

New Europe College Yearbook 2010-2011



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Editor: Irina Vainovski-Mihai

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ISSN 1584-0298

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THE ART OF NOT BEING GOVERNED: FROM ISLAMIST JOURNALS TO ISLAMIC CRITICAL THEORY?

“Critique, whether immanent, transcendent, genealogical, or in yet some other form, is always a rereading and as such a reaffirmation of that which it engages. It does not, it cannot, reject or demean its object. Rather, as an act of reclamation, critique takes over the object for a different project than that to which it’s currently tethered”.

Wendy Brown¹

“I have always sensed that the writings of the freedom-loving fighters do not go in vain, mainly because they [writings] awaken the sleepy, inflame the senses of the half-hearted, and lay the ground for a mass-oriented trend following a specific goal...Something must be happening under the influence of writing”.

Sayyid Qutb²

“Global imperialism complements naked violence with an epistemic apparatus (employing at times intellectuals, academics and theologians who proclaim themselves Muslim), categorizing Islam and Muslims as moderate and radical, while singlehandedly cherishing the former denomination. The same social scientists and local/foreign orientalists still haven’t grown tired of using extensive information technologies at their disposal to advance/repeat theses announcing the end of “political Islam”, each time, as the conclusion of latest research.”

Mehmet Pamak³

The last two decades of the twentieth century have witnessed the growing salience of two related phenomena in the Islamic world: religious resurgence and democratization.⁴ Scholarly attention to the phenomenon of Islamist activism has generated analyses which consider such development as emblematic of a new round of Islamic modernism, reminiscent of its nineteenth century examples such as Muhammad Abduh and Jamaladdin al-Afghani, which aim to elevate the Islamic heritage to the level of contemporaneity and provide a viable socio-political alternative to Western models of governance. In this extensive literature addressing

the recent wave of Islamic revivalism, some scholars have drawn upon the “alternative” status of Islamic practices and subjectivities to counter the normative foundations of liberal political culture and questioned scholars’ uncritical use of concepts from liberal traditions (such as autonomy, resistance and critique) in the study of allegedly nonliberal Islamic movements.⁵ Others have contested this portrayal of Islam’s alternative relationship to political modernity by bringing in historical cases from within the Muslim majority world which help to “nuance” the notion that Islamic traditions stand in a “counter” relation to liberal politics. A quintessential scholarly reference, in that regard, has been Turkey’s experience with modernity, stretching to Ottoman reform movements.⁶

In addition to genealogies of modernity, Turkey has also featured in ethnographies of modernity.⁷ Since the 1990s as the Islamist parties began sweeping many municipal elections and even national ones, there have been numerous studies on the role of Islam in democratic politics in Turkey. Many have revealed a surging pattern of self-limiting radicalism, a moderate/normalized Muslim subjectivity in analyses of the “Islamist party” (Welfare Party, Virtue Party and the AK Party, in chronological order) and its activist constituency. In particular, subsequent to the AK Party’s victory in the 2002 parliamentary elections, studies of Islam in Turkey have predominantly pursued the question of the successful accommodation of former Islamists with the democratic, neo-liberal exigencies of globalization and the concomitant doctrinal transformations in the Islamists’ outlook.⁸ The Gülen movement, in its symbiotic relationship to the AK Party cadres, has constituted the second major target of scholarly attention.⁹ Sufi brotherhoods such as the Naqshbandi order have also been the subject of recent anthropological work.¹⁰

Against this background, this paper will examine the discursive field of Islamic critical thought developed by a group of Muslim activist intellectuals in Turkey who work in collaboration with the Islamist NGOs. This paper demonstrates that the public discourse of these religiously committed individuals constitutes an immanent criticism, produced by a group of “organic” Muslim intellectuals, of the governing paradigms of a liberal-democratic (post)modernity. Studies of Islamic intellectual discourses have been on the rise in the last decade both among political scientists and Middle East scholars.¹¹ In addition to the scholarly focus on the organizational, economic, and psychological dimensions of Islamic activism qua social movements, the study of the discursive and theoretical dimensions of contemporary Islamism provides a fundamental contribution to our

understanding of the doctrinal substance of Islamic activism. Going beyond the early framing of Islamic politics as faith-based, theologically driven phenomena, comparative theoretical inquiries promise to shed light to the philosophical substance of Islamic discourses, read in juxtaposition to trends in western political thought. This paper is written with a similar motivation to extricate questions about political agency, ontological presumptions founding normative theorizing, limits of liberal cosmology, the status of ethics and locality in political philosophy, etc. from the ethnographic and textual study of contemporary Turkish Muslim intellectuals' *tabligh* (invitation to an Islamic worldview, delivered in text and/or activist praxis). The analysis of published works, seminar lectures, panel presentations and personal interview with the authors provides the backbone of the paper, and is discussed in relation to the philosophical tradition of western critical theory. Firstly, the paper will begin with an intellectual genealogy of the term "intellectual", its relationship to politics, and its recent referential use to denote Muslim thinkers, activists and ideologues. The second section will explore the historical role of Islamist journals and publishing houses in the process of Islamic revivalism in Turkey and the privileged status enjoyed by the Egyptian Muslim thinker Sayyid Qutb among Muslim intellectual circles in Turkey. Far from constituting a homogenous group, let it suffice to say that the activist intellectuals referenced here still compose a cohesive collectivity revolving around the utopia of the "unique Qur'anic Generation" first elaborated by Qutb in his *Milestones*. In the third section, I bring general insights from western critical theory to propose an alternative theoretical framework for comprehending Muslim activist intellectuals' critical and post-liberal engagement with the *present* (practices and ways of thinking to which we are presently subject).

The objective of this analysis is not only to shed light to the intellectual infrastructure of Islamist activism in Turkey, but also to extrapolate from the intellectuals' immanent critique of a postmodern, liberal politics of de-politicization of Islam, a semantic deviation from the term "radical" as a qualifier to Islamist activism to "radical" as a qualifier of critique. While the former denotation has equated the term 'radical' with a tendency to resort to violence to achieve political ends (especially for Islamist groups), the latter usage aims to disrupt the normalization of the radical-moderate Muslim dichotomy and re-place the term in the philosophical terrain of "transformative, emancipatory, revolutionary, world-disclosing" politics, following the tradition of critical theory. This last note presents one major implication of the "political theory" approach to Islamism, adopted in this project.

Intellectuals: Bridging Thought and Praxis

Scholars have argued that the temporal origins of the word *intellectual* in Western European usage can be traced to the late nineteenth century: accordingly, as a noun to refer to a person, *intellectual* made its first appearance with the Dreyfus Affair in France. The particular connotation that the word took on stemmed from the active intervention of writers such as Emile Zola, André Gide, Marcel Proust, Anatole France, “in the public sphere of politics to protest in the name of Justice in order to secure the release of the innocent Captain Alfred Dreyfus”. For Jennings and Kemp-Welch, it was “the action of intervening in politics by intellectuals” which defined the essence of the noun.¹² In that sense, active political intervention, reminiscent of the Schmittian sovereign intervention in times of crisis, has marked the noun “intellectual” from its inception.

Some sociologists have later defined the term through the labor it rests upon, and argued that what makes intellectual knowledge qualitatively distinct from other forms of knowledge consists “in the fact that it is concerned with the values which a society accepts as part of its culture.”¹³ Understood in this fashion, intellectual knowledge has both a regulative and orientational function over the behavior of the members of the society, hence implicated in normative, teleological questions. For Konrad and Szelenyi, intellectual knowledge must also have cross-contextual significance, that is, an ability to offer conceptual models which are applicable in different contexts, different social milieus, transcending the boundaries of an individual situation in importance. Leaving aside sociological definitions of the term which usually refer to those who by profession or occupation engage in intellectual rather than physical labor, I will here focus on some of the major perspectives from modern political and social thought, concerning the ends of intellectual production and its relationship to everyday politics.

In his Reith Lectures in 1993 on the “role of the intellectual”, Edward Said states:

The intellectual is an individual endowed with a faculty for representing, embodying, articulating a message, a view, an attitude, philosophy or opinion to, as well as for, a public, in public. And this role has an edge to it, and cannot be played without a sense of being someone whose place it is to raise embarrassing questions, to confront orthodoxy and dogma (rather than to produce them), to be someone who cannot easily be co-opted by governments or corporations, and whose *raison d'être* is to represent

all those people and issues who are routinely forgotten or swept under the rug...Intellectuals are representative, not just of some subterranean or large social movement, but of a quite peculiar, even abrasive, style of life and social performance that is uniquely theirs... Intellectuals are of their time, herded along by the mass politics of representations embodied by the information or media industry, capable of resisting those only by disputing the images, official narratives, justifications of power circulated by an increasingly powerful media - and not only media, but whole trends of thought that maintain the status quo, keep things within an acceptable and sanctioned perspective on actuality.¹⁴

Extrapolating from this, it is noteworthy that Said's definition of the intellectual rests upon an in-public and for-a-public articulation of a specific message, countering the orthodoxies of one's spatial and temporal inhabiting. Intellectual work, by definition, challenges the dogmas of status quo, always keeping a healthy distance from corporate institutions and representations serving the ends of dominant social groups and/or modern Princes. Julien Benda, the French philosopher renowned for his *The Treason of the Intellectuals*, similarly defines an intellectual through a permanent state of opposition to the status quo: "a being set apart, someone able to speak the truth to power, a crusty, eloquent, fantastically courageous and angry individual for whom no worldly power is too big and imposing to be criticized and pointedly taken to task."¹⁵ Said and Brenda not only concur on the social role of the intellectual as a public figure who is always on the side of the un(der)represented, the dispossessed, and the oppressed, but also on the appropriate existential mode of intellectual labor, which is social detachment. For Said, this takes the form of exilic displacement, as the intellectual constantly inhabits the liminal space of migration (between a lost homeland and the provisionality of new contexts) because of her refusal to be integrated to the vast institutional apparatus of her country.

The American sociologist C. Wright Mills shares the conception of the intellectual's responsibility to reveal "truth". He states in *Power, Politics, and People*:

The independent artist and intellectual are among the few remaining personalities equipped to resist and to fight the stereotyping and consequent death of genuinely living things. Fresh perception now involves the capacity to continually unmask and to smash the stereotypes of vision and intellect with which modern communications (that is, modern systems of representation) swamp us. These worlds of mass-art and mass-thought are

increasingly geared to the demands of politics. That is why it is in politics that intellectual solidarity and effort must be centered. If the thinker does not relate himself to the value of truth in political struggle, he cannot responsibly cope with the whole of live experience.¹⁶

In his *Prison Notebooks*, the Italian Marxist political philosopher, activist, journalist, Antonio Gramsci, defines the intellectual in the following fashion: "all men are intellectuals, one could say, but not all men have in society the function of intellectuals."¹⁷ Those who have that function belong to one of the two categories: traditional intellectuals such as teachers, priests and administrators, and organic intellectuals, directly connected to a class to organize and further its interests. In clear contrast to the independent, socially detached intellectual of Said, Brenda and Mill (who has left the "cave", contemplating critically on mass politics), the Gramscian organic intellectual is a person embedded in social structures, fulfilling a set of functions from within her position in society. Traditional intellectuals are those who adopt a "transcendent", "speculative", or "metaphysical" point of view detached from their social milieu as opposed to the historically subjective mode of criticism among organic intellectuals who remain engaged with their community. Organic intellectuals translate this phenomenology of engagement into "immanent criticism" grounded in the thoughts and everyday experience of common people. Forming no special cadre, "they can be found amongst all social groups, and seek to give them homogeneity and an awareness of their function in the social and economic system."¹⁸ Gramsci also believed in the possibility for certain organic intellectuals "to represent the interests of oppressed groups and encourage them to liberate themselves by developing a critical consciousness of their situation from within their own current forms of thinking and acting".¹⁹ With the exception of Gramsci, those who regard the fundamental mission of the intellectual as the responsibility to truth appear to concur, including Benda and Edward Said, on the fact that this mission can be effectively carried out only if the intellectual stands detached from his society. This exterior positionality secures an intellectual vantage point which remains outside the mainstream, hence unaccommodated, uncoopted, and resistant. Said deploys the model of "self-imposed exile" for the public intellectual, maintaining that "truth inevitably lies at the margins of society."²⁰

The co-optation and institutionalization of intellectual labor has been a prevalent topic of concern for scholars who have, since the 1980s, pointed

to an emerging historical pattern of the eclipse of intellectuals through mass media and professionalization.²¹ The result has been perceived as “a considerable degradation of the intellectual function”. According to Russell Jacoby, the generation of 1900, the classical American intellectuals “lived their lives by way of books, reviews and journalism” whereas with the generation of 1940, the forces of academization destroyed “the intellectuals’ commitment to a public world and a public language (the vernacular)”.²² Scholars such as Bruce Robbins have later commented on the idealization of the autonomous intellectual, independent from the institutional strains of academia by arguing that the consequences of professionalization have not been as dire as described.²³ Against this background, I suggest that the commitment to a world beyond the private, professional domain as one phenomenological dimension (among many) of the public intellectual is of particular theoretical relevance in understanding Muslim activist intellectuals whose texts and speeches will be explored here. My use of the term is also informed by Michael Walzer who proposes a similar portrayal of the intellectual in his *Company of Critics*. He argues that the mark of the intellectual is not his autonomy from the world he inhabits; au contraire, “he is not an inhabitant of a separate world, the knower of esoteric truths, but a fellow member of this world who devotes himself, but with a passion, to truths we all know”.²⁴ In a Gramscian framework, Walzer depicts the essence of intellectual labor as the exposition of hypocrisies and injustices from *within*. The intellectual, for Walzer, is a social critic who promotes “a collective reflection upon the conditions of collective life” through his interaction with other members of the community.²⁵ He fulfills the mission of social criticism by “holding up a mirror to a society as a whole”, by “enquiring whether the values which give them their self-respect are hypocritically held, or ineffectively endorsed by the powers that be.”²⁶ Like Gramsci, Walzer believes that the dangers of Olympian detachment on the one hand, rule by an intellectual elite on the other, can best be avoided through a form of immanent critique that “evolves out of the prevailing views and practices of ordinary people.”²⁷ From the perspective of Gramsci’s philosophy of praxis, criticism and reality are always embedded in a historical subjectivity, in a particular historical consciousness.

In the context of Turkey, the term “Muslim intellectuals” as an analytical referent has been deployed since the 1990s to refer to the emerging Islamic-educated intelligentsia distinguished by their Islamist stance and public rhetoric from the Kemalist, secular or leftist intellectual elite. The

sociological literature on the rising Muslim intelligentsia predominantly captured the anti-modernist, anti-Western agenda promoted by the intellectuals in their quest for an “alternative social discourse”.²⁸ Others have recently challenged the validity of this representation in the light of contemporary changes that Muslim intelligentsia has undergone in the last decade. Ihsan Dagi, in his analysis of a new brand of Islamism named post-Islamism in effect since the AK Party’s electoral victory in 2002, maintains that some Muslim intellectuals “appear to have abandoned the ideas for the construction of an alternative social and political order that in effect enabled them to seek a rapprochement with the West, Western ideas and institutions”.²⁹ Other scholars such as Karasipahi continue to depict contemporary Muslim intellectuals through “their overall negation of Western civilization”.³⁰ In her explanation of contemporary Islamist discourse since the 1980s, Karasipahi unquestioningly accepts the representation of Islamist revivalism in Turkey as the product of the contradictions of the Kemalist modernization process. Despite diachronic and synchronic variations among scholars in their description of Turkish Muslim intellectuals’ political agenda and orientation, there seems to be a rough consensus on the individual constituents of Turkish Muslim intelligentsia as most of this literature cites such figures as Ismet Özel, Ali Bulaç, Ersin Gürdoğan, Abdurrahman Dilipak who are well known among “secular” circles. The group of Muslim activist intellectuals examined in this project is comparatively less popular outside their own “neighborhood”: to give an example, a prominent figure in these circles, Hamza Türkmen, is a best-selling Islamist author in the pious district of Fatih, but is rarely recognized by the secular intelligentsia in Turkey.

The *philosophes* were a “cohesive group with a coherent character and purpose, a self-conscious vanguard of the French Enlightenment”.³¹ The relatively less well-known substratum of Muslim intellectual life analyzed in this study, is akin to the *philosophes* in that they compose an organic epistemic community dedicated to construct a *sociology of Qur’anic Generation* grounded in everyday life (which translates an Islamic ontology and epistemology into a counter-hegemonic, post-liberal philosophy of praxis). These intellectual-activists, Hamza Türkmen, Abdurrahman Arslan, Ridvan Kaya, Atasoy Müftüoğlu, Mehmet Pamak among others, are affiliated collectively with Islamist civil society, embedded in networks of intellectual activism enabled by the Islamist NGOs (particularly, the Özgür-Der). The “Islam” practiced and professed by these intellectuals is not a religion disengaged from life’s struggles, and the pressing matters

of the present. In that sense, they bear testimony to Martin Luther King's insightful remark, stating that "any religion that professes to be concerned about the souls of men and is not concerned about the slums that damn them, the economic conditions that strangle them and the social conditions that cripple them is a spiritually moribund religion awaiting burial."³²

To conclude this section, I maintain that both Gramsci and Walzer present a more elucidating theoretical framework to capture a mode of intellectual activism intent on bridging thought and praxis, ontology and politics, the private and the public. Pace Gramsci, however, the civil society activism of Muslim intellectuals in Turkey elucidate the ways in which metaphysical systems of thought can, and do indeed, coexist with immanent modes of everyday life, thought and practice. In doing this, their work attests to the fact that modernist and poststructuralist aversion to religion as a fixed ideal should be revised before problematically lending itself to the conclusion that religion fosters "absolutes" that "demand a total and uncompromising change that can only prove destructive."³³ Religious experience and subjectivities, in other words, are not simple dictates of theological dogma; they are formed and performed in the immanence of a critical philosophy (of emancipatory praxis embedded in the idea of *shahadat*). Literally meaning the act of witnessing, *shahadat* is a central component of Muslim activist intellectuals' discourse and philosophy of praxis as an epistemological bridge (from within the Islamic tradition) between Qur'anic exegesis/ontology and politics. As such, *shahadat* evokes the idea of self-governance through embodying a sacred utopia. Another integral component of this philosophy is a "nativist" search for authenticity, not rooted in cultural particularism, but in the totalizing truth of Islam. The quest for an authentic being in opposition to the identitarian eclecticism of postmodern pluralism and the rootless cosmopolitanism is reminiscent of Heidegger, as some scholars point out. Subtracting from Heidegger's authenticity the ontological privileging of "cultural particularism" as "the primordial phenomenon of truth", we are left with a philosophical position which is based on a totalizing truth claim as a hidden "authentic" ground accessible only by way of "revelation" and not reasoned argument. In a similar vein, Muslim intellectuals' exegesis/philosophy of praxis reclaims Qur'anic revelation as the means to reach a state of authenticity in piety and exemplary social being, under conditions of late modernity.

Islamist Journals, Publishing Houses and Sayyid Qutb in the Process of *Tawhidi* Awakening in Turkey

A broad consensus is noticeable among Muslim activist intellectuals regarding the significance of journal publishing which, as a modern means of narration and communication, is considered an integral part of the process of Islamist re-awakening and struggle. Hamza Türkmen, in his article "Can there be effective dialogue and development without journal readership?" published in the Islamist journal *Haksöz*, traces back the educational significance of journal publishing to the *Muvahhid* movement founded by Ibn Tumart (D. 1130) which ruled much of the Maghrib for over a century until 1269. In its systematic and pervasive educational thrust, the *Muvahhid* movement relied upon the dissemination of studies of Qur'an, *tafsir* and *fiqh* copied in handwriting and declarations of the *shura* council propagated in the form of bulletins to the subunits and educational institutions of the *Muwahhid* state. This didactic effort, for Türkmen, constitutes the prototypical forms of Islamic publishing in the history of Islamic revivalism.

According to Türkmen's genealogy of printed Islamist *tabligh* (the dissemination of a message), the educational legacy of the *Muwahhid* movement has later been furthered by *Urwah al-Wuthqa*, the very first Islamist journal published under the aegis of Jamaladdin al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh. The contemporary significance of the *Urwah* is based on the fact that "it legitimized the widespread use of a modern means of mass communication (the journal) deemed today as the most significant means of *tabligh*, intra-Muslim solidarity and dialogue."³⁴ Notwithstanding its short lifespan, *Urwah al-Wuthqa* has pioneered in providing a *wahy* (revelation)-centered analysis of the use of tools/means of non-*wahyi* systems. While intending to raise Muslims' awareness of the Qur'an and accurate *sunna*, clarify their concepts and identities, and socialize them into the idea of resistance and *Ittihad-i Islam* (Islamic union) against both tyranny and colonialism, Afghani and Abduh put forward the principles of employing a systemic tool from the hegemonic *jahili* system, as a strategic part of their efforts to generate *islah* (reform) in the Muslim world. This early example of the *Urwah* was later followed by the journal *Menar*, first published in Egypt under the editorship of M. Rashid Rida in 1898, *Sirat-I Mustakim* published in 1908 in Istanbul, and *Tercumanu'l-Qur'an* published in India in 1927. These three journals, according to Türkmen, constituted the major periodic publications, used as an example and

benchmark by the Islamist movement journals in the process of Islamist awakening since the first quarter of the twentieth century.

As an illuminating side note annexed to the history of Islamist journals, let me mention in passing Türkmen's comments regarding "other" accounts of the process of Islamist revival and the role of journals therein. Türkmen notes a tendency, that is well known to scholars of "political Islam", "among traditional and national/pious circles as well as academics to consistently depict and ostracize the *ittihad-i Islam* and *islah* efforts as modernist, recent (*nevzuhur*) and mimetic." He stresses that the Islamist efforts at *islah* and acumen (*dirayet*) encapsulated in the publishing of *Urwah al-Wuthqa* and the medium of journal they used have been labeled, by the aforementioned parties, "a product of the modern world" or "manifestations of a defeatist psychology influenced by orientalism and rooted in Europe-emanated political longings." He maintains, however, that equating the presentation of Islamist *tabligh* via a technological medium of mass communication implicated in Western modernity, with "modernism" per se is "fundamentally flawed". Such a representation is nevertheless "pleasing to the imperialists by virtue of keeping a rival potentiality under allegation." Türkmen criticizes the anti-modernist sensitivity of those refusing to use such "infidels' inventions" as cameras and televisions, while he acknowledges the controlling power and the civilizational imprint in each medium of non-*wahyi* systems. Yet, he concludes that such *sufi* and *salafi* reactions to modern media should not be confused as a genuine *tawhidi* stance. The *Urwah al-Wuthqa* practice, accordingly, has demonstrated the applied illustration of how to use, when necessary, convenient systemic media to rally Muslims living under *jahili* systems around the ideal of a society of *wahy* (revelation).

In Turkey, the first periodic journal following the footprints of *Urwah al-Wuthqa* was *Sirat-i Mustakim* initially published in 1908. The journal, according to Macide Türkmen, was characterized by "an inability to sufficiently purge itself of Ottomanism or the burgeoning Turkish nationalism."³⁵ A similar ideological orientation could be found later in the journal *Hilal* which began its career in the 1960s. By virtue of incorporating rightist and conservative traits into its general approach, *Hilal* has oftentimes been categorized within the "rightist-Islamist" genre. For Macide Türkmen, even though the period of transition to multi-party system benefited the Muslims in Turkey with increased relative freedoms (of expression), the burgeoning Islamic journals have largely remained within the parameters of the regime-dictated Turkish identity. The author

refers to the right-wing Islamism characteristic of the era as “pragmatic Islamism” which remained “un-critical of the democracy game by actively supporting political parties that opposed the Kemalist legacy of the CHP (Republican People’s Party).”³⁶

Against the historical background of a right-wing attitude marking the mid-twentieth century articulations of Islamism in Turkey, many among Muslim activist intellectuals trace their lineage to the journal *Düşünce* which began its publication in the 1970s. Since then, the most significant Islamist monthly or weekly journals in chronological order have been: (1970s) *Kriter*, *Talebe*, *Islami Hareket*, *Tevhid*, *Aylık Dergi*, *Hicret*; (1980s) *Iktibas*, *Insan*, *Girişim*, *Kelime*, *Kalem*; (1990s) *Tevhid*, *Yeryüzü*, *Haksöz*, *Umran*, *Değişim*, *Genç Birikim*. Today, four major Islamist journals have carried their existence to the twenty-first century: *Iktibas*, *Haksöz*, *Umran*, *Genç Birikim*. Regarding the contemporary significance of journal publishing (*dergicilik*) for Islamic revival, Hamza Türkmen stated in an interview that the medium of journal accomplishes something valuable, genuine, continuous and productive for the Muslims by virtue of forming an “école” and a “den/meeting center” (*ocak*). In the last analysis, the journal demonstrates the sustained consistency of the *tawhidi* content despite changing forms and names in which Islamist journals have been published. He explains the idea of being a “den/nest” through “the ability to keep the fountains of our thought clean, pure and lucid in this defunct age of global capitalist hegemony and against the molestations of comprador regimes”.³⁷ As a result, the primary condition for becoming a den of purification against global-scale contamination of minds is to “develop the networks of relationship, solidarity and collective *shahadat* (witnessing, epitomizing an ideal) warranted for an efficacious, Qur’an-derived *usul* (method) and perspective as well as for the upbringing of cadres which embody that efficacy, and firmly resist the individualizing momentum of the liberal policies penetrating the entire publishing sector in Turkey.” The extent of functionality of such missionary journals, he points out, cannot be evaluated via quantitative measures as total circulation as it solely rests on “the creation of a participant, active and productive man of *da’wa* (cause) by way of the journal’s *tabligh*, instruction, dialogue and *shahadat* efforts.” In other words, journal publishing is legitimized among Muslim intellectuals through the equation of the use of such modern medium with “the worship (*ibadet*) of forming a social nucleus of *da’wa* adherents, riveting a jurisprudence of brotherhood in faith and concerted action.” The functionality of journals is, in brief, in their

potential to represent a means of Islamic *tabligh*, and consequently a collective performance of piety. According to the editor of *Haksöz*, Bahadır Kurbanoğlu, the journals *Düşünce*, *Iktibas* and *Haksöz* have been the primary technological vehicles of the thirty, thirty-five years long process of Islamist purification, intellectual development and struggle in Turkey.³⁸ Resulting from a collective endeavor, journals have in time occupied a prominent place between books and newspapers in terms of both form and content. According to Hamza Er, Islamist journals could be seen:

[...] as a means of propaganda, as the *shahadat* of the Qur'anic duty/exhortation to 'command the good, and forbid the evil' (*amr bi'l-ma'ruf wa nahy an'al-munkar*), especially in a conjuncture where our concepts have been mitigated through doctrinal and practical deviations (*bid'ad*: innovations that deviate from religion), a conjuncture marked by the total siege of society by a modern lifestyle, the acceleration of the imperialist efforts to distort Islamic values which are deemed the sole obstacle to a smoother exploitation of the globe, the isolation of those brave souls fighting against occupation in the path of God, and the outdated/obsoleting of such concepts as *shahadat* and *jihad* erased from debates and writings.³⁹

Understood in this fashion, journals, as endemic parts of social movements, record the *shahadat* of a generation in concerted action bequeathed to the future. Historically, the didactic dimension of journals have been complemented by other milieus of *tawhidi* educational efforts such as *Hizbu't Tahrir* (cell-type reading/working group of 3-7 people analyzing the texts of the *Hizb*, the international Sunni pan-Islamic movement), *Mücadele Birliği* (the Struggle Union), *MTTB* (National Turkish Student Association), the "seminar-conference" medium brought to the forefront by the *Düşünce*, *Islami Hareket*, *Aylık Dergi* journals, and the platforms of club, dervish lodge (*dergah*), and mosque meetings where training in sermon and conversation (the Sufi concept of *sohbet*) was conducted in the 1970s.⁴⁰ However, in the post-1980 period, the Islamist groups with a *tawhidi* orientation have begun to sever their ties to the Sufi lodges (*dergah*) based on intellectual objections and to the mosques due to methodological disputes.⁴¹ The safest substitute for educational sites later became the houses. Increasingly in the 1990s, the representative agency for the educational endeavors at homes has been transferred to the publishing houses and journal bureaus instrumentalized for the goal of generating a dense, pious reading public which participates in the seminars and workshops organized by the journals in collaboration with

Islamic NGOs. Today, the workshop/seminar programs of Islamic civil society attract a large number of young Muslims (the female majority been unable to get higher education due to the headscarf ban) drawn in the project/process of building an Islamic community (*jamaat*). A major example of such class-seminar form of Islamist curricular training into the *tawhidi* hermeneutics of modern life and an accurate insight into the Qur'an has been instituted in 2001 by the Islamic NGO, Özgür-Der, under the banner of "Alternative Education Seminars".

Haksöz, as an Islamic journal in circulation for two decades, has also instituted a *Haksöz* school (*Haksöz Okulu*) which grew out of "an expression of belonging conferred by Muslims who have perceived *Haksöz* as more than a journal in-between two covers, and instead as a line of comprehension, collective expression of a lifestyle, an aura of unity and association".⁴² Among the initial undertakings of *Haksöz* School, one finds the publication of a compiled edited volume on the pioneering figures of the Islamic struggle, bringing together biographical articles and commentaries published in the *Haksöz* and *Dünya ve İslam* journals in the last two decades. This endeavor, coupled with the educational seminars on the historical intellectual vanguard of Islamic thought, manifests the objective to introduce contemporary Muslims to "the seven centuries-long line of heritage comprising intellectual practitioners of *islah*, *ihya* and *tajdid* in their contributions to the Islamic struggle."⁴³ For didactic purposes, the school compiles Muslim thinkers and activists, chronologically stretching from Ibn Taymiyya to Ali Shari'ati, who, despite their doctrinal and methodological variations, are presented as integral components of a single, continuous, and unitary tradition of Islamic thought and political struggle. Among these figures, Sayyid Qutb stands as a particularly influential and frequently referenced Muslim thinker, executed by the Gamal Abd al-Nasser regime in Egypt on August 29, 1966 as part of its crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood opposition.⁴⁴ The anniversary of Qutb's "martyrdom" (*shahadat*) is commemorated each year through public events organized by Özgür-der. In the 2009 reunion which I attended, the event started with Qur'anic recitation, followed by a panel discussion among leading Muslim activist intellectuals (Hamza Türkmen, Beşir Eryarsoy, and Mehmet Pamak) on the nature and contemporary significance of Qutb's legacy for the Islamic resistance. The event lasting over three hours also included the screening of a brief documentary on Qutb's life followed by a guest lecture from a Hamas activist from Palestine, and concluded with a brief concert by the Islamic band "Grup

Yürüyüş". Aside from being the most intense experience of the fieldwork, this commemoration hosting around 400 participants transformed a modest, regular conference hall located in the outskirts of Istanbul into a disruptive event of the being-in-common (as the event of community), to borrow from Jean-Luc Nancy. In individuals' synchronous affirmation and assertion of a pious collectivity, the room appeared less to envelop the sort of interactions which resemble free exchange of opinion between moral equals within a public sphere. Instead, that overcrowded room seemed to contain the opening of a space, construed in post-foundational thought as the very moment of the political.⁴⁵ What exactly could Badiou be doing in that conference hall? As troubling as it is, in the most unlikely of places, the "event" seemed to unfold in a manner vaguely reminiscent of the "subjectivizing truth-processes of militants".⁴⁶ But how did we get here? The story of Qutbianism among Turkish Muslims began with an Islamic journal in the year 1965.

**Şehid SEYYİD KUTUB'u
Anma Toplantısı**

Konuşmacılar
HAMZA TÜRKMEN | BEŞİR ERYARSOY | MEHMET PAMAK

29
Ağustos
Cumartesi
2 0 0 9

Saat
21:00

Kur'an-ı Kerim
Sinevizyon
Görüş
Şiir: Bünyamin DOĞRUER
Dua: Mevlut AKBAL

YER:
Bağcılar Belediyesi
Kültür Merkezi

Sancaktepe Mahallesi
3/6 Sokak No: 3
Bağcılar-İSTANBUL

Bağcılar ÖZGÜR-DEĞER Temsilciliği

NOT:
Bağcılar Merkez Camii'nden Mahmutbey'e giderken
500 m. ilerde sağda, Bağcılar Adliyesi'nin karşısında

Flyer for the 2009 Commemoration of "Shaheed" Sayyid Qutb

The news of Sayyid Qutb's "shahadat" in the hands of the Nasser regime reached the Muslims in Turkey through the Islamic journal *Hilal*. In an article entitled "Understanding and Developing Sayyid Qutb's Message", Hamza Türkmen mentions the very first appearance of Sayyid Qutb in Turkish language to be found in February 1965 issue of *Hilal*, in an article titled "The Genuine Muslim: Sayyid Qutb", written by Ismail Kazdal. Even though the piece includes insufficient biographical data, Türkmen argues, the article effectively summarizes those works of Qutb such as "Social Justice in Islam" and "This Religion is Islam" which have been translated in Turkish before his execution. The news of his death in *Hilal* was accompanied with the announcement of the publication of Qutb's *Milestones*, publicized as "the book which brought execution". *Milestones* was published with the translation of Abdülkadir Şener only two months after being announced in *Hilal*.⁴⁷ The journal's 56th and 64th volumes carried Sayyid Qutb to the cover and contributed to his growing familiarity among Turkish Muslims.

During the 1970s which saw the burgeoning of Islamic revivalism in Turkey, Türkmen notes that Qutb's works, especially after the translation of his *Fi Zilali'l Qur'an*⁴⁸ in Turkish, were heavily criticized by traditionalist, right-wing Muslim intellectuals of the time such as Sezai Karakoç and Necip Fazıl Kısakürek whose perspective, according to Türkmen, has not yet reached a state of catharsis from "the diseases of sectarianism, mysticism, rightism, statism, and nationalism."⁴⁹ Such doctrinal purification, for Türkmen, is imperative to genuinely comprehend the teachings and the *shahadat* (manifestations in deed of an exemplary living, being the living example of a sublime idea) of Sayyid Qutb. The early reaction of the conservative Islamic sector notwithstanding, Qutb's books continued to be translated in Turkish by the "International Islamic Federation of Student Organizations" in Kuwait and local publishers alike. The major conceptual contributions of Qutb have been discussed since then with reference to his ideas of *tawhid* (the rule of divine sovereignty), correct method, *jahiliyyah*⁵⁰ (ignorance of divine law), *umma* (Islamic community), and *jihad* among others. For Türkmen, the thirty-five years of Islamic revivalism in Turkey received its initial sparks from Qutb's *Milestones* which asserted the pressing need to re-generate an authentic *umma*, exemplary in piety: "It is necessary to revive that Muslim community which is buried under the debris of wrong notions and man-made values and traditions of many generations, and which is

covered under the crushing weight of false laws and constitutions which have not even the remotest connection with Islam, and its Way of Life."⁵¹

Today, one could still trace the imprint of Qutb's approach in *Milestones* in the work of contemporary Muslim activist intellectuals in Turkey along two major lines of influence: methodological and normative/theoretical. Concerning intellectual method, Muslim intellectuals derived from *Milestones* the centrality of self-criticism (that is, internal criticism of earlier phases in the process of Islamic struggle) to the development of Islamic thought, and the need to formulate a consistent analysis of history, society and the global system. They have also retained the normative framework of the Qutbian approach to Islamic revival: the supreme end of the process of Qur'an-centered revival is the formation of the nucleus of a Qur'anic Generation freed from the shackles of modern *jahiliyyah*, rather than the hasty establishment of an Islamic state. *Milestones* underscored first and foremost the need for detachment on the plane of "consciousness" and "identity" from the local *jahili* structures integrated in the global system. Qutb's introduction in *Milestones* opens with a powerful diagnosis of the contemporary wretchedness of humanity:

Today mankind stands at the brink of a precipice, not because the danger of total extinction is hovering over its head -for this being only an apparent symptom not the real disease- but because today humanity is bereft of those values of life, which are not only instrumental to its healthy growth but also to its real evolution...If we look at the sources and foundations of modern modes of living, it becomes clear that the whole world is steeped in *jahiliyya* . . . based on rebellion against the sovereignty of God on earth. It attempts to transfer to man one of the greatest attributes of God, namely sovereignty, by making some men lords over others . . . in the more subtle form of claiming that the right to create values, to legislate rules of collective behavior, and to choose a way of life rests with men, without regard to what God has prescribed.⁵²

His prognosis for the contemporary erosion of "values" pointed to an identitarian "*hijra* to Islam" (turn to Islam) from the *jahili* societies inhabited by Muslims, towards the goal of re-building the Qur'anic Generation. Composed of the companions of the Prophet, the Qur'anic Generation is represented by Qutb as a unique and unmatched organization in Islamic history "for the sole reason that it imbibed the understanding of religion and training direct from one single source (the Qur'an)."⁵³ As a guiding light, this exemplary generation today imbues contemporary methods

and rhetoric of inviting and teaching Muslims the message of the Qur'an. The centrality of a generational utopia to Islamic *tabligh* can be traced to the "Unique Qur'anic Generation" chapter in *Milestones*, where Qutb extrapolates and elaborates an ontology of total renunciation of the *jahili* environment with its customs, usages, ideas, concepts, for a return to that pure source of guidance which has bred the unique generation.

After taking refuge under the shadow of Islam, a Muslim's life witnessed complete segregation between his past life of ignorance and the new Islamic life. This severance would be effected with full consciousness and under a thought-out decision. As a result, his collective relationship with the surrounding society of Jahiliyyah would get snapped up and burning his boats, he would completely identify himself with Islam. Although he may be having trade and daily commercial dealings with the polytheists, it made no difference as relationship of feelings and understanding and business connection were two different and divergent things.⁵⁴

More than a guiding utopia, the Qur'anic Generation is seen by Muslim activist intellectuals in Turkey as the concrete embodiment of the primacy of a vanguard, exemplary collectivity formed in Islamic *shahadat* and resistance to the tentacles of the *jahili* society. Its formulation as a vanguard force follows the Qutbian dictum.

How should the task of reviving *Deen* (Islam) begin? It is necessary that initially a vanguard should come into existence which should set out with a firm determination to perform this tremendous task, making incessant strides towards the goal, marching through the vast ocean of jahiliyyah, which has encircled the entire world.⁵⁵

In the absence of that foundational nucleus of Islamic revival, "no socio-political project can hope to be advanced."⁵⁶ For Andrew March, scholar of Muslim political thought, Qutb's account of the unique Qur'anic Generation "neither suggests religious nostalgia for a unique sacred moment nor reveals an epistemic commitment to closing the books of interpretation with the death of those who had unmediated access to the Prophet".⁵⁷ Instead, he reads Qutb's recurrent discussions of the *salaf* (first generations of Muslims) in the context of a genealogical account of the political origins of vice in human society. The idea encapsulated in the "unique Qur'anic Generation", however, suggests more than a descriptive, diagnostic account of the origins of modern *jahiliyyah*. For practitioners

of a Qutbian worldview, the activist intellectuals under analysis here, this generational utopia points to a philosophy of praxis which fruitfully conflates, following the role model of the first Muslim generation, the performance of piety with public epitomization (*shahadat*) and *tabligh* of Islamic resistance.

The significance of Qutb for Islamic social movements, according to Türkmen, is derived from his original revision of previous methods for a Qur'an-centered project of *islah*—and an epistemology of emancipation—which dictated the need for re-organization, purification and self-criticism in the Islamic struggle. His political manifesto, *Milestones*, does not include a theory of state, unlike his *Social Justice in Islam* which was written in the early phase of his intellectual trajectory. The mature Qutb held that institutionalizing faith and *jamaat* is a *jahili* tactic which threatens to jeopardize the essential applicability/practicality of the Islamic worldview. His refusal to provide a blueprint for the institutions of an Islamic state, as underlined by Roxanne Euben, is based upon his “unwillingness to play an intellectual game whose rules are determined by the enemy.”⁵⁸ For Ridvan Kaya, Qutb provides a “model” identity by incorporating the integrity of *iman* (faith) and *amel* (deed) in the ways in which he personally exemplified a life of *shahadat* to the revelatory truth.⁵⁹ In that respect, Qutb reverses the fundamental rupture between abstract thought and practice powerfully noted in Marx’s eleventh thesis on Feuerbach.

A most consequential component of Qutb’s political thought as reflected in the perspective of Muslim activist intellectuals in Turkey is the theological framework he provides for the organic bond between politics and morality (how a daily practice of Islamic ethics implicates the Muslim in politics). To grasp Qutb’s interpretation of the enmeshed nature of politics and Islamic morality, one needs to go beyond the more obvious ideas that Islamism is a modern critique of secularism and rationalism and seeks to unite “religion and state.”⁶⁰ To that end, recent scholarly exegesis of Qutb’s work has addressed the question of what is political about “political Islam”, of which Qutb is considered one of the most influential twentieth century ideologues. Limited to a textual analysis of Qutb’s political theory, such studies have produced a juridical account of the place of politics—understood as a particular socio-political order—in the attainment of moral excellence. In this literature, March (2010) provides an excellent illustration of the limitations of a textual commentary of Qutb’s political thought on the basis of his postulate of *shari’at-fitra* harmony (between Islamic law and human nature). Even though his

insights are illuminating in the sense of providing a (or confirming a Rousseauvian) conception of politics as collective submission to a common, all-embracing Law, the overemphasis on the comprehensiveness of Islamic law overshadows what Qutbian lay Muslims, such as Muslim intellectuals examined here, understand as the main implication of Qutb's political thought: the interdependence of *amel* and *iman*, of deed and faith. From their standpoint, what is political about "Islam" (and not political Islam) in its Qutbian articulation is that embedded philosophy of praxis rooted in the integrity of faith and deed. Where morality meets politics constitutes the moment of daily socialization with others, which actively seeks to create a collectivity in exemplary servitude to God and in fullest conformity with one's innate nature (*fitra*).

For in Islam, politics, like life in general, had always been the expression of those moral feelings that lie deep within life and that are rooted in its very nature. The existence of those feelings was a natural consequence of that constant watchfulness that Islam enjoined upon the individual conscience and of that keen moral perception that it awakens in the souls of its adherents.⁶¹

For Türkmen, Qutb's message has not been sufficiently understood and furthered, his project of *islah* not been socialized in a concrete and didactic manner among the Muslims in Turkey.⁶² Citing a prominent Muslim intellectual, Ali Bulaç, on his reading of Qutb, Türkmen illustrates the misunderstandings which still pervade among Muslims with respect to Qutb's political thought. Bulaç, in his "Terror and the Trajectory of the Islamic Movement", accuses second-generation Islamists such as Qutb and Mawdudi for the heavy emphasis they placed upon a state-centered "formal Islam" (*resmi* Islam) instead of the "civil Islam".⁶³ This reading, for Türkmen, fails to grasp the intellectual evolution of Qutb's thought and contradicts his objective to resuscitate the Qur'anic Generation, which, "can only be explained with reference to such concepts of the Islamic literature as *islah* and *sunnetullah*,⁶⁴ instead of the sociological constructs/referents of civil versus formal Islam." Such predominant misreadings, accordingly, stem from the relative shortage of efforts to disseminate Qutb's message. Public events such as panels and symposiums which address the topic have been limited to two panels organized by IDKAM (Islamic World Cultural Center) on August 26, 1995 and August 24, 1996 entitled "Sayyid Qutb and the Qur'anic Generation", followed by the "Sayyid Qutb

Symposium” organized by Irfan Vakfi (Irfan Association) on December 21-22, 1996 on the 30th anniversary of Qutb’s *shadahat*. Similarly, the 35th and 40th anniversaries of his execution have been commemorated by panels organized by Islamic associations; Özgür-Der in 2001 and Medeniyet Derneği in 2006. Since 2009 to the present, Özgür-Der organized public events commemorating Qutb’s *shadahat* every year.

In the 2001 symposium entitled “The Duty to Build the Qur’anic Generation”, organized by Özgür-Der to commemorate the 35th anniversary of Qutb’s *shahadat*, the theologian and jurist Mustafa Islamoğlu discusses “revelation” in the context of a divine project of construction on the basis of the human *fitra*.⁶⁵ Accordingly, revelation as the event of divine dialogue has the sole purpose of reminding men his sublime responsibility in building a life in full conformity with his innate nature. It is for this reason that man is created “responsible”, and not “sinful”. Islamoğlu explains the divinely ordained purpose of man as God’s vicegerent on earth through a two-fold scheme: the pursuit of the divine responsibility of human self-fulfillment in a life which is harmonious with his nature requires both an infrastructure and a superstructure, which implies the need to conceive man both as a constructing subject and an object to construct. The ontological infrastructure of human existence, that is the divine “format” of *fitra*, renders man malleable for construction, and is referred in the Islamic epistemology as *huduri* (a priori) knowledge. The superstructure, on the other hand, corresponds to the act of envisioning, reasoning and developing a character/self, and is named on the grounds of its acquired nature, *husuli* (a posteriori) knowledge.⁶⁶ Alienation of man, from himself, his fellow men, his environment, and God takes place precisely at the moment of detachment from one’s *fitra* when the correspondence of *husuli* and *huduri* knowledge is broken. Going back to the status of “revelation”, Islamoğlu describes this divine intervention into human lifeworld as a mode of subjectification, through which man as a producing subject is produced as a subject. Central to this “mode d’assujettissement” is the initial creation of *taqwa* (fear of God), a consciousness of responsibility, by the divine message of *wahy* (revelation). This responsibility to God, built into the human *fitra*, lies at the heart of Islamoğlu’s reading of Qutb and his call to rejuvenate the Qur’anic Generation in *Milestones*.

In addition to the reinstatement of the Qur’an at the center of the Islamic struggle as its fundamental source of reference, Qutb’s *Milestones* provoked the shattering of traditional attitudes among the Muslims of Turkey. Rıdvan Kaya particularly stresses the guidance provided by this

work in the course of developing an Islamic identity which takes up “the call to question traditional frames of religiosity grown in the shadow of *jahili* mindsets and practices.”⁶⁷ Qutb’s emphasis on faith as the sole legitimate marker of solidarity among Muslims (thus, negating other non-Qur’anic bases of social identification as territory, patria, history, race) has fundamentally disrupted the intellectual universe of Muslims in Turkey who have inherited a “traditional, national, and conservative” legacy of Islamic thought. Especially in the light of the present conjunctural changes amongst the Islamic social sectors, Kaya asserts the ever-present relevance of Qutb’s analysis of modern *jahilliyah* to understand the epistemic pollution created by a hybrid, eclectic conception of religion. The Qutbian emphasis on doctrinal purification resonates with Mawdudi who famously stated: “If I could secure one square mile of territory in which none other than God would reign supreme, I would value every speck of its dust more than the entirety of India.”⁶⁸ Qutb’s radical condemnation of imperialist efforts at distorting the Qur’anic message –as manifested in his renunciation of “American Islam”⁶⁹ promoted in the context of the Cold War to annex Muslims to the political agenda of the “Free World”- is still illuminating, according to Kaya, for Muslims who half a century later find themselves besieged by such projects as the Greater Middle East Project and its derivatives.⁷⁰

In his *tabligh* presented at the 2001 Symposium on the Qur’anic Generation, Islamoğlu differentiates between *akl* (wisdom, intelligence) constructed by and upon revelation on the one hand, and the *akl* of *jahili* Mecca and modern West, on the other. Firstly, revelatory *akl* is defined as *tawhidi*, that is, it seeks to discover the existential interrelationships between everything that is created and God, as opposed to the reductionist reason which dissects rather than connects. In the *surat ar-Ra’d*, the Qur’an states: “And those who unite the bonds God has commanded to be joined, and stand in awe of their Lord and fearful of facing the most evil reckoning.” (13.21) The bonds that are commanded to be generated, according to Islamoğlu, provide the coordinates of a pious *akl* in full conformity with the human *fitra* and the *hakika* (truth) and include the unification of God-man, life-afterlife, matter-spirit, soul-corpse, religion-world etc. Secondly, revelatory *akl* is bound to be *adil* (just). In lieu of the oppressive reason which dislocates matter and intervenes in its nature in a way which defies divine wisdom, the Qur’an regulates the human-matter, and human-human zone of interaction through the principle of justice. To illustrate this *wahyi* wisdom, Islamoğlu references the *surat al-Ma’un* which is composed of

two parts: the first three verses organize the man-man relationship on the basis of almsgiving, the second organizes man-God relationship on the basis of worship. The *sura* connects the thematic division through the conjunctive *fa* (and then) in Arabic, which Islamoğlu argues, points to the indivisible integrity of *deen* (religion) and *dunya* (world), of man's duties towards fellow men and those towards God, of help and prayer. Thirdly, the revelation constructs an emancipated/free and reliable *akl*, which has secured its independence from instincts, vices and desires through faith, juxtaposed against an enslaved and shadow *akl* under the reign of the ego. The following verse warns against those who have been enslaved by their fancies: "Do you ever consider him who has taken his lusts and fancies for his deity!" (45.23)⁷¹ Kürşat Atalar, Islamist writer at *Iktibas* and discussant in the 2001 Symposium, objects to Islamoğlu's use of the words "özgür" (free) to qualify revelatory wisdom on the grounds that the definition is not Islamic. Özgürlük (freedom), as the Turkish translation of the Arabic word *hurriya*, corresponds etymologically to the "strengthening of the self/ego" which can be situated within the humanist philosophy, and not in the Islamic tradition.

Extrapolating from Qutb's account of the degeneration of Islamic perception and consciousness after the unique Qur'anic Generation, Islamoğlu describes a process wherein *wahy* (revelation) has been transformed from an agent constructive of life (subject) into a sacred object. First came the reduction of revelation to utterance and meaning by way of neglecting its macro component, i.e. its *maqṣad* (purpose) which is the referee/arbiter for both utterance and meaning. Setting aside the purpose of revelation in exegetical efforts accordingly resulted in glossing over the constructivity-productivity of revelation. Then came the further reduction of revelation to simple utterance, wherein its interlocutors began to memorize/recite (*hatm*) the utterances of revelation, instead of reading it through a dialogical contemplation, and communicating with its *maqṣad*. Concomitant with the equation of revelation with utterance, the Qur'an has been reduced to a manuscript bound between two boards (*mus'haḥ*). Instead of exalting its interlocutors, the Qur'an has begun to be exalted by them (whereas, as an already sublime entity, revelation only needed to be comprehended and lived). Contemporary implications of this historical break in modes of apprehending the Qur'an include the morphosis of the salvation project of revelation-as-subject (which is the building of a new society by changing individuals one by one) into an imaginary of personal salvation through objectified revelation. In a

world modeled to a large extent after the historical outcome of Western modernity, Islamoğlu asserts the accuracy of Qutb's *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* in calling for the building of "a life centered on man, a man centered on faith, faith centered on knowledge, knowledge centered on truth (which is in turn centered on God)."⁷² Türkmen echoes Islamoğlu in underlining the duty to exist as a *jamaat* which enjoins the right and forbids the wrong as the fundamental instance of *shahadat*. It is in reviving and reminding Muslims of this duty to re-build life in its entirety and resuscitate the unique Qur'anic Generation under the shadow of the Qur'an that Türkmen locates the essence of Qutb's teachings.⁷³ Concerning the primacy of the project of building the Qur'anic Generation as the foundation for the re-construction of the *umma*⁷⁴, the symposium reflects a consensus among the participants including predominant Muslim intellectuals such as Kürşat Atalar, Atasoy Müftüoğlu, Mehmet Pamak, Hamza Türkmen among others. As emphasized by Qutb in *Milestones*, what is to be done first is to disseminate an exegesis of praxis, a reading of the Qur'an with a practical orientation to live its maxims, which is the distinguishing mark of the first generation. In comparison, many among the panelists lament the fact that contemporary intellectual and academic circles oftentimes approach the Qur'an as a research field whereby gaining Qur'anic knowledge corresponds to the fulfillment of a professional requirement. For Mehmet Pamak, the first leg of Islamic struggle must be the targeting of the oppressive system of *shirk* (polytheism oftentimes used interchangeably with modern *jahiliyya*) while at the same time working to rectify (*islah*) the faith of the oppressed masses and to extricate them from the system of *shirk* towards which they must be endowed with an oppositional attitude. Antagonism must be structured as a disciplined, principled, sincere struggle of *islah* against "primarily the degeneration taking place at an intellectual, academic plane, through the production of reconciliatory, liberal ideas annexing Islam to modernity, which, in fact, only work to dilute the revivalist potential of Islam."⁷⁵

To be able to this, we must seek to disseminate a consciousness of *jamaat* and the totality of *iman* and *amel* (faith and deed) which will be brought about through putting *tawhid* into practice while working to arrest the process of individualization stimulated by modernity and postmodernity... We must insistently seek to socialize our authentic concepts and principles as an alternative to the impositions of modernity, and provide complete dissociation from, rather than accommodation with, modernism on every plane and platform...Islamic identity cannot be built upon the modern

paradigm (individualism, nationalism, democracy, market economy, relativist faith in the absence of absolute truths, rationalism, humanism etc). An identity predicated upon constituents of modern culture does not carry any meaning beyond the vesting of modern jahili identity with Islamic attire. Islamic identity can only be founded on our authentic/unique paradigm constituted of original references to the Qur'an and the example of the Prophet.⁷⁶

In a similar vein with Türkmen, Pamak warns against the mistake of downplaying the primary struggle along the axis of *tawhid* and *shirk* for a conception of *da'wa* (cause) which remains restricted to the resolution of societal problems. Those who have committed that mistake, Pamak adds, have in due course skidded towards reconciliatory, democratic, even secular tracks while pursuing the fabrication and defense of projects which, using discourses of legal pluralism, multiculturalism and tolerance, address the question of peaceful co-existence with the "Other" within the social status quo.⁷⁷ His criticism here concerns those who (from within Muslim circles such as Ali Bulaç) have taken "a democratic pledge" to adapt the Compact of Medina for pluralist, multicultural projects of social co-existence among different constituencies, while resigning from the call to transform the society in all its registers. Another manifestation of that reformist logic intent on solving societal problems, for Pamak, has been the *Adil Düzen* (Just Order) project promoted by the Islamist Welfare Party in the 1990s, which "synthesized the normative benchmarks of global imperialism and modernity with Islamic motifs." Moreover, he also accuses the Islamic NGO, Mazlum-Der which he himself founded in 1991, for deviating in time into a "democratic human rights" struggle abstracted from the Qur'anic determination of concepts, references and guiding principles. Last but not the least, another mentioned example of doctrinal drift among Muslims committed to solve social ills caused by the *jahili* system is the Abant Councils⁷⁸ which have popularized "reconciliation based upon tolerance" as another version of projects of co-existence. These meetings, for Pamak, are venues opened up by the Gülenist Muslims in Turkey to undertake intellectual efforts which seek to accommodate the Qur'an with secularism and democracy.

A significant amount of Pamak's *tabligh* in the 2001 Symposium on the Qur'anic Generation revolves around the risks involved in "subduing Qur'anic knowledge to the yoke of academic specialization" which contributes to the process of drifting apart from the *practice* of *tawhidi*

shahadat (*vita activa* which consists of witnessing, embodying divine revelation).

There have recently been an increase in the number of those who seek to impede the realization of a shared Qur'anic conception (as a common denominator) through claims of relativism concerning even the definite provisions of the Qur'an, and those who seek to hinder the Qur'an from intervening into the present by burying it in history through claims of scientificity such as historicism, and relativism...As an example, the "historicity of the Qur'an" could be cited as one of the distorting theories advanced for the purpose of diluting a Qur'anic conception which welcomes the every day intervention of the Book into contemporary society and history. Among the representatives of such theses used, supported, and sponsored by western imperialism, we can mention Fazlur Rahman, Hasan Hanafi, and Sayyid Hussein Nasr (he adds Rene Guenon and Mohammad Arkoun to the list of those orientalist who try to popularize such theses among Muslims).⁷⁹

Paradoxically, for Ali Mirsepassi, scholar of Muslim political thought, these same contemporary Islamic thinkers such as Fazlur Rahman, and Sayyid Hussein Nasr represent a seismic epistemic rupture from the earlier "reformist apologetics" of Al-Afghani and Abduh. Mirsepassi sees these thinkers as inaugurating projects of "radical hermeneutics" in their engagement with the Islamic tradition of thought. Pamak, on the other hand, sees a new round of reformist apologetics in the modernist exegesis of contemporary scholars such as Rahman and Hanafi, which institutes an equivalence between Islamic jurisdiction and positive, secular law. He argues that previous emphasis on rationalist, positivist hermeneutics of the Qur'an is today being replaced with postmodern techniques of subjectifying (in the sense of rendering subjective, relativising) Qur'anic meaning.

From Islamic Ontology to Islamist Critical Theory?: Questioning the Hegemonic Discourses Which Justify the World⁸⁰

In *Edgework*, Wendy Brown provides an illuminating discussion of the relationship between political time, timeliness and untimeliness on the one hand, and critique on the other. The sense of timeliness "as

temperateness about when, how and where one raises certain issues or mentions certain problems⁸¹ is of particular theoretical import for the purposes of this paper because such a reflection helps us contemplate on the ways in which discourses function in a specific relationship to the political time in which and against which they are operationalized. In the same vein, criticism, as a discourse endowed with a diagnostic and restorative quality, is uttered in a particular matrix of political time, claims of timeliness, and accusations of untimeliness. In the sense elaborated by Brown, critique is always untimely qua intemperate. In its particular articulation presented here, the “immanent critique” of “organic” Muslim intellectuals in Turkey which is rooted in an Islamic ethics of *shahadat* is primarily a critique of (de-politicized) temperateness, of a political time marked by temperateness in critique.

I argue in this section that disrupting the fixity of time, to borrow from Brown, opening fissures in an otherwise relatively temperate and conservative present despite charges of radicalism, extremity etc. brings this Muslim activist intellectual discourse closer to the philosophical territory of critical political theory. Un-settling prescriptions about and depictions of what constitute ideal political subjectivities in/and ideal political communities is what I see as the major theoretical implication of my informants’ critical discourse, despite charges of (illiberal) radicalism. The risk of beholding critique (expressed by the collaborators/informants and myself) is to let the grand prescriptions, political imaginaries of our time, the postulate that liberal democracies founded on moderate political subjectivities make the good life possible, close in on us. Refraining from a discussion of whether the abovementioned statement is true, my aim is solely to let “local narratives and critique” interrupt a present that imagines itself as continuous and total. Against this background of the totality of liberal time, the critic is the one who dynamites the “present’s overvaluation of itself”, to borrow from Nietzsche,⁸² the one who tears the totality of liberal time open. In one of its most powerful articulations, the critique for Nietzsche is “an arrow shot into the age randomly and without guaranteed effect.”⁸³ Where critical theory meets the “dangerous insights” from Nietzsche, critique becomes the pursuit of alternative possibilities and perspectives in a seemingly closed political and epistemological universe; it becomes “a nonviolent mode of exploding the present.”⁸⁴ At that same meeting point, critical theory also offers useful insights in highlighting certain aspects of the public discourse of Muslim activist intellectuals in Turkey.

Islamic civil society, as the field of an ethico-political (counter) hegemony in the Gramscian sense, is born out of and sustained by an open, diversified, creative and immanent intellectual and political will to forge a sphere of emancipation anchored to a critique of liberal-democratic modernity. Despite being grounded in different ontological terrains, Muslim activists' intellectual discourse shares with the critical theory tradition a similar thrust in providing a social-philosophical diagnosis of modern society and a concomitant critique of ideology. Akin to the historical-philosophical framework of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, the burgeoning intellectual products of Islamist political critique function as "a disclosing critique of society that attempts to change our value beliefs by evoking new ways of seeing."⁸⁵ Muslim activist intellectuals' attempt at instituting an idea of "good life" predicated upon Islamic ethics and a disavowal of modernist reason denotatively resonates with the tendency of the Frankfurt school to accept the predominance of instrumental reason over other forms of action and knowledge as the decisive "disorder" of modern societies. Moreover, extrapolating from the historical experience of the Frankfurt School, one could arrive at a broader conceptual understanding of "the idea of a critical theory." According to Geuss, critical theories aim at producing enlightenment in the agents who hold them (versus self-imposed coercion, self-delusion), are inherently emancipatory, have cognitive content (they are forms of knowledge), and are reflective (rather than objectifying such as theories in natural sciences).⁸⁶ Against this background, I frame this section broadly as a question, rather than an answer: to the extent that Muslim intellectuals' discourse presented here shares with critical theory the "aim at being the self-consciousness of a particular group of agents in a particular society in a process of successful emancipation",⁸⁷ can it be regarded as an immanent Islamist critical theory?

Criticizing the unquestioned internalization of the paradigms of western social scientific enterprise by some Islamist intellectuals trained in the disciplines of philosophy and sociology, Ismail Aksu maintains that Muslim intellectuals are required to undertake a profound questioning, a critical interrogation of western thought. This exercise of critical epistemological distancing should accordingly employ "their own standpoint, concepts and languages instead of the input from modern sociology or economics."⁸⁸ Here, I shall sketch the contours of an ongoing debate among Muslim activist intellectuals in Turkey regarding the conceptual infrastructure of a global liberal-democratic normativity.

In the account of Ismail Aksu, Islamist writer at *Dunya ve Islam Dergisi*, civil society, juxtaposed against political society, is understood “as the realm beyond the intervention of the state, of self-orienting/directing individuals”, and for those who advocate this notion, it has come to refer to “the platform of democratic structures and democratic struggle.” In the post-1980 conjuncture in Turkey, the term civil society has reached Islamist intellectual circles as a result of an anti-coup platform of dialogue with the leftist intelligentsia. For Aksu, such dialogue resulted in “a liberal drifting through the importation of certain elements of modern Judeo-Christian narratives (*Isra’iliyat*) to the Muslim segments of the society.”⁸⁹ The sociologist Abdurrahman Arslan similarly maintains that “a civil society culture contains the premise/recognition of the relativity of all truth claims for the purpose of instituting a common ground of compromise, thereby denying acceptance to absolute truths...it is for this reason that a conception of ‘good’ and ‘freedom’ predicated upon ‘civility’, upon the recognition of the sovereignty of reason cannot be made compatible with values defined by the religion.”⁹⁰ Arslan adds:

Vesting the civil culture with Islamic attire, propagated by the modernist imaginary under the banner of *cultural Islam*, amounts to mistaking an institution (civil society) for the *jamaat* and thus failing to transcend the drafting impetus of the supreme horizon of the metropole.⁹¹

Accordingly, civil society as the institutional milieu designed to restrain the governance and surveillance of the public sphere by political power, is founded and operates upon the conviction that the political/social community rendering the “good life” possible is a democratic state. Ergo, for Arslan, the *foreignness* of civil society to Islam, is essentially made up of its negligence/disregard for that dimension of daily life pertaining to *ghayb* (hidden, invisible/unknowable, impermeable to reason or feelings) and *reza* (consent, assent) of God as well as its divergence from the Prophet’s example according to which social relations must be built on justice, rather than equality/equalization. In that sense, Islam, objecting to civility’s conceptualization of man (*ensan*) as individual, rather envisages a *mu’min* (pious) subject in its place, and a *jamaat* in the place of society or civil society. For the *mu’min* and the *jamaat*, there is only one relevant milieu/institution; the mosque.⁹²

Elsewhere, Arslan provides an illuminating account of civil society and Muslims’ political predicament in the context of the postmodern present. He depicts postmodernity as marking the human quandary in late modernity with its nihilist culture divested of every certainty.⁹³ In contrast

to positivist, rationalist assumptions of linear progress associated with modernity, postmodernity reveals the emancipatory forces in fragmentation, indeterminacy, heterogeneity and diversity. From this vantage point, identity acquires a fluid dimension, perceived as a continuous process of formation marked with an impossibility of final fixation due to its own historicity. For Arslan, despite the clear epistemological rupture between modernity and postmodernity, both paradigms manifest themselves as emancipatory projects. While modernity claimed to emancipate man from the church through its logocentrism, postmodernity seeks to emancipate man from modernity and homogenization by decentring 'reason'.

Classical liberal doctrine has promised to free man from the constraints of religion and tradition thanks to civic culture; today's neoliberal civic culture, however, promises emancipation from the repression of reason, science and state. Historically, what distinguishes these consequent manifestations of civic culture is the detachment of liberalism from its Enlightenment roots (in positivist epistemology) and the teleological transformation undergone by modern liberalism. Classical civic culture discussed the legitimacy of founding social norms such as "common good", while neoliberal civility reduced to absurdity all future projections about that social existence grounded in progress which we call society.⁹⁴

The fragmentation endemic to the postmodern condition, according to Arslan, brings us in contact with two phenomena in social life: civil society and multiculturalism. Yesterday's monolithic social imaginary depended upon an understanding of society composed of classes engaged in a dialectical relationship which in turn sustained the interoperability and dynamism of the society. Today, Arslan maintains, this social imaginary is being replaced with a novel, fragmented, temporary, dis-organized (as a structural requirement) modality of human association (coming-together) which we call "civil society". A characteristic feature of this new mode of sociality is the absence of any substantive future design, projection or goal inscribed into it. This structural component of civil society, for Arslan, is today being discarded by Muslims who believe that they have successfully detached themselves from this foundational quality of civil society by deploying the latter for organizing around ideals they have prescribed to themselves. In the postmodern conception, Arslan adds, every belief and/or idea which carries the objective of building its own future according to predetermined projections is delineated as totalitarian.

The principle of “fragmentation” which is assigned a foundational role by postmodernity radically revised the substantive meanings associated with the narratives, practices, and social relationships embedded in modernity. Among these, particularly important for Arslan is the postmodern representation of civil society, qualified with the participatory democratic ideal, as the antidote to all worldviews categorized totalitarian by virtue of falling outside the territory of neo-liberalism. What form of human solidarity and collectivity is contained in the idea of civil society, what sort of moral universe does civil society represent? For Arslan, civil society reflects the relativist, democratic foundation of a social structure, the ontological domain of which has assumed a fragmented condition, following the postmodern turn.

It is for this reason that in postmodern culture, the term civil society expresses a modality of human solidarity which refuses to be fixed through foundationalist projections. In this modality of being-together, priority is accorded to the individual use of reason, downplaying “public reason” and accusing every political/social thought and order based on a holistic ideology, of being totalitarian. Therefore, the characteristic aspect of civil society is not solely its foundation in voluntarism but also its dimension of temporariness/ephemerality...as a platform for ends-oriented voluntary coming-together of people (until the ends sought are obtained), civil society is a state of social “ebb and flow” (*med-cezir*).⁹⁵

Arslan’s commentaries on the postmodern character of civil society provide illuminating insights into our political present. In an eloquent philosophical discussion of the “neo-liberal civic culture” of postmodern politics, he underlines the ontological and moral infrastructure of such founding concepts of contemporary politics as civil society. Present liberal enthusiasm around the term oftentimes inhibit creative and radical philosophical theses on civil society: it is in that context that Arslan’s ontological reading of the civic culture of postmodernity offers a critical angle. Arslan describes civil society today as representing the new participatory, democratic possibility of postmodern politics, constituting the social (*toplumsal*) ontology of democracy. In this vein, concomitant with postmodernity, “contemporary democracy is evolving away from an ‘absolutist-secular’ property into a relativist ontology which we can call ‘neo-secular’.”⁹⁶

What are the risks involved for Muslims getting drawn into networks of civil society? Arslan answers this question in the following manner: when a concept which has a foundational property is transplanted into the intellectual imagination (*muhayyila*) of another worldview, it does not always go through a loss of meaning and context as posited by some Islamist intellectuals. Moreover, semantic intervention is not a solution either; at times, it is possible for the alien concept to create a semantic and contextual rupture on an intellectual plane within the worldview to which it is annexed. Arslan is aware of the increasing appeal of the idea of civil society for Muslims who seek public expression within the institutional context of civil society. He points out that civil society today endows Muslims with practical opportunities which guarantee their presence in the public sphere, as the concrete condition of possibility of a Muslim identity. Nevertheless, he warns against the intellectual transformation concomitant with Muslims' "instrumentalist" use of the communicative sphere of civil society. His *tabligh*, in that respect, calls for a critical rethinking of the kinds of social "forms", outside the ones proposed by the modern world, "in which Muslims shall carry to the future solidarity venues, personal lives, and upcoming generations."⁹⁷

In its classical definition in the West, civility expresses a social structure autonomous from the sphere of influence of the cleric, the feudal prince or the absolutist political order; more importantly, it refers to a mode of thought and reasoning sublimated from religion. The question then arises: is it possible to consider "civil" a mode of thought predicated upon Islam, and a *jamaat* built on religious foundations part of "civil society"? Arslan addresses the question of equivalence by proposing to analyze these social entities on the basis of the ontologies upon which they are constructed. What sorts of a priori projections regarding man does civil society presuppose or envision? Arslan begins his response by underlining the two-fold imaginary concerning man in the western tradition of thought: the "theological" definition which originated in the Judeo-Christian tradition, and the "rationalist" definition rooted in the ancient tradition of thought. The "individual" is the human model predicated upon the rationalist paradigm, idealized by secular Enlightenment as an isolated moral geometer. As such, Arslan defines the individual "the man who promulgates his own laws, and who achieved complete autonomy from god, nature and society." In contrast, the subject juxtaposed to the state, in the Islamic thought, is the *jamaat* which precedes the individual. For this reason, in opposition to the modern conception, Islam primarily seeks

to organize the collectivity of *mu'min* (the pious), rather than the state. As a counterpart to “the individual” which composes the smallest unit of modern society, *jamaat* denotes the smallest unit of human association or collectivity. Civil society, on the other hand, enunciates a social existence which contains the emancipation from *jamaat*-based social relationships. In the current conjuncture, civic culture compels Muslims to engage in unfruitful comparisons between civil and Islamic values, between the call for being a citizen and for being a *mu'min*.

For Arslan, civil society takes the meaning of “transparent society” in postmodern philosophy founded on the principle of social fragmentation. Transparent society refers to a society in a constant state of hysteria of deliberation/discussion of its shared problems, in the acknowledged absence of an exogenous (and homogenous) source of social reference. It is for this reason that today, for Arslan, being the democratic citizen of contemporary postmodern civil society refers to being the unique representative of an idiosyncratic lifeworld, independent from a “common good”. Accordingly, the actual addressee of our neoliberal civic culture is the desires of the individual, the satisfaction and emancipation of which relies on the relativisation of the general will.

The emancipation of individual desires is encapsulated as an end in the idea of civil society which allows the individual-qua-citizen to pursue socialization and emancipation from within his own world (as opposed to a totalizing worldview and lifestyle). This should not lead anyone to conclude that neoliberal civic culture is not in a relationship of vital dependence on religion to revise and repair its content. Cognizant of the capacity of religion in providing novel possibilities for civil politics, neoliberal civility benefits from religion only by filtering it through its relativising rationale.⁹⁸ Islam, however, is a religion which totalizes, not thought, life or human practice, but the common good.⁹⁹

Concerning the conjunctural relationship of postmodernity to religion, Arslan maintains that postmodernity on the one hand generates the illusion of freeing “religious life” by ruling out obstacles rooted in modernity, and on the other hand, simultaneously denies religion the possibility of establishing an ontological field *sui generis*. In other words, the political culture of neoliberalism provides the “opportunity structures” for Muslims to build a milieu of criticism with the dissolution of the staunch norms and rules of laïcité. Founded on (the foundation-less ground of) fragmentation,

postmodernity, at the same time, disrupts the status of religion as a source of reference in human imagination and life. Arslan draws upon the example of compassion to illustrate this point: neoliberalism accordingly deprives Muslim politics of the element of compassion (*merhamet*) by transforming it from a *political* to a *personal* event/matter. By diluting the essentiality of compassion to social morality, it renders meaningless the public inspection/governance of deed (*amel*), and facilitates the transparency of the civilized Muslim imaginary. Not restricted to economic matters, neoliberal culture disseminates in the realm of governance a politics of cruelty paradoxically implemented under the banner of freedom. The reflection of this novel mentality among the civil society actors, for Arslan, is the reduction of compassion, abstracted from politics and economics, to charity in the social universe of capitalist relationships. In a revealing portrayal of the preponderance of charity efforts in Islamic civil society, he ironically states: "Like the white man's safari, the good-hearted Muslim is sent to chase poverty in Africa."

As to the concept of pluralism, Ismail Aksu describes the term as "another Judeo-Christian virus infecting Islamist intellectual circles" as a result of the "growing realization of the need to dispense with the revolutionary attitude and to accept the existence of the myriad segments composing society."¹⁰⁰ The pluralism debates among some Islamist intellectuals, according to Aksu, contain such apologetic arguments as "the best democracy is Islamic democracy", "the greatest pluralism is in Islam" which oftentimes draw upon the Compact of Medina as a historical repository of an Islamic pluralism. On the contrary, Aksu states, "the Muslims, the radicals, prioritize politics" and "stand in no need to take lectures of pluralist tolerance from the West and its liberal appendixes, nor do they benefit from debates of 'real pluralism is in Islam' sort."¹⁰¹ In a similar vein, tolerance is deemed a Western invention resulting from a religious and historical experience that belongs 'essentially to the West'. For Arslan, the concept of tolerance relies upon a particular conception of alterity in the "modern democratic tradition which, by virtue of its Cartesian nature, is still not wholly open to the 'other', except in offering the option of either assimilation or elimination."¹⁰² The "other" in Islam, on the other hand, is not an absolute other since it is also the witness (*shahid*) of the subject in the other world. Thus, the relationship between the self and the other in the Islamic tradition is marked by this transcendental condition of mutual *shahadat*. From the standpoint of Muslim activist intellectuals in Turkey, other Islamists' embrace of liberal pluralism,

post-modernism, and civil society appear to reflect a de-politicizing tendency in the sense of taking the critical edge away from the Islamist struggle otherwise responsible for critically inquiring into the agendas and paradigms disseminated by the global system. Accordingly, a Muslim intellectual cannot afford to remain outside the sphere of the political by virtue of the incontestably political nature of the project of transforming the society which, as Muslims, they cannot refrain from.

Against the background of a perceived siege of the Islamist struggle by global paradigms and concepts, Abdurrahman Arslan defines Islamism primarily as an *episteme*, a modality of knowledge-production enmeshed in a "*tabligh* to re-discover the authentic meaning of Islam to the same extent that it constitutes a response to the threat of modernity and to the liberal world order deprived of justice and morality."¹⁰³ In the current era, he asserts that it is becoming increasingly noticeable that "although we thought we were engaged in a profound interrogation of the values of the modern period, we were still thinking through concepts the substantive meanings of which were sutured by modernity." Indeed, he denotes as "raced" or "contender/competitor" (*yarıştırılan*) Islam, the struggle through the modus operandi of the opponent, under the circumstances and on the grounds chosen and defined by the opponent. The reformist line of heritage in Islamic political thought, according to Arslan, subjects the "substance" to perpetual re-definition such that "While yesterday there was civilization, science, liberty and republic in Islam; there is today democracy, women's rights, profit, consumption, fashion, and no wonder, civil society."¹⁰⁴ The "raced Islam", as the critical discourse produced from within the context of modernity, constitutes a dependent opposition deprived of an emancipatory momentum against powers outside of Islam.

In response to Arslan's use of "emancipation" in his *tabligh*, Yıldız Ramazanoglu argues that the concept of emancipation, presently equated with democratization, does not correspond to an Islamic understanding of liberty. She proposes, as an alternative to the liberal conception carrying an earthly and material emphasis, a definition of emancipation which refers to "the struggle to internally evade the siege of our appetites and desires (*heva* and *havas*) and externally evade all forms of siege claiming to tie us to a particular temporality/age."¹⁰⁵ Understood in this fashion, emancipation corresponds to a process of attaining ontological indifference from the self and the dictates of the temporality one inhabits. Concerning emancipation, Türkmen maintains that the concepts and instruments of the global system besieging us could be seen as an opportunity to break out of

the epistemic siege. The institutions of the *jahili* system such as journals, associations, foundations could indeed be occasionally and expediently used as is done by Ikhwan-i Muslimin, Jamaat-i Islami, Hezbollah, Hamas and Nahda. The crucial difference lies in the use versus internalization of the instruments: in other words, “concepts such as human rights and democracy did not emerge within the Islamic culture, yet profiting from the possibilities opened up by their use within the global prison should not amount to according them legitimacy on ontological and epistemological grounds.”¹⁰⁶ Despite minor divergences among Muslim activist intellectuals’ approach to the “use of *jahili* media” in Islamist struggle, there is an unwavering accord between their articulations of an effective response to global siege: the re-vivification of the exemplary Qur’anic Generation as the foundation of a global counter-alternative.

Conclusion: Qur’anic Generation and Post-Liberal Subjectivities

In the *surah al-Maidah*, the Qur’an mentions the story of Adam’s two sons, Habil and Qabil, to describe the evil consequences of envy, and injustice: Qabil fights and kills Habil out of envy for the bounty God provided Habil with, and because Habil’s sincere sacrifice was accepted by God.

So the *Nafs* (self) of the other encouraged him and made fair-seeming to him the murder of his brother; he murdered him and became one of the losers. (5: 30)

The murdered brother earns divine forgiveness and is admitted to the paradise while the murderer suffers evil consequences in both lives.

O Muhammad recite to them the story of the two sons of Adam [Habil (Abel) and Qabil (Cain)] in truth; when each offered a sacrifice (to Allah), it was accepted from the one but not from the other. The latter said to the former: “I will surely kill you.” The former said: “Verily, Allah accepts only from those who are *Al-Muttaqun* (the pious, those who fear Allah). (5:27)

Habil, out of *taqwa* (fear of God) and piety, tells his brother who threatened to kill him without justification: “If you do stretch your hand against me to kill me, I shall never stretch my hand against you to kill you, for I fear Allah, the Lord of all that exists. (5:28)

In his “Marginal Notes on Liberalism”, Bahadır Kurbanoğlu, the editor of Ekin publishing, argues that totalitarianism does not recede in social structures composed of individuals who submit to the authority of their *nafs* (ego). Drawing upon the Habil-Qabil story in the last revelation which outlines the attributes of the human *fitra* and differentiates between those which need to be encouraged versus those in need of discipline, Kurbanoğlu argues that liberalism sanctions the properties of Kabil. Personal gain, inclination towards pleasure and happiness, aversion to pain etc. are placed at the foundation of the moral equipment of the individual as the prominent features of human nature. In the process, certain attributes of Habil such as *isar* (altruism) and *ihsan* (engaging in good deeds with others without expectations of reciprocity) have faced oblivion and extinction, if not considered as obstacles to the individual’s self-realization and freedom. In his own words:

As the strongest sect of the religion of rationality, liberalism is founded on the de-linking of man from all its surrounding bonds...Even though rationalism tries to invade the field emptied with the expulsion of religion from “life”, this endeavor itself is no different than what previous religions have hitherto undertaken. The clergy of this religion believe they are moving forward, following the myth of progress, in the direction of the truest, the best, the rightest, and in doing this, present a new metaphysical orientation to humanity. Humanity has thus been exposed to the *tabligh* of a religion which is progressive and rationalist in its approach to man, history, and future, its definition and production of knowledge, and its conception of morality.¹⁰⁷

Revealing the theology inherent in liberal cosmology accomplishes a useful, strategic goal in “bracketing” its natural teleology, and in “provincializing” the liberal tradition by unveiling its own metaphysics. By dethroning liberalism from its a-temporal position and subjecting its ontology to Islamic criticism, Muslim activist intellectuals in Turkey examined here, open up a space for alternative, post-liberal articulations of subjectivity in late modernity. To illustrate one such articulation, Muslim activist intellectuals have incorporated the Qutbian utopia of resurrecting the Qur’anic Generation into their revivalist discourse. As such, the Qur’anic Generation points to the ontological foundation of contemporary intellectual efforts which appropriate the Islamic identity as a “basis of resistance and a conscious existence through resistance to the processes of hybridization, identitarian eclecticism and postmodern pluralism.”¹⁰⁸

In that sense, the Qur'anic Generation principally represents, for the activists, an attempt at the purification and authentication of the Islamic identity deemed under risk of erosion by syncretistic and compromising attitudes and practices as well as "modern diversions" through affiliation with laicism, nationalism, and democracy. For scholars, it is an invitation to think local narratives, texts and practices in the terms of their practitioners, and from within the traditions of thought in which they are immersed.

Saba Mahmood aptly notes that the question of politics can most adequately be addressed at the level of the architecture of the self.¹⁰⁹ Extrapolating from this, I proposed in this paper to look at Qur'anic Generation—the focal utopia around which intellectuals' efforts revolve—as a matrix of texts and practices through which an Islamic collective agency is conceptualized, articulated and reproduced in the faced of a pervasive universal will to moderate and de-politicize piety. This Islamist intellectual endeavor is forged by modern technologies for the propagation of a pious political self (a *shahid* or a *mu'min*) in a conscious effort to contest the universal telos of liberal democratic subjectivity and to transcend the terms of the liberal discourse on political agency and its concomitant ethic of moderation. Seen under that light, Muslim intellectuals evoke Foucault's "plebs" in the sense of representing "the underside of power relations, a centrifugal movement, an inverse energy resisting every new advance of power"¹¹⁰ or Badiou's "reinvention of militant politics", with either term, signalling the opening up of a space of the political as a space of counter-Discourse, a space founding both a *mu'min* and a *jamaat*.

NOTES

- ¹ Wendy Brown, *Edgework: Critical Essays on Knowledge and Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), p. 16.
- ² Sayyid Qutb, *Dirasat Islamiyyah* [Islamic Studies], cited in Lamia Rustum Shehadeh ed., *The Idea of Women Under Fundamentalist Islam* (University Press of Florida, 2003).
- ³ Mehmet Pamak, "Kur'an Nesli İnsası, Toplum ve Sorunlarımız" (The Building of the Qur'anic Generation, Society, and Problems We Face) in *Kur'an Neslini Insa Sorumluluğu: Sempozyum* (the edited collection of the paper presentations in the 2001 Symposium to commemorate the 35th anniversary of Sayyid Qutb's martyrdom, organized by the Islamist NGO, Özgür-Der), (Istanbul: Ekin Yayinlari, 2009), p. 122.
- ⁴ John L. Esposito and John O. Voll, *Islam and Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 11.
- ⁵ See Talal Asad, "The Limits of Religious Criticism in the Middle East" in *Genealogies of Religion. Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993); Charles Hirschkind, *The Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counterpublics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006); Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005) among others.
- ⁶ Brian Silverstein, "Islam and Modernity in Turkey: Power, Tradition, and Historicity in the European Provinces of the Muslim World", *Anthropological Quarterly* 76 (3): 497-517; Brian Silverstein, *Islam and Modernity in Turkey* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Michael Meeker, *A Nation of Empire: The Ottoman Legacy of Turkish Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Serif Mardin, *Religion, Society, and Modernity in Turkey* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2006).
- ⁷ For examples of the "Alternative/Multiple Modernities" literature which, in the case of Turkey, highlights the emergence of an "Islamic modernity", see Nilüfer Göle, "Snapshots of Islamic Modernities", *Daedalus*, Vol. 129, No. 1 (Winter 2000): 91-117; Kimberly Hart, "Performing Piety and Islamic Modernity in a Turkish Village", *Ethnology*, Vol. 46, No. 4 (Fall 2007): 289-304; E. Fuat Keyman and Berrin Koyuncu, "Globalization, Alternative Modernities and the Political Economy of Turkey", *Review of International Political Economy*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (February 2005): 105-128; Masoud Kamali, *Multiple Modernities, Civil Society and Islam: The Case of Iran and Turkey* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2006); Ibrahim Kaya, *Social Theory and Later Modernities: The Turkish Experience* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2004).
- ⁸ Among scholarly analyses of the AK Party's experience with democracy and neo-liberalism, see Hakan M. Yavuz, *The Emergence of a New Turkey*:

Democracy and the AK Parti (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2006); William Hale and Ergun Ozbudun, *Islamism, Democracy and Liberalism in Turkey: The Case of the AKP* (New York: Routledge, 2010); Berna Turam, *Between Islam and the State: The Politics of Engagement* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007); Yildiz Atasoy, *Turkey, Islamists and Democracy: Transition and Globalization in a Muslim State* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2005); Yildiz Atasoy, *Islam's Marriage with Neoliberalism: State Transformation in Turkey* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Cihan Tugal, *Passive Revolution: Absorbing the Islamic Challenge to Capitalism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009); R. Quinn Meacham, "From the Ashes of Virtue, A Promise of Light: The Transformation of Political Islam in Turkey", *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (2004): 339-358.

⁹ Studies of the Gülen movement and its liberal Islam model include Hakan M. Yavuz and John L. Esposito, *Turkish Islam and the Secular State: The Gülen Movement* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2003); Hakan M. Yavuz, "Towards an Islamic Liberalism?: The Nurcu Movement and Fethullah Gülen", *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 53, No. 4 (Autumn 1999): 584-605; Hakan M. Yavuz and John L. Esposito eds., *Turkish Islam and the Secular State: The Global Impact of Fethullah Gülen Nur Movement* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2003); Berna Turam, *Between Islam and the State: The Politics of Engagement* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007); Helen Rose Ebaugh, *The Gülen Movement: A Sociological Analysis of a Civic Movement Rooted in Moderate Islam* (London: Springer, 2010); John Esposito And Ihsan Yilmaz eds., *Islam and Peacebuilding: Gülen Movement Initiatives* (New York, NY: Blue Dome Press, 2010).

¹⁰ Brian Silverstein, "Disciplines of Presence in Modern Turkey: Discourse, Companionship, and the Mass Mediation of Islamic Practice", *Cultural Anthropology* Vol. 23, No. 1 (February, 2008): 118-153; Hakan M. Yavuz, "The Matrix of Modern Turkish Islamic Movements: The Naqshbandi Sufi Order", in *Naqshbandis in Western and Central Asia*, ed. Elizabeth Ozdalga (Istanbul: Swedish Research Institute, 1999); Catharina Raudvere, *The Book and the Roses: Sufi Women, Visibility, and Zikir in Contemporary Istanbul* (Istanbul: Swedish Research Institute, 2003); Kimberly Hart, "The Orthodoxization of Ritual Practice in Western Anatolia", *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 36, No. 4 (November 2009): 735-749. For similar ethnographic analyses of British Sufi publics, see Pnina Werbner, "Stamping the Earth with the Name of Allah: Zikr and the Sacralizing of Space among British Muslims", *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (August 1996): 309-338; Tayfun Atay, *A Muslim Mystic Community in Britain: Meaning in the West and for the West*, Studies in Comparative Social Pedagogies and International Social Work and Social Policy, Vol. XVII (Bremen, Germany: EHV, 2012). For the history of the Naqshbandi order in Turkey and the Ottoman Empire, see Serif Mardin, "The Naqshbandi Order in Turkish

History” in *Religion in Modern Turkey: Religion, Politics and Literature in a Secular State*, ed. Richard Tapper (London: I.B. Tauris, 1991); Dina LeGall, *A Culture of Sufism: Naqshbandis in the Ottoman world, 1450-1700* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005).

- 11 In addition to the seminal works on Islamic political thought such as Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age 1798-1939* (Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1983); *Hamid Enayat, Modern Islamic Political Thought* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982), there have been a recent growth in the scholarly literature on contemporary Islamic political thought and intellectual discourses, including Michaelle Browers, *Democracy and Civil Society in Arab Political Thought: Transcultural Possibilities* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2006); Elizabeth Suzanne Kassab, *Contemporary Arab Thought: Cultural Critique in Comparative Perspective* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010); Sena Karasipahi, *Muslims in Modern Turkey: Kemalism, Modernism, and the Revolt of the Islamic Intellectuals* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2009); Ali Mirsepassi, *Political Islam, Iran, and the Enlightenment: Philosophies of Hope and Despair* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Carol Kersten, *Cosmopolitans and Heretics: New Muslim Intellectuals and the Study of Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011) among others.
- 12 Jeremy Jennings and Tony Kemp-Welch, “The Century of the Intellectual: From the Dreyfus Affair to Salman Rushdie”, in Jennings and Kemp-Welch eds., *Intellectuals in Politics: From the Dreyfus Affair to Salman Rushdie* (New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 7.
- 13 George Konrad and Ivan Szelenyi, *The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power*, trans. Andrew Arato and Richard E. Allen (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Inc., 1979), p. 30.
- 14 The whole text of Said’s Reith Lectures can be found in the *Independent*, 24 June, 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 July 1993.
- 15 Julien Benda, *The Treason of the Intellectuals*, trans. Richard Aldington (New York: Norton, 1969), p. 8.
- 16 C. Wright Mills, *The Politics of Truth: Selected Writings of C. Wright Mills*, introduced by John H. Summers (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 19.
- 17 Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, eds. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 2005), p. 9.
- 18 Antonio Gramsci (2005), p. 5.
- 19 Richard Bellamy (1997), p. 35.
- 20 Edward Said, the Reith Lectures, “Intellectual Exile: Expatriates and Marginals, What is the Proper Role of the Intellectual in Today’s World?”. This third lecture of the series is available online at <http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/the-reith-lectures.html>.

- 21 Among the most illustrating examples of this literature, one finds Russell Jacoby, *The Last Intellectuals: American Culture in the Age of Innocence* (New York: Basic Books 1987); Régis Debray, *Teachers, Writers, Celebrities: The Intellectuals of Modern France* (London: Verso, 1981).
- 22 Russell Jacoby (1987), p. 17-19.
- 23 See Bruce Robbins ed., *Intellectuals: Aesthetics, Politics, Academics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990) and *Secular Vocations: Intellectuals, Professionalism, Culture* (London and New York: Verso, 1993).
- 24 Michael Walzer, *Company of Critics: Social Criticism and Political Commitment in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Basic Books, 2002), p. 42.
- 25 Michael Walzer, *Interpretation and Social Criticism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), p. 32.
- 26 Michael Walzer, "Maximalism and the Social Critic" in *Thick and Thin: Moral Argument at Home and Abroad* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), p. 42-43.
- 27 Richard Bellamy, "The Intellectual as Social Critic: Antonio Gramsci and Michael Walzer", in Jeremy Jennings and Anthony Kemp-Welch eds., *Intellectuals in Politics: From the Dreyfus Affair to Salman Rushdie* (New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 26.
- 28 Michael Meeker, "The New Muslim Intellectuals in the Republic of Turkey", in R. Tapper (ed.), *Islam in Modern Turkey: Religion, Politics and Literature in a Secular State* (London: I. B.Tauris, 1994), p.196. Other examples of the social scientific literature on "Muslim intellectuals" in Turkey in the 1990s are, Haldun Gulalp, "Globalizing Postmodernism: Islamist and Western Social Theory", *Economy and Society*, Vol. 26, No.3, 1997, pp. 419-433; Ayse Gunes-Ayata, "Islamism versus Authoritarianism: Political Ideas in Two Islamic Publications", in R. Tapper (ed.), *Islam in Modern Turkey: Religion, Politics and Literature in a Secular State* (London: I. B.Tauris, 1994), pp. 254-279; Binnaz Toprak, "Islamist Intellectuals: Revolt against Industry and Technology" in M. Heper, A. Oncu and H. Kramer (eds.), *Turkey and the West: Changing Political and Cultural Identities* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1993); Nilufer Gole, "Secularism and Islamism in Turkey: The Making of Elites and Counter-Elites", *Middle East Journal*, Vol.51, No.1 (Winter 1997), pp.53-54; Binnaz Toprak, "Islamist Intellectuals of the 1980s in Turkey", *Current Turkish Thought*, No. 62, (Spring 1987), pp. 2-19.
- 29 Ihsan Dagı, "Rethinking Human Rights, Democracy, and the West: Post-Islamist Intellectuals in Turkey", *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies* (Summer 2004), 13(2), pp. 135-151; p. 136.
- 30 Sena Karasipahi, *Muslims in Modern Turkey: Kemalism, Modernism, and the Revolt of the Islamic Intellectuals* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009), p. 2.
- 31 Gertrude Himmelfarb, *The Roads to Modernity: the British, French and American Enlightenments* (New York: Knopf, 2004), p. 33.

- 32 Martin Luther King, Jr., *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (New York: HarperOne, 1990), p. 38.
- 33 Ali Mirsepassi, *Political Islam, Iran, and The Enlightenment: Philosophies of Hope and Despair* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 149.
- 34 Hamza Türkmen, "Dergi Okumadan Yeterli bir Diyalog ve Gelisim Imkani Olur mu?" *Haksöz*, Sayi: 220 (Temmuz 2009): 18-24, p. 19.
- 35 Macide Göç Türkmen, "Cok Partili Sisteme Gecerken Islamci Dergiler-3" *Haksöz*, Sayi: 28 (Temmuz 1993): 23-27, p. 25.
- 36 *Ibid.*, p. 26.
- 37 Interview with Hamza Türkmen, November 18, 2009, Istanbul (Findikzade).
- 38 Interview with Bahadır Kurbanoğlu, August 21, 2009, Istanbul (Fatih).
- 39 Hamza Er, "Dergilerin Etkisi Hareketin Gucuyla Orantilidir", *Haksöz*, Sayi 223 (Ekim 2009): 16-21, p. 18.
- 40 Hamza Türkmen, "Dergi Okumadan Yeterli bir Diyalog ve Gelisim Imkani Olur mu?" *Haksöz*, Sayi: 220 (Temmuz 2009): 18-24, p. 22.
- 41 *Ibid.*, p. 23.
- 42 *Islami Mucadelede Oncu Sahsiyetler*, (Pioneering Figures of the Islamic Struggle) Haksoz Okulu Serisi-1 (Istanbul: Ekin Yayinlari, 2009), p. 6.
- 43 Interview with Bahadır Kurbanoğlu, October 13, 2009, Istanbul (Fatih). *Islah*, *ihya* and *tajdid* (reform, revival, and renovation) refer to the building blocks of the Islamic tradition of thought, and has been understood by Muslim intellectuals as the shared doctrinal essence of tawhidi Islamist struggle, in the past and the present.
- 44 Richard P. Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).
- 45 This opening of a space, for Jean-Luc Nancy, takes place in an ontological plane. In that respect, it is different from the public sphere understood in the ontic sense. For Nancy, the political primarily consists in the opening of a space by freedom. This ontological opening is the condition of possibility of the ontic public sphere. For details, see Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Experience of Freedom*, trans. Bridget McDonald (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993), p. 78.
- 46 Alain Badiou, *Metapolitics*, trans. Jason Barker (London: Verso, 2005), p. 20.
- 47 Soon after its publication, *Milestones* was on trial under Article 163 of Turkish Penal Code which penalized *irtica* (political reactionism). The copies of the book were seized by the authorities, and the translator Abdulkadir Şener received a prison sentence.
- 48 *Fi Zilal al-Quran* (in the shadow of the Qur'an) was written in the period between 1951 and 1965 by Sayyid Qutb. It contains a comprehensive exegesis and textual commentary (*tafsir*) of the 114 surahs of the Qur'an.

- 49 Hamza Türkmen, "Seyyid Kutub'un Mesajini Anlamak ve Gelistirebilmek" (Understanding and Developing the Message of Sayyid Qutb), in *Islami Mucadelede Oncu Sahsiyetler* (Istanbul: Ekin Yayinlari, 2009), p. 239.
- 50 Qutb's work presents one of the first scholarly contributions to a novel understanding of the term "jahiliyyah" which was first used and defined by the Prophet with reference to his experience in Mecca. Traditionally, the term refers to the pre-Islamic era of the pagan ignorance of God. Qutb, as well as Mawdudi, used the concept to refer to everything (land, ideas, persons, institutions) in the world that was un-Islamic or impurely Islamic. "When we speak of a *jahili* society, we are not referring to conditions that might have prevailed during a particular period of history. *Jahili* is every society in which humans are subjugated by others", writes Qutb in, Sayyid Qutb, *In the Shade of the Qur'an*, (18 Vol) trans. Adil Salahi and A. Shamis (Leicester, UK: The Islamic Foundation, 2002-9) Vol. III, 5. With this definition of jahilliyah, Türkmen argues that Qutb criticized the strategic goals of the Ikhwan-i Muslimin (Muslim Brotherhood) and proposed an alternative line of struggle, a program of action, and education based on the primacy of a revolution of minds over the struggle for political power. For Qutb, the revelatory belief in "La Ilaha Illallah" preceded in importance both the evaluation of organizational details and the construction of an Islamic community.
- 51 Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones*, trans. S. Badrul Hasan (Karachi, Pakistan: International Islamic Publishers, 1981), p. 47.
- 52 *Ibid.*, p. 44-49.
- 53 *Ibid.*, p. 56.
- 54 *Ibid.*, p. 60.
- 55 *Ibid.*, p. 51.
- 56 Hamza Türkmen, "Seyyid Kutub'un Mesajini Anlamak ve Gelistirebilmek" (Understanding and Developing the Message of Sayyid Qutb), in *Islami Mucadelede Oncu Sahsiyetler* (Istanbul: Ekin Yayinlari, 2009), p. 248.
- 57 Andrew F. March, "Taking People as They Are: Islam as a 'Realistic Utopia' in the Political Theory of Sayyid Qutb", *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 104, No. 1 (February 2010), p. 193.
- 58 Roxanne Euben, "Comparative Political Theory: An Islamic Fundamentalist Critique of Rationalism", *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 59, No. 1 (February 1997): 28-55, p. 46.
- 59 Ridvan Kaya, "Seyyid Kutub ve Mucadele Ornekligi", in *Islami Mucadelede Oncu Sahsiyetler* (Istanbul: Ekin Yayinlari, 2009), p. 264.
- 60 Roxanne Euben, *Enemy in the Mirror: Islamic Fundamentalism and the Limits of Modern Rationalism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), p. 191.
- 61 Sayyid Qutb, *Social Justice in Islam*, trans. John B. Hardie and Hamid Algar (Oneonta, NY: Islamic Publications International), p. 215.

- 62 The author mentions western exegeses of Qutb among which he cites “the young orientalist” Roxanne L. Euben’s analysis of Qutb’s anti-modernist discourse as integral to the broader trend of romantic reaction to the Enlightenment, and laments the relative lack of understanding of Qutb’s message among Turkey’s Muslims, in comparison to such western scholars as Euben.
- 63 Ali Bulaç, “Teror ve İslami Hareketin Seyri”, *Zaman*, November 15, 2001.
- 64 The word literally means the custom or the way of God. The Book states the term in the context of the unchanging universal laws of divine origin which men have to observe.
- 65 Mustafa İslamoğlu, “Kur’an Algisinda Tarihi Kirilma” (Historical Rupture in Qur’anic Understanding), in *Kur’an Neslini Insa Sorumlulugu: Sempozyum* (Istanbul: Ekin Yayinlari, 2001), p. 15-33.
- 66 The constructive work of revelation can be understood as unfolding on four fields: the construction of *tasavvur* (thinking) through the revelation’s re-definition of concepts and terms upon which human understanding is built, such as *akbar-asgar* (big-small), *maruf-munkar* (good-bad), *hasanat-sayyiat* (virtues-vices), *fawz-husran* (gain-loss), *a’la-adna* (worthy-valueless), *ilm-jahl* (knowledge-ignorance), *karib-ba’id* (near-far); the construction of *akl* (wisdom) through the provisions and statements included in the revelation such as “Let there be no hostility, except to those who practice oppression” (2.193), “God has prescribed mercy for Himself” (6.12), “Does man think that he will be left aimless” (75.36); the construction of *shahsiya* (personality) through the revelation’s description of exemplary personalities such as the prophets; the construction of *hayat* (life) via a holistic reading and profound contemplation of the spirit and purpose of the revelation. İslamoğlu maintains that the first Generation, who has comprehended the purpose of revelation as a constructive agent, has gone through all the four stages described above.
- 67 Ridvan Kaya, “Seyyid Kutub ve Mucadele Ornekligi” (Sayyid Qutb and His Exemplary Struggle), in *İslami Mucadelede Oncu Sahsiyetler* (Istanbul: Ekin Yayinlari, 2009), p. 267.
- 68 Quote taken from Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, *The Vanguard of the Islamic Revolution: the Jama’at-i Islami of Pakistan* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1994), p. 107.
- 69 Sayyid Qutb, “İslam Amrikani”, *al-Risala*, no. 991(1952), 713-15. Railing at the instrumentalist use of Islam, Qutb noted in 1952: “The Islam that America and its allies desire in the Middle East does not resist colonialism and tyranny, but rather resists Communism only. They do not want Islam to govern and cannot abide it to rule because when Islam governs it will raise a different breed of humans and will teach people that it is their duty to develop their power and expel the colonialists”. The historian John Calvert maintains that Qutb sees “an agenda of depoliticization of a holistic religion” at the heart of what he defined as American Islam: “Like the expressions of

Christianity Qutb witnessed during his stay in the United States, ‘American Islam’ emphasized piety and ritual at the expense of social and political activism.” For more details on Qutb’s “Islam Amrikani”, see John Calvert, *Sayyid Qutb and the Origins of Radical Islamism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), p. 166-7.

70

Rıdvan Kaya (2009), p. 269.

71

This translated passage is from Mustafa İslamoğlu, “Kur’an Algisinda Tarihi Kirilma: Hayati Insa Eden Oznededen Kutsal Nesneye”, (Historical Break in Perceptions of Qur’an: From the Life-Constructing Subject to Sacred Object) in *Kur’an Neslini Insa Sorumlulugu: Sempozyum* (Istanbul: Ekin Yayinlari, 2001), p. 23-25.

72

Ibid., p. 31.

73

Hamza Türkmen, “Kur’an Nesli ve Tarih Perspektifi” (The Qur’anic Generation and Perspective on History) in *Kur’an Neslinin Insa Sorumlulugu: Sempozyum* (Istanbul: Ekin Yayinlari, 2001), p. 34.

74

The Qur’anic Generation project, for Türkmen, precedes in importance every other socio-political project addressing the economy, education, charity, or objectives including capturing political power, founding a state, civil society building, national reconciliation, formation of international pacts, joining transnational alliances etc. Prioritizing such goals and projects, accordingly, amounts to contemplating the interior design of a building which does not yet have a base.

75

Mehmet Pamak, “Kur’an Nesli Insasi, Toplum ve Sorunlarimiz” (The Building of the Qur’anic Generation, Society and Problems We Face), in *Kur’an Neslinin Insa Sorumlulugu: Sempozyum* (Istanbul: Ekin Yayinlari, 2001), p. 94.

76

Ibid., p. 95.

77

Ibid., p. 111.

78

Organized by the Abant Platform, Abant Councils refer to the regular panel and roundtable discussions first held in Lake Abant in the city of Bolu. The honorary president of the think tank sponsoring the Councils, the Abant Platform, is Fethullah Gülen. Pamak’s critical reference to the “Abant Councils” for that reason implies a broader criticism targeting the Gülen community and its modernist hermeneutics of the Islamic tradition in conformity with the “official ideology”.

79

Ibid., p. 142-144.

80

Susan Buck-Morss, *Thinking Past Terror: Islamism and Critical Theory on the Left* (London; New York: Verso, 2003), p. 42.

81

Wendy Brown, “Untimeliness and Punctuality: Critical Theory in Dark Times”, in *Edgework: Critical Essays on Knowledge and Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), p. 4

82

Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, in *The Portable Nietzsche*, trans. and ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Viking Press, 1968), p. 387.

- 83 Ibid., p. 217.
- 84 Wendy Brown, "Untimeliness and Punctuality: Critical Theory in Dark Times", in *Edgework: Critical Essays on Knowledge and Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), p. 14
- 85 Axel Honneth, *Disrespect: The Normative Foundations of Critical Theory* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2007), p. 57.
- 86 Raymond Geuss, *The Idea of a Critical Theory: Habermas and the Frankfurt School* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 76.
- 87 Ibid., p. 63.
- 88 İsmail Aksu, "Sosyal Bilimler, Bilim Felsefesi, Sivil Toplum ve Cogulculuk Tartismalari", *Dünya ve İslam Dergisi*, Sayı: 12 (Guz 1992): 18-24, p. 19.
- 89 Ibid., p. 22.
- 90 Abdurrahman Arslan, *Modern Dünyada Müslümanlar* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2004), p. 78-80.
- 91 Abdurrahman Arslan, *Modern Dünyada Müslümanlar* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2004), p. 264.
- 92 Ibid., p. 266-268.
- 93 Abdurrahman Arslan, "Sivil Akil, Sivil Toplum, Sivil Müslüman" (Civic Reason, Civil Society, Civil Muslim) in *Sabra Davet Eden Hakikat* (Truth Inviting to Patience) (İstanbul: Pinar Yayınları, 2009), p. 148.
- 94 Ibid., p. 153.
- 95 Ibid., p. 150-151.
- 96 Ibid., p. 154.
- 97 Ibid., p. 179.
- 98 Arslan also refers to this process whereby the eternal truths of religions are relativised through historicism, as the "re-invention of religion".
- 99 This, for Arslan, refers to the a-temporal and a-spatial nature of Islam's social reality. Passage taken from Arslan (2009), p. 187-189.
- 100 İsmail Aksu, Sosyal Bilimler, Bilim Felsefesi, Sivil Toplum ve Cogulculuk Tartismalari", *Dünya ve İslam Dergisi*, Sayı: 12 (Guz 1992): 18-24, p. 23.
- 101 Ibid., p. 21.
- 102 Abdurrahman Arslan, "Bir Muhalefet ve Butunlesme Aracı Olarak Ozgurluk" (Freedom as a Medium of Opposition and Unification) in *Kuresel Sistem ve Kavramlari: Muzakereli Seminerler* (Global System and Its Concepts: Seminars with Discussions) (İstanbul: Ozgur-Der Yayınları, 2004), p. 38.
- 103 Abdurrahman Arslan, *Modern Dünyada Müslümanlar* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2004), p. 24.
- 104 Ibid., p. 32.
- 105 Yıldız Ramazanoglu, discussant to Abdurrahman Arslan "Bir Muhalefet ve Butunlesme Aracı Olarak Ozgurluk", in *Kuresel Sistem ve Kavramlari: Ozgur-der Muzakereli Seminerler*, (İstanbul: Ozgur-Der Yayınları, 2004), p. 45.

- ¹⁰⁶ Hamza Türkmen, "Küresel Sistemin Kavramlarına Yaklaşımında Usul" (Methods in Approaching the Concepts of the Global System), in *Küresel Sistem ve Kavramları: Özgür-der Muzakereli Seminerler* (Istanbul: Özgür-Der Yayınları, 2004), p. 22.
- ¹⁰⁷ Bahadır Kurbanoğlu, "Liberalizme Dair Kenar Notları-III: Rasyonalite Dininin En Güçlü Mezhebi: Liberalizm" (The Strongest Sect of the Religion of Rationality: Liberalism), *Haksöz*, Sayı: 231 (Haziran 2010): 34-41, p. 37-38.
- ¹⁰⁸ Hamza Türkmen, *Türkiye'de İslamcılık ve Özeleştiri* (Islamism and Self-Critique in Turkey) (Istanbul: Ekin Yayınları, 2008), p. 34.
- ¹⁰⁹ Saba Mahmood, "Secularism, Hermeneutics, and Empire: The Politics of Islamic Reformation," *Public Culture* 18 (2) (Spring 2006): 323-347.
- ¹¹⁰ Michel Foucault, "Power and Strategies" in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1979*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), pp. 134-146.