin, "Turkey: Islam and Westernization," p. 181.

20 Annemarie Schimmel, "Islam in Turkey," in *Religion in the Middle East: Three Religions in Concord and Conflict*, A. J. Arberry, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 74.

21 Lewis, *The Emergency of Modern Turkey*, quoted in Pitman, *Turkey a Country Study*, p. 128.

22 Suat Cebeci, "Cumhuriyet Doneminde Yüksek Din Egitimi," *Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, Ankara Ün. Basimevi, 1999, pp. 227-228; Ilknur Polat Haydaroglu, *Osmanlı İmparatorlugunda Yabancı Okullar*, Ankara: Ocak Yayinlari, 1993, pp. 183-213.

23 Joseph S. Szyliowicz, *Education and Modernization in the Middle East* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1973), p. 201; see also Halis Ayhan, "Cumhuriyet Donemi Din Egitimine Genel Bir Bakis," *Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, Ankara Ün. Basimevi, 1999, p. 248.

24 Nuri Eren, *Turkey Today-and Tomorrow* (New York and London: Praeger Pub., 1963), p. 200; Lewis, *The Emergency of Modern Turkey*, p. 415.

25 Szyliowicz, *Education and Modernization*, p. 202.

26 Suat Cebeci, *Din Egitimi Bilimi ve Türkiye'de Din Egitimi*, Ankara Akçag Yayinlari, 1996, pp. 223-225.

27 Henry E. Allen, *The Turkish Transformation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1935), pp. 179-180.

28 Schimmel, "Islam in Turkey," p. 77.

29 Nyrop, *Area Handbook for*, p. 109.

30 See Fahri Kayadibi, *Yaygin Din Egitiminde Cami ve Gorevlileri*, Ankara: Diyanet Isleri Baskanligi Yayinlari, 2000, p. 32.

31 Norton, "The Turks and Islam," p. 403; Mardin, "Turkey: Islam and Westernization," p. 179.

32 Ali Bardakoglu, "Moderation in Islam," presented as a paper at the International Conference on "Moderation in Islam," Middle East Center, University of Utah, USA, 21-22 February 2004.

33 For broad information about the historical development and current situation of Imam and Preacher Schools see, Mustafa Ocal, *Imam-Hatip Liseleri ve İlkogretim Okullari*, Istanbul: Ensar Nesriyat, 1994, pp. 59-69.

34 Reed, "The Revival of Islam in Secular Turkey," p. 273.

35 Schimmel, "Islam in Turkey," p. 78.

36 Lewis, *The Emergency of Modern Turkey*, p. 419.

37 *Ibid*, 419.

38 See, Howard A. Reed, "The Faculty of Divinity at Ankara II," *The Muslim World*, vol. 47, no 1 (January 1957), pp. 24-29.

39 Schimmel, "Islam in Turkey," p. 80.

40 Howard A. Reed, "The Faculty of Divinity at Ankara I," *The Muslim World*, vol. 46, no. 4 (October 1956), p. 307.

41 Reed, "The Faculty of Divinity at Ankara I," p. 309.

42 Eren, *Turkey Today*, p. 202.

43 Reed, "Revival of Islam," p. 274.

44 Cebeci, "Cumhuriyet Doneminde Yüksek Din Egitimi," p. 229.

45 Cebeci, "Cumhuriyet Doneminde Yüksek Din Ogretimi," p. 230.

46 Schimmel, "Islam in Turkey," p. 81.

47 Münir Kostas, "Türkiye'de Laikligin Gelisimi (1920'den Günümüze Kadar," *Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, Ankara Üniv. Basimevi, 1999, p. 192.

48 Ayhan, "Cumhuriyet Donemi Din Egitimine Genel Bir Bakis" p. 250.

49 Ayhan, "Cumhuriyet Donemi Din Egitimine Genel Bir Bakis" p. 251.

50 Kostas, "Türkiye'de Laikligin Gelisimi," pp. 192-193.

51 Kostas, "Türkiye'de Laikligin Gelisimi," p. 195.

52 Mardin, "Turkey: Islam and Westernization," p. 191. See also Mango, Turkey, p. 102; Eren, *Turkey Today*, p. 201; J. A. Kingsbury, "Turkey's New Constitution," *The Muslim World* (April 1961), pp. 152-155.

53 Richard B. Scoot, "Qur'an Courses in Turkey," *The Muslim World*, vol LXI, no 4 (October 1971), p. 240.

54 Scoot, "Qur'an Courses in Turkey," p. 241.

55 Schimmel, "Islam in Turkey," p. 81.

56 Cebeci, "Cumhuriyet Doneminde Yüksek Din Ogretimi," pp. 234-235.

57 Allen, *The Turkish Transformation*, p. 177, footnote 11.

58 G. L. Lewis, "Islam in Politics, Turkey," *The Muslims World*, vol. 56, no 4 (October 1966), pp. 235-236.

59 <http://www.diyamet.gov.tr> (06.05.2004).

60 Fahri Kayadibi, "Cumhuriyet Donemi Imam-Hatiplik ve Vaizlik," *Din Egitimi Arastirmalari Dergisi*, sayi 6 (1999), p. 170.

61 <http://www.diyamet.gov.tr> (06.05.2004).

62 Although the military forces did not directly mount a military coup on 28 February, 1997, the effects of their action, known as the effects of a *postmodern military coup* are seen in every aspect of the religious life of people and religious education in Turkey.

63 See, for the problems of Religious Education in Turkey, Abdullah Ozbek, "Din Egitiminin Problemleri," *Din Egitimi Arastirmalari Dergisi*, number 6, 1999, pp. 124-130.

**Chapter IV**  
**The Historicist Dispute in Turkish-Islamic Theology**  
Yasin Aktay

**Introduction**

The title of this article is chosen deliberately to remind us of the title of one of Adorno's major books, *The Positivist Dispute in German Sociology*. There are very few discussions which can influence the fate of an intellectual adventure so deeply. The dispute over historicism and traditionalism in the Turkish context has many deep implications not simply for the formation of the methodology of understanding religious texts, but also for the conception of religion, the idea of person, the idea of time and space, identity, free will and predestination. In other words, the dispute over historicism is likely to constitute an umbrella for the reproduction of all the classical theological discussions of Islamic tradition in modern times. But the first occasion for opening the question is related to the Muslim venture towards modernity. This venture has double aspects, first of which is closely related to the profound and complicated impact of colonization. The reality of being colonized has raised most of the questions that Muslim scholars have had to face. Some questions have been imposed upon the Muslim intellectual or scholar agenda from political centers which were dominated by the colonizers. The second aspect is related to the spontaneous and relatively apolitical impact of modernization. Modernity has undoubtedly changed and transformed deeply old manners of thought and life-styles, and has forced not only Islam, but also all religions to face their availability and relevance in a radically different new world. Both aspects necessarily require a great deal of confrontation with the problematic of historical consciousness. The ability to survive on a trans-historical course without falling into an anachronism is an important question for every religion. The Turkish context in that regard is the focus of this article. Since Turkey has never experienced a direct colonization, the impact of colonization has had a very different influence upon the specifically Turkish intellectual atmosphere, which is more likely to be seen as self-colonization.

*The Modernist and Colonial Context of Islamic Historicism*

The last two centuries have raised the crucial question about the development of the Islamic societies. The question is formulated as: "Why cannot Islamic countries find the way to develop the institutions that are essential for making the society a modern and developed one?" Max Weber formulated the question in a quite different and a more refined way. He asked why capitalist institutions did not develop in societies other than the European ones. His series of answers indicated the importance of some institutions or cultural *habitus*, which were supposed to be exclusively European. All the answers also implied the incompatibility of Eastern religions in general (and Islam, in particular) and the development of the institutions which make the development of capitalism possible. The translation of this common assumption of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was cast, according to the Ottoman political agenda, along the lines of the following assertion: "Islam is an obstacle to progress" (*Islam terakkiye manidir*). All the Orientalist discourse, which was imbedded into the analysis of capitalism, comparative

civilizations, religion, sociology of culture, etc., elaborated on this assumption. This discourse was answered by an apologist discourse, which claimed that it was not Islam that was an obstacle to progress, but rather it was the Muslims who deviated from the true understanding of Islam.<sup>1</sup>

This is the brief story of the formation of the problematic of the Muslim world concerning its position towards the development of modernism. The early Islamist reaction against the offensive Orientalist discourse was to stress the role of the deviance from the true understanding and practice of Islam. For this reaction, the reason for the underdevelopment of the Islamic world was not Islam, but on the contrary, it was the de-Islamization of the culture, causing it to remain backward. Against the claims that associated Western progress with Christianity, the early Islamist responses claimed that it was again the removal of the Western societies from Christianity which led them to develop. Then, the same movement of removal from religion was supposed to result in two radically different directions.

### *Political Instrumentalization of Historicism: Islamic Reformation*

This approach, however, did not remain prevalent in all Islamic countries. Modernization had a tremendous impact. The political regimes, or the bureaucratic elites of most Islamic countries, which sought for the modernization of their societies tended to take such modernist assumptions for granted, and thought that they should reform Islam in order to make it compatible with modern conditions. The underlying idea here was simply highlighting the historical distance of the classical Islamic texts and the difficulty in applying them to modern conditions. For the new, Westernized (mostly bureaucratically strong) elites of the Muslim societies there was a clear anachronism in any attempt to apply any Islamic text to any modern experience. While this did not always mean the entire abolition of the text, it at East implied the necessity of a radical interpretation of the scripture to be understood in an appropriate way –a way that allows an accommodation of the Muslims to modern life-styles, legal systems, and world order. Then the political leaders of the Islamic countries sought for a new political interpretation of Islam. Particularly in Turkey, Mustafa Kamal, the founder of the modern Turkish Republic, expressed this search by formulating Islam in the following way: "Our religion is a rational, plausible religion, which is why it is the last valid religion". Here plausibility or rationality was, of course, something that has been determined by the "mentality of our time". In its very classical origins Islam was to be followed only after the mediation of this rationality.

In this approach, as it seems, there is no radical negation of the religion, but rather the will to interpret it so that it would not be an obstacle to development. The model was the relationship of Christianity, particularly of Protestantism, with the development of Western social and political institutions. The first political attempt to reform Islam was led by Mustafa Kamal himself in 1928. This attempt was accomplished by a declaration of the members of the faculty of Theology at Ankara, claiming the legitimacy, even the necessity to 'Reform Islam', to update it to accommodate to the modern world conditions. Otherwise Islam would remain in its anachronistic discourse and position, making its followers destined to backwardness. The Reform project aimed at imitating what has been done to Christianity through the Reformation, but particularly it was following the historical path of the Western societies.<sup>2</sup> This was a simple adaptation of the modernist idea of what might be called "universal historicism". The paradox of the combination of universalism and historicism was a logical consequence of the perception of history as a uni-linear path requiring that all world societies pass along it. Obviously the core of this notion of history was set up from a Eurocentric point of view. As Bobby S. Sayyid points out, for an Islamic

country, to be European paradoxically meant to be radically more 'Orientalized'. In order to be Westernized, an Eastern society should always put stronger emphasis upon its own Eastern origins. This happens especially if this society tries to get rid of its Eastern identity.<sup>3</sup> That is what has happened in the case of Turkish modernization. Apart from the series of Reformations that constructed the Turkish Republic, as mentioned above, the most important part of this series was the Reformation of Islam. This step required the employment of the Muslim theologians, particularly the members of the Faculty of Theology. All the strategy of the members relied on emphasizing the importance of historical distance and the need to reinterpret Islamic Scriptures according to the logic and needs of "our time".

Speaking of the reform to journalists who asked him for information, Professor Köprülüzade Fuad Bey, one of the leading figures among the members of the faculty of Theology, said:

The purpose of religious reform is to make religion able to shape the process of the development now active in all other parts of life. We shall submit this program, which we have prepared to accomplish this, to the Board of Directors of the University and that body in its turn will submit it to the Ministry of Education.<sup>4</sup>

The adoption of the idea of historicism in theological circles thus has at the outset very political origins. Religion here was supposed to be a complementary element in a more global project of development. The way to recruit the religious ideology for such a task was to install within it a kind of historicism that was expected to make religion useful in that regard. In its given forms, religion, particularly the religion of Islam, was regarded as an obstacle to given ideals and programs of modernization. If it is left alone, Islam is very inclined to follow its own ideals and programs, which have nothing to do with the world of modernity. Given ideals of Islam were drawing a world which could not come to an accommodation with "our times." But it was a world of its own, of the past, of thirteen centuries ago, of the Bedouin-tribal life style. It should be modified so that it would be a part of the modern, contemporary Turkish national social-political body. It should only function in enriching the modern Turkish world, and not do more.

Thus, the idea of history in Islamic sciences is associated with the political attempts to reform Islam. Therefore, both the idea of history and the reform itself were also associated with a religious resistance, which constituted the background of Islamic conservatism since the interventions of the Westernized political center into Islamic theology in that way were perceived as a direct attack on the sacred realm of the Muslims. Religious conservatism was organized against such concepts as historicism, modernism, and reform, which altogether created a very strong feeling of constancy in the religious sphere. Even though the gate of *ijtihad* (the Islamic institution of jurisprudence, the tradition of legislation in case of new social problems), which was supposed to be closed since the early twelfth century, was being forced to open, these political attempts caused a stronger reflex against opening that gate. The reflex was based on the awareness of needlessness of opening the gate, because *ijtihad* had no applicability to the new location of the religion in social and political life. There would remain no place for any attempt at *ijtihad*, because it no longer had any relevant political subject. There was no longer any relevant subject who would be competent or authorized to make *ijtihad* concerning an Islamic community.

Thus, the gate of *ijtihad* actually required a relevant social ground, which would be constituted by a social-political embodiment of the Muslims. Religious conservatism approved of a strong discourse about the constancy of the religious text, mostly because of this group's sensibility against any kind of instrumentalization of the religion. The religious texts were supposed to be

more and more untouchable, unchangeable entities. They came to represent a metaphysical, constant and sacred realm, which would not function in a direct way but would influence the psychological mood, aspirations, and ideals of the community. In the direct dichotomy between religion and modernity, the religious scripture should be kept far away from any kind of intervention of modern influences. Religious texts were thought of as transcendental, i.e., as revealed from above history and social contexts. Religious texts were revealed to humanity from the source of absolute truth, which is not influenced in any way by any human, historical or social effect. Although this kind of conception has always been represented in Islamic history by various religious groups, for now this conception of the Scripture was the only compensation religious people tried to pay to their religious responsibilities. In many cases this kind of sanctification produced some sorts of "reification" of the text, as is usual in many cases of conservatism. That is why it should be understood in the first place as a conservative defense of the community, (which happened to be disorganized because of a series of wars), against the attacks of modernity.

However, there is a danger in reducing all sorts of disputes on historicism to this political instrumentalization. The classical dispute on the "creation of the divine Word, of the Qur'an" (khalqu'l Qur'an) has indeed provided one of the important traditional roots for this discussion.<sup>5</sup> This discussion again did not take place exclusively in the intellectual sphere. Rather, it had very strong political implications. The parts of the discussion corresponded to the political division again between religious conservatism and openness to novelty. The discussion again took place in the context of the encounter of the Muslim society with Persian, Greek and Judeo-Christian civilizations. But one important difference was that the Muslim scholar body was still actively reproducing an awareness of its own political embodiment. An Islamic orthodoxy was established to protect from some foreign influences. In the case of modernity, however, the Islamic society has lost its entire 'establishment', its political and social embodiment. What is protected has a mere existence at the conscious level but without any actual reality.

### **Restoring the Context: A Search for Historicism "for Itself"**

The historicist dispute that we are trying to underline in the Turkish theology is something different. It has, of course, its roots in political search for accommodation, but there is also a strong part of the purely intellectual concern for determining the role of history in the formation of the Islamic body of knowledge. There is always a burden on the Turkish theologian to produce Islamic knowledge in accordance with "our times". Therefore, the attempts of the theologians to take into account the role of history in the formation of Islamic scriptures have always encountered a great difficulty in terms of legitimacy. As might be expected, this has been a serious obstacle to the development of an elaborated notion of history in the contemporary Islamic thought. Even the intellectually determined discussions about the historicity of religious texts have to be done against this complication of legitimacy. The difficulty remains in the face of the fact that the secularist, modernist ideologies have not given up demanding a sort of "official religion" which relies on employing all the historicist arguments as instruments of accommodating the religion to existing policies. On the other hand, the intellectual questions that historicism has raised increasingly need to be handled: Do the religious texts mean the same thing for the people who encountered them at first, and for contemporary man? What is the role of the historical distance and social difference in our understanding of the texts? Is it possible to understand the religious texts as their first addressee understood them? What is the role of the cultural and social difference in the formation of the texts? Can the Islamic rules be thought to solve the problems of our time? Is not it a sort of

anachronism to be inspired by teachings of some texts which emerged fourteen centuries ago? What are the conditions of such texts to fulfill their authentic functions in our time? What is the applicability of some Qur'anic punishments such as execution by beating with a stick, or cutting off hands, that seem to have been deeply influenced by the social and historical conditions of the Arabian Peninsula of the seventh century? Could there be claimed for them an applicability relying on the authentic understanding of the Qur'an?

The answers to all such questions have been among the major concerns of the Turkish theologians in their search to produce an Islam compatible with modern times, an Islam that may concern the man of our time. These questions have been turning around and shaping a greater discussion, which has been entitled the 'historicity of Islam'. While the discussion has always remained in the faculty under different titles and occasions, recently it has gained a more intellectual content and concern, influenced by the ideas and works of some Egyptian and North African thinkers who have contributed to the contemporary scholarship of Islamic historicism. The works of Fazlur Rahman from Pakistan, Hasan Hanafi and Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid from Egypt, Muhammad Abid Jabiri from Morocco and Muhammad Arkoun from Algeria have been translated and published into Turkish from the mid-eighties onwards. All these authors have been discussed among the Turkish Islamic circles, particularly among the academic theologians, so that the arguments they raised have brought about a polarization among these circles between historicism and traditionalism, including the formation of some "beyond" or "in-between" positions. The discussion between these groups or positions turned around the stands towards the literal understanding versus the historical consideration of the text, an anachronism versus the consideration of the needs and logic of our time, authenticity of the religious life versus an accommodation to the on-going power relations, emphasizing the importance of tradition versus the importance of the continuously changing reality, theology versus anthropology, dynamism versus stagnation and metaphysics, etc.

In the recent two decades the Turkish Islamic theology has thus been deeply influenced by the reconsideration of the concept of history. The center of the discussion was mainly the Faculty of Theology of Ankara University. The international Muslim intellectual figures, mentioned above, found their own followers among the faculties of Turkish theology. The followers were mostly the students of those thinkers who made their studies at Chicago (Fazlur Rahman's students Alparslan Acikgenc and Bekir Demirkol)<sup>6</sup> or Egypt (Ilhami Güler and Ömer Özsoy followed the lectures of Hasan Hanafi and Abu Zaid) at the Ph.D. or post-doctorate level. Beginning from the early eighties with the translation of some books by Rahman, Arkoun, Hanafi, Mohammad Abid Jabiri and Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid, the modern historicist theme has found a great reception among Turkish theological circles. A considerable literature has been produced concerning this issue. Many MS and doctorate theses have focused on the relevance of history in Quranic or Islamic studies.<sup>7</sup> Many meetings and conferences were devoted exclusively to discuss the problem of historicism.<sup>8</sup> All these conferences, meetings and fragmented literature created the ground to mark a historicist dispute within the Turkish-Islamic theology.

### **Historicism between Theology and Anthropology**

The dichotomy between theology and anthropology characterizes the contribution of Hasan Hanafi to the literature of Historicism. It indicates a turn to humanism versus the theocentric conception of this world within the limits of Islamic religion. Anthropologization of theology is a project of reversing the religious interest from the centrality of God to the centrality of man. The

first appearance of Hasan Hanafi in Turkish goes back to the late seventies. One of Hanafi's articles, "Theology or Anthropology?" was a very good representation of his basic ideas, and was translated by M. Sait Yazicioglu, who would later be the president of Religious Affairs, and then a deputy of the Justice and Development Party, and published in the official journal of the Faculty of Theology. Hanafi's ideas were stated in this article perhaps in the most radical and courageous way. He claimed a historical relativism not only for the Shariah rules, but also for the conception of God himself. He argued that there is no way to objectify God and to study Him in a scientific way. The only thing that we can 'see' about God is the conception of him in the human mind. Therefore God has no independent reality except for His manifestation in the human mind.

We can see in history that people have conceptualized God according to their social and economic needs. Even in the Qur'an God is not mentioned by any attribute that concerns His own existence. All His attributes correspond to some human aspirations and desires about this world. God is reflected in the human mind by all these human ambitions. Then, any search for the history of God, which sounds very unusual, has no field of study other than human consciousness. God is available only in human consciousness. That means any study of God, any history of God has to focus on human consciousness, and this focus would give us nothing about the real nature of God but rather only about man himself. This phenomenological interest will require a transformation of theology into anthropology, since any knowledge about God will give us more clues about the nature of man.

The remaining task after this awareness is to produce a sort of theology that may help us emancipate man from all kinds of slavery, exploitation, colonialism and other power relations. For the third world Muslim countries such as Egypt, for example, we may need a conception of God that would focus on social justice, free will and liberation, since what is needed in the social condition of Egypt is a theology that would motivate people to take life seriously, to believe in their free will and self-determination. The classical Asharite theology, which relies on the conception of the Supreme Being of God, is far from supplying such a theology. Here, again, God is rendered as a subject of history. He is no more a constant essence over history but something that is changing throughout history. The history of God is followed in a phenomenological path, that is, in the history of human consciousness. On the other hand, theology, through a special usage of historicism, is instrumentalized, and God himself is rendered as a possible production of an arbitrary intervention. The knowledge of God becomes a matter of technique. This application of historicism makes God himself a technical instrument, rather than an entity that might have addressed man for his purification and salvation.<sup>9</sup> He is no more the Supreme Being who determines our life, but something that might be produced according to our temporary interests.

Until the early nineties, however, the article, which was translated by S. Yazicioglu as mentioned above, had not drawn sufficient attention. From the early nineties onwards, together with his other colleagues, İlhami Güler, a theologian in Ankara University, who had been a student of Hanafi begun to write and reproduce some ideas of Hanafi in Turkish. Following Hanafi, he insisted on the importance of God's necessity to pursue the ethical rules he has put forward. Moreover, the ethical rules in question are already the natural ones that force them even onto God. By this way he tried to fight against the traditional Sunni theology that conceptualized God as a Supreme Being beyond any human conception and attribute. For Güler such a conception was the main reason for the backwardness of the Islamic world. It is the main reason for the suppression of Oriental subject(s) under an overwhelming authority of God. This overwhelming authority, which found no resistance or objection because of the very nature of its theology, always produced and reproduced itself in the image of this Sunni theology. In the Turkish context, this kind of

theology has always corresponded to a parallel political theology, which is based on a rightist, conservative political ideology. 10

While there is a corresponding philosophy of history under all these ideas, Güler collected all his articles under a title which reflected his position: "Constant Religion and Dynamic Shariah." In this book he distinguished between religion and Shariah. For Güler, religion is something that should be conceived as a constant, metaphysical realm, but the understanding of this religion, which constitutes the content of the Shariah, is a dynamic, dialectical process.<sup>11</sup> Such a discerning of the religion as an "essence" and the Shariah as a dynamic process may be regarded as a retreat from more radical historicisms, since the tune of Hanafi's historicism required the complete subjection of all religious spheres to history. Surely, apart from Güler's personal style, an understanding of this shift may require some reference to the transforming effect of the dominant theological paradigm in Turkey.

### *Rahman and the Impact of His Soft Historicism*

If a classification is possible, a relatively more moderate historicist figure, Fazlur Rahman, has played a more important role in making the Turkish Islamic Intellectual agenda adopt the idea of historicism. For Rahman many Islamic codes of penalty and civil codes, which were derived from the Qur'an, are very difficult to apply in the modern world. The Qur'anic verses that command the cutting off of the hand(s) of a thief, and the capital punishment of a murderer; the verses that define the position of women in the court, which seems to equate her witness to half of a man; and the share of women in inheritance which again seems to leave only half of the man to woman from the share -all these commands seem to be unacceptable from a modernist point of view. And Rahman, who speaks to the American audience, feels very deep difficulty in convincing his audience about the righteousness of all these applications.

While the difficulty comes from the incompatibility of the modern language of rights with the Islamic codes, Rahman tries to solve this difficulty by applying historicism as a methodological technique. This provides him a way to hold the apparently final codes within the limits of the time they originated. He suggests that the discourse of the Qur'an, which seems to put the final word on some legal issues, indeed should not be understood in their literal meaning. In a holistic overview one can find that what the Qur'an suggested as penalties were not but a preference from among some already usual punishment techniques of the time. What is sought for in these preferences was more important than what kind of penalty is suggested. If the essential goal is to preclude robbery, and dissuade the thief, an Islamic state should abolish the preconditions for falling into robbery, and even after this if some insist on robbery they should be punished in a contemporary way that technically may really be sanctioning and dissuading. By so doing Rahman, indeed, follows a classical line of Islamic jurisprudence, which is characterized by many Muslim historical figures such as Omar, the second Caliph, who always sought for the benefit of the community in the interpretation of the text without keeping strictly tied to the literal meaning of the text; Abu Hanifah, the leader of the most important Sunni school, who again favored the benefit of the ummah in the face of a controversial textual statement; and Shatibi, the famous Muslim scholar, sought for the intention of the author, of God or the Prophet, in any case of legislation, not restricting meaning to the literal sense of any code. According to this line of reasoning and behaving, what is said in the divine word has an intention and sometimes this intention is lost while following the literal meaning. Moreover, if we can find the intention of the Shariah we can reproduce it, perhaps in formally different ways than stated in the textual statement at hand.

Rahman, too, adapting this idea of intention, claims that what is stated in the cases in question are not the real intention of God, but the intention is still to keep woman in the historical conditions they have originated. Here, Rahman faces the question of how to understand the real intention of the text, which was issued fourteen centuries ago. Is it possible to understand the context and intention of such a text? This question leads Rahman to follow the hermeneutical discussion between two very important hermeneutics, Emilio Betti and Hans-George Gadamer. His reading of Gadamer, even if not of Betti, in this discussion, fails to understand the implications of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics and relies on an over-simplification of what the German philosopher has said. He reduces Gadamer's approach to a relativist and agnostic position towards the possibility of understanding a historical text. This failure, however, is not so important in the formation of Rahman's formulation about overcoming the distance of history in making a proper interpretation of the Qur'an, which is a typical historical text. What he understands from his reading of Gadamer, should be treated as independent of Gadamer's real implications, complementing Rahman's own approach. Hermeneutically this separation is possible, of course, depending on what you seek. Then Rahman proposes a double movement (journey) from a good understanding of our time to the historical period when and where the text in question has emerged, and finally to come back to our time to find out what may concern us through the implications of this text.<sup>12</sup>

Obviously this formulation depends on a highly technical and instrumental treatment of such concepts as text, history, understanding, revelation and language. It is as simplistic as many modernist ideologies are. Even though Rahman applies hermeneutics, this field has indeed advanced in the critical thought about the technological origins of such conceptions of history, text, method etc.<sup>13</sup> I quote all these ideas of Rahman in the context of Turkish theology, because his formulation has dominated the common Turkish theological paradigm. Now, of course with many exceptions, the spontaneous philosophy of any young Turkish theologian seems to be very inclined to take the content of these arguments for granted.<sup>14</sup> Probably that is because this limit of Rahman's historicism is the most acceptable and plausible one, having its origins in classical Islamic scholarship. What causes dispute is the result of the application of this historicism. For some Turkish theologians this is simply a product of an apologist discourse, which is ashamed and trying to get rid of some Islamic symbols and formal habitus for the sake of a modernist conformism.<sup>15</sup>

### *Epistemological Possibilities of Historicism*

A quite alive and fruitful atmosphere of intellectual discussion can characterize the nineties in Turkey. Many conferences and meetings took place to discuss the nature of Islam, the Qur'an and man's relationship with God and the religious texts. This intellectual atmosphere constituted an available circumstance for deepening the problems of Islamic theology. The problem of modernity, interpretation of the Qur'an, traditionalism, and historicism were almost the constant subjects of all these meetings. Many ideas were stated and faced each other during these conferences; many young Muslim intellectuals found opportunities to shine and to form and formulate relatively unique positions during these meetings. It constituted a humble circumstance for a kind of, so to say, Islamic Renaissance, where the possibilities of all intellectual ventures within the limits of the Islamic religious or scholarship 'body' were examined.

One of the most prominent theologians among these, for example, was Omer Ozsoy. Ozsoy tried to make a unique combination of his own after his readings from Fazlur Rahman, Hasan

Hanafi, Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid, Muhammad Arkoun and Judi Paret. Ozsoy's unique historicism does not preclude him from adopting a sort of objectivism in understanding Qur'anic assertions. He again is fighting against historical distance, and he tries to find a good methodology for arriving at the objective, out-there meaning of the given statements. There is always an objective meaning of a statement, which should be arrived at in any attempt of reading. The possible obstacle before arriving at this meaning is not the very nature of the interpreter, but rather the methodological difficulties that should be overcome. Compared with other historicists this point constitutes his uniqueness since it has been unusual to associate an objectivism with historicism, which is almost identified with the kinds of relativism. For Ozsoy, if we search sufficiently for the true content of the texts it is highly possible to find it. Then he is not pessimistic in terms of the possibility of discovering the true meaning of any verse, of any statement. There are some cognitive obstacles or coverings between our consciousness and the object that should be understood. The problem is simply technically how to abolish, discover, reveal these covers.<sup>16</sup>

To be able to expose all this meaning, however, does not mean that the normative content of the statement has to be available and universally or eternally valid in an unhistorical way. After a short journey through the early history of Islam one can see the historical, linguistic, and cultural differences between the society where Islam emerged and the modern social conditions. This historical difference is reflected directly in the text that has been revealed by God. For Ozsoy, God and his works and words are not exempt from the influence of history. They, too, take place in a historical course and circumstance. As human beings we have no chance to look from an over, beyond or trans- historical point of view. Our perception is by its very nature tied with history. Man exists within history, and his consciousness cannot be treated as isolated from history. While it has been usual to say this about the nature of man, Ozsoy, following Hanafi and Abu Zaid, extends this nature so it is applied to the nature of revelation, too. While the given discourse of the revelation seems to claim a universal validity and availability, the aspect that constitutes evidence forces us to think about the trans-historical nature of the revelation in the orthodox Islamic paradigm: Ozsoy underestimates the importance of this emphasis. Since this discourse is limited to its own historical conditions, it should not be taken so seriously. This discourse has already no chance to speak by a discourse that is exempt from the limits of historical restrictions. It already has to use this language, because it speaks from within this language. The language and all its indispensable natural restrictions stemming from its historical source is the best example of the historical aspect of the Qur'an.

One can see in this sort of historicism an obvious violation of the limits of even scientific discourse. As would be criticized by Sevket Kotan, who published a book exclusively on the Qur'an and Historicism,<sup>17</sup> in which he sketched the Western and Islamic framework of the dispute and tried to formulate his own position, this decision about the nature of God's speaking belongs to a metaphysical sphere where a discourse with scientific limits cannot say anything that can be testified. Philosophically, of course, one can think about the nature of God and His way of speaking. This is a sphere open to speculation. But speculative discourse leads one to no place where one could feel himself religiously well-guided. Even within the limits of philosophy it is no longer easy to remain coherent in thinking about the nature of God and His discourse, because it belongs to a sphere which is by its very nature unknowable except insofar as God reveals information about Himself.

In one sense, this problem evokes Ghazzali's discussion with the Muslim Aristotelians about the nature of the timing of the existence of God and his knowledge and Word. The idea was obviously an importation from the Judeo-Christian context of theological tradition. The question

asked was about when and how God decided to create the universe. If there is a temporal distance between what He knew and what He created one can attach to His Being imperfectness, something that was accomplished by His later actions. This seemed to create a gap within the conception of a Supreme, omnipotent Being. Ghazzali replied to this argument by urging us to think about the possibility of a being without time. He reminds that if God is the creator of everything, he should also be the creator of time. Then, he cannot be conceived as being forced to keep within the limits of time. Time is the categorical limit that man cannot go beyond, it does not restrict God. Rather, God creates it as an existential condition of man. For Ghazzali all this discussion ignores this fact that, indeed, constitutes the core of the issue.

Similarly Kotan argues that history or the consciousness that is working to think about the nature of God is the creation of this God, and there is no guarantee that one can encompass the ultimate truth about the nature of God's attributes. We cannot ultimately know what is happening at the moment of revelation. Ozsoy and many historicists draw attention to the dialectical aspect of the very process of revelation –the process that is called by the exegetical tradition as "occasions of revelation" (esbab-i nuzul). Hanafi, Abu Zaid from Egypt and Güler and Ozsoy from Turkey conclude that the volume of revelation is sometimes filled not only with the exclusive composition of God from above, but sometimes the aspirations, demands and interventions of man as influencing this occasion from below. Therefore the process is not working one-directionally from top to below, but originates from the human condition, too. This shows that God himself is influenced by the human agenda, and the composition of the text occurs in quite an arbitrary way.

Obviously this is an idea that could not be so framed in any Sunni version of Islam. This kind of historicism, therefore, stimulated many reactions from more, so to say, traditional points of view. Some reactions were formulated just to reproduce this Sunni orthodox body of knowledge.<sup>18</sup> Some others, like Kotan, in addition to be loyal to the traditional arguments, keep to arguments within the limits of the language of historicism, and ask about the Subject who is able to decide about the historical nature of any moment of existence. This implies a more radical point of view of historicism. It means, as far as we advance within the logic of historicism, the more we lose more the ability to make such statements requiring high metaphysical interest. Man is not equipped with the ability to know all things concerning the moments where God acts. Then, while Kotan proposes a radical historicism about the sphere which is knowable, observable and testable, he follows proposing a relative agnosticism about the nature of God with history and what is happening during the process of revelation. Man, with all his aspects, is completely subject to historicism. His language, understanding, culture and all his existence are historical. Even all his knowledge about revelation, the nature of God, and His attributes, is human by its very nature: therefore it is 'historical'. That is, if not the Qur'an itself, whose knowledge does not belong to us because of the unknowable elements it contains, all human knowledge and conception of the Qur'an, all that man has understood from the Qur'an, has historical boundaries. Nobody can claim a universal availability to his own interpretation. Every reading and exegesis is subject to historical analysis. Since, the knowledge of all these domains is available, our statements about these realms can be examined, verified or falsified. Therefore, it is possible to produce a secure knowledge of these domains without walking within the paths of metaphysics. But it is not so easy to say the same thing about the realm where only God, or a metaphysically equipped subject, could know the truth. Thus, to say God's word is 'historical' categorically belongs to the same grammar as to say God's word is not 'historical'. Both are metaphysical statements that cannot be tested within the limits of exclusively human knowledge. Within an Islamic jargon these belong to the realm of the unknowable, ghaib. By so doing, indeed, Kotan goes on to arrive at the point which is marked

by radical historicists such as Hanafi and Abu Zaid,— the path, which, for him, has not been exploited to the full by them: for, to remain within the limits of historicism requires a greater humility in speaking about the nature of God and the constitution of his Word.

While there is no cognitive reason to favor one over the other, the practical consequences of both statements (of claiming the historical or non-historical nature of the Word of God) may have some advantages or disadvantages. To accept the content of a religious discourse as historical, with all its implications such as relativism or possible unavailability, may destroy the world of the religious man. This necessarily works against the nature of the religious community, which has to rely on sharing the common perception of the truth. Historicism in this way of speaking creates the feeling of incredibility in relation to the discourse. If God's word itself is subject to history, and does not represent the ultimate truth, then there is nothing to be trusted. On the other hand if the internal logic of the Qur'anic discourse were destroyed in this way, this would mean that God might say something that He does not mean, or may mean something that He does not say. Moreover, this may imagine a God who is unaware of that about which He speaks, because He is also determined by his own historical conditions; or a God who is deceiving and manipulating human beings by some promises which do not have real existence. In any case the adoption of such a position creates a destructive feeling in the entirety of the believer, which would make it impossible to keep a religious community together. That is why historicism becomes a matter of dispute. While the problem of history is and has been always in this or another way an important issue within Islamic scholarship, the statement of the problem in this way has stimulated many conservative reflexes, which are likely to overshadow the real value of the discussion.

## **Conclusion**

On the other hand, there is a serious problem on the side of the classical Islamic scholarship, which fails to produce new and appropriate solutions for modern everyday life problems of the believers. The domain of Islamic jurisprudence still insists on sufficing with the body of knowledge produced in and for historical and spatial circumstances really very different than the modern ones. Another important dimension of this problem, however, is that the possibilities of the existing jurisprudence have not yet been sufficiently exploited. Islamic jurisprudence already contains strong notions of history that take into account social change and its possible influence on the everyday jurisprudence. The way of adaptation and importation of historicism together with all its related arguments extracted from their Western context do not really fit the Muslim context appropriately. However, Muslim society now no longer stands in an authentic condition isolated from the global impacts of Westernization. Therefore, the multifaceted experiences perhaps require the application of an amalgamation of various approaches in a relatively pragmatic way – a pragmatism that would really seek for the benefit of the Muslim societies, rather than seeking for an opportunistic compatibility with existing power relations. The historicist dispute in Turkish Islamic theology has played and is likely to continue to play a comprehensive role wider than its apparently intellectual boundaries. The controversy has come to the point where a considerable deepening of self-reflection is possible in contemporary Muslim thought.

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## Notes

1 For details of the formation of these discourses see. Bryan S. Turner's *Weber and Islam: A Critical Approach*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974 Chapters 9-10.

2 One of the most prominent members of the faculty of Theology, who signed the declaration of Islamic Reformation in June 1928, Ismail Hakki Baltacıoğlu, replied as follows to a question asking about the ethical position of Islam against Christianity: "Islam is as much an ethical and civil religion as Christianity. Both have become the representative of the eternal enthusiasm of men. Both are human attempts, not to understand the absolute forms of the truth, goodness and beauty, but to make them observable. However, there are some interpretative differences between the two, rather than conflict. But there is no way to favor one over another in as much as these differences remain at the interpretative level. Therefore it is very natural that the origins of our faiths should be the religious life of our national society. On the other hand it is required that men should differ in religious convictions as they differentiate in sects, provided that this differentiation remains on an interpretative level without being extended to the level of hostility." (Quoted from *Millî Mecmua*" (Number 110-111,1928) by Ceylan, 1990, Vol. II, pp. 119). This is an example of a typical apologist discourse that located Christianity at the center of historical development, as universal criteria. Thus a particular history of Christianity is universalized on the one hand, and the usual claim of Islam for universalism is given up, on the other hand.

3 Bobby S Sayyid, *A Fundamental Fear: Eurocentrism and the Emergence of Islamism*, London: Zed Books, 1997.

4 For historical details of this Reformation, cf. Jäschke, Gotthard,. *Yeni Türkiye'de İslamlik*, trans. by Hayrullah Ors, Bilgi Yayınevi, Ankara, 1972, pp. 40-42; Howard A. Reed, The Faculty of Theology at Ankara I, II, in *Muslim World*, vol. 46, 1956, pp. 295-312; vol. 47, 1956, pp. 22-35.: 300-301; H. Hüseyin Ceylan,. *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Din-Devlet İlişkileri*, 3 volumes, Risale Yayınları, İstanbul: 1990, pp. 116-118

5 The discussion took place mainly between the Mutazilah movement and the Asharite Sunni sect in the early history of Islam. The former was more rationalist, emphasizing the free will of man against predestination and the creation of the Qur'an. The latter was more traditionalist, believing in the limited free will of man in choosing his fate. They resisted the idea of the creation of God's Word because it is, as other attributes of God, eternal with him.

6 One should, of course, mention Hayri Kirbağoğlu, a prominent member of the Faculty of Theology in Ankara, in the context of his relationship with Rahman. Since, although he is not a student of Fazlur Rahman, Kirbağoğlu translated one of Rahman's essential books, *Islam and Modernity*, in joint with Alparslan Açıkgenç, and became a prominent interpreter of the author of this book.

7 This is not to give a comprehensive bibliography of such studies, but just to illustrate we may mention two studies: Ahmet Fethi Polat, *Cagdaş İslam Düşüncesinde Kur'an'a Yaklaşımlar*, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Selçuk University, 2000; Cemalettin Erdemci, *Mütekaddimin Kelamında Nassi Anlama Sorunu ve Asiri Yorum*, Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi, Unpublished PhD thesis, 2002.

8 Again not to cite all of them, but just to mention two important ones among these meetings: One was organized by "Qur'anic Foundation" in Bursa in 1996. The title of the meeting was "Qur'an and Historicism" and gathered all academicians who were concerned with the topic to discuss the issue. The papers and discussions of the conference were published by the same foundation. See Hökelekli, Hayati, ed. *Kur'an ve Tarihselcilik*, Bursa: Kurav, 2002. The second

one was organized at Nevsehir by *Islamiyat*, the academic theological journal published in Ankara mainly by the members of the Faculty of divinity. This was in a colloquium form. All people prominent in their stands towards the issue were gathered around a table to discuss the present situation of their stands.

9 For a criticism of historicism as a sort of technique from the hermeneutical point of view, see Yasin Aktay, *Anlama Vahy ve tarih: Bazi Vahy Yorumlarının Elestirel bir Incelemesi*, *Tezkire*, number 5, 1993; idem, *Modernist Yorumun Tekno-Lojik Cikarlari, Islam ve Modernizm Sempozyumu: Fazlur Rahman Tecrübesi*, Istanbul: 1997

10 For details of Güler's views see İlhami Güler, *Allah'in Ahlakîliği Sorunu*, Ankara: Ankara Okulu Yayinlari, 1997;

11 İlhami Güler, *Sabit Din Dinamik Seriat*, Ankara; Ankara Okulu Yayinlari, 2000.

12 Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity*, Chicago: University Press, 1981,

13 See for example Hans-George Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, Second revised edition, translated from the German by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, Crossroad, New York, 1991. For a strong criticism of Rahman from this point of view see, Burhanettin Tatar, *Fazlur Rahmanin Yorum Yöntemi Uzerine*, *Tezkire*, nuber 14-15, 1998, pp. 180-188; Aktay, *Modernist Yorumun..*; Sevket Kotan, *Kur'an ve Tarihselcilik*, İstanbul: Beyan Yayinlari, 2002.

14 Almost all books of Fazlur Rahman were translated into Turkish and had considerable circulation. His first book, *Islam*, was translated by Mehmet Dag and Mehmet Aydin (the present Minister of State, responsible of Religious Affairs) in 1981. Then his book *Major Themes in Qur'an* was translated by Alparslan Acvıkgenc (one of his students from Chicago school, who worked to introduce Rahman to the Turkish agenda, *Ana Konularıyla Kur'an*, Ankara: Fecr Yayinlari, 1987); *Islam and Modernity* was translated by Alparslan Acıkgenc and Hayri Kirbasoglu (*Islam ve Modernlik: Islam Egitim Tarihinde Fikri bir Gelenegin Degisimi*, Ankara: Fecr Yayinlari, 1990). In 1990 a special issue on Fazlur Rahman was made by the *Journal of Islamic Research*, the journal which was being published by a group of theologians mainly from the faculty of Theology in Ankara. The co-editors of the special issue were Alparslan Açıkgenç and Bekir Demirkol who was again a student of Rahman in Chicago University. These publications constituted the first texts to introduce Rahman to the Turkish agenda. After that members of the faculty of theology accomplished a campaign of translation. *The Problem of Islamic Methodology in History (Tarih Boyunca Islami Metodoloji Sorunu*, Ankara Okulu Yayinlari, 1995) was translated by Salih Akdemir, a Professor of Qoranic exegesis in Ankara University, one of the most prominent advocates of historicism in Islamic methodology. Other parts of the collection were later translated mostly by Adil Ciftci, from Dokuz Eylül University Faculty of Theology, a person who identified all his efforts with Rahman's ideas. The collection is being published by Ankara Okulu, the name referring to the theological stand of Ankara as a School, to imply a connotation with the Frankfurt School or Vienna School.

See for example Mevlüt Uyanık, *Kur'an'in Tarihsel ve Evrensel Okunuşu*, Ankara, 1997; Tahsin Görğün, *İlahi Sözün Gücü*, Istanbul: Gelenek, 2003.

16 For the details of his argumentations, see Ömer Özsoy, *Kur'an ve Tarihsellik Yazilari*, Ankara: Kitabiyat, 2004, pp. 63-66.

17 Sevket Kotan, *Kur'an ve Tarihselcilik*, Istanbul: Beyan, 2002, pp. 267-288.

18 For example, Hayrettin Karaman, the famous Muslim theologian from Marmara Universitiy Faculty of Theology, see Karaman's presentation in Hökelekli, Hayati, ed. *Kur'an ve Tarihselcilik*, Bursa: Kurav, 2002; Uyanık, Mevlüt, *Kur'an'in Tarihsel ve Evrensel Okunuşu*, Ankara 1997.

Chapter V  
**Early Conservative Political Thought in Turkey: The Case of a  
Conservative Periodical, "*Türk Düşüncesi*"**

Nuray Mert

Conservatism is one of the most controversial terms in modern political thought. It simply refers to 'modesty', reminds one of religiosity, and is generally defined as 'resistance to change'. Conservatism emerged as a reactionary political thought and attitude against the French Revolution and the spirit of Enlightenment, the belief in history's progressive design and the Revolution's participation in this. Edmund Burke, who extended his criticism of the French Revolution to a critical attitude towards revolutionary ways, Enlightenment ideas and radical politics in general, can be considered as the founding father of conservative political thinking. In the words of a contemporary British conservative, Roger Scruton, "...conservatism arose out of a reaction, first to the French Revolution, and secondly to the habit engendered by that revolution, of seeking large-scale social transformation as a remedy".<sup>1</sup>

In fact, neither Burke, nor conservatives in general, ever deny change; on the contrary, sometimes they even promote the idea of change by putting it into historical context, defining it in terms of evolution. Nevertheless, the most common feature of conservative thinking is its preference of gradual change over radical breaks. In other words, "Conservatism has never been in favour of an alteration involving unfamiliarity, which is change. However, it has been and is *for* the kind of alteration, no doubt also involving some unfamiliarity, which is reform conservatism: conservatism has had at its heart, indeed firmly in its head, a claim about a deep difference between change and reform".<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, under the label of 'reform' or 'evolution', rather than 'change' and 'revolution', conservative thinking acknowledges the need of social and political change as an imperative of history and therefore defines change as an aspect of fate, rather than as a result of human thoughts and deeds. Accepting change as fate helps to prevent the idea of change from becoming a norm and habit which may lead to questioning the idea of order and hierarchy.

In the words of Burke, change "alters the substance of the objects themselves, and gets rid of all their essential good as well as the accidental evil annexed to them... Reform is not a change in substance or in the primary modification of objects, but direct application of a remedy to the grievance complained of."<sup>3</sup> This distinction of reform and change or gradual evolution and revolution aims to protect social life and structure from the probable destabilizing effects of radical change. For this reason, the conservative frame of mind permanently tries to give political and social change a sense of tradition and history. According to David Willets, it is the skill of conservatism to "give historical patina to really new institutions": his favorite is the Victorians—"Victorians were brilliant at creating traditions and thus investing the newfangled with historical legitimacy"<sup>4</sup>.

In the words of a prominent modern conservative thinker, Michael Oakeshott, "...to be conservative is not merely to be averse to change, it is also a manner of accommodating ourselves to changes... For, change is a threat to identity... identity... is not a fortress into which we may retire, and the only means we have of defending it against the hostile forces of change is in the open field of our experience, by throwing our weight upon the foot which for the time being is

most firmly placed, by cleaving to whatever familiarities are not immediately threatened and thus assimilating what is new without becoming unrecognizable to ourselves". 5

In the conservative view, societies are like living organisms, and it is tradition which keeps the organism alive. In the words of Antony Quinton, society "is not composed of bare abstract individuals but of social beings, related to one another within a texture of inherited customs and institutions which endow them with their specific social nature".6 Conservatives emphasize tradition not only because it gives society an identity of its own but also because they define it as the accumulated wisdom of society. In this view, societies are bound to be corrupted, if they do not accommodate change in terms of their own identity and accumulated wisdom. The basic concern of conservative understanding of change in terms of tradition and historical continuum, then, aims to protect the idea of order and hierarchy, without which, in this view, societies are bound to fall into anarchy. Traditions ensure social order, since they "are not only repositories of... values, but also one important means whereby conflicts among values can be resolved".7

Finally, it can be claimed that conservatism idealizes the status quo and tries to give it historical legitimacy and social approval through the concepts of historical continuity and tradition. Nevertheless, as Aughey, Jones, and Riches rightly underline; "It is not the existing which conservatives idealize, but an image of the existing derived from assumed circumstances and situations anchored in the past". 8 I think we should also underline that it is not the idealization of the past either, but again an image of the past, since it is some key concepts or principles which determine conservative understanding of politics and society. The basic concepts or principles are of authority, hierarchy, harmony, continuity and order. The conservative defense of status quo and employment of the historical continuity and tradition to provide legitimacy for the defense of status quo are all related to the concern of the above mentioned key concepts, so much so that these concepts are elevated to the status of sacred. In the words of the father of conservatism; "(present) political system is placed in just correspondence and symmetry with the order of the world, and with the mode of existence decreed to a permanent body composed of transitory parts; wherein, but the disposition of a wisdom, moulding together the great mysterious incorporation of the human race, the whole at one time is never old, or middle aged, or young, but in a condition of unchangeable constancy, moves on through the varied tenour of perpetual decay, fall, renovation and progression".9

## **Turkish Conservatism**

The definition of conservatism becomes even more controversial and vague when it becomes a subject of debate in Turkish political thought, and in this case, it is often confused with Islamism or fundamentalism, among other right wing currents. In fact, conservatism is the discourse of centre-right politics rather than of extreme right or of fundamentalism.

In the case of Turkey, the introduction of the multi-party period and the rise of the Democrat Party to power created an intellectual atmosphere in which the critical views concerning the Republican Revolution and conservative political thought could blossom. The critics of the Republican Revolution in the 1950s were rather mild and modest compared to the conservative reaction against the French Revolution. In fact, it can be called a mild reaction against a mild Revolution, yet the Turkish version of conservative reaction followed similar intellectual patterns with the mainstream conservatism.

Political currents, thoughts, concepts do not occur over night and in that sense, the origins of the conservative approach can be easily traced back to the intellectual debates of the Second

Constitutional Period. Nevertheless, the basic political problem, in the earlier period, was to rescue the declining Empire and the debate was focused on the degree of the required modernization and Westernization or of political and social change in general. The method of political change was rather out of question: there were no revolutionary ideas nor their opponents nor monarchists and Republicans. Only after the foundation of the Republican regime, conservatism started to develop as a critical political approach, or in fact, as an alternative official ideology. Conservatism emerged as a frame of thought which was critical of the Republican Revolution, and especially its cultural aspect, but defended the idea of nation state. Combining the counter-revolutionary criticism with a strong sense of nationality, it enabled the formation of an alternative definition of national identity, and therefore managed to engender a strong sense of political loyalty and commitment to the new nation state. In this respect, conservative revision can be seen as the emergence of an alternative official ideology. The rise of conservative thought started where the Republican Revolutionary ideology failed; it was the secular definition of national identity, which had difficulty to find a popular support, and even created considerable resentment and resistance and finally suffered from legitimacy crisis. The conservative revision of the Republican Revolution reconciled the resentment with recovery. On one hand, the sense of resentment against the secular, Westernist and elitist aspects of Republicanism found expression in the conservative criticism of Cultural Revolution. On the other, this criticism never reached a point of questioning the legitimacy of the nation state. It was this fine balance between the criticism (of cultural aspect only) and the confirmation of the state authority which ensured the recovery of national identity. The basic formula of conservative thought and politics was to redefine nationality in terms of the habits of hearts, instead of abstract and secular principles.

The rise and development of conservative criticism in Turkey should be evaluated not only in the intellectual, but also in the political context. It was only after the multi-party period and especially after the Democrat Party came to power, that a critical stream of thought could find a suitable political climate to blossom. It was the rise of conservatism which established the intellectual or ideological base of right wing political and intellectual discourse.

The study of conservative thought in Turkey, then, first and foremost, helps us to determine the basic conceptual pillars of right wing politics. Besides, since it was the rise of right wing politics which enforced an alternative definition of national identity and of state ideology, the study of conservatism also helps us to understand the process of transformation of national identity and state ideology in Turkey. This process started in the 1950s, found its best expression in the formula of Turkish-Islamic Synthesis in the 70s, and was officially acknowledged during the military rule of the early 80s.

The scope of this paper is limited to a reading of *Türk Düşüncesi* ("Turkish Thought"), a periodical or intellectual and artistic magazine as it called itself. It was published in the early years of the Democrat Party period, 1953, edited by a leading conservative intellectual, Peyami Safa. Among the contributors, there were some other leading intellectuals of the period whose ideas can also be classified as conservative; like Hilmi Ziya Ulken, Mustafa Sekip Tunc and İsmayil Hakkı Baltacıoğlu. Nevertheless, none of these intellectuals could label themselves as 'the conservatives'. What united them was their reserve towards the secular aspect and cultural project of the Republican Revolution and against the Republican People's Party as the advocate of the project.

The editorial of the first issue of the *Türk Düşüncesi* announced that the whole intellectual life in Turkey is chaotic and superficial, since the political debates of the Second Constitutional Period has ended without any definitive intellectual product. According to this view, since the Turks were

further left without orientation, as a result of the ongoing shallow interpretation of the Republican movement, Turkish youth were in danger. The absence of any ideal was serving the purposes of 'the hidden political forces' to push youth to extremist politics. Therefore, in this view, the most important task was to refuse all kinds of debates which explain everything in terms of revolution and reaction (*inkilab-irtica ikiligi*) dichotomy.

Thus, from the very beginning, *Turk Dusuncesi* defined its position as a firm alternative to the so-called revolutionarists (*inkilabcilar*) who misleadingly presented themselves as the guardians of the Republic and the reactionaries who blindly opposed any kind of social change in the name of religion. In fact, Peyami Safa, expressed his peculiar views concerning the Republican Revolution, in his ("*Turk Inkilabina Bakislar*") published as a serial in a daily, *Cumhuriyet*, in 1938, long before *Turk Dusuncesi* came to life. According to his view, the intellectual origins and national character of the great Turkish Revolution was neglected. Yet, Safa later admitted that, he chose not to mention the criticism of positivistic and rationalistic Western thought, at that time, considering the fact that it was a critical time for Turkey to overcome medieval mystic thinking and to adopt the modern thought. The time to be critical of positivism came with the ascension of the Democrat Party to power, and he started his introductory article in *Turk Dusuncesi* with the criticism of the materialistic and positivistic aspects of the Western civilization.

In the first issue of *Turk Dusuncesi*, as elsewhere, Safa stated that the Western Civilization was in serious crises, and the reason was the materialistic and positivistic understanding of the modernity. Safa complained that the Westernists in Turkey failed to catch up with the intellectual developments in Europe: now, he claimed, the Western world was questioning its materialistic aspect and showing growing interest in the intellectual currents and philosophic thoughts which contain metaphysical aspect. Besides, Westernists in Turkey failed also to comprehend Ataturk's reforms and Westernism with its all aspects, because, according to Safa, Ataturk defined Westernism in nationalist terms and aimed to reach an original synthesis. Otherwise, Republican Westernism would be nothing more than the simple imitation of the West. The latter was not the intention of Ataturk, and that was why he tried to complete the reforms of Westernisation with the movements of Turkish history and language.

Hilmi Ziya Ulken clarifies the national aspect of Westernisation by stating that "Westernisation means to be a nation. Only by forming a nation, does it become possible to participate in Western culture in an active way." According to Ulken, Western culture was representing the superior culture which engendered the dynamic, creative forces of history. Other cultures, he stated, lose their creative forces when they face a superior culture, and only those who manage to reach the level of the superior culture can recover their own creativity. National revival has nothing to do with combining the old and the new cultures, but engendering the definition of nation within the dynamics of the new culture. Only then, can one talk of the contribution of Turkish national culture to the Western culture as a whole, he maintained. (No.13, 1 Aralik 1954)

In fact, Peyami Safa, often proposed not eclecticism but a true synthesis of the East and the West, which would not only push Turks onwards in their search of progress but also help Western culture to find new sources to overcome the crises resulting from materialism.

Peyami Safa and the circle of *Turk Dusuncesi* clearly stated their positive attitude towards the Western culture, in various articles. Safa, who elsewhere proved to be an admirer of Western culture and an enthusiastic supporter of Westernism (if not unconditionally), needed to remind people of his and his friends' pro-Western attitude when *Turk Dsuncesi* was facing criticism. Since *Turk Dusuncesi* was accused of being pro-Islamic, he first reminded people that Turk is not the opposite of Islamic, but then assured his attackers that his position is pro-Western,— that is

why they published the articles of Western thinkers extensively. Safa underlined the fact that he and his colleagues were against the materialistic thought of 19th century, and finally asked if such anti-materialistic currents of Western thought can be classified as Islamic (No.4, Mart 1954). A few issues later, Safa needed to emphasise his movement's Westernist position, and stated that *Türk Düşüncesi* agreed with Selahaddin Eyuboglu who said that "even if one accepts that the richest sources of thought are in the East, without Europe, these are useless". Safa admitted that "Nothing can be done without Europe," and that was why, he claimed, they proposed the idea of the East-West Synthesis. Besides, he said, since they accepted that such a synthesis can only be the fruit of the European mind and method, they published mostly views of the Western thinkers. (No.6, Mayıs 1954)

No doubt, the most crucial subject that *Türk Düşüncesi* needed to clarify was its understanding of the issue of religion. As stated above, *Türk Düşüncesi* put itself equidistant to revolutionism and the reaction. From the beginning, the periodical denounced the total rejection of Westernisation and the Republican Revolution, as a blind fanaticism and harmful anachronism. In this respect, its position was quite clear, yet, interpretation of religion differed from one author to the other. Hilmi Ziya proposes to approach religion with an eye of a modern and Western man rather than scholastic mind, and he has vitalist thoughts and philosophers like Bergson in mind. Safa had a similar approach and similar interest in anti-materialistic philosophy with more emphasis on mysticism. On the other hand, Ismail Hakki Baltacıoglu wrote most extensively on religion in *Türk Düşüncesi*, and he had rather a reformist approach in mind.

Baltacıoglu stated that religion was a very important aspect of social and national life and, therefore, secularism could neither be defined as irreligion nor as indifference of the state to religious affairs. On the contrary, since the issue of religion had a vital importance for the wealth and progress of the nation, the state had some responsibilities concerning the organisation of religious life. (no.1, Mayıs 1955) In his view, Atatürk rightly abolished the Caliphate, and all the traditional institutions of religion, yet the problem of religion was left unresolved since the most necessary measures has not been taken. The most basic step in this direction was to translate the Qur'an into Turkish, said Baltacıoglu. In fact, he completed such a translation in 1957. He explained the necessity to translate the Koran not only as a means to understanding what the holy book says but, more importantly, as a step of nationalization ('uluslaşma'). Baltacıoglu had a strong belief in historical evolution and parallel to this view, he claimed that the vital stage of nationalization is the translation of the holy book to the vernacular languages as happened in the Christian world (No. 39, 1 Mayıs 1957). In short, first of all, the reform of religion was an imperative of historical progress. Then, the transition of the Koran into Turkish would also help to overcome the inferiority complex concerning language: through such an effort Turks would stop seeing their language as inferior to Arabic (no. 39, 1 Mayıs 1957)

In Baltacıoglu's mind the issue of religion, first and foremost, was a question of national development (as he put it; 'milli kalkınma') (no. 19, Haziran 1955): that is why he needed to search the ways of national development through religion ("*Türkiye dinle nasıl kalkınacak?*", "How can Turkey achieve development through religion?") no. 37, Mart 1957). He proposed an extensive programme of religious reform as an answer. The precondition of the reform was to establish a proper Faculty of Theology: this faculty would be a Turkish Islamic Faculty of Theology (*Türk İslam İlahiyat Fakültesi*). Its first duty would be to help people to understand Islam in its true meaning; then this Faculty would clarify what aspects of religion changes and what remains constant and to do so it would 'philosophize' religion ("*Bir Türk İslam İlahiyat Fakültesi*

*istiyorum*," no. 18, *Mayis* 1955). Otherwise, he claimed, the society would be left ignorant and superstitious and as result, religious fanaticism and fanatics would exploit religious sentiments.

In general, *Turk Dusuncesi* circles attempted to define religion in national terms and tried to revise Republicanism. Abdulkadir Karahan, another conservative thinker who wrote in culture and religion extensively, put it in a nutshell as, "to find out aspects of reconciliation in our religion and our reforms" (no. 2, Ocak 1954). The purpose was to reconcile reforms and reactions in order to reach a new agreement on principles and social values, in a way to avoid extreme versions of reaction. Such reactions were to be avoided because they would hinder historical progress and national development.

Baltacioglu firmly stated that reaction is nothing more than a problem of will, an evolution and even an anomaly, since it proposes to reverse historical process and advocates dead aspects of life which do not have the right to live any more ( no. 5, 1954- no.56, 1959).

Not surprisingly, two subsequent issues of *Turk Dusuncesi* were devoted to the subjects of reaction and revolution in 1959. As stated above, the periodical, from the beginning, set its purpose to engender an alternative to revolutionarism and reaction, as they put it, and to fulfill that aim, they tried to formulate a revision of the Republican Revolution. This is what we label the rise of conservative political thought in Turkey.

In fact, even the term "revolution" is controversial and may be misleading in the case of Republican Revolution in Turkey. As we all know, even the founders of the Republic did not call it a revolution, but 'the proclamation of republic', the term of 'inkilab' was used instead of 'ihtilal'. Yet, *Turk Dusuncesi* referred to the radical interpretations of the Republican Revolution when it mentioned the "revolutionarism." Peyami Safa defined inkilab as a kind of regeneration ('tekamul hamlesi') and tried to replace the narrative of radical break with the past with that of gradual historical evolution. In an attempt to define the foundation of the Republic merely as a stage in the run of history rather than as an upheaval or as a radical break, he tended to rewrite the history of the Republic. He claimed that the transformation started long before the Republic has been founded: according to him, reforms had their roots in earlier periods and national sovereignty started not in 1923 but 1908. (57-58). There were even more courageous attempts among the articles in *Turk Dusuncesi*, to rewrite the Republican history; one traced the reforms back to the early seventeenth century ("Vecdi Burun," 57-58). In the mind of the *Turk Dusuncesi* circle, this was an important attempt, since the society should have to relate itself to the past, and the social and political change had to have a 'tradition'.

Nevertheless, Hilmi Ziya Ulken needed to clarify the term 'inkilab' and finds it difficult since there are more than one term for inkilab in European languages. He rejected the term "revolution," and recalled "evolution," yet he needed to remind people that evolution does not necessarily refer to a historical movement directed to a higher stage,— rather, it is called maturation, 'tekamul'. He claimed that strong cultures experience social change within the framework of their deep traditions, that is why change does not result with destruction in such societies, but it means regeneration. In Ulken's view, the superiority of the West could be explained by their loyalty to the traditions despite all the changes. According to Ulken, counter-revolutionary movements have the same weakness with that of revolutionaries; they also target a total destruction of the present to restore the old. Ulken, in a good conservative fashion, implied that any radical position is bound to lead to destruction.

*Turk Dusuncesi* circles needed to criticize the Republican revolution, thinking that its radical aspects should be eliminated, not only because they are inherently bad but more importantly, because they weakened the national identity and generated social unrest which meant further

weakness. In the very first issues of *Türk Düşüncesi*, Mustafa Sekip Tunc formulated their understanding concerning social life and politics in the most common terms of conservative thinking. Tunc stated that the dynamics of politics are very similar to that of nature; as in the case of nature, societies live in constant change and experience progress through evolution, yet change should be balanced with conservation of the positive aspects of the past. Tunc warned that, conservatism should not be understood as the simple defense of the old thoughts and forms, which would be a simple reaction. Tunc underlined the danger of reaction by reminding his readers that ignorant masses can easily be attracted by reactionary politics and resist any change (no. 2, Ocak 1954).

The leading intellectuals who contributed to *Türk Düşüncesi* can be classified as the forerunners of modern conservatism's thinkers in Turkey. They believed in historical evolution and gradual social change rather than radical and revolutionary politics. They needed to be critical of the Republican Revolution, yet, they preferred to be moderate in criticism, since a radical criticism would lead to some sort of radical politics and eventually have destructive effects in society. They proposed a fine balance and harmony of the old and new, past and present, rather than the total rejection of the present, since they accepted social as a historical imperative. They respected religion, but mostly as an important aspect of social life rather than an omnipresent set of morals: that is why they favored philosophizing, nationalizing and reforming religion to adjust it to the requirements of the time and the political status quo. In short, their views concerning history, society, politics and religion were perfectly consistent with the main tenets of modern conservative political thinking. Nevertheless, especially Peyami Safa, Hilmi Ziya Ülken and Mustafa Sekip Tunc referred to the term "conservatism" yet did not present themselves as conservatives, most probably due to the unfamiliarity with the conservative thinking and Anglo-Saxon political thinking in general.

Finally, *Türk Düşüncesi* and the rise of conservative thinking in Turkey cannot solely be evaluated as a revision of the Republican ideology. It should also be seen as an instant response and reaction against left wing ideas, parallel to the rise of the anti-communist discourse in the beginning of the Cold War period. Peyami Safa, who was one of the arch-enemies of leftist ideas and a forerunner of the struggle with communism (komünizmle mücadele), stated that tradition, affiliation with the past and cultural heritage protect youth from spiritual emptiness and from the trap of materialism. Moreover, he said, the rejection of the past which leads to fascination with anything new, prepares fertile ground for dangerous and deviant ideas which claim to be new and finally serve the interests of the propaganda of our enemies. Besides, he claimed, communism which pretends to be a new idea, is in no way new; on the contrary, it is the most primitive social formation. Safa reminded his readers that it is sociology which informs us that, only the primitive societies without any division of labor experienced communist regimes. In this respect, it was not nationalism but communism which was old-fashioned. Safa stated that societies should change without refusing the essential aspects of their life, like in the case of living organisms. There was no need to leave those traditions, habits, ideas which can adjust themselves to the change: they constitute the memory of society which gives its identity and protects it from all sorts of dangers and forces of destruction. In this respect, conservatism and change were not opposites but rather complementaries; their enemies are reactionaries and revolutionaries (31, Haziran 1956). Safa elsewhere needed to underline that he is against materialism and Marxism as its product, not modern Western thought and Westernism.

*Türk Düşüncesi* easily connected its criticism of the Republican Revolution with its opposition to communism. In their view, the mishandling of the Revolution which led to an alienation of the

state from people with its radical reforms, and moreover the cultural revolution which ignored the national and immaterial aspects of social life, prepared fertile ground for the danger of communism. In an article in *Türk Düşüncesi*, Republican Revolution is labelled as ‘a revolution which did not integrate the nation’ (*‘Milletle Mal Olmayan Bir İnkılab’*). The revision of the Republican change intended to reconcile the new state with its nation: to do so, it needed to reinterpret the history and to redefine the nation. The conservative revision tended to solve the legitimacy problem of the early republican state, firstly by formulating an organic narrative of the history and politics. By explaining the recent history in terms of a gradual evolution of society, this narrative aimed to internalize the process of modernization. The Republican change then could be seen as a necessary stage of the history which was engendered within the Ottoman society, rather than a radical break with history which led to alienation of the social and to political change. That is why Republican reforms were needed to be traced back to earlier periods before the Republic. Then the emphasis of the traditional values and culture helped to establish a sense of affiliation between society and the once alienated state. This made it possible to rebaptize the nation state.

The *Türk Düşüncesi* was a product of the multi-party period and supported the Democrat Party in power but did not seem to promote the idea of democracy. The discourse of democracy was not one of the basic themes of discussion. Yet, in retrospective, we can say that it perfectly reflected the political discourse of the Democrat Party and its supporters, since the Democrat Party based its discourse of democracy on an organic definition of politics and state rather than emphasizing civil rights and freedom. It opposed the one party regime mostly because the one and only party in power was alienated from the people: it was too Westernised and too secular. The idea of democracy in the mind of Turkish Democrats was the idea of authentic representation as putting in office the ‘real’ representatives of the nation. In this view, the state was the organic head of the society, and the problem with the state was not one of authority and freedom, but a matter of the qualifications of those in power to represent the culture that the people values. The Republican People Party was disqualified because it was alienated and therefore could not claim representation of the nation.

The article mentioned above, *‘Milletle mal olmayan inkılab’*, criticised the Republican reforms and one party period, not because of their authoritarianism, but because the people did not welcome them. If reforms were opposed by people, or seen as alien to their values, the democratic duty was to abolish them. This was what the Prime Minister of the time, Menderes, did by removing the ban on the call of prayer in Arabic. (*“Bekir Berk,”* no.57-58, *Haziran-Temmuz* 1959)

This peculiar understanding of democracy did not need to relate itself to the idea of civil rights and political freedom. These were understood in rather conditional terms. In the words of Peyami Safa, freedom of thought, for instance, can only be defended for the qualified thoughts (*‘halis düşünce’*),— otherwise, pseudo ideas lead to disaster. Against those who criticized the censorship policy of the Democrat Party and defended freedom of thought, Safa said that there was a careful and sensitive censorship in the Western world. In his view, in the countries where such a level was not reached, it is the censorship law which limits intellectual life (no.58, *Nisan* 1957). Just before the 1960 coup, an editorial in *Türk Düşüncesi* admitted that the Democrat Party in power denounced some political freedoms since 1950, but it was due to the irresponsibility of those who were in opposition. According to *Türk Düşüncesi*, they confused criticism with provocation). They underestimated the enormous achievements of the government and ‘disregarded the requirements of our social structure’. (no.63, *Nisan* 1960) This was the intellectual framework of the political

opposition which started to develop with the beginning of the multiparty period and is sometimes regarded as the genesis of the democratic tradition in Turkish politics.

## **Conclusion**

The interpretation of center right wing political discourse in Turkey, in terms of conservatism, is very important in two respects: first, the main arguments of center right politics became intelligible only within the framework of conservative political understanding. Then, the distinctions among center right and far right politics can only be defined by reference to conservatism as a modern political discourse.

It is nationalism which is seen as the main current of right wing politics in Turkey. Yet, the term of nationalism alone is rather confusing, since Turkish nationalism of the early Republican era had nothing to do with conservatism with its radical, secular and civic character. The popular resentment against the secular and Westernist aspects of Republican Revolution found the chance of representation only after the introduction of multi-party politics in 1950. Since then, a different brand of nationalism started to be evolved out of oppositional politics; this brand of nationalism can be classified as right wing nationalism as opposed to secular Republican nationalism. As Republican nationalism was in line with the idea and politics of Enlightenment with its secular, civic and progressive aspects, right wing nationalism was the outcome of a reaction against the revolutionary project of the Republic. The right wing brand of nationalism compromised the religious community's sense of identity with that of a modern national one, by employing religious and traditional values and symbols while promoting Turkish national identity. Although right wing nationalism is its basic component, Turkish conservatism cannot solely be defined in terms of nationalism. Rather, it is conservatism which gives right wing nationalism its essential character, as a discourse of compromise between modernity and tradition. Besides, the general mildness of conservatism underlines the sobriety of right wing Turkish nationalism as against far right versions of nationalism.

On the other hand, Turkish conservatism is sometimes identified with reactionarism and in the case of Turkey with fundamentalism. In fact, conservatism employs religious values and symbols and respects religion as an aspect of tradition, but only insofar as religion confirms the authority of state and order. Conservative understanding of religion is quite different from that of fundamentalism. On the other hand, in the words of Arthur Aughey, "Conservatives and reactionaries both share a fascination with the past as a repository of fundamental wisdom: But whereas the conservative is willing to identify with the accumulated achievements of a political order, if not all of its contemporary values, the reactionary does not". Whereas reactionary ideologies or fundamentalisms share a common disposition with the revolutionary and radical views, in that they all require a total replacement of the existing order with a new one, conservatism "present itself as a set of political principles concerned to preserve continuity in the state".<sup>10</sup> This distinction is very useful to define Turkish conservatism as the discourse of center right wing politics.

The conservative approach promotes the concept of tradition, values historical experience very highly and defines culture as the culmination of the past and present of the national life, whereas fundamentalism of all kinds defines tradition as a distorted version of truth, rejects historical experience as a process of deterioration, and equates culture with the symbols of universal moral truths.

Finally, conservatism is often confused with authoritarianism. Some define Kemalism as a version of conservatism out of such a confusion; yet, Kemalism is no more or less than a Jacobin project of modernization and nation-building. Besides, despite the fact that conservatism values the concept of authority very highly, it is rarely authoritarian, as opposed to some other far-right politics. On the contrary, the main inspiration of conservative politics in Turkey has always been the British political tradition, which can hardly be classified as authoritarian.

To sum up, conservatism enforced an alternative brand of nationalism with reference to familiar values and symbols, as opposed to Republican nationalism with its secular-Western appeal. For this purpose, conservative discourse employed many religious values and symbols, but only to promote the idea of nation, state and order. Turkish conservatism criticized the authoritarian style of Republicanism, yet enforced the idea of state authority with reference to tradition and history.

It can be claimed that the conservative revision of the Republican Revolution moderated and channeled the feelings of resentment and reaction against the Revolution into an alternative sense of national identity. In doing so, conservative political discourses generated an alternative ground of political legitimacy and social affinity for the new nation state.

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## Notes

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3 Edmund Burke, "Letter to a Noble Lord," in *The Philosophy of Edmund Burke*, ed. by L.I. Bredvold and R.G. Ross, Michigan, 1960

4 David Willets, *Modern Conservatism*, London, 1992, 101

5 Michael Oakeshott, *Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays*, London, 1971

6 Antony Quinton, *The Politics of Imperfection*, London, 1978, p.16

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8 A. Aughey, G. Jones, W.T.M. Riches, *The Conservative Political Tradition in Britain and the United States*, London, 1992, 15

9 Edmund Burke, Extracts from 'Reflections on the Revolution in France (1790)', *Burke, Paine, Godwin and the Revolution Controversy*, M. Butler, ed., Cambridge University Press, 1984

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Chapter VI  
***Kalam* between Tradition and Change: The Emphasis on  
Understanding Classical Islamic Theology in Relation to Western  
Intellectual Effects**

Ömer Aydın

In the second half of the 19th and at the beginning of the 20th centuries the intellectual trends that appeared in the West began to spread in Turkey. With the influences of these trends, the expectations of renovation emerged in the field of *Kalam* (Islamic Theology). In this period the intellectual trends that arose in the West such as Materialism, Positivism, Darwinism and Atheism began to spread in the Ottoman State. But these trends included thoughts incongruous with Islamic basic beliefs. Under these circumstances the Islamic Theologians' duty was the protection of Islamic beliefs.

Before the 17th century, the Ottoman State and all the Islamic world on the other hand were unaware of the new developments in the field of science and technology in the West. Especially from the 18th century onwards, some of the Ottoman scientists tended to consider the new expectations. The Ottoman intellectuals were divided into three groups: complete opponents of the Western trends, supporters of the Western developments in every respect, and those who attempted to reconcile the Western values with Islamic values.

In this article I focus on the works of the supporters of the West and their opinions. I also analyze the opinions of modern Islamic thinkers who have written books or articles about this subject. I think it will be useful for readers to be given first some information about theology's situation in the Ottoman period.

### **Theology (*Kalam*) in the Ottoman Period**

The education of Theology in Ottoman was held in the *madrasahs* that show the character of Seljuki's *madrasahs*. Thus the understanding of education was under the influence of the Seljuk's understanding of education. As is well-known, the leading scholars of Seljuk's *madrasahs* like al-Juwayni (d. 1085) and al-Ghazali (d. 1111) were Asharites.<sup>1</sup>

We don't have detailed information about the programs of Theology courses in the Ottoman *madrasahs*. We can only obtain some information from the books written on the *madrasahs* and biographies of theologians.<sup>2</sup> At this point it will be appropriate to make this determination. It is seen that an unproductive period of standstill started in the field of Theology (*Kalam*) since the 8th [Islamic calendar]/13th century [A.D.] (the Ottoman Empire was established in the same century). *Sharhs* (Commentaries), *hashiyahs* (glosses) and *ta'liks* (appendixes) began to take the place of independent *Kalam* works.<sup>3</sup> The Primary *Kalam* books in the Ottoman *madrasahs* were *Sarh al-Aqaid* by Sadaddin Taftazani (d. 793/1390) and *Sharh al-Maqasid*, and *Sarh al-Mawaqif* by Sayyid Sharif al-Jurcani (d. 816/1423).<sup>4</sup> These two writers were also Asharites.

Although Ottomans generally were of the Hanafite-Maturidite school, the majority of books studied in *madrasahs* were from the Asharites. To understand the Asharite School's influence on Ottoman science and thought, it is necessary to go back to the 11th century. When the Great Seljuks accepted the religion of Islam in the last quarter of the 10th century as a whole, the scholars

who came from *Mawaraunnahr* had guided their science and thought-life. The Seljuks adopted Sunni Islam, and appointed the Asharites scholars to *madrasahs*.<sup>5</sup> Consequently, the influences of Asharites' theology started to be seen in these *madrasahs*. This influence continued on through the Ottoman period.

One of the books studied in the Ottoman *madrasahs* is *Hashiyat al-Tajrid* by Sayyid Sharif al-Jurjani on Nasir al-Din al-Tusi's (d. 1274) work *Tajrid al-I'tiqad*.<sup>6</sup> The influence of Abu Hamid al-Ghazali and Fahr al-Din ar-Razi (d. 1209) in the theological thought of the Ottoman State was clear. Ghazali's influence was due to his character, which attaches importance to Sufism.

One of the Asharite scholars showing his influence on Ottoman theology is al-Razi.<sup>7</sup> As is well-known, some of the Ottoman scholar's *ijazatnamah* genealogies come to an end by al-Taftazani, and the others by al-Razi. Although the founders of Sunni theology are known to be Abu al-Hasan al-Ashari (d. 935) and Abu Mansur al-Maturidi (d. 944), the *sanads* (scholar chain) of Sunni theology genealogies end with al-Ashari and sometimes his scholar Abu Ali al-Jubbai (d. 303/915). Although he is accepted as one of the founders of Sunni theology, Abu Mansur al-Maturidi was mentioned only *infiqh sanads*.<sup>8</sup>

One of the reasons for the Ashari influences on the education of *Kalam* in the Ottoman State is Molla Fanari (d. 1430).<sup>9</sup> Molla Fanari, the first *shayh al-islam*<sup>10</sup> (the chief religious official in the Ottoman State), was a prominent scholar on the field of *Tafsir* (interpretation), *Fiqh* (Islamic Law) and *Usul al-Fiqh* (Methodology for research and knowledge in Islamic jurisprudence). It is cited that he wrote more than a hundred works.<sup>11</sup> But he also did research in the field of *Kalam*. He wrote *ta'likaats* (glosses) for *Sarh al-Mawaqif* by Sayyid Sharif al-Jurjani and wrote *sarhs* (commentaries) on *Muhtasar al-Mawaqif* by Adud al-Din al-Iji (d. 1355).<sup>12</sup>

Molla Fanari was the representative of the Middle Asia School in the Ottoman State. He carried the influence of al-Razi to the Ottoman world. Thus, he was very important for Ottoman theology. In addition to his works, he contributed to the formation of Ottoman science's tradition by means of his students.

It would be very useful to determine whether Middle Asia's Turkish theologians were impressed by al-Razi and al-Tusi.<sup>13</sup> In my opinion, al-Taftazani and al-Jurjani reconciled the Asharite and Maturidite schools. One of the reasons for the studying of their books in Ottoman *madrasahs* must be that point. Essentially it is known that the differences between Asharite and Maturidite schools are not primary principles but secondary principles.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, the Ottomans evaluated the theology from the Sunni's point of view, and they didn't consider any differences between the two schools.

Ottoman *madrasahs* showed progress and advance in the 16th Century. Especially Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror attached a big importance to science and science institutions after the conquest of 1453. He supported the development of scientific and philosophical mentality.<sup>15</sup> But unfortunately some defects occurred in the *madrasahs* from the reign of Kanuni onward. Consequently unproductiveness and regression started in Ottoman Science. Afterwards some attempts were made to improve the *madrasahs*. But the regression wasn't stopped in any way.<sup>16</sup> In the 18th century the religious works became less in proportion than the ones of the previous century.<sup>17</sup>

## **The Influences of Western Thought Trends on Ottomans**

In the Ottoman *madrasahs* mathematics, astronomy, medicine and philosophy, as well as the religious sciences were studied. But before the Reform declaration (*Tanzimat*) the level of social

science in Turkey was very low. Medieval Philosophy and Gazali-Ibn Rushd's discussion continued between the scholars in the Ottoman world. They failed to take any steps to advance philosophical thought.<sup>18</sup>

While the regression continued in Ottoman science and thought, much renovation appeared in the science, thought and arts in the Western world. A new philosophical understanding was brought to light because of these developments in science. This new understanding, based on intelligence and experiment, shocked the medieval religious understanding. Appearance of trends like positivism, materialism and evolutionism induced many problems in the religious field.<sup>19</sup>

While the Ottoman scholars were researching the reasons for their regression, the advances in the West and their influences on the Ottoman State were increasing from day to day. And the Ottoman scholars directed their attentions to the Western world. Thus Enlightenment philosophy began to flourish, especially after the Reform declaration (*Tanzimat*) in 1839. Ottoman intellectuals translated and wrote books related to the advance in the Western world. Among them a group that supported the western mode and also opposed the *Madrasahs* appeared. They carried the rationalism, materialism and positivism from the West to the Ottoman world.<sup>20</sup>

With the Reform declaration (*Tanzimat*) the Ottoman Empire opened its doors to the West. The students had been sent to gain a philosophical education in France Germany, England and America in this period. Students who came back carried the dominant understandings of the West to the Ottoman World. The opinions and standpoints that took the Western from Enlightenment age to the French revolution began to enter the Ottoman world after the *Tanzimat*. Philosophers and thinkers of the Enlightenment contributed in establishing a new social order with political standpoints and thoughts basing governments on secular and democratic structure.<sup>21</sup> Precursors of the Enlightenment movement in Turkey were Ibrahim Sinasi, Munif Pasha, Ali Suavi and Ahmet Mithat.

According to Ibrahim Sinasi's (1826-1871) point of view, the basis of Western civilization is "intelligence." Islamic civilization's basis was also intelligence rooted in reality. But wrong beliefs appeared afterwards and changed this character. He believed that the Enlightenment movement would end the age of oppression and ignorance.<sup>22</sup> The influences of Positivism could be seen in Sinasi's opinions. He does not see any contradiction between new Western thoughts and Islamic beliefs. He always expressed the harmony between these two beliefs. <sup>23</sup>

Munif Mehmed Pasa (1828-1894) was a conservative thinker of the Enlightenment. He collected Voltaire, Fontanelle and Fenelon's dialogues in a book entitled "*Muhaverat-i Hikemiyye*". He also published "*Macmua-i Funun*" with some encyclopedist friends. The primary aim of this period was to inform the Ottoman world about Western civilization.<sup>24</sup>

Ali Suavi (1839-1878) wrote a small encyclopedia entitled "*Kamus al-Ulum wa al-Maarif*". He also published the first philosophical history under the title of "*Tarih al-Afkar*" in his newspaper "*Ulum*". In his writings he explained the opinions of philosophers before Socrates and made some comparisons between their opinions and Islamic Philosophy.<sup>25</sup>

Ahmed Mithat (1842-1912), translated J. W. Draper's book *The History of Conflict between Religion and Science* into Turkish. He also wrote a philosophical history entitled "*Tarih-i Hikmet*". Furthermore he published some translations and wrote some philosophical articles in the review *Dagarcik*.<sup>26</sup>

In the period of *Mesrutiyet* (Second Constitutional Monarchy), publications on Materialism, Positivism, Immoralism and Mechanical Evolutionism increased more. There were many intellectuals who wrote on these trends. But I will mention only some of them.

Baha Tevfik (1884-1914) was impressed by Materialism. He published Ernest Haeckel's "Weltratsel" (translated by Memduh Suleyman into Turkish) in his review "Felsefe". He also published a research on Immanuel Kant and his work *Critique of Pure Reason* in this review. At the same time he was the representative of materialism.<sup>27</sup>

Besir Fuat (1852-1887) was impressed by the materialist Ludwig Büchner. He said that Büchner's work *Natur und Geist* represents the 'newness' in the philosophical world. In addition, he for the first time attached importance to the writings of thinkers like Denis Diderot, Baron d'Holbach and Jean Le Rond d'Alembert.<sup>28</sup>

Among the ones impressed by Positivism and Naturalism are Riza Tevfik, Mehmed Cavid and Ahmet Suayb. They published the review *Ulum-i İktisadiye ve İctimaiyye* in 1908. The opinions introduced and discussed in this treatment spread among Ottoman intellectuals.<sup>29</sup> Riza Tevfik stated that he follows the way of empiricism and agnosticism. He called himself "the student of Bacon and Stuart Mill". He prepared his book *Kamus-i Felsefe (Dictionary of Philosophy)* with the permission of the Ministry of Education. Riza Tevfik wrote the first philosophy book for high schools, entitled *Felsefe Dersleri (Lessons of Philosophy)* and published in 1914.<sup>30</sup>

Ahmed Suayb (1876-1910) wrote some philosophical articles in the reviews *Sehbal* and *Servet-i Funun*. In his book *Hayat ve Kitaplar (Life and Books)* he entered the depths of positivism. His positivist opinion turned into evolutionism, and based on positivism he entered sociology. He also prepared publications regarding biologic sociology from the viewpoint of the new trends.<sup>31</sup>

Memduh Suleyman (1877-1920) translated Eduard Hartman's (1842-1906) book *Darwinism* into Turkish in 1911. Apart from the other Darwinists in the Ottoman World, he criticized Darwinist theory.<sup>32</sup>

One of the writers of the review *Ulum-i İktisadiyye va İctimaiyye* which began to be published at the beginning of the Second *Mesrutiyet*, Bedi Nuri (1875-1913), appropriated evolutionism and published some articles on evolutionism. Influenced by Spencer he applied evolutionism to society in his article *İctimai Kabiliyet*, published in his review *Ulum-i İktisadiyye va İctimaiyye*. He decided that the bases that he found in biological life can be carried out in social life. Sati al-Husri, as a Darwinist and Spencerist, also applied evolutionism to society, as did his brother Bedi Nuri in the article *Cemiyetler ve Uzviyetler* published in the review *Ulum-i İktisadiyye va İctimaiyye*. He adduced that evolution includes society.<sup>33</sup>

Among the writers of the review *Ulum-i İktisadiyye va İctimaiyye*, Asaf Nefi, also a Darwinist, applied evolutionism to the society, where it competed with Lamarckism.<sup>34</sup>

Suphi Ethem wrote two books on Lamarckism and Darwinism and published an article, "Lamarck and Lamarckism," in the review *Felsefe*. In addition he wrote a book entitled "Bergson *Felsefesi*" (*Philosophy of Bergson*). Suphi Ethem adduced that the opinions of Darwin already existed in antiquity. Two famous philosophers Empedocles and Herakleitos discussed it. But Darwin was unaware of this fact. Suphi Ethem appropriated Darwin's opinions but presented them to the readers with exaggerations.

Ethem Nejdet was also a fanatic evolutionist. He has a work entitled "Principles of Evolution (*Tekamul ve Kanunlari*)" on the subject. He considered Darwin's theory better than Lamarck's.<sup>35</sup>

When Ahmed Riza was in Paris, he joined a positivist association. He began to publish a newspaper *Mesveret* that focused on positivist opinions. He gave detailed information about the opinions of H. Spencer -among the positivist thinkers- in his work *Tolarance Musulmane*.<sup>36</sup>

Abdullah Cevdet (1869-1931) defended the positivist, materialist and atheist opinions in his review *Ictihad*. He translated some books from Gustave Le Baron and published them in the review. His work *Funun ve Felsefe* is very important in terms of philosophy.<sup>37</sup>

Celal Nuri Ileri (1877-1939) tried to transfer materialist opinions to the Ottoman World with his books, newspapers and reviews. Although he was inspired by Buchner generally, he could criticize him and the materialist thinkers.<sup>38</sup>

Because of the structure of widespread intellectual trends directed towards the removal of religious values, the scientists aimed to introduce a new science of Theology, since the science of Theology had been criticized regarding its capacity to answer current needs. The modernization in the field of *Kalam* was so important that the review *Ceride-i Ilmiyye (Scientific Review)* prepared an award competition for the writing of a new book of *Kalam*.<sup>39</sup>

### **The Influences of Western Intellectual Efforts on New Islamic Theology**

In this section we will describe the opinions of Abdullatif Harputi (d. 1912), Sehbenderzâde Filibeli Ahmed Hilmi (d. 1914) and Izmirli Ismail Hakki (d. 1946) who maintain they have produced a modern *Kalam* (Islamic theology) and who wrote books about that matter. Here it is made clear that besides theologians in Turkey, thinkers like Muhammed Abduh (d. 1905) in Egypt, Syed Ahmad Khan (d. 1898) and Sibli Numâni (d. 1914) in India, Muhammed Iqbal (1876-1938) in Pakistan supported particularly the new Islamic theology, and they also tried to contribute to new Islamic thought in general<sup>40</sup>.

#### *Abdullatif Harputi (1842-1912)*

In the last period of the Ottoman State a theology thinker who dealt with the task of seriously producing a modern Islamic theology was Abdullatif Harputi.<sup>41</sup> He proposed that there were no data in science and philosophy which gave difficulties to Islam. He answered those Oriental writers and Muslim intellectuals who unjustifiably critiqued Islam<sup>42</sup>.

Harputi expressed his attitude towards the new philosophical movement as follows: Changeable philosophy has been eliminated and the opinions which are suitable to Islam have been determined and assumed. Thus they are made possible for the benefit of Islam. Disagreeable opinions, if they are inconvenient to reconcile or interpret, should be refused. Thus has the new Islamic theology been constituted. From the beginning Muslim theologians behaved in this same way in relation to the philosophical trends of their own historical periods<sup>43</sup>. After he had made this determination, he stated that the period of new Islamic theology had indeed started. As a matter of fact he made clear that he personally put into this into practice by writing *Tanqih al-Kalam*, and he also reached his expectations that this movement would be continued by the following generation.<sup>44</sup>

Harputi wants Islamic theologians who are against the new philosophy to deal with subjects related to the creation of matter and power: matter does not invent objects, the universe is not only proper to matter and material things, and he wants them to try to prove the existence of the spiritual universe transcending visible things. However, according to him, when the philosophical subjects are studied the framework of *Usul al-din* must be kept. Otherwise there is no relation between philosophy and Islam. He personally put his approach into practice in his work entitled *Tanqih*.

#### *Sehbenderzâde Filibeli Ahmed Hilmi (1865-1914)*

Filibeli Ahmed Hilmi<sup>45</sup> was born and brought up in a troublesome period of the Ottoman State. In the period which began with the reforms (*Tanzimat*), the movements of 'improvement' and arguments of various movements became violent. In that period, there were active thoughts aimed precisely at rescuing the State. In spite of the fact that they were different from one another, the shared purpose of all these intellectual movements was to try to determine precautions and principles that prevent the collapse of the State<sup>46</sup>. Thus, scholars generally dwelt upon negatives in their articles in newspapers and periodicals<sup>47</sup>. Henceforward, Filibeli believed in the inevitability of improving our thought system, and he was also sure that the conditions were suitable for that:

We are a nation that joined the caravan of evolution recently. Even though very quickly, we have been obliged to live the periods of evolution that the other nations had experienced before... Before the revolution (before the 1908 constitutional monarchy) thinking or especially saying one's thoughts were considered a crime. Now thank God, everybody can say what he/she thinks...<sup>48</sup>

Filibeli Ahmed Hilmi seriously struggled with Bahâ Tevfik at first, then Celal Nuri (d. 1936)<sup>49</sup>. When Bahâ Tevfik translated Louis Büchner's work entitled *Matter and Power*, that book was received favorably by the press. But Sebilurresad was not able to display the same bravery in publishing Dr. Dozy's *Islamic History*"<sup>50</sup>. Filibeli maintained the necessity of modernizing Islamic theology, and he produced a work on that subject named *Uss-i Islâm*, meaning "new theology". He summarized the basic units of Islamic beliefs by criticizing Comte's theory of three cases: Filibeli dwelt upon relations between religion and science and the sense of the side of religion.<sup>51</sup> He also mentioned that he wrote a brief Islamic theology book named *Ilm-i Tawhid (The Science of Unity of God)* in this work<sup>52</sup>.

According to him, it is not possible to persuade human beings these days by using ancient logic and knowledge. Consequently, the Islamic society feels the need for reform of thought and must take renewal seriously. This becomes a reality by studying former intellectual products, by preferring the suitable and beneficial, by discarding what is harmful for the society and also by changing what is unsuitable for ethics and improvement: in the new satisfaction it is absolutely necessary to benefit from the latest science and by realizing the necessity of environment. However this application never aimed at the demolition of religion or putting suspicion in its place. As a matter of fact, religion is essential for human being and throwing the essence away means to commit suicide. The necessary treatment must be made for the organs of body which have lost their vitality. For example, a gangrenous finger of a body can be cut but the heart and the brain cannot be thrown away.<sup>53</sup> In religion, besides the principles of belief, scholars frequently emphasized the importance of the "religious sense." Thus he tried to give Islamic theology a new form. According to him, religion keeps going because of religious sense or feeling: it is not able to carry on its existence without them.<sup>54</sup>

*Izmirli Ismail Hakki (d. 1868-1946)*

Izmirli Ismail Hakki<sup>55</sup> completed his education at the transition period of the Ottoman State from the method of traditionalist education and instruction to modern method as in the Western society. He wrote most of his works in the transition period from the authority to the

republic.<sup>56</sup> Izmirli was a unifying personality between the modern school and the Muslim theological school (madrasah). He addressed some philosophical subjects existing in contemporary Western thought in his book and he investigated them.<sup>57</sup> He is in favour of modernizing Islamic theology. Besides expressing this opinion by speech, he actually put it into practice in his book named *Yeni Ilm-i Kelâm* (New Islamic Theology). So he is accepted as one of the leaders of the movement of reform in Islamic theology in Turkey<sup>58</sup> .

Izmirli is one of the modernist scholars taking part in the Islamic movement which occurred in the late period of the Ottoman State. These scholars aimed to comment on the Islamic ‘basis’ again as a criterion for modern thought (as designated by Western scholars), and these scholars also argued that Islam must cooperate with modern thought and association.<sup>59</sup> This movement’s scholars tried to balance between the ‘necessity of the times’ and religious belief by paying attention to contemporary civilization.<sup>60</sup>

Although Izmirli was a philosopher he skillfully wrote about many subjects related to all other Islamic sciences: this is so because of the particular period in which he lived, and this special feature arose because of the education of Muslim theological schools. He left behind for us approximately 50 works. One of them is the most important: it is entitled *Yeni Ilm-i Kelâm*.<sup>61</sup> He planned to finish this work with the intention of composing four chapters,—introduction, theology, sam’iyyat (prophecy, eschatology, problems of faith) and conclusion: but he was only able to finish the first two chapters. The most important reason compelling him to write the book in question is:

That existing Islamic theology now played itself against Greek Philosophy first, then against Avicenna’s philosophy (who wanted to make Islamic thoughts closer by spreading Greek philosophy), and finally against innovating and heretical groups. The scholars knew that Islamic theology had become less effective after a thousand years: what was needed was especially somebody who knew exactly the basic subjects of Islamic theology, and who also understood the difficult matters of Islamic theology. Such a person was rarely found. In the end, Islamic theology turned out to only consist of *Sarh al-Aqaid al-Nasafiyya* and *Sarh al-Aqaid al-Adudiyya*. Someone who could understand *Sarh al-Mawâqif*, *Sarh al-Maqâsid* and *Tawâli’ al-Anwar* which were sources of Islamic theology was rare indeed. So it was necessary that Islamic theology reflected prior theologians: someone responsible to and for Islamic beliefs was required to adapt the past to contemporary requirements. Izmirli supported these reasons for the necessity of changing the Islamic theology, but with proper affiliation to theological scholars who had lived in the past.<sup>62</sup> The question of the insufficiency of contemporary Islamic theology was also attested to by Ibn Taymiyyah (1263-1328) and Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyah (1292-1350). Nevertheless the scholar al-Juwayni al-Ashari changed his mind about Islamic theology later: he no longer regarded al-Ghazali as sufficient for his purposes. Fahr al-Din al-Razi also agreed that the traditional methods of Islamic theology were not enough to provide solutions for [present-day] problems.<sup>63</sup>

Science has characteristically to keep up with contemporary developments.<sup>64</sup> To refute opponents in each period it is necessary to prepare oneself.<sup>65</sup> *Islamic theology whose basic function is to protect Islamic thoughts from every risk—in order to perform this mission—has to take into consideration modern scientific developments. When it realizes this, Islamic theology can only profit from the evidences and methods which modern philosophy uses.*<sup>66</sup> But here the important point is that changing the basics of Islamic religious faith is impossible. There are many Qur’anic verses declaring just this, and besides all the prophets agreed on this point.<sup>67</sup>

Izmirli, by accepting the Qur’an and prophetic practices as a principle, tried to develop a new modern Islamic theology, and he assumed the sense of Western philosophy as a method. Izmirli’s importance in Islamic theology was that he had understood an absence, and he had tried to find a

way or solution for that. On the one hand, he made clear that the subjects of classical Islamic theology were not neglected and on the other hand he thought that as the wahy (revelation) required, Islamic theology had to answer the contemporary problems.<sup>68</sup>

Izmirli and the thinkers like him maintained that for the intellectual reforms to take place authentically, it was required that Muslims have pure beliefs, the ideals of improvement or reform of education, and the ideals of Sufism (Islamic mysticism), and the aim of bettering the Muslim "moral mind"; and they declared that it was necessary to expand the concept [meaning] of jihad as in the beginning of Islamic history.<sup>69</sup>

Izmirli does not insist on discarding old thoughts completely and automatically assuming new ones as in the West. He explains his approach to this matter:

I only agree to scholars' opinions if there is proof (burhaan): I esteem them and pay attention to their opinions whether they are in opposition or in favour of me. I do not refuse the opponents' opinions as they are only the opponents, and again I do not accept the supporters' opinions just because they are those of my followers. I am certainly not automatically a supporter of a scholar. I do not consider any scholars' opinion as wahy. I am not a supporter of both Ghazali and Ibn Taymiyyah. I am neither a Hanbelite nor an Asharite. I depend neither on Islamic Sophists nor theologians (mutakallimun). I am a supporter of what is right. I do not accept anybody's opinion if there is not a proof. I never accept or reject rashly any philosopher or sophist or sect trying to find the right and truth. I think that there is rightfulness for each thinker in controversial matters, so I see a reality for one point of view in every group.<sup>70</sup>

According to Izmirli, the old philosophy is insufficient for the period we live in: it must be adapted by a combination of English, French and Germany philosophy called "Western philosophy"<sup>71</sup>. He says it is more beneficial today to cite figures like Bacon, Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Locke, Malbranche, Hume, Kant, Hegel, Auguste Comte, Hamilton, Stuart Mill, Spencer, and Bergson instead of Greek philosophers like Thales, Anaxagoras, Empedocles, Democritus, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, Zenon, Porphyrius (who are repeatedly mentioned in the works of Islamic theology and Islamic sects). Once again according to him, he states that it is more useful to research New Materialism, Spiritualism [vitalism], Positivism, Criticism, and Evolutionism, which derive from modern Western philosophy instead of sects like Skepticism, Naturalism, Mashshaiyyun (Peripatetics), Stoicism, Dahriyyun (the Materialists), Sophism, Sumaniyya and Brahmanism<sup>72</sup>. At the same time it is necessary to respect the principle of freedom in thought and opinion. But it is also necessary to reject all the philosophical rules which do not agree with Islamic belief. As a consequence, the accepted ones have to be assumed because of proof and the refused ones rejected because of proof.<sup>73</sup>

The Islamic theology Izmirli aimed at mixes with the new philosophy and, on the other hand, directly includes matters of science and astronomy. Yet, just as these latter sciences were treated as philosophical subjects in the old ages, they later were separated from philosophy and no longer belong to it today.<sup>74</sup>

Izmirli particularly studied Materialism in a detailed manner. He described their opinions and then he criticized them.<sup>75</sup> He emphasized that human beings have continuously put forward an idea of three important matters: God, matter, and spirit. According to him, for the New Islamic theology it is surely important to understand the thinking of the new philosophy about matter and spirit, and these can keep the human mind quite busy.<sup>76</sup>

Izmirli criticized Positivism. He declared that Auguste Comte first had thought to remove religious rules but later changed his mind about removing them completely.<sup>77</sup> Besides the above-named Islamic theology scholars who have defended the modernization of Islamic theology and have written towards this purpose, there have been still other Islamic theology scholars who argued for its modernization. Musâ Kâzim (1858-1920) is the most important one. He wanted to write a new Islamic theology including solutions for contemporary problems. According to him, from now on this requirement is to be recognized and there should be no need for fanaticism in this regard.<sup>78</sup>

The great Turkish commentary Elmalili Hamdi Yazir (1878-1942) has also agreed with that idea. He says that modernization is not falsification, so thoughts assumed deliberately or unintentionally by Muslims were sorted out, the right ones from the harmful. Thus he says that in the name of protecting the nass (divine text), modernization has occurred in theory and practices. According to him the mission of the scholars who are the extensions of the prophets must study the value of causes and reasons, and their social results. They should criticize the last period and determine requirements for the future. In this case, the relations between Islamic theology and all other sciences are strengthened.<sup>79</sup>

Celâl Nuri (1877-1939) who had a materialistic tendency also declared that it was necessary to reform the Islamic theology books, in a chapter named Yeni Akâid (New Theology) of Târih-i Istikbâl. To him the existing Islamic theology books were written to refute the old skeptical thoughts. However there is no need for those old ones today.<sup>80</sup> Filibeli agrees mostly with Celal Nuri's thoughts in the above-mentioned book except for its severe criticisms of and hindrances put up in the face of Muslim scholars.<sup>81</sup> Filibeli emphasizes that he agrees with Celal Nuri about the modernization of Islamic theology, but he separates from him on method<sup>82</sup>.

Here, it is necessary to mention that Islamic theology studies are done by teachers in the Theology Faculty of *Dârulfunun*. Izmirli is one of the philosophy teachers in that Faculty who constantly maintains the need for modernization of Islamic theology. Besides him, Mehmet Semsettin Günaltay, Mehmet Serafettin Yaltkaya and Yusuf Ziya Yorukan have also studied Islamic theology. Those scholars have written the first model of academic works in theology. So many articles have been published in the periodical of *Dârulfunun*.

## Conclusion

It is necessary to put forward what the basic principles of the new Islamic theology are. If those characteristics have been determined, then the definition of that group becomes clear automatically. New Islamic theology is a science which totally rejects materialism and positivism as an philosophical opinion, answers all the biological and physiological criticisms (Darwinism, Freudianism) against religion; after it has criticized movements of new philosophies, it has proven the existence of God by using data of sciences, maintained the holy doctrine by proving and explaining the subjects of Islamic belief.<sup>83</sup>

One of the common points of modernization supporters in Islamic theology is to consider contemporary philosophy important. There are two basic reasons for this: firstly, the translated philosophical books from Western languages or other sources written by such as Baha Tevfik, Celâl Nuri and Abdullah Cevdet have contained knowledge which could be used against Islam. Secondly, when Islam was rewritten it resorted to a new way of expression by means of philosophical capability.<sup>84</sup> If we glance at the books written in the period of the Ottomans, we see few Islamic theology books originally written but many books as sharh (commentary), hashiyah (glosse) and ta'lik (appendix). That does not mean that it was not studied among the

Ottomans. For the writers of sharh, hâshiyah and ta'lik have not repeated old thoughts: rather, they have generally put forward their original opinions. In the period of the Ottomans one of the important things was also, instead of writing a whole Islamic theology book, to write a risalah (treatise) addressing a contemporary problem.

In conclusion, the Islamic works of theology produced in the period of the Ottomans were affected by the period of "standstill." There are no arguments which bring about new discussions in Islamic theology during the Ottoman period. The Ottomans did not give permission for discussions and separation; and against existing occasional bid'ahs (deviations), religions and thoughts differing from Islam, the Ottomans have always insisted that belief is necessary. For Islamic theology has two functions: firstly, explaining Islamic belief correctly to the people; and secondly, protecting Islamic belief from the assault of doubts. Thus Muslim belief is saved from danger. Performing both of these functions, Islamic theology has not abandoned its duty.

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## Notes

1 See Ahmet Yasar Ocak, "Ibn Kemâl'in Yasadigi XV. ve XVI. Asirlar Turkiye'sinde Ilim ve Fikir Hayati", *Seyhu'l-Islâm Ibn Kemal Sempozyumu*, (Ankara, 1989), p. 30.

2 For more information see Osman Nuri Ergin, *Türk Maarif Tarihi*, (Istanbul: Eser Matbaasi, 1977), Vol. I, pp. 122-129; Huseyin Atay, *Osmanlilarda Yuksek Din Egitimi*, (Istanbul: Dergah Yayinlari, 1983), pp. 87, 93, 94, 97; Omer Aydin, *Türk Kelâm Bilginleri* [Turkish Theologians, in Turkish], (Istanbul: İnsan Yayinlari, 2004), p. 15.

3 Bekir Topaloglu, *Kelâm Ilmi Giriş*, [Introduction to Islamic Theology, in Turkish], (Istanbul: Damla Yayınevi, 1991), pp. 34-35; M. Sait Yazicioglu, "Bir Kelâmci Olarak Ibn Kemâl", *Seyhu'l-Islâm Ibn Kemal Sempozyumu*, (Ankara, 1989), p. 149.

4 For more information about this subject, see. Muharrem Ergin, *Türk Maarif Tarihi*, (Istanbul: Eser Matbaasi, 1977), Vol. I, pp. 122-129; Atay, *Osmanlilarda Yuksek Din Egitimi*, pp. 87, 93, 94, 97.

5 Ocak, "Ibn Kemâl'in Yasadigi XV. ve XVI. Asirlar Turkiye'sinde Ilim ve Fikir Hayati", p. 30.

6 See M. Serafeddin Yaltkaya, "Türk Kelâmcilari", *Dârulfunun İlâhiyat Fakultesi Mecmuasi*, (Istanbul 1932), p. 15; Atay, op. cit., pp. 87, 93-97.

7 H. Ziya Ulken, *Eski Yunandan Çağdaş Düşünceye Doğru İslam Felsefesi, Kaynakları ve Etkileri*, (Istanbul: Cem Yayinlari, 1993), p. 163.

8 Atay, op. cit., p. 167.

9 For more information about life and works Molla Fenâri, see. Bursali Mehmet Tahir, *Osmanlı Muellifleri*, A. Fikri Yavuz, İsmail Ozen (ed.), (Istanbul), Vol. I, p. 314.

10 Bursali, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 314.

11 See Bursali, op. cit., I, 314.

12 Bursali, op. cit., I, 314; Hakki Aydın, *İslâm Hukuku ve Molla Fenari*, (Istanbul: İsalet Yayinlari, 1991), 72.

13 These effects can be found in the works of Muhammed Semsuddin al-Semerikandi's *al-Sahâif al-İlâhiyya* and Sadr al-Sharia al-Sâni's *Ta'dil al-Ulum*.

- 14 Emrullah Yuksel, "Es'ariler Ile Mâturidiler Arasındaki Gorus Ayriklari", *Ataturk Universitesi Islami Ilimler Fakultesi Dergisi*, (Ankara: Sevinc Matbaasi, 1980), Nr. IV, pp. 98-99.
- 15 A. Adnan Adivar, *Osmanli Turklerinde Ilim*, (Istanbul 1970), p. 31.
- 16 See Atay, *Osmanlilarda Yuksek Din Egitimi*, pp. 174-213.
- 17 See Ismail Hakki Uzuncarsili, *Osmanli Tarihi*, (Ankara: Turk Tarih Kurumu Basimevi, 1988), Vol. IV/II, p. 522-523.
- 18 Hilmi Ziya Ulken, *Turkiye'de Cagdas Dusunce Tarihi*, (Konya: Selcuk Yayinlari, 1966), Vol. I, p. 48.
- 19 See M. Sait Ozervarli, *Kelâm'da Yenilik Arayislari*, (Istanbul: Isam Yayinlari, 1998), pp. 23-27; Ilhan Kutluer, "Batililasma", *Turkiye Diyanet Vakfi Islam Ansiklopedisi (DIA)*, (Istanbul 1992), Vol. V, pp. 152-158.
- 20 See Akgun, Mehmet, "1839-1920 Yillari Arasinda Turkiye'de Aydinlanmanin Uzantisi Olarak Temsil Edilen Felsefi Akimlar", *Ankara Universitesi Ilahiyat Fakultesi Dergisi* (Ankara 1999), Vol. XL, pp. 475-476.
- 21 Kâmiran Birand, *Aydinlanma Devri Devlet Felsefesinin Tanzimata Tesirleri* (Ankara, 1955), p. 33.
- 22 Ulken, *Turkiye'de Cagdas Dusunce Tarihi*, Vol. I, p. 78.
- 23 Ulken, op. cit., p. 82.
- 24 Ulken, op. cit., p. 82-88.
- 25 Ulken, op. cit., pp. 101-127.
- 26 Ulken, op. cit., pp.156-174; Akgun, op. cit., pp. 491-492.
- 27 Ulken, op. cit., pp. 365-384; Abdullah Ucman, "Baha Tevfik", *DIA*, (Istanbul 1991), Vol. IV, pp. 452-453.
- 28 Orhan Okay, "Besir Fuad", *DIA*, (Istanbul 1992), Vol. VI, pp. 5-6; Kutluer, "Batililasma", Vol. V, p. 155; Akgun, op. cit., pp. 487-488;
- 29 Ulken, op. cit., p. 237.
- 30 Ibid, pp. 406-422.
- 31 Ibid, pp. 218-228; Abdullah Ucman, "Ahmed Suayb", *DIA*, (Istanbul 1989), Vol. II, p. 138; Akgun, op. cit., pp. 479, 488.
- 32 Ibid, p. 477.
- 33 See Ulken, op. cit., p. 247-261.
- 34 Ulken, op. cit., pp. 261-264.
- 35 Ibid, p. 265.
- 36 Ziyad Ebuzziya, "Ahmed Rizâ", *DIA*, (Istanbul 1989), Vol. II, pp. 124-126.
- 37 Ulken, op. cit., pp. 387-404.
- 38 Akgun, op. cit., p. 495.
- 39 Atay, op. cit., p. 225.
- 40 Ozervarli, op. cit., pp. 52-59.
- 41 For more information about his life and works, see: Ebu'l-Ulâ Mardin, *Huzur Dersleri* (Istanbul, 1966), p. 274; Ishak Sunguroglu, *Harput Yollarinda* (Istanbul, 1959), Vol. II, p. 141 vd.; Yusuf Kilic, "Abdullatif Harputi'nin Cagdas Bilim ve Kulturumuze Katkilari", *Dunu ve Bugunuyle Harput Sempozyumu, Elazig 24-27 Eylul 1998*, (Elazig: TDV Elazig Subesi Yayinlari, 1999), p. 203; Metin Yurdagur, "Harputi Abdullatif", *DIA*, Vol. XVI, pp. 235-237.
- 42 Harputi, *Târih-i Ilm-i Kelâm*, (Istanbul 1332), p.111.
- 43 Ibid, p. 111.
- 44 Ibid, pp. 113-115.

- 45 For more information about life and works of Filibeli Ahmed Hilmi, see: Bursali, *Osmanli Muellifleri*, Vol. II, pp. 156-157; Filibeli Ahmed Hilmi, *Islâm Tarihi* (Giris), (Otuken Yayınevi, 1974), p. V; Zekeriya Uludag, *Sehbenderzâde Filibeli Ahmed Hilmi ve Spiritualizm*, (Ankara, 1996), p. 37-46; Aydın, *Türk Kelâm Bilginleri*, pp. 79-82.
- 46 Huseyin G. Yurdaydin, *Islâm Tarihi Dersleri* (Ankara, 1988), pp. 170-171.
- 47 Ozerverli, op. cit., p. 45.
- 48 Filibeli, *Huzur-i Akl u Fende Maddiyun Meslek-i Dalâleti*, p. 68; *Allah'î Inkâr Mumkun mu?*, Necip Taylan-Hasan Onart (ed.), (Istanbul, 1977), p. 15.
- 49 For more information about the life and works of Celâl Nuri, see Recep Duymaz, "Celâl Nuri İleri", *DIA*, Vol. VII, p. 242-245.
- 50 See Mehmet Ozdemir, "Dozy, Reinhart Pieter Anne", *DIA*, Vol. IX, pp. 513-514.
- 51 See *Uss-i Islâm: Hakâik-i Islâmiyye'ye Mustenid Yeni Akâid*, (Istanbul, 1332).
- 52 *Uss-i Islâm*, pp. 20, 59.
- 53 Filibeli, *Maddiyun Meslek-i Dalâleti*, pp. 134-135.
- 54 Filibeli, *Islam Tarihi*, p. 647.
- 55 For more information about life and works Izmirli, see Celâleddin Izmirli, "Izmirli Ismail Hakki: Hayati, Eserleri, Dini ve Felsefi Ilimlerdeki Mevkii", *Izmirli Ismail Hakki Sempozyumu, 24-25 Kasim 1995*, (Ankara: TDV Yayinlari, 1996), pp. 241-264; Hizmetli, Sabri, "Izmirli Ismail Hakki'nin Ilmi Sahsiyeti", *Izmirli Ismail Hakki Sempozyumu, 24-25 Kasim 1995*, (Ankara: TDV Yayinlari, 1996), pp. 3-26; Aydın, *Türk Kelâm Bilginleri*, pp. 84-86.
- 56 Hizmetli, "Izmirli Ismail Hakki'nin Ilmi Sahsiyeti", p. 3.
- 57 Ibid, p. 3.
- 58 Ozerverli, op. cit., p. 49.
- 59 See Mumtaz'er Turkone, *Siyasi Ideoloji Olarak Islâmciligin Dogusu*, (Istanbul, 1991), pp. 275-276.
- 60 Ulken, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 443.
- 61 Izmirli, "Yeni Ilm-i Kelâm", *Sebilurresâd*, Vol. 21, Nr. 528-529, p. 59.
- 62 Izmirli, *Muhassalu'l-Kelâm ve'l-Hikme*, Istanbul 1336, p. 11.
- 63 Ibid, pp. 12-13.
- 64 Izmirli, "Yeni Ilm-i Kelâm", *Sebilurresâd*, Vol. 21, nu. 528-529, p. 59.
- 65 Izmirli, "Yeni Ilm-i Kelâm Hakkında", *Sebilurresâd*, Vol. 22, Nr. 551-552, p. 38.
- 66 Izmirli, *Muhassalu'l-Kelâm*, p. 16.
- 67 Izmirli, *Mulahhas Ilm-i Tevhid*, (Istanbul, 1338), p. 6.
- 68 See Serafettin Golcuk, *Kelâm Tarihi*, (Konya: Esra Yayinlari, 1998), pp. 381-390.
- 69 Ismail Kara, *Turkiye'de Islamcilik Dusuncesi*, (Istanbul, 1997), Vol. II, pp. LXIV-LXV.
- 70 See Izmirli, "Mustasvife Sozleri mi, Tasavvufun Zaferleri mi?", *Hakkin Zaferleri*, (Istanbul 1341), pp. 6-7.
- 71 Izmirli, "Yeni Ilm-i Kelâm", *Sebilurresâd*, Vol. 21, Nr. 528-529, p. 59; *Muhassalu'l-Kelâm*, pp. 13-14
- 72 Ibid, p.13.
- 73 Ibid, p.16.
- 74 Ibid, pp. 15-16; Izmirli, "Yeni Ilm-i Kelâm Hakkında II", *Sebilurresâd*, Vol. 22, nu. 551-552, p. 40.
- 75 See Izmirli, *Yeni Ilm-i Kelâm*, Vol. II, pp. 59-78.
- 76 Izmirli, *Yeni Ilm-i Kelâm*, Vol. I, pp. 263-264.
- 77 Ibid, Vol. II, pp. 79-83.

78 See Musâ Kâzım, *Kulliyât: Dini İctimâl Makaleler*, ed. Ferhat Koca, (Ankara: Ankara Okulu Yayınları, 2002), pp. 351-355.

79 Elmalılı, Metâlib ve Mezâhib, "Dibâce", pp. 35-36; See also Mehmet Aydın, "Elmalılı'da 'Teceddüd' Fikri", *Elmalılı M. Hamdi Yazır Sempozyumu*, (Ankara, 1993), pp. 303-304.

80 Celâl Nuri, *Târih-i İstikbâl*, (Istanbul, 1333), Vol. I, p. 119-120.

81 See Filibeli, *Huzur-i Aklu Fende*, p. 15.

82 See Ibid, p. 151.

83 Topaloglu, *Kelâm İlmi Giriş*, p. 39.

84 Kara, *Türkiye'de İslamcılık Düşüncesi*, pp. LXV-LXVI.

**Chapter VII**  
**The Conceptions of Islamic Philosophy in Turkey**  
Ömer Mahir Alper

**Introduction**

The conceptions of Islamic philosophy in Turkey, as is the case with many serious intellectual issues, have been basically determined by the perspectives of the three trends of thought called Islamism, Turkism, and Westernism, the origins of which can be found in the 19th century Ottoman Empire. During that century Ottoman domains underwent dramatic transformation in association with the Westernization program of the Empire, and these three trends, which have ideological and political characteristics at the same time, developed in the beginning of the 20th century in reaction to the results of the program; they also offered new programs for modernization and development. Although the three of them present different ideas about the reasons for the "backwardness" of the Ottoman Empire in comparison with the West, they have been in agreement that modernization is necessary for salvation. However, they have been in disagreement about "self-perception" and "other-perception" as well as about the ways to achieve modernization. The trend of Islamism, which has had the project of the Islamization of society in all fields, has basically seen its source of value in Islam; the trend of Turkism, which has had the project of construction of a "Turkish" society or of creation of a Turkish nation, has mainly designated "Turkishness" as an ultimate point of reference; and the trend of Westernism, which has had the project of Westernization of society in all areas, has essentially found its source of value in the modern West. Thus, the general views and approaches of all these trends have highly influenced the philosophers and the historians of philosophy in Turkey; moreover the perspectives of the three trends have determined their conceptions of Islamic philosophy.

Starting from such a claim, in this article, I will present the conceptions of Islamic philosophy in Turkey—in parallel with the trends of thought mentioned above—under the three titles: (I) "The Islamist Conception of Islamic Philosophy", (II) "The Turkist Conception of Islamic Philosophy", and (III) "The Westernist Conception of Islamic Philosophy". I will do this by tracing the thoughts of three philosophers and historians of philosophy who represent the three trends or represent their typical perspectives and influence the course of philosophy in Turkey. Thus, in the first section, I will deal with the Islamist conception of Islamic philosophy within the context of Ismail Hakki İzmirli (1869-1946) who is a prominent Islamist or Islamic modernist. It should be noticed that he is the first scholar who studied the history of Islamic philosophy in the modern sense, as well as the founder of history of Islamic philosophy as a discipline in Turkey<sup>1</sup>. He is also the first figure appointed as chair of the history of Islamic philosophy at the University of Istanbul,<sup>2</sup> which is the earliest modern university of Turkey. In the second section, I will deal with the Turkist conception of Islamic philosophy within the context of Hilmi Ziya Ülken (1901-1974) who represents typically the Turkist perspective in his works on Islamic philosophy and makes the most valuable contribution to the studies of Islamic philosophy in Turkey after Ismail Hakki İzmirli<sup>3</sup>. In the third section, I will deal with the Westernist conception of Islamic philosophy within the context of Macit Gökberk (1908-1993) who is the important and highly influential Westernist<sup>4</sup> in Turkish philosophical and intellectual circles. Although Gökberk did no work on Islamic philosophy, as the important Turkish historian of Western philosophy who is the first writer of the "History of Western Philosophy" in the modern sense,<sup>5</sup> he has a certain approach to Islamic philosophy, and

it might be said that his Westernist approach is representative of the views of most Westernists. I will try to present these conceptions in detail and give some pertinent examples.

### **The Islamist Conception of Islamic Philosophy: Ismail Hakki Izmirli**

It is obvious that Ismail Hakki Izmirli's conception of Islamic philosophy was shaped by his idea of Islamism, which suggests the Islamisation of intellectual and philosophical life, as well as other domains in a way that agrees with certain necessities of modern times, and proposes the reconstruction of society relying on an Islamic value system in harmony with moderate modernization. He, as other Islamists of his time, was confronted with the problem of how to interpret the vast Islamic tradition of Quran, *Hadith*, and philosophy in a socio-political and scientific environment dominated by the West. For him, the pre-modern notions of Islamic philosophy and religion are inadequate to meet the challenge perpetuated by an aggressive Western worldview. The essential question posed by him is how Muslims can be authentic and modern at the same time. He sees the need for a total revitalization of Islamic thought in the face of encroaching Western culture.

In this context he bases his approach to Islamic philosophy on three points centered on Islam. The first point is that Islamic philosophy should be understood truly and criticized freely, correcting its errors and mistakes in light of the teachings of the Quran and the acceptable evidences given by the modern science and philosophy<sup>6</sup>. It should be mentioned that the term Islamic philosophy used by him refers to the thoughts put forward by Muslims depending on main Islamic principles and their opinions about God and the afterworld, as well as reality and goodness since the Prophet Muhammad<sup>7</sup>. It seems that he uses this definition to oppose some modern orientalists who claimed that the Quran is anti-rationalist, and Islamic philosophy is merely a shadow of Greek philosophy. As a result of his definition of Islamic philosophy in such a way, contrary to some orientalists, he does not restrict the concept of Islamic philosophy to the thoughts produced by the *falâsifa* who followed the way of ancient Greeks, particularly Aristotle, in the Islamic World such as al-Fârâbi, Avicenna, and Averroes. On the contrary he thinks that Islamic philosophy is a general term including all the thoughts of *salafiyyûn*, *mutakallimûn*, *mutasavvifûn*, and *bâtiniyyûn* about God and the afterworld as well as reality and goodness<sup>8</sup>.

According to Izmirli, although there is agreement among the Islamic philosophers on the basic ideas such as the necessity of the existence of God and the afterworld<sup>9</sup>, there is considerable disagreement on details of these matters<sup>10</sup> and they have some wrong opinions and interpretations in the details. Thus, from the Islamic point of view, he criticizes them. Despite the fact that he makes the most severe judgments about the opinions of some *bâtiniyyûn* (esoterics) ranging from heterodox to unreligious according to him<sup>11</sup>, he also criticizes *mutakallimûn*, *mutasavvifûn*, and *falâsifa*. For example, while he attacks *mutasavvifûn* (mystics) generally for their attaching extreme importance to purification of the soul by practice, neglecting rational thinking and life in the world, he criticizes *mutakallimûn* (theologians) for neglecting practice<sup>12</sup>. Like al-Ghazâlî<sup>13</sup> he also attacks *falâsifa* (philosophers) for failing to prove by demonstrative argument certain metaphysical ideas claimed by them while using demonstrative argument in physics and mathematics. He also criticizes *falâsifa* for failing to do their philosophical duty in a true way by analyzing the truth given by Revelation and proving and legitimating it rationally, and even by harmonizing Revelation with reason and explaining it in a way which agrees with living philosophy<sup>14</sup>. Izmirli claims that *mutakallimûn* are more successful in using demonstrative

argument in metaphysics and in achieving more correct conclusions in metaphysical and epistemological domains than *falâsifa*<sup>15</sup> .

In his several works, although Izmirli seems to examine the philosophical trends in Islamic civilization from the perspective of philosophy, he in fact discusses the value of the thoughts produced by these trends from the religious point of view. Thus, he argues that the philosophy put forward by *falâsifa* is not a real and true "Islamic" philosophy. On the contrary Islamic philosophy is a synthesis of Greek thought and Islamic theology in Islamic terms. In his view, the impact of Islam on this philosophy is clear and certain. *Falâsifa* have never completely neglected Islam. Moreover, they have tried to Islamize Greek philosophy in numerous matters. Therefore, no absolute boundaries can be drawn between philosophers and theologians. But it is not possible to say that it is an "Islamic" philosophy in the real sense of the word because of the predominance of Greek culture, especially Aristotle's philosophy in the thought of *falâsifa*. So, according to Izmirli the real/true Islamic philosophy could only be discovered in several schools of Islamic theology (the *kalâm*) rather than Islamic philosophy (the *falsafah*)<sup>16</sup> .

The second point on which Izmirli bases his approach to Islamic philosophy is that Islamic philosophy with all trends should demonstrate that it is an original and very important advance in thought and, thus, it should be shown that Islam is a perfect religion leading its followers to create a high culture including philosophy. In this connection he attempts, in his several books, to demonstrate the originality of Islamic philosophy and the very great significance of it. Moreover, he criticizes some orientalist's attitude toward Islamic philosophy which considers it philosophically insignificant in itself but merely an intermediary between Greek philosophy and later Latin scholasticism. This attitude is best exemplified by the statements of one of the earliest authors of a general introduction to Islamic philosophy, T.J. De Boer's *The History of Philosophy in Islam*, a book which first appeared in German in 1901<sup>17</sup> . According to De Boer, "Muslim philosophy has always continued to be an Eclecticism which depended on the stock of works translated from the Greek. The course of its history has been a process of assimilation rather than of generation. It has not distinguished itself, either by propounding new problems or by any peculiarity in its endeavors to solve the old ones. It has therefore no important advances in thought to register"<sup>18</sup> . The only value which De Boer can find to credit Islamic philosophy with is in the social history of ideas: "Now the history of philosophy in Islam is valuable just because it sets forth the first attempt to appropriate the results of Greek thinking with greater comprehensiveness and freedom than did the early Christian dogmatics. Acquaintance with the conditions which made such an attempt possible will permit us to reach conclusions by way of analogical reasoning...as to the reception of Graeco-Arabic science in the Christian Middle Ages, and will perhaps teach us a little about the conditions under which philosophy arises in general"<sup>19</sup> .

As Dimitri Gutas pointed out<sup>20</sup> , this attitude is clearly based on the view –it might be called racist today- that the Semites –in this case the Arabs— are incapable of critical rational thought, in so far as they have a genius for religious and especially mystical thought. Contrary to the attitude of De Boer, Izmirli rightly argues that in the first century of Islam before the translation movement of the works of Greek philosophy, Muslims had a philosophical mind and attitude towards some philosophical problems such as freewill, human destiny, knowledge of God and His attributes. From the early years of Islam a number of important conceptual difficulties and solutions arose which clearly represent philosophical problems and answers, although they were not always recognized as such. According to him they developed a philosophical movement by discussing these issues on a philosophical level and by putting forward certain original ideas about the abstract concepts<sup>21</sup> .

He also rightly maintains that this movement, which emerged at the end of the first century of Islam, was deeply rooted in the Quran and the Sunna. Muslims developed an Islamic philosophical movement by explaining and interpreting the data given by the Islamic sources in a rationalistic way, as well as by reasoning on abstract issues. Islamic principles and their implementation led to a variety of controversies over their interpretation right from the start of Islam. Many of the questions and answers that arose were philosophical without anyone calling them *falsafa*<sup>22</sup>. According to him the first philosophers of the century were some *mutakallimûn* such as Ma'bad al-Juhani and Ca'd b. Dirham, for they were the first to discuss the certain philosophical problems. Although their discussions seem to be theological in appearance, it could be said that many of them are highly philosophical in nature. Therefore, he says that the Mu'tazila constructed the philosophical life and environment first in the Islamic world, and this was the basis for Islamic philosophy developed in the later centuries<sup>23</sup>.

Izmirlî does not reject the connection between Islamic philosophy and Greek culture and its impact on the emergence of some philosophical schools such as Peripatetics (*Mashshâiyûn*) and Illuminationists (*Ishrâqiyûn*) in the Islamic civilization<sup>24</sup>. However, he opposes the opinion that Islamic philosophy is not original and "real philosophy". He also strongly disapproves of considering it simply Graeco-Alexandrian philosophy in Arabic dress, a philosophy whose sole role was to transmit certain important elements of the heritage of antiquity to the medieval West. For not only *mutakallimûn* and *mutasavvifûn* but also *falâsifa*, who have been mostly influenced by Greek thought, are original and real philosophers, although it is impossible to say that they (*falâsifa*) are real "Islamic" philosophers. It is a fact, he says, that in the beginning *falâsifa* studied Greek philosophy by meditating on its works. They attempted to interpret and explain them at different levels. But then they added their opinions to it and wrote very important and original works. They even opposed many ideas of Aristotle. It is clear that the arrival of Greek philosophy provided a great impetus for the growth of Islamic philosophy. However, it was not that the Muslim thinkers slavishly followed the ideas of the Greeks<sup>25</sup>. For them, even the translation movement in itself was an original achievement and conscious activity. Since the Muslims accepted neither the humanistic values nor the religion of the Greeks, their borrowings came exclusively through translation and, more than that, they were severely limited to a technical and scientific Hellenism. They read Plato and Aristotle, Euclid, Galen and Ptolemy, but never Homer<sup>26</sup>. In addition to it, they preferred Aristotle to Plato, because they considered the former as more "scientific" than the latter<sup>27</sup>.

Finally, the third point on which Izmirlî bases his approach to Islamic philosophy is that Islamic philosophy should be studied and examined because of its usefulness for the reconstruction of a modern Islamic philosophy. According to Izmirlî the Muslims today must create a new philosophy in a way that agrees with principles of Islam and modern science and philosophy. In doing so, however, modern Muslims should be believers themselves. In this case, the importance of classical Islamic philosophy appears in its being the "model" for the modern Muslims to believe, and its being the source of motivation to reconstruct the new philosophy, rather than in the use of classical ideas and conclusions emerging from the context and conditions of their own previous time. In his opinion, study of Islamic philosophy will lead the modern Muslims to see the huge achievement in the past and consider that such an achievement is very possible today. Thus, they will believe also in themselves and attempt to reconstruct the Islamic philosophy they need in the modern world<sup>28</sup>.

It should be noticed that the reason why Izmirlî needs the reconstruction of a modern Islamic philosophy is not that he has the notion which orientalist biases generated that classical Islamic

philosophy ends with Averroes. This false notion has been the widespread opinion until relatively recently<sup>29</sup>. As Gutas says,<sup>30</sup> it is a natural result if one views Islamic philosophy merely as an intermediary between late Greek and high medieval scholasticism, and if one views it from a Eurocentric and racist perspective<sup>31</sup> in which Averroism, was indeed, the last major theory from the Islamic world to have influenced medieval Western thought. Long before today, the French orientalist Henry Corbin demonstrated the falsity of this view in his by now classic *Histoire de la philosophie islamique* (1964), a book which was also translated into English (1993)<sup>32</sup>. Contrary to the Eurocentric perspective of some orientalists, Izmirli believes that classical Islamic philosophy has continued up to today. It is true that every trend in the Islamic philosophy has undergone certain transformations and revolutions (*inqilâbât*)<sup>33</sup>. *Falsafah* became more or less wed to either *kalâm* or *tasawwuf* in later centuries in much of Sunnism, at least in the Arab world. In any case Islamic philosophy has remained an intellectual activity and a living intellectual tradition in the Islamic world up to the present day. So it is certain that it did not end after Averroes. On the contrary it has continued up to today in numerous forms. Consequently, the necessity of the reconstruction of modern Islamic philosophy is related to the changes and transformations in the modern world. The modern condition is different from what happened before; thus, the philosophy of the modern times must be different in order to be able to meet modern demands<sup>34</sup>.

### **The Turkist Conception of Islamic Philosophy: Hilmi Ziya Ulken**

Hilmi Ziya Ulken, who represents the Turkist conception of Islamic philosophy in Turkey, is not only a philosopher but also a historian of Islamic philosophy. However, his main purpose for studying Islamic philosophy is to prepare the way for the studies of Turkish thought. In other words, his interest in Islamic philosophy is not for the Islamic philosophy in itself but in the context of the history of Turkish thought: he thinks that it is impossible to separate the Turkish thought from the Islamic philosophy that is an integral part of it, and there is obvious connection between them in a period of Turkish history. Thus, according to him, study of Islamic philosophy will serve to show the importance of Turkish thought, the main concern of his works. Consequently, his first comprehensive work on the history of Islamic philosophy appeared as *Türk Tefekkürü Tarihi* (*History of Turkish Thought*), a book that is the earliest general introduction to Turkish thought, first published in 1933-1934 in two volumes and reprinted in 2004 as an important reference book on the subject. In this work, he divides Turkish thought into three main periods: (1) Pagan Turkish Thought, (2) Islamic Turkish Thought, and (3) Modern Turkish Thought. In the introduction of the chapter concerning Islamic Turkish Thought, he considers the purpose of the chapter as discovering the characteristics of Turkish thought in Turkish history and examining the ability and course of contemporary Turkish thought<sup>35</sup>. Furthermore, he sets forth its purpose as an introduction to the presentation of the peculiarity of Turkish thought in Islamic civilization and the examination of the works produced by Turks after their acceptance of Islam<sup>36</sup>. The same aim is seen in his other works on the subject. For example in the preface of his *İslam Düşüncesi* (*Islamic Thought*), a comprehensive book which first appeared in 1946 and was reprinted in 1995, he states: "This work should be considered as an introduction to the studies of the history of Turkish thought. In fact it is clear that to study the history of Turkish-Islamic thought is possible only by studying the history of thought in Islamic civilization in a general and systematic way"<sup>37</sup>.

Hilmi Ziya Ulken's consideration of Islamic philosophy generally as a "door" to the Turkish thought and his approach to Islamic philosophy from the point of view of the Turkist intellectual

trend lead him to (mis)conceive Islamic philosophy as mainly Turkish philosophy and to (mis)perceive some Islamic philosophers who are in fact originally Arabs, such as Ibn 'Arabi, as Turkish philosophers due to the fact that they lived most of their lives in Anatolia and wrote most of their works there<sup>38</sup> .

Although he accuses some orientalist such as Gustave le Bon, Carra de Vaux, E. Gilson, and Arab writers such as Jamil Saliba of calling Islamic philosophy Arabic philosophy<sup>39</sup> , he does not hesitate to call the peripatetic (*mashshâi*) school in Islam the "first Turkish philosophical school," because he thinks that the founders of this school are two Turkish philosophers, al-Fârâbi and Avicenna, and all of the important figures in this school are their followers<sup>40</sup> . It seems that, according to him, the Turkish philosophical school is not only the peripatetic (*mashshâi*) school in Islam but also the illuminationist (*ishrâqi*) school, because he thinks that the founder of the later, Suhrawardi, is most probably a Turkish philosopher<sup>41</sup> . Moreover, in his opinion the most influential philosopher, Avicenna, who is a Turkish philosopher as mentioned above, is essentially the founder of the illuminationist school<sup>42</sup> .

Like Izmirli, he does not restrict the concept of Islamic philosophy to the thoughts produced by the *falâsifa*. On the contrary he thinks that Islamic philosophy is a general term including all the theoretical aspects of *kalâm* (Islamic theology), *tasawwuf* (mysticism), *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), and *siyâsa* (politics)<sup>43</sup> . According to him, to present Islamic philosophy in a real sense is only possible by examining all these disciplines as a whole<sup>44</sup> . However, the Islamic philosophy that appeared in Islamic civilization should not be examined as a whole separated from Greek culture and modern Western thought. On the contrary it should be studied in connection with them. Furthermore, its value can be understood only by studying it in this connection. Therefore, he criticizes some Western writers because of their concentration on its being influenced by Greek philosophy and by neglecting its impact on Western thought. Since Islamic philosophy is a part of the Mediterranean tradition, it is rather strange to suggest that this philosophy is alien to the Western philosophy, because it has been so strongly influenced by Greek thought, and in turn has had much influence on the development of philosophy in Christian Europe<sup>45</sup> .

Ulken's consideration of Islamic philosophy as a part of Mediterranean tradition leads him, in his works, to focus on its Greek sources and its influences on the West, neglecting the "inner" sources of Islamic philosophy and its characteristics and creativeness as an original philosophy like other philosophies. Consequently the primary feature of his historiography of Islamic philosophy in this context is its consideration of this philosophy mainly as an intermediary between Greek philosophy and later Latin scholasticism<sup>46</sup> . However, Ulken does not simply accept this orientalist approach rejected today by many scholars as mentioned above, because he thinks that Islamic philosophy as a philosophy is not merely a continuation of Greek philosophy: Islamic philosophy has produced some original works, together with the translation and interpretation of Greek works. Moreover, there are some important philosophers among the *mutakallimûn*, *mutasavvifûn*, and *fuqaha* (jurists) who had not been known by the Latin world. In addition, there are some philosophers among the *falâsifa* whose works had not been translated into Latin. Therefore, it is not correct to consider all of Islamic philosophy "merely" and "simply" as an intermediary between Greek philosophy and Western philosophy<sup>47</sup> .

Although he does not approve of Islamic philosophy's being "simply" an intermediary, the net result of all his discussion is that according to him the main characteristic of Islamic philosophy is its being the vehicle for the transmission of Greek philosophy into Europe. In support of this opinion he refers to Ernest Renan's *Averroés et l'Averroésisme* and De Boer's *Geschichte der*

*Philosophie im Islam*<sup>48</sup>, both writers who represent the typical orientalist assumption and Eurocentric view, as discussed above.

Ulken shares the orientalist attitude not only in this point but also in seeing the main structure of Islamic philosophy as mystical. Following in the footsteps of A. F. Mehren and H. Corbin, he views especially Avicenna's philosophy as completely mystical, non-rational, and even pantheist. Moreover, he thinks that Avicenna is the real founder of illuminationism (*ishrâqiya*), as mentioned before<sup>49</sup>. The predisposition to view Islamic philosophy as mystical is dramatically illustrated by the publications on Avicenna by A. F. Mehren, an orientalist who worked quite consistently on Avicenna at the end of the nineteenth century. Mehren's illustration was highly conditioned by "orientalism," a term that refers to a certain nineteenth century picture of the natives of the "Orient" held by Westerners: mystical, sensual, otherworldly, non-rational and intensely interested in religion, living in despotic societies, and immutable in ways of life and systems of thought<sup>50</sup>. Following the predisposition of Mehren who saw Avicenna's "Eastern" or "Oriental" philosophy as mystical<sup>51</sup>, Corbin went one step further and found in Avicenna the precursor and real founder of Suhrawardi's illuminationism<sup>52</sup>, despite the fact that Suhrawardi himself accused Avicenna of being a thorough-going Peripatetic with no understanding of this doctrine<sup>53</sup>.

Ulken mistakenly interprets Islamic philosophy as mainly mystical. He thus speaks of Islamic philosophy as a philosophy whose development, and whose modalities are essentially linked to philosophical mysticism. According to him, however, the most original side of Islamic philosophy lies in its mystical aspect; and Islamic civilization has reached the highest point or level through it<sup>54</sup>. Izmirli clearly rejects Ulken's idea or claim that Islamic philosophy, particularly the philosophy of Avicenna, is mystical<sup>55</sup>, and he does not give special importance to mysticism. It seems that, contrary to Izmirli, Ulken views Islamic philosophy as mystical and emphasizes the originality of the mystical aspect of Islamic philosophy not only because of his being influenced by the orientalist approach but also because of his Turkish nationalistic considerations.

According to Ulken, Islamic mysticism has produced his most important works in Anatolia and has caused Turkish thought to be original by adding some original features to it. Moreover, Turks have found a great ground in it to renew the "powerful wisdom" that they had before Islam<sup>56</sup>. In his opinion Turkishness has been identified with mysticism, an aspect of Islamic philosophy that has been the most influential on Anatolian Turkish society and its identity. Since Ibn 'Arabi's mystical philosophy, particularly his pantheism, shaped essentially by the Turkish philosophers, al-Fârâbi and especially Avicenna, has continued to be influential generally in the Islamic world but particularly in Turkish intellectual and philosophical life<sup>57</sup>.

Regarding the issue, another notion held by Ulken is that Islamic philosophy mainly ends with Averroes. As I mentioned in the first section, this is the natural result if one views Islamic philosophy merely as an intermediary between Greek and medieval scholasticism, and if one views it from a Eurocentric perspective in which Averroism was indeed the last major theory from the Islamic world to have influenced medieval Western thought.

For him Islamic philosophy, on which Turks and Persians had been more influential than Arabs, was replaced by the *kalâm* and *tasawwuf* movement after Averroes. Depending on this notion, Ulken ends Islamic philosophy with Averroes in his book, *Islam Düsüncesi (Islamic Thought)*. However, Ulken, in his last work, *Islam Felsefesi (Islamic Philosophy)*, referring to Henry Corbin's works, presents a different approach from the former. In *Islam Felsefesi* Ulken concentrates on Mullâ Sadra "as the last important philosopher", and other figures of the illuminationist school due to his being influenced by Corbin. Despite the fact that Ulken sees Mullâ Sadra as the last eminent philosopher and thinks that in the Persian-speaking world, Islamic

philosophy has continued to follow a largely illuminationist curriculum right up to today, he maintains that Islamic philosophy, at least, has weakened after the death of Averroes and generally gone out of fashion in the Islamic world. Moreover, he seems to consider the fact of Mullâ Sadra and other figures of the illuminationist school as merely exceptions<sup>58</sup> .

It is not possible to accept this notion and attitude not only because of the fact that the illuminationist school has continued up to today, as Corbin has demonstrated, but also for the reason that, for example, although the preeminence of Avicenna is now universally acknowledged, we know next to nothing about his school and successors. There are no studies on any aspect of the subject, from the transmission of the text of Avicenna's works among his students, to the interpretation by them of his philosophy. In addition, we know very little, maybe nothing, about the long tradition of Islamic philosophy in the Arab lands and Ottoman Empire after Avicenna and Averroes. There are many extremely influential works and very many commentaries and supercommentaries in these areas and periods. But we know very little about these works; neither their precise contents, nor an analysis of them, nor their relation's to the earlier Islamic philosophy. All these remain mysterious.

### **The Westernist Conception of Islamic Philosophy: Macit Gökberk**

Macit Gökberk is a representative historian of philosophy of the Westernist trend and a leading figure in the course of the Western type of philosophical movement in Turkey. He considers the West as a homogeneous community and views modernity as the most perfect form of life reached by humanity. As a Westernist thinker, his main goal is to transmit the point of view of the Enlightenment, which is the essence of modernity, into Turkey and to integrate Turkish society into the West, seen by him as a model value system in all fields. Furthermore, he is a philosopher who bases his thought on the Western type of rationalism that opposes the tradition, and attempts to create a philosophical culture that is not connected with the religious point of view, seeing all tradition and religion as a type of fence or gate that prevents people from moving in the direction of "enlightened reason"<sup>59</sup> .

He interprets the process of transformation of modern Turkey as a transition from one culture to another one (from Islamic cultural environment to Western cultural environment), from one age to another one (from the Middle Ages to the Enlightenment) as a whole and suggests such be done. According to him, the future of Turkey is not in continuity but in radical discontinuity, since the transmission of Turkey from Islamic cultural environment to the Western cultural environment means transition from the darkness of the Middle Ages to the light of the modern age<sup>60</sup> . This kind of transition is necessary and, thus, the values of the Islamic cultural environment must be left behind: the Islamic worldview which has shaped the Turkish identity for centuries has been bankrupted<sup>61</sup> .

Moving from such a context, as many other Westernists, Gökberk does not consider Islamic philosophy as a real philosophy that is significant in itself; he denies the existence of real philosophy in Islamic civilization, because it has all the characteristics of the Middle Ages and it contains traditional and religious values. Moreover Islamic philosophy is subordinate to the religion and its main goal is to serve Islam. Thus, it has nothing to give any value to modern human beings. According to Gökberk, this characteristic of Islamic philosophy has prevented it from being based on reason and going anywhere to which reason and real philosophy (which depends on reason) are able to go. Thus, as all philosophies of the Middle Ages, Islamic philosophy has only concentrated on interpretation of Greek philosophy. Consequently, it is not possible to

consider Islamic philosophers, such as al-Fârâbi, Avicenna, and Averroes, as free philosophers in the real sense of the term,<sup>62</sup> since "the eminent Islamic philosophers are, in fact, the transmitters and interpreters of Greek philosophers; al-Fârâbi follows Plato and Aristotle, while Avicenna and Averroes follow Aristotle"<sup>63</sup> .

Gökberk sees the value of Islamic philosophy in its influence on the Middle Age's Christian philosophy and in its providing new sources of knowledge for Western philosophy. According to him, Islamic philosophy has never succeeded in reaching a Renaissance as happened in the West. In addition, Islamic philosophy has never gone beyond the Aristotelianism that reached the highest level with Averroes and beyond the commentaries on Aristotle's works and the analysis of his texts, and never risen beyond the thinking depending on his concepts. Consequently, its value is not in itself but in its impact on the Middle Age's West through transmission of the sources of Greek philosophy to the Christian world<sup>64</sup> . Therefore, for this typical Westernist historian of philosophy, Islamic philosophy, as a philosophy, is not significant in itself. Thus, he maintains that philosophy, in the real sense, has appeared in this nation only after the transmission of the Western philosophy to Turkey, a country in which the mind of the Middle Ages and scholasticism have dominated until the establishment of the Republic of Turkey<sup>65</sup> . It means that, in Gökberk's view, the philosophical tradition in Turkey is very new, and he is one of the first generation of real Turkish philosophers<sup>66</sup> .

The main reason behind the approach held by Gökberk, as well as numerous Westernist historians of philosophy in Turkey, is that they view "real philosophy" as the "modern Western philosophy". Since this Westernist attitude is based on the notion that Islamic philosophy is an unoriginal and unimportant Islamic form of the Greek philosophy, it is not worth studying.

No doubt this approach is the result of seeing Islam and Islamic philosophy emerge in Islamic civilization as an "other". As contemporary Turkish philosopher Dogan Ozlem states<sup>67</sup> , the Westernists in Turkey follow the attitude of Western historians of philosophy and culture who are so prejudiced against Islamic philosophy. Moreover, they, indeed, know almost nothing about Islamic philosophy, and they do not have any information about recent studies of Islamic philosophy done by the Western and Muslim scholars. And it could even be said that the Turkish Westernists, who are so alienated from their own culture and society, do not need to think about Islamic philosophy as philosophy. As a result of this view and attitude, they could not be able to value it.

It is certain that the Westernists' understanding of Islamic philosophy in Turkey is mainly conditioned by the typical orientalist approach of the 19th century that reduced the movement of Islamic philosophy to only transmission and interpretation of Greek philosophy. Thus, they ignore not only some important and creative philosophers such as Shamsaddin al-Fanâri, 'Ali Qushji, Khoja-zâde, Ibn Kamâl, and Qinalizâde 'Ali in the Ottoman tradition of philosophy but also they pay no attention to the most distinguished Islamic philosophers such as al-Fârâbi, Avicenna, and Averroes, seeing the philosophy of these Islamic philosophers as subordinate to the Islamic religion, despite the fact that these philosophers, especially al-Fârâbi, Avicenna, and Averroes, give primacy to philosophy and reason over religion and revelation.

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## **Notes**

1 Hilmi Ziya Ulken, *Türkiye’de Çağdas Düşünce Tarihi* (Istanbul: Ahmet Sait, 1966), vol. II, p. 454.

2 İsmail Hakki İzmirli, *İslâm Felsefesi Tarihi* (Istanbul: Dârülfünûn Matbaası, 1340), p. 595; also see Arslan Kaynardag, "Onsöz", in Hilmi Ziya Ulken, *Eski Yunan’dan Çağdas Düşünceye Doğru İslâm Felsefesi, Kaynakları ve Etkileri* (Istanbul: Ulken, 1998), p. vii.

3 Kaynardag, "Onsöz", pp. vii-viii.

4 Dogan Ozlem, "Macit Gökberk ve Türkiye’de Felsefe", *Felsefelogos*, 5 (1998), pp. 59, 61.

5 Betül Cotuksöken, "Cumhuriyet Döneminde Felsefe ve Felsefeye Emek Verenler", *Felsefelogos*, 5 (1998), pp. 47-48; Arslan Kaynardag, *Türkiye’de Cumhuriyet Döneminde Felsefe* (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı, 2002), p. 28.

6 See İzmirli, *İslâm Felsefesi Tarihi*, pp. 15, 17, 19.

7 İsmail Hakki İzmirli, *Arap Felsefesi* (Istanbul: Hukûk Matbaası, 1329-1331), pp. 2-3; *İslâm Felsefesi Tarihi*, pp. 11-12.

8 İsmail Hakki İzmirli, *İslâm’da Felsefe Akımları*, ed. N. Ahmet Ozalp (Istanbul: Kitabevi, 1997), pp. 22-32. It seems that İzmirli depends on al-Ghazâlî in his seeing Islamic philosophy as a general term including all of the thoughts of *salafîyyûn*, *mutakallimûn*, *mutasavvifûn*, *falâsîfa*, and *bâtiniyyûn* about God and the afterworld as well as reality and the good. Since, al-Ghazâlî states in his work *Munqidh min al-dalâl* (*Deliverance from Error*): "I came to regard various seekers (after truth) as comprising four groups: (1) The Theologians (*mutakallimûn*), who claim that they are the exponents of thought and intellectual speculations; (2) the *Bâtiniyah*, who consider that they, as the party of ‘authoritative instruction’ (*ta’lim*), alone derive truth from an infallible *imam*; (3) the Philosophers, who regard themselves as the exponents of logic and demonstration; (4) the Sufis or Mystics, who claim that they alone enter into the ‘presence’ (of God) and possess vision and intuitive understanding". al-Ghazâlî, *Munqidh*, in M. Watt, *The Faith and Practice of al-Ghazali* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1953), pp. 26-27.

9 İzmirli, *İslâm Felsefesi Tarihi*, pp. 10-11.

10 Similarly Max Horten states: "All these groups [philosophers, theologians, and mystics] concur in substance, in the common conviction of faith; they differ only in the incidentals of form". Max Horten, "The System of Islamic Philosophy in Detail", translated by V. June Hager, *Islamic Studies*, 12/3 (1973), p. 195.

11 İzmirli, *İslâm’da Felsefe Akımları*, pp. 31-32; *İslâm Felsefesi Tarihi*, p. 481; *Yeni İlm-i Kelâm*, ed. Sabri Hizmetli (Ankara: Umran, 1981), p. 106.

12 İzmirli, *İslâm’da Felsefe Akımları*, pp. 28-29.

13 al-Ghazâlî, *Munqidh*, pp. 32-38.

14 İzmirli, *İslâm’da Felsefe Akımları*, pp. 25-26, 65; *İslâm Felsefesi Tarihi*, p. 277.

15 İzmirli, *Yeni İlm-i Kelâm*, p. 94.

16 İzmirli, *İslâm’da Felsefe Akımları*, pp. 26, 63-64; see also *Yeni İlm-i Kelâm*, p. 89. It seems that M. Semseddin Günaltay (1883-1961), who was one of the preeminent professors of history of philosophy at the University of Istanbul, was influenced by İzmirli’s idea concerning the issue of "real Islamic philosophy". He similarly states: "The real/true ‘Islamic’ philosophy could be discovered in several schools of Islamic theology", rejecting the idea that the philosophy brought forward by *falâsîfa* is the true ‘Islamic’ philosophy in the real sense of the term. See M. Semseddin Günaltay, *Antik Felsefenin İslâm Dünyasına Girişi*, ed. İrfan Bayın (Istanbul: Kaknüs, 2001), p. 21. Contrary to this notion, Seyyed Hossein Nasr argues that Islamic philosophy is really ‘Islamic’, and *falsafah* and Quran and *Hadith* are closely related and its inspiration and origins is

to be found in these sources. See, for example, his article on "The Qur'ân and *Hadith* as Source and Inspiration of Islamic Philosophy" in Seyyed Hossein Nasr-Oliver Leaman (ed.) *History of Islamic Philosophy*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), vol. I, pp. 27-39. In the "Introduction" of the same volume of the *History of Islamic Philosophy*, he opposes the approach seeing Islamic philosophy as "foreign" while considering, for example, *kalâm* as Islamic. Regarding the issue he states: "In the case of Islam, however, most Western scholars of the subject have chosen to identify other schools of Islamic thought such as *kalâm* as Islamic and Islamic philosophy as "foreign", appealing to those very voices within the Islamic world which, like the Talmudic scholars in Judaism, have opposed Islamic philosophy... Certainly, Islamic philosophy has had its opponents in Islamic circles but it has also had its defenders in not only the Shi'ite world but also in certain areas and schools of the Sunni world" (p. 17).

17 *Geschichte der Philosophie im Islam* (Stuttgart: F. Frommans Verlag, 1901). The book appeared soon afterwards in an English translation (London: Luzac and Co., 1903), a translation which was reprinted a number of times; it remained, until the publication of Henry Corbin's history in 1964, the single most accessible account of Islamic philosophy.

18 T.J De Boer, *The History of Philosophy in Islam*, translated by E.R. Jones (New York: Dover, 1967), p. 29.

19 *Ibid.*, p. 29.

20 Dimitri Gutas, "The Study of Arabic Philosophy in the Twentieth Century", *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 29/1, (2002), p. 11.

21 Izmirlî, *Islâm'da Felsefe Akımları*, pp. 38, 50, 64; *Arap Felsefesi*, p. 5; *Islâm Felsefesi Tarihi*, p. 588.

22 Izmirlî, *Islâm'da Felsefe Akımları*, p. 38. For further account of this idea see M. Abdel Haleem, "Early *Kalâm*" in Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Oliver Leaman (ed.) *History of Islamic Philosophy*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), vol. I, pp. 71-88.

23 Izmirlî, *Islâm'da Felsefe Akımları*, pp. 38, 50. For similar explanation and detailed argument for this approach see Alparslan Acikgenc, "The Framework for a History of Islamic Philosophy", *Al-Shajara*, 1/1-2 (1996), pp. 1-19.

24 *Ibid.*, pp. 52, 64.

25 Ismail Hakki Izmirlî, *Hikmet-i Tesri'* (Istanbul: Sirât-i Müstakim, 1328), pp. 44-45; *Arap Felsefesi*, p. 5; *Islâm'da Felsefe Akımları*, pp. 27-28.

26 Izmirlî, *Arap Felsefesi*, p. 4. See also *Islâm'da Felsefe Akımları*, p. 56; *Hikmet-i Tesri'*, p. 43.

27 Izmirlî, *Islâm'da Felsefe Akımları*, pp. 58-64; see also *Hikmet-i Tesri'*, p. 44.

28 Izmirlî, *Islâm Felsefesi Tarihi*, pp. 24-25.

29 In many ways the modern image of Averroes inside and outside the Islamic world is still determined by Ernest Renan (1823-1892). This was essentially the result of his study *Averroës et l'averroïsme-Essai historique*, which first appeared in 1852. It might be said that Renan is the first scholar to introduce this notion into the study of Islamic philosophy. Renan based his notion mainly on a 'racist' and certain positivist attitude. According to him when Averroes died in 1198 Islamic philosophy lost in him its last representative, and the triumph of the Quran over free thought was assured for at least six hundred years. For further account of Renan's notion, and critique of it, see Stefan Wild, "Between Ernest Renan and Ernst Bloch: Averroes Remembered, Discovered, and Invented. The European Reception Since the Nineteenth Century" in Mourad Wahba-Mona Abousenna (ed.), *Averroës and the Enlightenment* (New York: Prometheus Books,

1996), pp. 157-160; "Islamic Enlightenment and the Paradox of Averroes", *Die Welt des Islams*, 36/3 (1996), pp. 382-386.

30 Gutas, "The Study of Arabic philosophy", p. 15.

31 Renan is the typical example for this racial perspective. He was the first person who openly stated the view that the Semitic race is inferior to the Aryan race. This judgment of Renan had an effect on some of his contemporaries, and some of his disciples and students. The advance of these notions of the 'Semitic spirit' in contrast to the 'Aryan spirit' by Leon Gauthier during the early part of the twentieth century was nothing other than the continuation of the argument made by Renan. In Gauthier's view, the Semitic mind is only capable of comprehending details and particulars which are disconnected from each other or are combined, and is incapable of conceiving any coherent order or relationship between details. It follows naturally that since the Arabs are inherently able to understand only particulars and isolated facts, they would be unable to form any theories, propositions, laws or hypotheses. It would be futile therefore to look for any philosophical or scientific investigation on their part. This is especially true now when Islam has narrowed their intellectual horizons and closed the doors to any speculative discussions, so much so that the Muslim student denigrates and ridicules science and philosophy. Those who stated such views held that Islamic philosophy is simply an imitation of Aristotelian philosophy, and Islamic philosophical texts are nothing other than repetitions of Greek ideas in Arabic. For further account of this racist approach of Renan and Gauthier, and critique of them, see Ibrahim Bayyumi Madkour, "The Study of Islamic Philosophy" translated by Shahyar Sa'adat, *Al-Tawhid*, 1/1 (1404 AH), pp. 83-96.

32 Corbin's book is a very important effort to strike out on an entirely novel approach to Islamic philosophy. Refusing the prevailing concept of Islamic philosophy which limited it to the writings of Muslim thinkers known to the medieval West through Latin translation, Corbin sought to show that a powerful tradition of philosophical meditation lived on in the Islamic world after the death of Averroes, finding its greatest flowering in the intellectually fertile soil on Iran. The nature of that philosophical tradition is different from the thought of the Peripatetics of the earlier centuries, but it is both lively and important and continues to be a powerful influence among the philosopher-mystics of Iran in our own day. For a detailed analysis of his approach to Islam and Islamic philosophy, see Charles J. Adams, "The Hermeneutics of Henry Corbin" in Richard C. Martin (ed.), *Approaches to Islam in Religious Studies* (Tucson: The University of Arizona, 1985), pp. 129-150.

33 Izmirli, *İslâm Felsefesi Tarihi*, p. 581.

34 Izmirli, *İslâm'da Felsefe Akımları*, p. 49.

35 Hilmi Ziya Ulken, *Türk Tefekkürü Tarihi* (Istanbul: Yapi Kredi, 2004), p. 10.

36 *Ibid.*, pp. 14, 81.

37 Hilmi Ziya Ulken, *İslâm Düşüncesi* (Istanbul: Ulken, 1995), p. 7.

38 Ulken, *Türk Tefekkürü Tarihi*, pp. 109-110; *İslâm Düşüncesi*, p. 12.

39 Ulken, *İslâm Düşüncesi*, p. 12; *İslâm Felsefesi*, pp. 101-102; *Türk Tefekkürü Tarihi*, p. 110.

40 Ulken, *Türk Tefekkürü Tarihi*, p. 103; *Uyanis Devirlerinde Tercümenin Rolü* (Istanbul: Ulken, 1997), pp. 167-168. According to Ulken all of the peripatetic philosophers (*mashshâiyûn*) including Averroes could be called "followers of al-Fârâbi". Ulken, *İslâm Felsefesi*, p. 72. But in fact Averroes wrote a series of works intended to show how al-Fârâbi and Avicenna had departed from the genuine teaching of Aristotle. One dealt with *The Divergence of al-Fârâbi's Approach to Logic...from That of Aristotle*, another with *al-Fârâbi's Departure from Aristotle in the*

*Arrangement, Canons of Proof, and Definition in Analytica Posteriora*. Another group of Peripatetic treatises was aimed at Avicenna. A general *Inquiry into Problems Discussed in Avicenna's Metaphysics of al-Shifâ'* appears to have dealt with his general metaphysical strictures against Avicenna. Moreover, it could be said that one of the major parts of Averroes' work could be seen as his criticism of al-Fârâbi and Avicenna in the name of a pure Aristotelianism, which they either distorted or misunderstood, according to him. See Majid Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy* (New York: Columbia, 1984), pp. 273-274.

41 Ulken, *Islâm Düşüncesi*, p. 233; *Türk Tefekkürü Tarihi*, p. 104, note 150; He also accepts Suhrawardi as a Turkish philosopher in his other work *Türk Feylesoflari Antolojisi* (Istanbul: Yeni Kitabci, 1935), p. 60.

42 Ulken, *Islâm Düşüncesi*, pp. 215, 233, 241.

43 In a similar way, Mustafa 'Abd al-Râziq (1885-1947), the preeminent Egyptian Muslim philosopher, argues that Islamic philosophy includes the philosophy of al-Fârâbi, Avicenna, Averroes, *kalâm* and *tasawwuf*. In addition, "the science of the principles of jurisprudence" (*ilm usûl al-fiqh*) has philosophical elements. The science of the principles of jurisprudence, like the science of *kalâm* is also part of Islamic philosophy. For more information see Ibrâhim M. Abû Rabi', "Al-Azhar and Islamic Rationalism in Modern Egypt: The Philosophical Contribution of Mustafâ 'Abd al-Raziq and 'Abd al-Halim Mahmûd", *Islamic Studies*, 27/2 (1988), pp. 130-131; "Islamic Philosophical Expression in Modern Arab Society", *Der Islam*, 72/1 (1995), pp. 58-65.

44 Ulken, *Türk Tefekkürü Tarihi*, p. 164; *Islâm Felsefesi*, pp. 6, 102; *Islâm Düşüncesi*, pp. 7-10.

45 Ulken, *Islâm Felsefesi*, pp. 6-7, 295-296, 299-300.

46 *Ibid.*, p. 9; *Uyanis Devirlerinde Tercümenin Rolü*, pp. 6-8, especially p. 8.

47 *Ibid.*

48 Ulken, *Türk Tefekkürü Tarihi*, p. 108.

49 Ulken, *Islâm Düşüncesi*, pp. 186, 191-192, 213-215; *Islâm Felsefesi*, pp. 55-56, 86; *Uyanis Devirlerinde Tercümenin Rolü*, p. 180.

50 Gutas, "The Study of Arabic Philosophy", p. 8. As Gutas pointed out, Muhsin Mahdi presented the evidence for the prevalence of these notions in the works of some orientalists of the first half of the twentieth century in his "Orientalism and the Study of Islamic Philosophy", in *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 1 (1990), pp. 79-93.

51 For an important and valuable critique of this approach see Dimitri Gutas, "Avicenna's Eastern ("Oriental") Philosophy: Nature, Contents, Transmission", *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy*, 10 (2000), pp. 159-180; "Ibn Tufayl on Ibn Sina's Eastern Philosophy", *Oriens*, 34 (1994), p. 222-241.

52 Opposing the interpretation of Islamic philosophy, particularly Avicenna's philosophy, in such a way, Gutas notices: "...As a result, the serious studies on Avicenna in the West after Corbin's book *Avicenne et le récit visionnaire* (Tehran and Paris, 1954), translated into English in 1960 as *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*, have been few and far between. Again, philosophers would not bother to look if all they could expect to find was confessional esotericism. And by the same token, just as Corbin's approach alienated philosophers from the study of Avicenna and all post-Avicennan Arabic philosophy, it attracted scholars who were interested precisely in confessional esotericism as a means to promote their personal or ethnic or religious chauvinistic agenda. This is a far cry from studying Arabic philosophy as philosophy in its historical context, much less making it accessible to historians of philosophy and scholars of Islam!". See Gutas, "The Study of Arabic Philosophy", p. 18.

53 See Hossein Ziai, "Shihab al-Din Suhrawardi: founder of the Illuminationist school" in Seyyed Hossein Nasr-Oliver Leaman (ed.) *History of Islamic Philosophy*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), vol. I, pp. 437-443.

54 Ulken, *Türk Tefekkürü Tarihi*, p. 93; Ulken, *İslâm Düşüncesi*, p. 26.

55 İzmirli, *İslâm'da Felsefe Akımları*, p. 137.

56 Ulken, *Türk Tefekkürü Tarihi*, pp. 202-203, 209.

57 *Ibid.*, pp. 220, 297-298.

58 Ulken, *Türk Tefekkürü Tarihi*, pp. 89, 103, 157; *İslâm Düşüncesi*, pp. 13-14, 23-24, 162; *İslâm Felsefesi*, pp. 250, 268, 297, 299; *Uyanış Devirlerinde Tercümenin Rolü*, p. 183.

59 See Nilgün Toker, "Filozof ve Ulus", *Toplum ve Bilim*, 98 (2003), pp. 16-17.

60 Serdar Tekin, "Batici İdeolojinin Yeniden Üretiminde Felsefenin Rolü", *Toplum ve Bilim*, 98 (2003), pp. 41-42, 45, 47.

61 Macit Gökberk, *Değişen Dünya Değişen Dil* (İstanbul: Yayı Kredi, 2004), p. 60.

62 Macit Gökberk, "Macit Gökberk'le Söylesi", in Bedia Akarsu-Tahsin Yücel (ed.), *Macit Gökberk Armaganı* (Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu, 1983), p. 11.

63 Macit Gökberk, *Değişen Dünya Değişen Dil*, p. 52.

64 *Ibid.*, p. 129. For the role of Islamic philosophy in this transmission see also Macit Gökberk, *Felsefe Tarihi* (Ankara: Bilgi, 1974), pp. 172-173.

65 Arslan Kaynardag, *Felsefecilerle Söylesiler* (İstanbul: Elif, 1986), pp. 38-39. For the similar approach of the Turkish philosopher, Nejat Bozkır see "Cumhuriyet Döneminde Türkiye'de Felsefenin Gelişmesi", *Felsefelogos*, 5 (1998), pp. 35-37.

66 Gökberk, "Macit Gökberk'le Söylesi", p. 4.

67 Dogan Ozlem, "Macit Gökberk ve Türkiye'de Felsefe", *Felsefelogos*, 5 (1998), p. 56.

## Chapter VIII

# The Hermeneutical Turn in Recent Turkish Intellectual Thought

Burhanettin Tatar

This paper intends to present and elaborate how some recent hermeneutical studies and thoughts in Turkey open a new possibility for Turkish intellectual thought, permitting critical self-reflection and a different direction than has followed during the last decades. Instead of summarizing the basic themes of all Turkish studies on hermeneutics, this paper will foreground merely the most significant ones from the viewpoints of theoretical and practical aspects of understanding. The main reason for doing so is that the responses to Western hermeneutics on the Turkish intellectual scene are mainly three: 1) Descriptive and historical; 2) Critical and reactionary; 3) Hermeneutical. Descriptive and historical studies on hermeneutics strive to present in the Turkish language the main hermeneutical schools and basic ideas of hermeneutical philosophers in the Western world.<sup>1</sup> The most significant ones among them are *Once Soz Vardi*,<sup>2</sup> *Cagdas Yorumbilim Kuramlari*,<sup>3</sup> *Teolojik Hermenotik*,<sup>4</sup> *Hermeneutik (Yorum Bilgisi) ve Edebiyat*,<sup>5</sup> and *Hermenotik*.<sup>6</sup> Critical and reactionary studies intend to show either the uselessness<sup>7</sup> or problems of hermeneutical thought.<sup>8</sup> 3) Hermeneutical studies are the ones which propose discovering hermeneutical aspects of Turkish or Islamic thought by staging them as a play with Western hermeneutical conceptions.<sup>9</sup> In view of this, this paper will focus on some hermeneutical studies within the third group since they reflect hermeneutical understanding as both theoretical and practical activity.

An academic study of the history of hermeneutical studies in Turkey would take the works "Foundation of *Geisteswissenschaften* in Dilthey and Rickert" and "Understanding as the Method of *Geisteswissenschaften*" which Kamiran Birand produced between the years 1953-1960<sup>10</sup> as its starting-point.<sup>11</sup> However, if one takes the word "hermeneutical" as to both characterize some academic studies on hermeneutics and to indicate "ways of understanding and interpretation", then one is supposed to take some significant works on different topics into consideration as parts of the history of hermeneutics in Turkey. In this context, for instance, the works of Cemil Meric seem to be significant in terms of their brilliant practice of language and of their continual striving to enrich and question Turkish culture by bringing some dimensions of different cultures into dialogue with it.

Accordingly, a difficulty which faces the historian of hermeneutics in Turkey is similar to the basic problematic in the history of Western hermeneutics: The dichotomy within hermeneutics as practice of understanding and philosophy or theory of understanding. When Schleiermacher attempted to universalize hermeneutics by claiming that human understanding is basically hermeneutical, then he broadened and fused the borders of so-called "regional hermeneutics" under the general concepts of text and interpretation. Obviously, he intended to show that specific types of texts and interpretations are not really distinctive fields to be taken as such. Rather, each type of text and interpretation are based on common human understanding and hence they differ from each other on this common basis.

For Schleiermacher, the word "hermeneutical" refers both to basic human understanding and theory of basic human understanding. The methodological character of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics derives its legitimacy not from basic (common) human understanding, but from its theory which hopes to solve the problems caused by "misunderstanding". Even if "misunderstanding" happens as an unavoidable fact of understanding, it requires hermeneutical

philosophers to assume a critical distance towards the event of understanding, whence they can see how misunderstanding takes place and how correct understanding can guard against it. Now, we can see the significant function of "critical distance" as a field of analysis and "explanation", which differs from basic understanding as an ordinary course of human life.

The distinction between explanation and understanding puts the scope of hermeneutics into question as follows: If the word "hermeneutics" is used to characterize the basic course of human understanding, as Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer claim, then the explanatory or analytical view of this course, which presupposes a critical distance and yields a possibility for constructing general philosophy and theory of understanding, becomes a meta-hermeneutics. Nevertheless, this means both the restriction and extension of the scope of hermeneutics at one and the same time. It restricts this scope since analysis and explanation require a critical distance from basic (common) understanding; it extends it since analysis and explanation bring the basic event of understanding to the field of meta-hermeneutics as its subject matter. In view of this, the universality of hermeneutics claimed by Schleiermacher is not a unified course, but rather a field divided into two somehow different levels.

The problem of the relation between basic (common) understanding and the theory of understanding takes on another view in Dilthey's hermeneutical attempt to establish a basis for *Geisteswissenschaften*. Dilthey aimed at engaging knowledge with interpretation in his foundational hermeneutics both to secure explanation (meta-theory) in the form of knowledge and to free interpretation as an infinite universal course. Would this outward engagement be substantial and abiding when temporality and historicity are taken to be the basic characteristics of human understanding? Focused on the psychological tone in the Diltheyan concept of understanding, one can easily perceive the role of the unconscious in the concept of historicity. Said differently, interpretation seems to be the course of bringing something from the unconscious level to consciousness. Thus it appears to be a course of activating what lies potential in historical understanding in the form of knowledge (i.e., as something to be participated in by all). However, in the course of activating, since what is transferred from unconscious level to consciousness has already lost its ontological-historical abundance and fullness, what is participated in under the form of knowledge is rather an empty story (narrative, explanation) about past experience, which is to be 'filled' by the finite experiences of its interpreter. Would this nature of "knowledge" as a rather empty story and explanation of the past experiences suffice for us to label it as a legitimate representative of the past? Does "re-presentative" have a real historical and ontological power "to present" what happened in the past?

Heidegger's essential claim in *Being and Time* that human understanding is basically hermeneutical reflects not the Diltheyan demand to engage knowledge with the practice of understanding; rather it declares the finitude of all types of human claim to knowledge on the basis of historical and temporal interpretation. This signifies also the end of philosophy as metaphysics or meta-hermeneutics. In Heidegger's radical turn to finitude of Being, his aim to shatter all metaphysical (or pseudo-rationalistic?) patterns of thinking takes the form of a battle cry against abstract universal theories of understanding. Clearly, to approach the radicality of Heidegger's hermeneutics of finitude as the defense of the unconscious or irrational cannot do justice to its basic intention to let Being show itself in its indeterminable destination. In view of Being's indeterminable destination, human rationality can be legitimate only if the rational concepts are flexible enough to hear and follow the steps of Being in its temporal happening. Therefore, Heidegger's radical hermeneutics of finitude does not foreground human unconscious or

irrationality but rather strives to turn the direction of human rational thinking toward the abundance (fullness) of historical staging of Being.

Even if Gadamer assimilates the radical character of Heidegger's concept of human finitude in his philosophical hermeneutics, he does not give up the construction of meta-hermeneutics as the philosophical interpretation of hermeneutics. What differentiates Gadamer from Schleiermacher and Dilthey is his identification of knowledge with interpretation on the level of philosophical hermeneutics, i.e., in his philosophical interpretation of hermeneutics. Therefore, Gadamer attempts to avoid differentiating knowledge as explanation from interpretation as understanding. This is to say, since he doesn't side with knowledge as something different from interpretation and as a rationally secured reconstruction of hermeneutical experience, he rescues hermeneutics from becoming foundational as a theory of *Geisteswissenschaften*. His basic motivation in his works is to translate the language of philosophy into hermeneutics and vice versa. In other words, philosophy in Gadamer is nothing else than hermeneutical interpretation of philosophical ideas and hermeneutics, nothing else than philosophical interpretation of hermeneutical experiences. Thus, hermeneutics is an open-ended play or continual conversation between rational ideas filled with and questioned by historical experiences.

The purpose of meta-hermeneutics as the philosophical interpretation of hermeneutics in Gadamer is to reflect upon ontological dimensions of the event of understanding. Namely, Gadamer takes the status of meta-hermeneutics as a conscious interpretation of what is happening to us when we understand something. However, since the event of understanding is more than our consciousness of it, a critical reflection on the event of understanding (and misunderstanding) is bound up with the experience of our historical relation to beings. This prevents all types of theoretical constructions or meta-hermeneutics from claiming universal validity; rather, claim to universality belongs to language which can bring everything to be understood into open-ended conversation or dialogue. Consequently, Gadamer makes the status of meta-hermeneutics a part of mutual understanding. In view of this, the dichotomy within hermeneutics as the practice of understanding and the philosophy (theory) of understanding turns out to be a conscious dialogue between different types of discourse in Gadamer.

Even if Kamiran Birand takes the problem of understanding into consideration within the context of Diltheyan historicism, she resists the psychological tone in Dilthey's works by claiming that real understanding is always taking subject matter of a text from a different perspective than that of its author. Thus in her writings, the intention of the author which plays a significant role in Dilthey's hermeneutics seems to be merely a matter of sympathy with the author as a creator of his text, and not as a historical person. Even if "sympathy" helps the interpreter understanding the text from the author's perspective, it falls short of bringing different aspects of the text, of which its author could be unconscious, to the fore. Birand calls the type of interpretation which aims at completing the text as "critical understanding".<sup>12</sup>

In her view, critical understanding sheds some light on the dark sides of the text, of which the author could be unconscious. Even if critical understanding may possibly endeavor to deconstruct and deconstruct the text within itself and nullify its basic claims, it can be also oriented by good will, so as to let subject matter show itself more clearly.<sup>13</sup> In the latter case, since critical understanding contributes towards the completion of the text somehow creatively, one can view Birand's concept of "critical understanding" as a crucial side of the problem of "co-authorship."

Though Birand does not discuss the problem of "co-authorship" in her analysis of "critical understanding", clearly she wants to charge the interpreter with the task of bringing all aspects of the text to light and of leading his/her reader into a correct direction on the way to its subject

matter.. This is to say, the interpreter is not bound by the field of vision as presented by the author; rather as long as his field of vision with respect to the text goes beyond the horizon of the author, s/he is able to understand it critically.<sup>14</sup> What is of importance at this point is that the interpreter should neither identify him/herself with the subject matter of the text (otherwise s/he can destroy the required critical distance toward it), nor cut his/her relation with it (otherwise s/he can lose his/her sight for it).<sup>15</sup>

This last point concerning the significance of "critical distance" in the event of understanding appears to be the key point in Birand's hermeneutical studies, since it aims at bringing practical and theoretical sides of understanding into mutual play. In other words, it reflects basically Birand's position with respect to dichotomy within hermeneutics as discussed above. Can "critical distance" provide us with the power of engaging practical understanding to theoretical understanding continuously? If critical understanding is somehow creative in the sense of engaging the subject matter of the text better than it was presented by the author, then how is it possible to be creative while the interpreter keeps a distance toward his/her subject matter? Doesn't creativity require us to belong to and participate in the subject matter?

Apparently, Birand confuses the interpreter's reception of the text as the product of an author with the interpreter's engaging himself with the subject matter of the text. While the former case presupposes a critical distance toward the text itself and requires the interpreter to consider it from different perspectives (like analytical, historical, aesthetical, structural, ideological, religious, etc.), the latter case demands him to expose himself to the experience of being fore-grounded by the text.

As can be estimated from what was presented above, for Birand, the concept of "critical understanding" has two different aspects: First, it is a methodological concept which prevents the interpreter from identifying himself with the author's perspective and the subject matter as presented by the author; second, it is a practical concept which is directed to different aspects of the subject matter and aims to complete the shortcomings of the text. In other words, it aims at bringing theoretical and practical aspects of understanding into mutual play. However many theoretical problems arise at the nexus between the two different aspects of "critical understanding", Birand wishes to keep theoretical (philosophical) and practical sides of hermeneutics in touch with each other.

The basic significance of Birand's hermeneutical writings is their attracting Turkish intellectuals for the first time to a different mode of understanding within a sphere surrounded by mostly materialistic, positivistic, idealistic and religious claims. Through her writings, the concepts of understanding and historicity started to shed light on the Turkish philosophical scene from a different angle.

Indeed, the Turkish intellectual tradition has been long familiar with the concept of understanding as it was developed by classical Islamic legal (*fiqh al-Islam*) and theological (*Kalam*) doctrines. The word "*fiqh*" already means "understanding" and actually it has a hermeneutical connotation besides its social and religious legal sense. Nevertheless, influenced by the metaphysical presuppositions of Islamic theology (*Kalam*), Islamic legal doctrines (*usul al-fiqh*) inclined to differentiate understanding from interpretation so as to secure the completion and perfection of Islamic revelation. Accordingly, Islamic legal doctrines restricted the concept of understanding to the event of comprehending what is presented by the Koran and traditions (*hadith*) of the prophet Muhammad. As the word "comprehension" implies, legal understanding as comprehension paid heed basically to abundance within the borders drawn by God and his prophet.

In other word, "inclusion" appears to be the basic characteristic of understanding as comprehension.

Therefore, the concept of understanding in Islamic legal and theological doctrines is of a mostly analytical nature. From this viewpoint, interpretation signaled the effort of connecting a legal or theological problem with the "meaning" already understood from the text. This is another way of saying that historicity belongs basically to the effort of interpretation which strives to bring "meaning" into actual life. Even if Islamic sufi doctrines emphasized the finitude of human understanding more than *Kalam* or Islamic *fiqh*, still we do not see in them the historicity (or historicality) of understanding as developed by the German historical school. One of the basic reasons behind it is their belief in impossibility of understanding the revelation better than God and his prophet understood them. For them the only possibility of understanding was the "revivification" of the meaning intended by God and his prophet.

This explains why many classical Muslim scholars attempted to differentiate meaning (understanding) from interpretation (application) when they endeavored to fasten the tradition of interpretation with the revelation. In this context, Ibn Hazm's rejection of the legitimacy of interpretation in the religious field; Ghazali's naming his most famous book "Revivification of Islamic Sciences" (*Ihya al-Ulum al-Din*), and Ibn Taymiyya's critique of Islamic tradition are of historical importance since they see human interpretive activity as fallible through favoring human interests possibly against the basic intentions (*maqasid*) of religion. Thus, interpretation must get its point of departure and legitimacy from the meaning understood.

Viewed from this historical and religious background, Birand's hermeneutical endeavor appears to be basically a defense of historicity of understanding in the Turkish intellectual tradition. Moreover, her works appear to provide practical activities of cultural studies in Turkey with a philosophical or theoretical reflection on what they are. After Birand, Dogan Ozlem attracted scholarly attention by his defense of historicity of cultural studies as presented from the hermeneutical viewpoint.

Ozlem has made his contribution to hermeneutics through his translations and writings on the works of outstanding philosophers like Dilthey, Misch, Heidegger, Gadamer, Habermas and Riedel.<sup>16</sup> In view of this, it is hard to find in him systematic theoretical claims of his own, beyond his appealing interpretations and critique of the texts. Maybe the basic characteristic of Ozlem's writings is that they reflect his practice of hermeneutics as an activity behind his presentation and discussion of some theoretical claims by philosophers.<sup>17</sup> Said differently, his practice of hermeneutics appears mostly at the margins of the texts he foregrounds in his writings. Given that he considers himself as belonging to Dilthey's philosophy, Ozlem's studies on hermeneutics should be evaluated as the extension and expansion of Dilthey's perspective into Turkish intellectual thought.

Since Ozlem understands "hermeneutics" basically as an art of understanding, he takes Heidegger's hermeneutics to be an "over-interpretation" for a different purpose and charges Gadamer with turning it into a doctrine of truth. In his view, hermeneutics as an art of understanding cannot be a specific philosophy beside other philosophies; rather it should remain as a practice of philosophizing. Thus, while all philosophies can be subject matters of hermeneutics, hermeneutics stays behind them as a critical interpretive activity. Meanwhile, Ozlem is conscious of the fact that critical interpretive activity is also a philosophy or meta-philosophy (*felsefenin felsefesi*); yet for him hermeneutics remains an activity distinct from other types of critical thinking.<sup>18</sup> Precisely because of this, he denies the possibility of theological hermeneutics, since it attempts to base hermeneutics on religious dogmas. According to Ozlem,

philosophy and theological thinking cannot survive together; at best theological thinking can be a subject matter of philosophical hermeneutics.<sup>19</sup>

In order to rescue hermeneutics from any types of foundational or ideological positions, he refers to human history and culture as the main fields of hermeneutical efforts conscious of their own historicity. Therefore, historicity of understanding is central to historical and cultural hermeneutics in Ozlem.<sup>20</sup>

From these accounts, one can assume that Ozlem inclines to take philosophical hermeneutics or meta-hermeneutics as a subject matter of critical interpretive activity. In other words, for him hermeneutical reflection on hermeneutics should be a continual effort which doesn't begin from a set of truth-claims of any kind. Accordingly, hermeneutics as a critical interpretive activity in Ozlem seems to be somehow sterile, free from infections of pragmatic and ideological interests. If this is so, since the practical aspect of understanding cannot be yoked by theoretical claims or prejudices in its being, praxis can lead us to an indefinite field of freedom. Even though this conception of hermeneutics as praxis, which is free of a set of truth-claims, signifies open-endedness of human understanding at first sight, still it seems to be without a sense of direction. Said differently, while rescuing hermeneutical praxis as critical interpretive activity from any kind of dogmatic and theoretical assumptions, Ozlem looks to separate theory from praxis at the outset and hence deprive praxis of its direction to move ahead for critique.

If this is the case, we should make the Gadamerian position clear with respect to Ozlem's charging him with turning hermeneutics into a doctrine of truth. First of all, I am not sure if Gadamer turns hermeneutics into a doctrine of truth. He merely refers us to different fields such as art, history, language, philosophy, and politics by claiming that the sense of truth in those fields is basically different from that of natural science. While the latter sense of truth is characterized with "certainty" and "rational-experimental proof", the former one is characterized by historical-ontological experience and hence by dialogue. In view of this, hermeneutics in Gadamer is a matter of having dialogue with other (humans, texts) by bringing hidden truth-claims or pre-assumptions into play so as to be able to find a better common sense of truth. In this context, Gadamerian philosophy raises some questions as follows: How is it possible to criticize any text and find a better way when interpreting its truth-claims? Should hermeneutics be silent in the sense of being free of pre-assumptions, when it faces a variety of truth-claims of the texts as their interpretive activity?

Gadamerian philosophy takes critical interpretive activities which do not begin with a sense of truth-claims as locked within the boundary of so-called "critical distance" which supposedly separates interpreter from his text. However, for Gadamer this is nothing other than claiming a silent doctrine of truth at the beginning of the practice of interpretation. In other words, if there is no sense of truth which directs interpretive activity before its text, this means that a hidden assumption of truth prevails in the course of understanding, as a silent power. This hidden assumption of truth is to take "critical distance" as a secure place to reflect truth upon itself. Since a hermeneutics without sense of truth is a kind of directionless activity unconscious of the power of its pre-assumptions, it turns out to be a sort of hidden logocentrism. This is another way of saying that theory dominates praxis in this kind of hermeneutics, which is the main characteristic of logocentrism.

After Ozlem, Yasin Aktay appears as the most significant dialogical thinker in Turkish hermeneutics. The dialogical character of his writings should be taken from different angles: 1) His writings represent a fruitful dialogue between the theoretical and practical aspects of understanding; 2) In his writings, dialogue mostly takes the form of dialectic between

"appropriation" and "critique". Here the word "appropriation" means more than "hermeneutic of trust" and the word "critique" more than "hermeneutic of suspicion" as presented by Paul Ricoeur; 3) The basic and prevailing aspect of Aktay's dialogical writings on hermeneutics can be designated by their robust resistance to all kinds of politics of violence.

As to fruitful dialogue between the theoretical and practical aspects of understanding in his writings, he seems to be conscious of the limitations of theoretical reflections on the event of understanding when he emphasizes often the historicity of understanding. Nevertheless, he is also aware of their providing him with a sense of direction apropos of what he is doing when understanding something. Clearly he avoids putting theory and practice into sharp opposition, as we can observe in his critique of historicism and logocentric positions. While accepting the ontological priority of history and tradition to our finite understanding on the one hand, he does not take this event as the superiority of praxis over our theoretical reflection on the other. Namely in Aktay, one's pre-exposition of a history of praxis does not lead one to blindness to what is happening to him. Consequently, theoretical reflection in Aktay occurs as a continual effort of philosophical interpretation of hermeneutical experiences. For him theory is nothing other than "reflection" which is based on our power of interpretation.<sup>21</sup>

The dialectic between "appropriation" and "critique" designates his dialogical relations with a variety of texts and thoughts. He appears to be in constant conversation with different philosophers like Spinoza, Heidegger, Gadamer, Habermas, Derrida, Foucault, Arkoun, and Rahman. While appropriating what they claim so as to broaden his horizon of thinking and dialogue on the one hand, he is always critical about them so as to transform his dialogue: his dialogue yields a new way of thinking. As he puts it often, the basic motivation in dialogue with others or with alternative trends is not to find a so-called "middle point" or "middle position". Rather, what is to be experienced in the course of conversation with others cannot be seen at the outset.<sup>22</sup> Thus, in Aktay appropriation is not a mere hermeneutics of trust which signifies one's exposure of oneself to truth claims of the text without reflecting consciously on these claims and one's reaction to them. Accordingly, for him "critique" is not a matter of putting a text within an assumed boundary and apprehending its claims from outside this boundary. Hence it is not a matter of mere hermeneutics of suspicion. Rather, he seems to understand critique as a rational conversation with the text from the viewpoint of its motivations. Here the word "motivation" designates both the motivation behind the text supporting its life and the direction to which the text wants its readers to turn. In view of this, Aktay refuses the notion "critical distance," since it reflects both the technological interest of modern man and his claiming to have a super-optic position toward history and being of the text.<sup>23</sup>

From these accounts, the prevailing aspect of Aktay's writings appears to be a "robust resistance" to all kind of politics of violence. In our perspective, this last aspect sheds light on the truly dialogical nature of his way of thinking with others. By "robust resistance", we mean first his keen awareness of the hidden structure of the texts and his art of bringing to light some implications proposed by the text; and next his power of criticizing them from different angles. By the term "politics of violence," we signify his resistance to "over-interpretation" of anything so as to grant it the claim to superiority. For instance, his resistance to the notion implied by "super-optic, and referring to the claim of a transcendental universalism; and his critique of "subjectivist and objectivist readings" which violate texts by preventing them from claiming a truth and by limiting them to some proposed idealistic and historicist borders. These critiques show clearly Aktay's opposition to a politics of violence toward human consciousness and texts. Consequently, Aktay's hermeneutical studies aim at making us conscious of false borders representing 'will to power'

and 'will to superiority' which create their specialized instruments precisely to violate our consciousness and our historical texts.<sup>24</sup>

As a conclusion, let me say that on the Turkish intellectual scene, hermeneutical thinking has been establishing both (1) a field of conversation between different types of discourse, since every type of philosophizing can be a subject matter of hermeneutics; and (2) a critical reflection on their ways of understanding and their sense of direction towards the future. Hermeneutical thinking's dialogical nature opens a possibility for different types of philosophizing, to 'think' another way than they used to. This is really something significant!

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## Notes

1 Actually under the title "descriptive and historical studies" we include not only published Turkish works but also hermeneutic classes in the departments of German literature, philosophy, law, sociology, and art. Though hermeneutics is a matter of interest in some theological faculties, it is mostly part of the classes for modern Islamic and Western thoughts, as well as for *tafsir* methodology of the Koran.

2 Yasin Aktay, Erol Goka, Abdullah Topcuoglu, *Once Soz Vardi*. Vadi Yayinlari, 1.Baski, 1996.

3 Osman Bilen, Cagdas Yorumbilim Kuramlari: Romantik, Felsefi, Elestirel Hermeneutik. Ankara: Kitabiyat, 2002.

4 Zeki Ozcan, *Teolojik Hermenotik*. 2. Baski. Alfa Yayinlari, 2000.

5 Metin Toprak, *Hermeneutik (Yorum Bilgisi) ve Edebiyat*, Istanbul: Bulut Yayinlari, 2003.

6 Burhanettin Tatar, *Hermenotik*, Istanbul: Insan Yayinlari, 2004.

7 See for instance, Sinan Kadir Celik, "Burjuva Dusuncesinin Antinomileri: Bati Metafizigini Yorumsamacilikla Asmak Mumkun mudur?" *Praksis*, Sayi: 3 (Yaz 2001), pp. 26-82.

8 Tahsin Gorgun, *Anlam ve Yorum*, Istanbul: Gelenek Yayıncılık, 2003; Recep Alpyagil, *Kimin Tarihi? Hangi Hermenotik?* Istanbul: Agac Yayinlari, 2003; Burhanettin Tatar, *Felsefi Hermenotik ve Yazarin Niyeti*, Ankara: Vadi Yayinlari, 1999.

9 See for instance, Kemal Gozler, "Realist Yorum Teorisi ve Mekanist Anayasa Anlayisi", *Anayasa Yargisi*, Ankara, Anayasa Mahkemesi Yayinlari, 1998, Cilt 15, pp. 207-243 ([www.anayasa.gen.tr/yorum.htm](http://www.anayasa.gen.tr/yorum.htm); 30.08.2004). Ozcan's work *Teolojik Hermenotik* should be considered as hermeneutical in its some parts.

10 Kamiran Birand, *Kamiran Birand Kulliyati*, Istanbul: Akcag yay. 1998, pp. 11-132.

11 See for instance, Mustafa Gunay, "Turkiye'de Hermeneutik (Yorumbilgisi)", pp. 1-12 at <http://www20.uludag.edu.tr/~felsefe/kaygi/dergi002/3-1.pdf> 30.08.2004.

12 Birand, *Kamiran Birand Kulliyati*, pp. 63-77.

13 Birand, *Kamiran Birand Kulliyati*, p. 70.

14 Birand views "critical understanding" as a matter of understanding the author better than s/he understood him/herself. See, Birand, *Kamiran Birand Kulliyati*, pp. 53-61.

15 Birand, *Kamiran Birand Kulliyati*, p. 71.

16 Dogan Ozlem, *Metinlerle Hermeneutik (Yorumbilgisi) Dersleri 1-2*, Istanbul: Inkilap Kitapevi, 1996; *Bilim, Tarih ve Yorum*, Istanbul: Inkilap Kitapevi, 1998; *Siyaset, Bilim ve Tarih Bilinci*, 1999; *Kultur Bilimleri ve Kultur Felsefesi*, Inkilap Kitapevi, 2000; *Hermeneutik Uzerine Yazilar*, Der.ve Cev. Dogan Ozlem, 1.Baski, Ankara: Ark Yayinlari, 1995; Wilhelm Dilthey, *Hermeneutik ve Tin Bilimleri*, Cev. Dogan Ozlem, Istanbul: Paradigma Yay., 1999.

17 See for an outline of Ozlem's interpretive studies, Mustafa Gunay, "Türkiye'de Hermeneutik (Yorumbilgisi)" pp. 6-11.

18 Dogan Ozlem, "Soylesi", *Marjinal Dergisi*, 2001 (Haziran); Gunay, "Turkiye'de Hermeneutik (Yorumbilgisi)", p. 7.

19 Ozlem *Ibid*; Gunay, *Ibid*, p. 10.

20 Ozlem, *Metinlerle Hermeneutik (Yorumbilgisi) Dersleri 1-2*, p. 260.

21 See for instance Yasin Aktay, "Kur'an Yorumlarının Hermenotik Baglami" *Islâmî Arastirmalar*, Cilt 9, Sayi 1-4, 1996.

22 See Yasin Aktay, "Anlamin Termodinamigine Dogru? Ducane Cundioglu'nun Cabasi" *Islâmî Arastirmalar*, Cilt 9, Sayi 1-4, 1996; "Objectivist ve Relativist Iradeler Arasinda Kur'ani Anlama Sorunu" *Bilgi Vakfi: II. Kur'an Sempozyumu*, Ankara, 1998.

23 See for more information Yasin Aktay, "Modernist Yorumun Teknolojik Cikarlari", *Islam ve Modernizm Sempozyumu: Fazlur Rahman Tecrübesi*, Istanbul: 1997

24 See for more, Yasin Aktay, "Tarihselcilikteki Huzur Iradesi" *Fecr Yayinlari, III. Kur'an Sempozyumu*, 19 Ocak, 1997, Ankara.

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