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Contents

RELIGIOUS AND IDEOLOGICAL AMERICAN PLURALISM

Beyond Herberg: An Islamic Perspective On Religious Pluralism In The Usa After 9/11

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The history of America's openness to immigration from diverse regions has advanced the course of religious pluralism. Many religious groups existed in America, yet only a few were publicly significant in advancing the course of pluralism from tolerance of differences to inclusion and participation. Their public significance was contingent upon their ability to help develop models of religious pluralism. Such models reflect structures that evolved as a result of attempts to formulate responses to diversity and to assert that there is religious unity to America. At first, this unity was Protestant; at some point in US history it evolved into Judeo-Christian; then it came to be "potentially" multi-religious with an Abrahamic overtone. Since 9/11 some scholars of Islam have become more articulate in advancing the pluralist state of mind toward becoming global in perspective.

On balance, it may well be that the greatest contribution made by the United States to global religious life is its demonstrating that, however vast the pluralism, a vital religious culture can flourish. Pluralism does not undermine common life but seems to enrich it. The seeds planted by diverse tribal cultures and by European colonists centuries ago came to full growth in the twentieth century, for it was the century when pluralism-religious pluralism- came of age.[1]

Charles Lippy's celebration of a pluralism that came of age in the twentieth century is a celebration of a contextual realization of an ideal that the US has been struggling to affirm since its inception. The US has a culture of pluralism because it has been the setting for a multitude of responses to religious diversity. These responses have been shaped by a tension between two seemingly antithetical poles: a gradual, at times grudging, acceptance of the reality of religious diversity (manyness) and a staunch desire for unity (oneness). Although the meanings of the

two terms "diversity" and "pluralism" overlap, the difference between both is essential to understand the dilemmas and tensions that underscore the process of transformation. In the *Culture of Religious Pluralism*, Richard E. Wentz defines "diversity" and "pluralism" as follows:

> Diversity is the awareness of manyness, the discovery that there are "others besides us and our own communities (…) individuals and groups often tend to think of themselves as isolated entities. Diversity represents a threat to that isolation (…) [T]he human condition is such that pluralism continues to be resisted by programs of conquest and conversion. The culture of religious pluralism has evolved in tension with the impulse to conquer or convert the "other" instead of to contemplate the manner in which the ideas, practices, and sociality of others are aspects of our own incompleteness - indeed, of human incompleteness. (Wentz :15)

This paper is an attempt to show how the history of America's openness to immigration from diverse regions[2] has advanced the course of religious pluralism. Many religious groups existed in America, yet only a few were publicly significant in advancing the course of pluralism from tolerance of differences to inclusion and participation. Their public significance was contingent upon their ability to provide a viable and coherent interpretation of American reality of which they made part. In a telling manner, groups who revered different cultural and religious symbols were able to project different perspectives on shared cultural and religious symbols. In finding a common ground, these groups were able to help develop models of religious pluralism. Such models reflect structures that evolved as a result of attempts to formu-

late responses to diversity and assert that there is a religious unity to America. These responses were meant to give meaning to "E Pluribus Unum." At first, this unity was Christian (ideally including all Christian, then Protestant, denominations), at some point in US history it evolved into Judeo-Christian (including Protestants, Catholics, and Jews), then it came to mean "potentially" multi-religious with an Abrahamic overtone (including Christians, Jews, and Muslims, with Hindus and Buddhist on the periphery). Since 9/11 some scholars of Islam have become more articulate in advancing the pluralist state of mind toward becoming global in perspective.

The religious traditions that are covered by these models are known as world religions. They immigrated to the US at relatively different stages of its history and made varying headways on the road to pluralism. What unites them most is that their experiences on the path of pluralism reflect recurring patterns and contest strategies.

My study of the dynamics of the culture of religious pluralism is based on the following definition of culture: "an identifiable and regularized behavior that is attributable to a particular people and that is expressed through certain images, symbols, rituals, myths, and other kinds of stories."(Wentz p.1) As cultures undergo endless transformations, the culture of religious pluralism, as it now stands, is the outcome of interactions of symbols and myths of the "many" and the "one". These interactions have generated transformations in both. Let's go through the models of religious pluralism.

The First Model: A Protestant "Establishment" that Nurtured Diversity

At the time of the Revolution the people of America were predominantly foreign born: Europeans and their descendants. The religious mosaic that they spread throughout the American landscape reflected the spectrum of Protestant Europe's sectarianism. The colonial period was marked by the centrality of Calvinism and Puritanism in shaping the world view of the settlers, the centrality of religion in shaping the civil order. It was also marked by an underlying current of tolerance of dissent that set the groundwork for religious liberty in the new nation. When the Constitution was adopted and the "novus ordo Seclorum" was established, denominationalism was the unique response of these diverse groups to give meaning to their diversity; and an unofficial "Protestant establishment" was their answer to their plural claims to religious truth. While levelling many of the traditional notions of religion and politics that were left behind in Europe, and to a less extent in some of the colonies, religious disestablishment and the concomitant (and somewhat unique) American principle of voluntary churches enshrined in the First Amendment[3] to the constitution[44] The American separation of church and state was a unique and revolutionary settlement to the question of religious diversity in the Christian world. As Catherine Albanese put it in America Religions and Religion did not act as a sluice obstructing the normal flow of the Christian spirit in the infant republic. On the contrary, as de Tocqueville observed in *Democracy in America* and as historical facts have confirmed, it fostered constant diversification and perpetual modifications within Christian denominations, and made Christianity the indiscriminately "well-established religion of the nation."

The pervasiveness of the institutional presence of the "informal Protestant establishment" in the early days of the republic was captured by Hutchinson who argues that

The religious establishment involved, first and most obviously, the more powerful Protestant denominations, especially those of the Baptists, Congregationalists, Episcopalians, Methodists, and Presbyterians. Second, it included the multitude of voluntary associations, both interdenominational and nondenominational, that promoted missions, peace, temperance, and numerous other kinds of moral and social reform. Third, it derived authority from a large and dominating world of English-language cultural, literary, educational, and journalistic entities that were Protestant in personnel and outlook. Finally, the establishment must be understood as a personal network of Protestant leadership that extended across the churches, controlled most of the nation's political life, and managed virtually all of the major secular institutions and entities in American society.[5]

The denominations that are referred to in the foregoing quotation used to denounce each other's teachings during the colonial period. Yet within the republic where religious liberty was protected by law, they came to see themselves as part of a larger spiritual community of the Christian Church. This spirit of unity was not provided by any of these denominations. The real ground for unity was the religion of the civil order: the civil religion[6] of the American Revolution. In *The Broken Covenant : Civil Religion in Time of Trial*, Robert Bellah defines civil religion as follows:

By civil religion I refer to that religious dimension, found I think in the life of every people, through which it interprets its historical experience in the light of transcendent reality (p. 3)

Civil religion provided some basis for public unity that broke down boundaries separating diverse religions that were on American soil at the inception of the republic. It did so by initiating a whole process of myth-building that revolved around the memorable deeds that Americans performed to initiate an age unknown before in the history of humanity. The way some of these myths were interpreted during the early years of the republic helped maintain an unofficial "Protestant Establishment" in the US. The latter helped weaken the boundaries between "the many" and the "one." By binding the "many" into the "one' in Protestant terms, the Protestant majority gave a possible meaning to diversity that opened the way for further possibilities.

The Second Model - Protestant, Catholic and Jew

With the advent of the 19th century, signs of cultural complexity and heterogeneity were very well reflected in the unprecedented demographic change that marked the American landscape. A severe reduction in Protestant Christianity's numerical dominance in the American population was occasioned by the sweeping flow of Catholic and Jewish immigrants who started settling in America in significant numbers. Along with the new "divergent" movements such as Adventism, Pre-millennialism, the Mormons, and the Holiness Movement that started gaining ground after the Civil War, Catholic and Jewish public presence became highly visible in America. According to Hutchinson, between 1850 and 1920 the Roman Catholic population "expanded at nearly three times the rate of overall population growth, while the number of Jews rose spectacularly - from fifty thousand to more than three million." (Hutchinson: 114)

What this religious mosaic generated was a visible change in the public discourse about religious diversity and pluralism. Toleration of non-radical beliefs, and to a less extent behaviours, seemed to have given way to the rhetoric of inclusion that was articulated by Jewish and Catholic leaders in an era of melting pot enthusiasm. Such headway could not have been made without changes that took place within the informal "Protestant establishment" to keep pace with the social, economic, and cultural changes that cut right across society and affected religion as well as politics. These included the rise of the social gospel with its leanings towards minorities, the wide appeal the liberal theological surge had among great numbers of people in the US, and the convening of the World Parliament of Religions in September 1893 in Chicago. The latter was an outright manifestation of a much wider campaign for inclusion orchestrated by liberal sections within Judaism, Catholicism, and Protestantism. For the first time ever Jews and Catholics were included by American Protestants in a conference on religion. This occurrence infused Protestantism with new life and contributed more than their nativist counterparts to maintaining the authority of the "establishment" within American culture.

Despite opposition to inclusive pluralism from the right wing of the Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish spectrums, liberals within these traditions displayed in their campaign for inclusion a plethora of themes and provided a repertoire of contest strategies. It was by capitalizing on the liberal belief that all religions are infused with divinity that the liberal wings within Judaism, Protestantism, and Catholicism won their battles for inclusion within their faith groups and the large faith community. They advanced a discourse that rested upon two pillars: first, a rejection of the non-essential doctrines and practices of their faith, and a preservation of its timeless essentials, and second, a belief in the promise of universal

religious freedom guaranteed by the First Amendment. Their arguments reflect a subtle blend of civil and religious themes even in their theological aspects.

Theologically, their discourse was premised on a repudiation of religious essentialism by acknowledging that one's religion presents a conception of the God-Idea (which is similar to what is referred to in the Declaration of Independence). What ensued from this was an outright rejection of rigid traditionalism as a crippling force. Americanists among Catholic and Jewish religious leaders expanded this rhetoric so far as to enthusiastically assert their claim that traditionalism was out of tune with the times, and that the future and welfare of their religions depended upon the willingness of the traditional establishments (Roman authorities in the Catholic case and Orthodox Rabbis in Europe and the US in the Jewish case) to undertake reforms based on American Catholic and Jewish experiences. Moreover, they would consider themselves as Americans with a special mission to reconcile their religious traditions with modernity by providing a model that derived its superiority from that of the American example with its separation of Church and State.

This argument seemed like an outright attack on the Roman establishment, and also like an affront to the then nascent Zionist spirit within the Jewish communities (more than its Orthodox wing). Nowhere was it more strikingly expressed than it was in the Americanist Jewish attempt to adopt the American myth of origin to that of the children of Israel as presented in the Old Testament. They portrayed America as their promised Zion. This was best reflected in the Central Conference of American Rabbis that convened in 1897. In this gathering American rabbis asserted that "We are unalterably opposed to political Zionism. The Jews are not a nation, but a religious community…America is our Zion. Here in the home of re-ligious liberty we have helped in founding this new Zion". (Hutchinson: 126)

The sense of separation from a group that allegedly held them loyal to an outside authority, which seems latent in the Jewish statement, was a pivotal theme in the Catholic discourse as well. From John London to John F. Kennedy, American Catholics had the most daunting task of asserting their loyalty to America and the American political system. They had to deflate a staunch anti-Catholic propaganda. Entangled in emotional and ideological considerations, it thrived on breeding in the public an irrational fear that Catholics in America were conspiring with Rome to threaten the stability of the American system.

In spite of the religious polyphony that characterized public discourse on religion, and in spite of the fact that religious and ethnic diversity had become a daily reality by the end of the 19th and the first half of the twentieth century, American church history continued to emphasize themes of Protestant unity rather than themes of diversity and unsettled pluralism. It was Will Herberg's *Protestant, Catholic, Jew*, published in 1955, that shifted the emphasis of American religious history. The Judeo-Christian model he praised was premised on his claim that Americans identify themselves, as Americans, as belonging to one of three traditions. The American way could be Catholic, Protestant, or Jewish. Even though Herberg's book was a consensus book, it was an attempt at broadening the scope of religious pluralism by assigning a new meaning to "Christianity" wherein "Christian" came to mean "theist": one who believes in the God of the Bible and of Abraham. This meant in effect that "Christian" was in some way inclusive of "Jew".

Herberg's model, which stresses that Americans define themselves religiously as Protestants, Catholics, or Jews, had great appeal in the post-war spirit of revival that cut right across churches and the realm of civil reli-

gion. Herberg's trinity came to light when the legendary status that the story of the four chaplains, two Protestants, a Catholic and a Jew, who sank in the troop ship Dorchester in 1944, was still tickling the American sense of divine providence. It was also a possible answer to President Eisenhower's pronouncement in 1952 that "our government makes no sense unless it is founded in a deeply felt religious faith - and I don't care what it is." Certainly what Eisenhower meant by deeply felt religious faith was something antithetical to the atheism of the then communist enemy. It was so large in scope that it might include the myriad of long-ignored religious traditions in the US. In this respect, Herberg's trinity fell short of reflecting the richness of the religious landscape of America in the mid-twentieth century. It was left to Martin Marty, Edwin Gaustad, Sydney Ahlstrom, and their followers to fill in the gaps.

The Third Model: A Multi-Religious America with an Abrahamic Overtone

Since the passage of the Immigration Act of 1965, the definition of religious diversity has expanded well beyond its sectarian Christian rivalries and Biblical toleration, and now includes Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs and others from many parts of the Globe. These traditions, upon observation, reflect a wide range of sectarian postures, adding to the plurality of the American landscape. From a civil religious perspective, the Act marked another stage in broadening the meaning of such long-cherished concepts as religious freedom, mutual respect, and voluntary "churches" or churches without government financial support, as guaranteed by the First Amendment.

Among the recently published studies of post-1960s religious pluralism is Diana Eck's *A New Religious America*. This book gives sympathetic attention to the presence of three major world religions on American soil: Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam. The pluralism about which Eck wrote, far from being the trinity presented by Herberg, is associated with the democratic idea that holds that difference must not be equated with inferiority. It is neither inclusive nor participatory; it is more likely to be still grappling between the stages of tolerance and inclusion. With an assurance made by a participant observer to her fellow Americans that neither the religious behaviour of these groups nor their beliefs are radical, the book includes an open invitation for average Americans to build bridges of dialogue and mutual understanding with them. Diana Eck's call for "positive pluralism" contains a latent warning about the consequences of isolation from and ignorance of these faith traditions and communities.

The September 11th events proved Eck's fears true. Before September 11 there were already more Muslims in the United States than Episcopalians. It is only a matter of time before adherents of Islam replace Jews as the largest non-Christian religious group in the US. To cover this new reality scholars were engaged in an effort to develop a model that would replace the "Judeo-Christian" one. The "Abrahamic" model emerged as the leading candidate. The advocates of this model attempt to trace Islam, Judaism, and Christianity back to a single origin: Abraham. The model seemed to have had official sanction by the US government during the 90s. On the occasion of the first Eid after the Gulf War, president Bush Senior started the tradition of sending Eid greetings to American Muslims. Under the Clinton administration, the first Eid celebration was conducted in the White House.

The same year (1996), the first break-of-the-fast event was held on Capitol Hill. In 1999 the first Muslim was appointed ambassador by the Clinton administration; and in 2000 both chambers of congress passed resolutions H.R. 174 and S. Res. 133 whereby Islam was recognized as an Abrahamic faith along with Judaism and Christianity, and wherein contributions of Muslims to American society were recognized. These gains were the outcome of dialogue between the elite of the Muslim communities and the US government that was attempting to build bridges with the Muslim world. Ordinary American citizens, whose knowledge of Islam and Muslims was at best shaped by Hollywood and at worst by ignorance, like ordinary Muslims and Imams, who were ignorant of the system of their country, did not have a place at the table. The Abrahamic model was a structure with bolsters of clay.

In the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks a surge of hate crimes was directed at American Muslims, Sikhs, and other Americans of foreign origin who were likely to fit in the stereotype of the terrorist as portrayed in the media. The well-established network of American Muslim organizations, including the ministry of W.D. Muhammed, issued in an unprecedented way, jointly as well as individually, public statements condemning the terrorist attacks and distancing themselves, at least in terms of religious behaviour, from the perpetrators of the attacks. Their voices did not reach most of their fellow Americans because they lacked the adequate networks. The aftermath of September 11th was marked by a public relations crisis. Even though many Muslim voices were invited for the first time to speak through major American media networks, they did not manage to dispel the revived centuries-old prejudices of "Islam" as a force to be feared and of Muslims as inherently irrational and violent people. Nor did President Bush's declaration that Islam is "a religion of peace" restore the image of Islam. President Bush, like the speakers on TV channels, mostly engineers, medical doctors, and physical scientists, who were primarily self-taught and whose knowledge of Islamic text and history was quite superficial, were able to position themselves as authorities on Islamic law and theology. Their discourse was apologetic. Even though they negated the association between Islam and terrorism, they created another static, idealized portrait of Islam, failing to address the concrete social, economic, and political causes at the root of such profound wrong doing.

The discriminatory aspect of the measures taken by the government against Arab and Muslim nationals under the PATRIOT Act[7], the double-standard that the government did not shun during the April 2002 Palestinian-Israeli crisis, President Bush's failure to denounce publicly anti-Muslim comments by conservative Christian leaders, and the Iraqi war campaign with its glaring anti-Arab stereotypes awakened many Muslim activists and scholars in America to their own obligation of restoring the image of their faith and traditions by assertively speaking out against and eschewing all forms of extremism, violence, and hatred in their midst. What is interesting is that out of their reconstitution of Islam one can trace a budding conception of a new pluralism. Even though the tenets of this new pluralism can be found in many aspects of American Muslim life, it can best be outlined, I believe, in the discourses of the so-called "progressive Muslim"[8] scholars who come from highly varied ethnic, geographical, linguistic, and intellectual backgrounds and who can be upheld as voices of legitimacy and authenticity. The new pluralism, "Global Pluralism," has the following tenets:

1. Beyond Abrahamic America:

On May 21, 2003, the Newhouse News Service interviewed religious leaders from the three 'Abrahamic' faiths about whether Americans should stop using the phrase "Judeo-Christian"[9] and use "Judeo-Christian-Islamic" or "Abrahamic" when describing the values and character that define the United States. National Muslim groups supporting a change included the Council on American-Islamic Relations, the Muslim American Society, the American Muslim Council, and the American-Muslim Alliance. These attempts at changing the language can be justified by the fact that the term "Judeo-Christian" is no longer inclusive. Yet it is difficult to think that the public will accept "Judeo-Christian-Islamic" when people who attacked the US on 9/11 did so in the name of Islam. To avoid falling into the trap of exclusivism, broader conceptions of pluralism were put forward. One way of doing so was through stressing the Americanness of the new religious outsiders, including Muslims and non-Muslims. This stance is best articulated by Osama Siblani, an influential voice among American Muslims and publisher of the Arab-American News in Dearborn, Michigan. "I believe we should call this the United States of America, made up of Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs, Muslims, Christians, Jews and others," said Siblani. "This stuff about language has to stop. We are all just Americans."[10]

2. Beyond tolerance:

In *Progressive Muslims*, Omid Safi underlines the shaky foundations of any conception of pluralism that rests only upon toleration and does not evolve into inclusion and participation. As he puts it

The connotations of "tolerance" are deeply problematic (…) the root of the term "tolerance comes from medieval toxicology and pharmacology, marking how much poison a body could "tolerate" before it would succumb to death. Is this the best that we can do? Is our task to figure out how many "others" (be they Muslims, Jews, blacks, Hindus, homosexuals, non-English speakers, Asians…) we can tolerate before it really kills us (?) In short, progressive Muslims do not wish for a "tolerant" Islam, any more than we long for a "tolerant" American or European society. Rather we seek to bring about a pluralistic society in which we honor and engage each other through our differences and our commonalities.[11]

3. Building bridges of understanding:

A study of the reactions to Muslims in various communities in the US after 9/11 reflects a curious mix of responses. They vary between tales of sympathy, cooperation, and compassion and others of intolerance expressed through hate crimes directed at individuals and institutions. Out of the welter of reasons that can express this polarity emerges a fairly clear pattern among the many American Muslim citizen and leader of organizations I interviewed in geographically different parts of the US. It rests on the distinction between exclusivist and pluralist communities. The pattern, it seems, applies as much to the Muslim communities as it does to other faith communities. Dr. Koshampour, the director of the Islamic Council of Greater Chicago, argued that his community mosque was not attacked because they had been very active in interfaith dialogue years before 9/11. He

added that his community and other faith communities formed human shields to protect the mosques of the isolationists among Muslims. Isolationism within the Muslim communities is anchored in religious orientations that are distinctively puritan and supremacist.

4. Reconstituting Islam:

To promote a pluralism based on mutual understanding and respect between religions, progressive scholars of Islam have recommended a reconstitution[12] rather than a reformation of Islam. Their objection is due to the fact that in the very language of "Reformation" lies the notion of a significant break with the past and split within the Muslim communities. It also implies that Islam adapts the historical and cultural course of action laid out by the Christian tradition. Unlike their Christian predecessors who associated religious progress with a rupture with the past, Europe and traditionalism, the progressive Muslim project, argues Omid Safi, "is not so much an epistemological rupture from what has come before as a fine-tuning, a polishing, a grooming, an editing, a re-emphasizing of this and a correction of that. In short, it is a critical engagement with the heritage of Islamic thought, rather than a casual bypassing of its accomplishments... It might be an easier task to start with a *tabula rasa*, but that would not be an Islamic project. Being a progressive Muslim, at least in the view of this group, mandates a difficult, onerous, critical, uneasy engagement with the tradition."[13]

Engagement with tradition concerns not only Muslim scholars of varied ethnic, geographic, linguistic, and intellectual backgrounds, but also non-Muslim scholars who are involved in producing knowledge about Islam for ordinary Muslims and non-Muslims. Such production of knowledge, which is a process of image-building, should, according to progressive Muslims, be rebuilt on sound assets. These include the following:

1- Engaging the Islamic tradition as a dynamic and viable living tradition by transcending pietistic fictions about Islam developed by both Muslim apologists and by so-called orientalists. According to Khaled Abou El Fadl, "the apologetic orientation consisted of an effort by a large number of commentators to defend and salvage the Islamic system of belief and tradition from the onslaught of orientalism, Westernization, and modernity by simultaneously emphasizing both the compatibility and also the supremacy of Islam." He carries this logic further and argues that "A common heuristic device of apologetics was to argue that any meritorious or worthwhile modern institutions were first invented and realized by Muslims. Therefore, according to the apologists, Islam liberated women, created a democracy, endorsed pluralism, protected human rights, and guaranteed social security long before these institutions ever existed in the West" (p55).

The main effect of such apologetics was to turn Islam into an untouchable symbol and to marginalize the complexity of Islamic intellectual heritage by reducing the history of Muslims into immutable origins. This essentialist reading of the past is no less obscurantist than that of orientalist writers whose essentialist approach to the history of Muslims is constituted essentially by a static religion.

2-Appreciating differences of orientations: The attempt to reflect critically on the heritage of Islamic thought and to adapt it to the modern world requires an honest intellectual study of the perspectives of various schools of thought. Such a study is essential to legitimize a range of opinions and to acknowledge a spectrum of interpretations. In doing so, learned scholars would situate themselves in that wider spectrum. Undertaking self-positioning would expose the exclusivism of many con-

temporary Muslim pundits who hijack an entire tradition, claiming to be a one-man spokesperson for all Muslims. This supremacist posture excludes debate and discussion within the tradition and stymies the richness that racial, gender, and other forms of diversity may bestow upon the tradition.

3-Commitment to social justice: Even though justice lies at the heart of Islam, involvement in social justice issues may be new to many contemporary Muslims in the US. After September 11, many Muslims have joined Christians, Jews, Buddhists, Hindus and others who have long been involved in social justice issues. By feeling responsible for the well-being and dignity of the marginalized members of the society, Muslim communities have realized the need to make positive contributions to culture and society so as to win the battle for inclusion. Yet such a battle is difficult to win as long as justice is not guaranteed to female and African American Muslims. In short, there can be no real participatory pluralism without getting women involved and incorporating the African American Muslim experience.

4-A commitment to the universality of Islam: Because Muslims have the moral and legal principles of pluralism available in their religious sources and heritages, and have had a long history of practicing pluralism, they can, according to "progressive Muslims", be a constructive and effective contributor to contemporary global pluralism. "To be committed to the universality of Islam and to cope with our era of global pluralism," argues Fathi Osman, "Muslims have to go beyond their bitter memories of history, including the Crusades, colonization, and exploitation, Jewish hostility, and Hindu fanaticism. They have to approach members of the Baha'i faith and Ahmadiyyas (…) Muslims cannot ignore each other in this rapprochement, either: they should also bridge the gaps between Sunnis, Shi'is (Zaydis, Ja'faris, Isma'ilis), Ibadis, and other sects and subdivisions (…)

Muslims ought to display the Quranic attitude towards human kind by extending the range of their dialogue to reach Hindus, Buddhists, Taoists, and other faiths. The Quran (7: 172-173) teaches that every human being has his or her spirituality, morality, and dignity, all human beings can develop universal relations and maintain global pluralism. It is significant that the Quran calls the good 'what is recognized by common sense' (ma'ruf) and evil 'what is rejected by common sense' (munkar)."[14]

In spite of the glaring absence of African American Islam in the list, Osman's view reflects a wider conception of pluralism that is based on global interfaith and intrafaith dialogues.

Conclusion:

The radicalism of religious diversity that has become a fact since the passage of the Immigration Act of 1965 has made it evident that America's diversity is much more radical than any of the foregoing formulas. Living in an epitome of the global village, some scholars of Islam in the US have advanced the pluralist state of mind further to become global in scope. The moral and legal principles of pluralism available in their religious sources and heritages, and their long history of practicing pluralism can help Muslims be constructive and effective contributors to religious pluralism in America and also contribute to contemporary global pluralism. Whether this project will be implemented will depend on how Muslims develop practical strategies and independent institutions to channel their ideas.

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Notes:

[1] Charles H. Lippy, Pluralism Comes of Age, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2000, p. 162

[2] It was also punctuated by acts of exclusion and quotas at the end of the 19th and the first half of the 20th centuries.

[3] Under the terms of the First Amendment, Congress could make no law either establishing or prohibiting the free exercise of religion. Until the Reformation of the sixteenth century, Europe has understood itself as Christendom _ one theoretically unified kingdom of Christ in which spiritual and worldly power were separate aspects of the whole. Even after the reformation, leading reformers such as Martin Luther and John Calvin, as well as Roman Catholics, had agreed that spiritual and worldly government went hand in hand… both mainstream Reformers and Roman Catholics persecuted the Radical Reformers, who with their sectarian principle were viewed as dangerous to the Church-state unity of Christendom. Official state churches, whether Protestant or Catholic, were the rule in Europe. Holland, the most liberal nation in its tolerance for dissent in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, still had a state reformed Church until 1795. England during the same period continued to maintain a religious establishment. Hence, when Americans separated church and state through the new federal Constitution, even though they understood themselves still as Christian and predominantly Protestant, they had created a radically innovative condition for religion. (p.403)

[5] William R. Hutchinson, Religious Pluralism in America: The Contentious History of a Founding Ideal. New haven and London: Yale University press, 2003, p. 61.

[6] Historically, the term "civil religion" was used by the French Enlightenment philosopher Jean- Jacques Rousseau (1712 - 1778). The word came to repeated use in the US to refer to a phenomenon that coincided with the birth of the nation. In the American context the resurgence of the term tends to be associated with Robert Bellah, who published an essay titled "Civil Religion" in 1967.

[7] According to The Status of Muslim Civil Rights in the United States 2002: Stereotypes and Civil Liberties, during the first few months following the attacks, between 1,200 and 1,700 nationals of Arab and Muslim countries "were taken into custody in the initial stage of the crackdown. There have been charges that detainees have not been informed of the reasons of their detention. Many have not had prompt access to a lawyer and detainees have been treated as if they were guilty until proven innocent." (P5)They are in violation of the 6th amendment that guarantees a speedy and public trial". Most of them were freed and none had any links to terrorism. On November 2001, Attorney General John Ashcroft announced that the government would conduct "voluntary" interviews with 5,000 legal Muslim Foreign nationals, 3,000 more were interviewed in 2002. Though the attorney general said the government learned a great deal from the initial interviews, but little was known as to how that information related to the investigation of the September 11th attacks or any suspected terrorists. The use of secret evidence was also the basis upon which three Muslim charities,21 designated by the government as terrorist organizations, were closed.

[8] Omid Safi defines "Progressive Muslims" as follows: Many people today who come from a whole host of religious, political, and ethnic backgrounds describe themselves as "progressives." There is, furthermore, a nascent community of Muslim activists and intellectuals

who readily identify with the term "progressive Muslims" and publicly embrace it. "Progressive," in this usage, refers to a relentless striving towards a universal notion of justice in which no single community's prosperity, righteousness, and dignity comes at the expense of another. Central to this notion of a progressive Muslim identity are fundamental values that we hold to be essential to a vital, fresh, and urgently needed interpretation of Islam for the twenty-first century. These themes include social justice, gender justice, and pluralism. Of course, the kind of Islamic interpretation one comes up with is largely determined by who undertakes the interpretation. (Progressive Muslims, p3)

[9] From its founding to the late 1940s, the United States was commonly described as Christian, a trend epitomized by an 1892 Supreme Court ruling in which Justice David Brewer wrote, "This is a Christian nation." In a 2002 survey by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life and the Pew Research Center for People and the Press, two-thirds of respondents said they consider the United States a "Christian nation" and 58 percent said the strength of American society is based on the religious faith of its people. However, only 14 percent said it is essential that a person believe in "basic Judeo-Christian values" in order to be a good American.

[10] Has the United States Become Judeo-Christian-Islamic?" See www.mpac.org (2003)

[11] Omid Safi, ed. Progressive Muslims : On Justice, Gender, and Pluralism, Oxford :Oneworld Publications, 2003 . pp 23-24.

[12] The term was used by Aziz Al-Azmeh in 1996.

[13] Omid Safi, ed. Progressive Muslims, p11.

[14] Mohammed Fathi Osman, The Children of Adam: An Islamic Perspective on Pluralism, Washington, D.C.: Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding : History and International Affairs, 1996 , p.65.

Anatomy of a Hoax: Holocaust Denial

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The phenomenon of Holocaust denial, once considered a fringe manifestation with very little impact, has, more or less, entered the mainstream of historiographical and academic debate in recent years. The main danger associated with the deniers' discourse is that of forcing into the public conscience the awareness of the fact that there might be "more sides" to the Holocaust history than previously known based on written documents, testimonies of survivors and other types of proofs. The following paper is a review of the emergence, development and extent of Holocaust denial, especially in the United States, as well as an attempt to summarise the deniers' arguments, claims and motivations, following the line opened by Deborah Lipstadt and other historians.

"The alleged Hitlerian gas chambers and the alleged genocide of the Jews form one and the same historical lie, which permitted a gigantic financial swindle whose chief beneficiaries have been the State of Israel and international Zionism, and whose main victims have been the German people and the Palestinian people as a whole"[1].

One might think that this kind of statement is the work of a completely twisted mind and that any man with a shred of common sense would dismiss it from the very start. But, unfortunately and ironically enough, this is just one example among many such statements that form the bases of what is now commonly known as the phenomenon of Holocaust denial. The worst part of all is that this phenomenon, far from being just a fringe school of thought, has gained significant ground, especially in the last two decades, and has entered common conscience, finding for itself quite a number of followers.

Holocaust denial has become an accepted, if not quite respected, historical assertion and it has generated realms of "well-founded historical literature".

Holocaust denial emerged immediately after World War II, especially in the United States, as an isolated phenomenon with little or no credibility, but it has come a long way since then. Nowadays, traces of Holocaust denial and overt anti-Semitism can be found in the United Sates as well as throughout Europe and the Middle East and even as far away as Australia.

The explanations for the spreading and influence of this *"growing assault on truth and memory"[2]* are many and diverse. In the following paragraphs, I will try to outline the essence of this phenomenon, to present its perpetrators and to review some of the most important reactions against it.

The Holocaust is one of those historical facts with a very enduring life: nowadays, almost half a century later, it has lost little of its striking impact upon the memory of mankind. Newspapers, magazines, publishing houses, and research institutes regularly print articles, books, and studies centered upon different aspects directly referring to or merely related to the Holocaust. On the other hand, there are almost just as many newspapers, magazines, publishing houses and institutes that regularly publish materials on Holocaust denial, which points out that there certainly is an audience ready to read and to accept the claims made by the authors of these materials, the self-proclaimed "historical revisionists". The ground on which the seeds of this denial are planted seems very fertile, and the more public the debate about it, the more people are likely to be caught up in the denial movement.

One of the most well-known and controversial public debates about Holocaust denial was generated by the recent suit brought by the freelance historian David Irving, probably the most prominent figure of Holocaust denial.

David Irving sued Professor Deborah Lipstadt for libel, claiming that the assertions she made in her book, *Denying the Holocaust*, were extremely offensive to him. The trial gripped the attention of both the British and the American media for many months, and the testimony given by David Irving horrified both the judges and the audience. The mere fact that such persons are taken seriously by so many people worldwide is extremely alarming, because it only shows us how vulnerable public opinion is when the instruments of manipulation are carefully orchestrated.[3]

Ignorance is the deniers' first ally in their mission to distort history, and the higher the level of ignorance, the more dangerous the effects of the denials are. In this respect, one example is very relevant.[4] In April 1993, in conjunction with the opening of the U.S. Holocaust Museum, the Roper Organization conducted a survey meant to determine the extent of Americans' knowledge of the phenomenon. The results expected by the organization and the American Jewish Committee were not at all startling. However, the answer to one of the question they initially wanted to eliminate from the questionnaire was more than shocking: when asked "do you think it possible or impossible that the Holocaust did not happen: 22% of American adults and 20% of American high school students replied that it was possible. This answer shows that Holocaust denial is not just an eerie phenomenon with no more credibility to it than the assertion that the Earth is flat.

Under such circumstances, one should not be amazed at the growing force of Holocaust denial and at the fact that its very existence is now being questioned in talk shows[5] on national television.

Deborah Lipstadt's book, *Denying the Holocaust – the Growing Assault on Truth and Memory,* is the best to-date account of Holocaust denial. It presents chronologically and clearly the roots of the phenomenon, the insti-

tutions and people involved in the practice of denial, and their main works and arguments.[6] The author tries to summarize the deniers' most frequent claims (she identifies five major themes for research in the field of denial: the absence of a single master plan for the annihilation of the Jewish people; the absence of gas chambers used for mass murder at Auschwitz and other camps; the fact that the testimonies of the survivors are given so much credibility because there is no objective documentation to prove the Nazi genocide; the absence of a total loss of Jewish lives between 1941 and 1945; the "mock trial" character of the Nuremberg trials, staged for the benefit of the Jews). She also tries to find explanations for the proliferation of denial literature, especially in the last two decades. The main argument that she brings is that the denial stirrings are closely connected with the neo-Nazi ideology and the rise of the radical right in politics. The evolution of West European politics, especially in the last ten years, has pointed out elements that show a return to the anti-Semitic language and attitudes common more than half a century ago. However, the anti-Semitism of the 1990s encompasses new elements and new ideas that feed the anti-Jewish feeling that has always existed in Europe. Neo-Nazism and the new radical right rely on Holocaust denial in order to obtain legitimacy and recognition in the political arena. Jean Marie le Pen[7], Jorg Haider, and Pim Fortuyn, are some of the western politicians who have played the card of anti-Semitism and have enjoyed considerable success. The fact that these people come from countries other than Germany (where the appearance of such ideas could seem more natural) shows that European anti-Semitism is far from extinct. Actually, the issue of an anti-Semitic Europe has received extensive coverage from prestigious magazines such as *Time*[8]: *"a Boston newspaper blared Kristallnacht Returns and declared, 'not since the Third Reich has there been anything like it.*" In

response to anxious enquiries, the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles issued an advisory warning Jews *"to exercise extreme caution while traveling to France and Belgium."*[9] However, this does not mean that there is no anti-Semitism in Germany or in other parts of Europe. Actually, the region that has shown itself most prone to fall prey to deniers' ideas in the past ten years is post-Communist East Central Europe, where the political and social atmosphere have been favorable to the development of such ideas that I will present later on.[10]

The most prominent European "canaries in the coal mine"[11] are David Irving, who achieved international fame during and after the aforementioned trial, Ingrid Rimland, Ernst Zündel, Fred Leuchter, Willis Carto, David Duke, Masami Uno, Richard Harwood, and Robert Faurisson, whom I have already quoted and whose arguments and statements would be extremely funny if there weren't so many people who take them seriously. His area of study is rather unique: *"criticism of texts and documents, investigation of meaning and counter-meaning, of the true and the false"*[12]. The irony here is that Faurisson regularly creates facts where there are none and dismisses and falsifies pieces of factual information that disprove his scenarios. One of his assertions refers to the "Draconian orders" given to the German army *"not to participate in excesses against civilians, including the Jews; consequently, the massive killings of the Jews could not have happened"*[13]. Faurisson also asserts that the wearing of the yellow star was imposed on the Jews in order to ensure the safety of the German soldiers. Following the same logic, one can easily reach the conclusion that six-year old children, who were also forced to wear the yellow star, constituted fierce threats to the well being of the German soldiers[14]. One of his best-founded arguments, however, remains the one regarding the gas chambers. According to him, the reason why one should not believe in the existence of gas cham-

bers is that *"no death camp victim has given eye witness testimony of actual gassings"*[15]. Faced with such irrefutable arguments, any historian who tries to disprove his findings has no other option but to rest his case.

Nevertheless, leaving all irony aside, Holocaust denial is not a threat just to Jewish history, but a threat to all who believe in the ultimate power of reason. The clever disguises used by these people in order to get their message across could easily misguide one's power of reason. For instance, the first and foremost circle of deniers has been established around the Californian-based and respectably named *Institute for Historical Review*, which has already gained important status especially in the United Sates, and which has already organized several so-called "revisionist conferences" beginning in 1974. The deniers have twisted the term "revisionism"[16] so as to suit their purposes, claiming the right to free speech under the protection of the First Amendment. Their main arguments – "the Ten Commandments of Holocaust denial" – include the pronouncement saying that the Holocaust, the organized plan to annihilate the Jewish people during the Second World War, simply did not happen. There never was a master plan whose result would be the annihilation of European Jewry. On saying that, the deniers deliberately ignore historical facts such as Hitler's own declarations published in official documents of the time, such as the two statements I would like to quote and that show the extent to which the Third Reich was infused with anti-Semitism and hatred of the Jews, so much so that the organized massacre of all these people was the next logical step. In a speech delivered before the Reichstag in January 1939, Hitler said: *"Today I want to be a prophet once more: if international finance Jewry inside and outside of Europe should succeed once more in plunging nations into another world war, the consequence will not be the bolshevisation of the earth and thereby the victory of the Jewry, but the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe"*[17]. Another statement, made in September 1942 (eight months after the Wansee Conference in January 1942, which marked the start of the implementation of the Final Solution) reinforces his ideas: *"in my Reichstag speech, I have spoken of two things: first, that now that the war has been forced upon us, no array of weapons and no passage of time will bring us to defeat, and second, that if Jewry should plot another world war to exterminate the Aryan peoples in Europe, it would not be the Aryan peoples which will be exterminated, but the Jewry…At one time, the Jews in Germany laughed about my prophecies. I do not know whether they are still laughing or whether they have already lost all desire to laugh. But right now I can only repeat: they will stop laughing everywhere and I shall be right also in that prophecy"*[18].

By their claims, the deniers try to absolve the Nazis of all guilt and put the victors and the vanquished of the war on par. Moreover, that the the Nazis were not the perpetrators of murder and destruction, but rather the Allies were, who should also be held responsible, not only for countless civilian casualties subsequent to their bombing of German cities, but also for the death of Jewish prisoners who had been gathered in labour camps "for their own protection"[19]. Deniers acknowledge that some Jews were incarcerated in such places as Auschwitz, but this camp was equipped with *"all the luxuries of a country club, including a swimming pool, dance hall, and recreational facilities"*[20]. (These arguments were presented at the trial of the Canadian denier Ernst Zündel by the "expert engineer" Fred Leuchter, whose case I shall discuss in the further on.)

The birthplace of Holocaust denial was not Germany, as many might think, but the United States, where one can find many sources of inspiration for this phenomenon as early as the 1920s and 1930s. As Deborah

Lipstadt has observed, *"modern Holocaust denial draws inspiration from a variety of sources. Among them are a legitimate historical tradition that was highly critical of government policies and believed that history was being used to justify those policies; an age-old nexus of conspiratorial scenarios that place a neat coherence on widely diverse developments; and hyperbolic critiques of government policies, which, despite an initial connection to reality, became so extreme as to assume a quality of fantasy. The aforementioned historical tradition was taken over and co-opted by Holocaust deniers. In the other two cases, denial was their logical successors"*[21]. American revisionism was born in 1920, after the First World War, when Sidney B. Fay and Harry Elmer Barnes started publishing articles and studies criticizing American involvement in the war, which, according to them, had been triggered by Jewish influences. Barnes can be rightfully regarded as the "father of American Holocaust denial", because he started writing articles attacking the facts referring to the destruction of European Jewry even before World War II had finished. Another famous and influential American anti-Semite in the interwar period was none other than Henry Ford, who not only wrote but also sponsored the publication of such overtly anti-Semitic pamphlets as the one entitled *The International Jew: the World's Foremost Problem*[22]. Some other historians, such as Charles Bread and Freda Utley, claimed, in the immediate aftermath of World War II, that *"Hitler did not want to go to war with Poland, but planned for Germany and Poland to dominate Europe together".*[23] Another favorite theme of argument for these early revisionists (I am reluctant to use the term "deniers" at this stage, because their activity does not fall into the category of those proliferated by David Irving and his supporters) was that of comparison between the Nazi atrocities and the casualties and destruction brought about by the Allies or in some other historical atrocities,

even the American Civil War. One particular statement, made by the English professor Austin J. App, whom I shall refer to later on as well, is relevant in this context: *"the top U.S. media, possibly because they are dominated by Jews, have no tradition of fairness to anyone they hate. They have also in wartime subverted much of the public to a frenzy of prejudice. Even in our civil war, where Americans fought against Americans, Americans of the North were told and came to believe that Choctaw County stunk with dead bodies of murdered slaves and that the Southern belles had worn necklaces strung out of Yankee eyeballs!… If Yankees could believe that Southern girls wore necklaces of Yankee eyeballs, would they not even more readily believe that Germans made lampshades out of the skins of prisoners, or that they boiled Jews into soap?"*[24]. However preposterous these claims might be, all the revisionists of this period differ from the Holocaust deniers in the sense that they stopped short of claiming that the atrocities never happened. They indeed tried to minimize the number of dead, to downplay the cruelties inflicted upon the Jews in the death camps, but they never actually said that they did not happened.

However, one cannot say the same about what transpired in the early 1950s, when revisionist historians began transforming into outright deniers, mostly influenced by the radical right ideology that had survived the fascist period and was trying to gain new legitimacy. The activity of the early proper deniers was also prompted by the publication of the first accounts of the Holocaust. One of the first defenders of the Nazis in the post-war era was the French fascist Maurice Bardèche. In his works *(Letter to François Mauriac, Nuremberg or the Promised Land)*, he contended that the evidence about the concentration camps had been seriously falsified and that the real culprits for the atrocities were not the Nazis, but the Jews themselves, because they had helped insti-

gate the war[25]. Another Frenchman, Paul Rassiner, former prisoner in the Büchenwald camp, published in 1948 a work called *Le passage de la ligne*, in which he claims that the survivors' testimonies could not be given much credibility because they were thoroughly biased. However, his own words were given a lot of credibility, since in 1977 the American publishing house Noontide Press published all his major books concerning the Holocaust in one issue entitled *Debunking the Genocide Myth*[26]. Rassiner also published a book in response to the classic text *Destruction of European Jewry* by Raul Hilberg, published in 1961, in which Rassiner claims that the figures presented by Hilberg in the book, all very well documented and concordant with the facts, were much inflated. Rassiner's ultimate argument is that *"some people may have been killed, but those who conducted such exterminations were acting on their own and not in the name of a state order or a political doctrine"*[27].

The 1970s marked a change in the denier's methods: they started coming up with new arguments alongside old ones, the most important being the money element – the Jews pretended to have been Holocaust victims so as to inflict a deep sense of guilt upon the German people and thus to be able to blackmail them for hard cash poured into the Israeli state bank. Consequently, all talk and evidence about the six million dead, the gas chambers, and the crematoria was an invention of the Zionist establishment. The deniers' attacks focused on such prominent historians as Raul Hilberg and Hannah Arendt, whom they dismissed as "frauds". Moreover, when confronted with such overt statements as the ones made by Hitler himself, which I have already quoted, the deniers dismiss them as well as *"irrelevant hyperboles, typical of the kind of defiance that was hurled by the ancient heroes"*[28].

The late 1970s and the early 1980s saw the establishment of a well-organized school of Holocaust denial, especially in the United Sates, which had become the place with the most flourishing denial literature and where many European deniers came to publish their works. Until that period, Holocaust denial in the U.S. had been primarily the province of fringe, racist and extremist groups who had found some support in a number of seemingly respectable circles. The inventiveness of the deniers found new arguments, the most quoted of them being the one according to which out of the 5 million Jews living in the United States, about 90% of them were European Jews who had allegedly died in the Holocaust, but who were safe and sound and living on money paid by the German and American taxpayers[29]. Harry Elmer Barnes, whom I have already mentioned, contributed significantly to the shaping of the new denial ideology, publishing some rather influential works such as *The Struggle Against the Historical Blackout*, in which he expresses his strong belief that Germany was in no way responsible either for the outbreak of World War II or for the atrocities it had been accused of. Barnes also praised Paul Rassiner for his great contribution to the emergence of the truth concealed by the Jewish politicians: *"this courageous author lays the chief blame for misrepresentation on those whom we must call the swindlers of the crematoria, the Israeli politicians who derive billions of marks from nonexistent, mythical and imaginary cadavers, whose numbers have been reckoned in an unusually distorted and dishonest manner"*[30]. Thus, Barnes paved the way for the claims of the American "guru of Holocaust denial", Austin J. App. A professor of English at the University of Scranton and LaSalle College, App, just like Barnes, was mainly concerned to lift the moral burden of the atrocities charge from the shoulders of a defeated and divided Germany. App was known for being an ardent defender of Nazi Germany. App's major contribution was the formulation of eight undeniable axioms that have become the fundaments of the denial

theory, included in his suggestively entitled book, *The Six Million Swindle: Blackmailing the German People for Hard Marks with Fabricated Corpses*.(1973) App's main preoccupation was that of dismissing the figure of six million as a "smear terrorizing myth", claiming that there was not a single *"order, document or blueprint that proved that the Nazis intended to annihilate the Jews"*[31]. He offered a strange argument to prove his point: the fact the some Jews had survived constituted proof that none were killed[32]. He also argued that Nazi Germany was so efficient that no Jew could have escaped if the Nazis had indeed intended to destroy all Jews. Consequently, the Holocaust was a hoax perpetrated by the Jews and communists alike.

His famous eight axioms are worth quoting, because they prove just how far the deniers are willing to go just to prove their twisted arguments:

"1. Emigration, never annihilation, was the Reich's plan for solving Germany's Jewish problem. Had Germany intended to annihilate all the Jews, a half million concentration camp inmates would not have survived and managed to come to Israel where they collect "fancy indemnities" from West Germany.

2. Absolutely no Jews were gassed in any concentration camps in Germany and evidence is piling up that none were gassed in Auschwitz. The Hitler gas chambers never existed. The gas installations found in Auschwitz were really crematoria for cremating corpses of those who had died from a variety of causes, including the genocidal Anglo-American bombing raids"

3. The majority of Jews who disappeared and remained unaccounted for did so in territories under Soviet, not German control.

4. The majority of Jews who supposedly died while in German camps were in fact subversive partisans, spies, saboteurs and criminals or victims of unfortunate but internationally legal reprisals.

5. If there existed the slightest likelihood that the Nazis had really murdered six million Jews, "world Jewry" would demand subsidies to conduct research on the topic and Israel would open its archives to historians. They had not done so. Instead, they have persecuted and branded as an anti-Semite anyone who wished to publicize the hoax. This persecution constitutes the most conclusive evidence that this figure is a swindle.

6. The Jews and the media who exploit this figure have failed to offer even a shred of evidence to prove it. The Jews misquote Eichmann and other Nazis in order to try and substantiate their claims.

7. It is the accusers, not the accused, who must provide the burden of proof to substantiate the six million figure, the Talmudists and Bolsheviks have so browbeaten the Germans that they pay billions and do not dare to demand proof.

8. The fact that Jewish scholars themselves have "ridiculous" discrepancies in their calculations of the number of victims constitutes firm evidence that there is no scientific proof to this accusation"[33].

App's arguments were further explored by Richard Harwood in a booklet published in 1974, entitled *Did Six Million Really Die? The Truth at Last*, which was sent to major newspapers and to the leaders of the British Jewish communities, being the preeminent British work on Holocaust denial for almost ten years after its publication. Harwood argues that *"Hitler had no reason to murder the Jews when he needed them for forced labour*." He goes on to point that the total number of Jews in Europe before the war was six and a half million and that one and a half million emigrated abroad. Harwood cites figures from international organizations - all quoted – to demonstrate that there were not more than three million Jews in Nazi Germany[34].

Deniers' efforts have long been centered upon gaining scholarly and historical legitimacy, and one step to-

wards this goal was made in 1976 with the publication of *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century* by Arthur Butz, professor of electrical engineering at Northwestern University, who significantly changed the nature of Holocaust denial. The American press extensively reported about the stirrings caused by the publication of this book, whose denial arguments are very cleverly disguised, since at first sight Butz appears to be a serious scholar who is very critical of Nazi Germany. Butz also tried to explain away all the Nazi references to the destruction of the Jews by misquoting statements made by Hitler and Himmler, and attempts to expose the Holocaust hoax as a product of a Jewish-dominated press. Butz was strongly supported by the leader of the Institute of Historical Review, Willis Carto, who declared at the first revisionist convention in 1974 that *"if Satan himself had tried to create a force for the destruction of the nations, he could have done no better than to invent the Jews"*[35]. The Californian Institute also provided support and "expertise" in 1986, at the trial initiated by the Canadian government against Ernst Zündel, charged with stimulating anti-Semitism through the publication and distribution of material he knew was false. (One such booklet was entitled *The Hitler We Loved and Why*). Among the deniers present at the trial were David Irving and Robert Faurisson, who provided "specialized consulting". However, the climax of the trial was reached with the testimony of the "expert engineer" Fred Leuchter, who was in fact just a history graduate from an obscure American university, but who claimed to have the necessary competencies to conduct specialized tests at Auschwitz in order to discover whether the facilities there could have been used to conduct mass gassings. Unsurprisingly enough, the firm conclusion that Leuchter presented before the jury was that those facilities could have under no circumstances been used to kill people – they were just innocent shower rooms; moreover, he also arrived at the

conclusion that Zyklon B was a pesticide whose main purpose was that of killing lice, not people. The deniers present in Canada considered Leuchter's testimony as a historic event, marking the end of the "gas chambers myth".

However, the Court was not eager to accept Leuchter's arguments and the judge dismissed both the "scientific proofs" he produced and his qualifications as an engineer. However, *The Leuchter Report* is still regarded a sort of Holy Grail by the perpetrators of Holocaust denial.

Following the popularity gained by Holocaust deniers after the Zündel trial, they considered that it was time to make another move towards acquiring legitimacy in one of the most sensitive environments: the campuses of the American universities, where the early 1990s saw the emergence of several posters and announcements calling for "open debate" about the existence of the Holocaust. The person behind this carefully orchestrated assault was Bradley Smith, director of the self-styled *Committee for Open Debate on the Holocaust*. He launched a propaganda campaign by placing ads in the campuses of the most important American universities, ads entitled *"The Holocaust Story: How Much is False? The Case for Open Debate".* These ads provoked a fierce debate in the campuses, between those who supported the idea of publishing the ads in the campus newspapers in the name of free speech and those who considered that such ads were a danger not only for the academic environment but also for the historical memory in general. Smith bet on the concept of political correctness to support his claim for open debate, and indeed some universities did publish his ad either as an article or an op-ed piece in the campus newspaper. However, the issue here was not political correctness or free speech – it was distortion of facts and fabrication of evidence, and if some universities indeed decided to publish such an ad, then the deniers

could consider that they obtained a major victory towards penetrating segments of public opinion that might be fertile ground for the spreading of their ideas[36]. The great danger about publishing such ads in university newspapers is that, as Deborah Lipstadt put it, *"many students read both the ad and the editorials condemning it. Some, including those who read neither but knew of the issue, may have walked away from the controversy convinced that there are two sides to this debate: the "revisionists" and "the established historians". They may not know that there is tremendous controversy about the former. They may not be convinced that the two sides are of equal validity. They may even know that the deniers keep questionable company. But nonetheless they assume that there is an "other side". That is the most frightening aspect of this entire matter"*[37].

As I have already pointed out, Deborah Lipstadt mainly refers to the phenomenon of Holocaust denial in the United Sates, where it has been cultivated for decades, but that does not mean that Europe has been spared this phenomenon. I have mentioned at the beginning of this paper that Europe is going through a new phase of anti-Semitism during which it is not unusual to see in the newspapers declarations such as the one printed by the Italian daily *La Reppublica* on March 24, 2000: *"Six Million Jews dead? No way, they were much fewer. Let's stop with this fairytale exploited by Israel to capture international solidarity"*[38]. There are hardly any fairies in this story, I may add – and this statement is not an isolated one. All over Europe and the Middle East, articles and studies have been published in order to substantiate the claim that the Holocaust is nothing more than a very convenient way for Israel to get money and international sympathy.

Post-communist Eastern Europe has also witnessed both a rise in anti-Semitism and the emergence of a new concept connected to the Holocaust period, that of "organized forgetting"[39]. The attitudes towards Holocaust in this region range from outright Holocaust negationism (for many years openly professed in Romania until recently, until the appearance of harsher libel laws, by such politicians as Corneliu Vadim Tudor and Stanislav Panis, and writers such as Radu Theodoru, who claims that *"no document on the Holocaust can be found. No order signed by Hitler, Himmler or other German leaders. The much-heralded Final Solution had two versions: that preceding the war against the USSR and consisting of the deportation of Jews to Madagascar; and that following the war outbreak, consisting in their deportation to the Far East. The gas chambers were delousing and disinfecting chambers, and the much heralded Zyklon B was a pesticide, as demonstrated by American engineer Leuchter in the two analytical repots he produced after visiting all camps in Germany, Austria and Poland. The crematoria burned the corpses of those who died of typhus."*[40]) to deflective negationism and selective negationism. Also, Holocaust is now associated with "comparative trivialization", namely the banalization of the phenomenon and of its consequences. Shafir points out the meaning of "comparative trivialization" as being *"the willful distortion of the record and of the significance of the Holocaust, either to the humanization of its local record in comparison with atrocities committed by the Nazis, or through comparing the record of the Holocaust itself with experiences of massive suffering endured by local populations or by mankind at large at one point or another in records of history"*[41].

The debate about the Holocaust is still in full swing, and there is no telling what might follow. The arguments that will be brought into the spotlight by the deniers cannot be predicted. All that we, the ordinary common sense

people, can do is be on guard for these distortions and be prepared to disprove them with facts. The belief that Holocaust survivors will one day be able to walk down the street without being pointed at and sneered at and the Holocaust in itself will not be contested should be kept alive, just like Anne Frank (one of the deniers' preferred targets) maintained her belief in escape until the very end: *"I simply cannot build my hopes on a foundation consisting of despair, misery and death. I feel the suffering of millions, I can hear the overapproaching thunder that will destroy us too – and yet, if I look up into the heavens I know that this cruelty too shall end and that peace and tranquility will return again"[42].*

Notes:

[1] Robert Faurisson quoted by The Guardian Weekly (April 7 1991)

[2] See Deborah Lipstadt, Denying the Holocaust, New York, 1993, Penguin Books

[3] So as to exemplify the kind of statements typical for Irving, I would like to quote a fragment from a speech he delivered in 1996 in Portland and posted on the Internet: "when I get to Australia in January I know what is going to happen. They are going to wheel out all the so-called eyewitnesses. One in particular, Mrs. Altman, I've clashed with her once or twice. She is very convincing. They can be very convincing. Because they have to do it so often over the years. They've had a free run. We're going to meet because she has that tattoo. I am going to say, 'you have that tattoo, we all have the utmost sympathy for you. But how much money have you made on it! In the last 45 years! Can I estimate! Quarter of a million! Half million! Certainly not less. That's how much you've made from the German taxpayers and the American taxpayers.'

Ladies and gentlemen, you're paying $3 billion a year to the state of Israel. Compensation to people like Mrs. Altman. She'll say, 'why not, I suffered' I'll say you didn't. You survived. By definition you didn't suffer. Not half as much as those who died. They suffered. You didn't. You're the one making the money. Explain to me this. Why have you people made all the money, but Australian soldiers who suffered for five years in Japanese prison camps haven't got a bent nickel out of it!"

[4] Cf. Lipstadt, op. cit., p. xi.

[5] The host of one such talk show in which Holocaust survivors and deniers were brought face to face, Montel Williams, urged viewers to stay tuned after the commercial break in order to find out whether the Holocaust was "a myth or a truth" (Lipstadt, op. cit., p. 2).

[6] However, it is not the only book dealing with the subject. Michael Shermer and Alex Grobman are the authors of another book focused on Holocaust denial, but their work is largely based on what Lipstadt says. (Michael Shermer, Alex Grobman, Denying History – Who Says the Holocaust Never Happened and Why They Say It, New York, 1995 Doubleday Books).

[7] Le Pen even went so far as to declare that "the gas chambers were a mere detail of history" – D. Lipstadt, op. cit., p. 10.

[8] Time Europe, June 17 2002, vol. 159/ no. 24.

[9] How bad is it?, in Time Europe, June 17 2002, vol. 159/ no. 24.

[10] See also Michael Shafir, Between Denial and "Comparative Trivialisation" – Holocaust Negationism in Post-Communist East Central Europe, Jerusalem 2002, The Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Anti-Semitism.

[11] Lipstadt, op. cit., p. 2.

[12] Ibidem, p. 9.

[13] Ibidem.

[14] Ibidem.

[15] Ibidem, p. 16.

[16] This concept was launched by the renowned American historian William Appleman Williams in connection with the American foreign policy in the early period of the Cold War.

[17] Lipstadt, op. cit., p. 61.

[18] Lipstadt, op. cit., p. 61-62.

[19] Cf. Lipstadt, p. 21.

[20] Ibidem, p. 23.

[21] Ibidem, p. 31.

[22] The title of this pamphlet indicates the fact that Ford strongly believed in the "world Jewish conspiracy" promoted by the Protocols of the Elders of Zion; he actually financed the publication of 6000 copies of this infamous work.

[23] Lipstadt, op. cit., p. 40.

[24] Quoted in Lipstadt, op. cit., p. 46.

[25] Cf. Lipstadt, p. 50.

[26] Noontide Press is closely connected with the Californian headquarters of the Institute for Historical Review.

[27] Lipstadt, p. 52.

[28] Paul Rassiner, quoted in D. Lipstadt, op. cit., p. 62.

[29] Cf. George Lincoln Rockwell, In the Valley of Death Rode the Six Million. Or Did They?, Los Angeles 1979, Noontide Press.

[30] Quoted in Lipstadt, op. cit., p. 74.

[31] Cf. Lipstadt, p. 93.

[32] "Every Jew who survived the German occupation is proof of this" – see D. Lipstadt, p. 93.

[33] Quoted in Lipstadt, pp. 99-100.

[34] Lipstadt, op. cit., p. 119.

[35] Ibidem, p. 154.

[36] Among the universities that accepted this ad for publication were University of Arizona, Cornell University, Duke University, University of Georgia, Howard University, University of Illinois at Urbana-Campaign, Louisiana State University, University of Michigan, University of Montana, Northwestern University, Ohio State University, Rutgers University, Vanderbilt University, and Washington University. The list of those that refused to have anything to do with the ad includes U. C. - Berkeley, Chicago State University, Brown University, U. C. - Santa Barbara, Dartmouth University, Emory University, Georgetown University, Harvard University, University of Minnesota, University of North Carolina, University of Pennsylvania, Purdue University, Rice University, University of South Carolina, University of Tennessee, University of Texas, UCLA, University of Virginia, Yale University, and University of Wisconsin.

[37] Lipstadt, p. 208.

[38] The declaration belongs to Ikrima Said Sabri, the Palestinian-Authority appointed imam of the Al-Aqsa mosque and mufti of Jerusalem, and is quoted in Goetz Nordbruch, The Socio-Historical Background of Holocaust Denial in Arab Countries – Reactions to Roger Garaudy's The Founding Myths of Israeli Politics, Jerusalem 2001, The Vidal Sassoon International Centre for the Study of Antisemitism.

[39] Shafir, op. cit., p. 4.

[40] Ibidem, p. 22.

[41] Ibidem. p. 60.

[42] Quoted in Lipstadt, op. cit., p. 230.

Mihaela Frunză

Între religiozitate și marketing: analiza unui fenomen literar

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The article proposes an analysis of the recent best-seller "Da Vinci Code", by Dan Brown. Several keys of interpreting the novel are sketched – from deconstructing the accuses of plagiarism and blasphemy to analyzing the role of feminism and new-age religiousness in the plot making. In the end, the author comparatively examines the novel and the Mel Gibson movie "The Passion of Christ", in an attempt to better situate the figure of Christ in recent cultural products.

„O blasfemie greţoasă", „un banal roman de aventuri", „maculatură", „kitch" – sînt doar cîteva dintre descrierile de care „se bucură" romanul lui Dan Brown, *Codul lui da Vinci* în pagina culturală a unui binecunoscut cotidian românesc[1]. „Hrană putredă", „sac plin de minciuni", „comportament deplorabil pentru un autor" – sînt caracterizările rostite de un important reprezentant al Vaticanului, care recomanda suplimentar credincioşilor să nu cumpere şi să nu citească respectiva lucrare[2].

Citind astfel de prezentări, fie eşti tentat să consideri că romanul cu pricina şi autorul său nu fac doi bani – dar atunci te întrebi pe bună dreptate de ce e nevoie de atîta osîrdie în condamnarea lor – fie poţi să chestionezi buna credinţă a detractorilor şi să încerci să afli ce anume deranjează atît de mult la una din cele mai bine vîndute cărţi din ultimul deceniu.

Răspunsul la această întrebare pare evident din majoritatea articolelor defăimătoare: autorul respectivei cărţi susţine o serie de blasfemii la adresa religiei creştine, cu scopul (pragmatic pentru unii, drăcesc pentru alţii) de a face bani. Faptul în sine a părut atît de scandalos unor editori bine intenţionaţi şi profund creştini din Cluj, încît au tradus rapid una din cărţile-parazit care „demontează" mecanismul romanului. Cu scopul binecuvîntat de „a da o replică din interiorul creştinismului" – şi cu finalitatea extrem de plăcută de a vinde într-o singură lună peste 6000 de exemplare din respectivul volum[3].

Dar să lăsăm pentru moment aspectul pecuniar (deşi acestuia i se datorează o parte din fascinaţia ce urmăreşte nu doar produsul ca atare al romanului, ci şi diversele sub-produse asociate acestuia prin fenomenul „piggy-backing" – parazitism de marketing) şi să revenim la ceea ce constituie, pare-se, circumstanţa agravantă a acestuia – şi anume, caracterul blasfemiator la adresa religiei creştine. Mai exact, nucleul dur al romanului, teza acestuia, care în esenţă sună cam aşa: întemeietorul creştinismului, Iisus Hristos, ar fi fost un om obişnuit, care s-a căsătorit cu Maria Magdalena şi a avut copii, urmaşii acestora supravieţuind pînă în prezent.

Rezumată astfel, teoria „browniană" pare într-adevăr să ultragieze simţul comun al credinciosului obişnuit. Dar… există mai mulţi astfel de „dar".

Este Codul un plagiat sofisticat?

Mai întîi, că teza respectivă nu e nouă, ci reprezintă mai degrabă un clişeu pentru cei familiarizaţi cu literatura de tip ezoteric. I s-au găsit, de altfel, numeroase versiuni[4], ceea ce a dus pînă la acuze de plagiat adresate autorului. Respectivele acuze, în opinia noastră, nu se justifică, pentru că, pe de o parte, autorul îşi menţionează sursele, unde e cazul, iar pe de altă parte, genul ficţional al romanului nu se supune rigorilor bibliografice ale literaturii ştiinţifice. Altminteri, un alt autor, cu mult mai celebru, care scrie un roman oarecum apropiat ca atmosferă şi intrigă (este drept, la un nivel de sofisticare superior) – desigur, vorbim aici de Umberto Eco şi al său *Pendulul lui Foucault* – şi care menţionează în egală măsură respectiva erezie (alături de multe altele) s-ar vedea pus la rîndul său în situaţia de a-şi justifica cele scrise.

Probabil însă că respectiva alăturare îi va umple de oroare pe cititorii „purişti", adepţi ai valorii estetice necontaminate de comercial; de altfel, într-o paralelă voit sugestivă (din păcate, trădînd mai degrabă un nefericit umor involuntar), se poate citi în grupajul deja menţionat din *Adevărul* că: „Dan Brown e, faţă de modelul Umberto Eco, ceea ce este Vadim Tudor faţă de Adrian Păunescu"[5] (sic!). Însă nu ne-am propus să realizăm aici un clasament de bună purtare pentru autori; dacă sîntem consecvenţi, din punct de vedere strict al conţinutului, cu ce e mai puţin anticreştină cartea lui Umberto Eco decît cea a lui Dan Brown?! Mai ales că, date fiind prestigiul şi reputaţia de care se bucură primul, „circumstanţa agravantă" ar trebui să atîrne mai degrabă de partea acestuia.

„Prezumția de vinovăție" a falsității

Mai apoi, se pune întrebarea în ce măsură o teză romanescă poate fi evaluată în paradigma „adevăr/ fals" și în ce măsură ea iese din această paradigmă. Este limpede că diverșii autori de tipul lui James L. Garlow & Peter Jones nu și-au pus nici un moment o astfel de problemă, cu toții încercînd să demonstreze „falsitatea" romanului și a diferitelor sale piste și surse. Ca o culme a paroxismului acestui gen de întreprinderi, merită menționat faptul că, în orașul natal al lui Leonardo da Vinci, romanului i s-a intentat chiar un proces de falsitate (doar cu acuzatori, fără apărător!)[6].

În acest caz, s-ar putea susține că funcționează „prezumția de vinovăție", deoarece, în locul obișnuitului *disclaimer* care apare la operele de ficțiune, de tipul: „Toate personajele și faptele prezente în această operă sînt fictive. Orice asemănare cu realitatea este pur întîmplătoare", autorul plasează chiar pe primele pagini un avertisment în care se susține opusul: „Toate operele de artă, obiectivele arhitecturale, documentele și ritualurile secrete menționate în această carte sînt reale".

Cu alte cuvinte, și ca un posibil răspuns la întrebarea de mai sus, răspunsul ar fi: da, este legitim de analizat romanul în cadrul paradigmei „adevărat/ fals", deoarece însuși autorul, prin intermediul propriilor sale spuse, își plasează cartea în centrul acestei paradigme.

Și totuși, lucrurile sînt mai nuanțate decît pare să rezulte din acest raționament. Să luăm un alt exemplu, pentru lămurire. Nimeni nu poate nega faptul că au existat regele Franței, Ludovic al XIV-lea, cardinalul Richelieu și ducele Buckingam. Acestea sînt personaje reale, cu acte în regulă, consemnate istoric în nenumărate documente. Ele sînt, suplimentar, și personaje de roman binecunoscute, grație talentului unui autor (ce-i drept, pe vremea respectivă nu exista termenul de *best-seller*), și anume Alexandre Dumas.

Acest fapt nu le știrbește existența istorică, dar nici nu o legitimează pe cea a lui d'Artagnan, ca să luăm numele celui mai cunoscut dintre mușchetari. Personaje reale pot coexista în deplină armonie cu personaje fictive; de fapt, s-ar putea spune că ele împrumută celor din urmă un fel de „halou de realitate", ceea ce facilitează „îngurgitarea" firului narativ. Cu alte cuvinte, Alexandre Dumas ar fi putut să scrie, la începutul romanelor sale, la fel de bine, că „toate personajele istorice menționate în această carte sînt reale". Însă nimeni nu e așa de nebun ca să-l acuze pe Dumas că vrea să rescrie istoria Franței și a Angliei datorită faptului că-l amestecă pe d'Artagnan în niște intrigi care nu au existat niciodată.

La fel stau lucrurile, în opinia noastră, și în cazul lui Dan Brown. Desigur, **există** tabolurile lui Leonardo da Vinci și catedralele menționate în *Codul lui Da Vinci*. Există și organizațiile menționate de lucrarea sa. Nu se poate însă susține că interpretările și intrigile elaborate de Dan Brown în jurul unor persoane și opere reale au alt caracter decît fictiv. Ceea ce le plasează, dintr-o dată, dincolo de paradigma obișnuită a adevărului și falsului.

S-ar putea obiecta că, pe tot parcursul romanului, personajele principale – și în special Robert Langdon, alter ego-ul autorului – se comportă *ca și cînd* ar avea convingerea că tezele pe care le susțin sînt adevărate. Dar, ca să revenim la paralela noastră: lasă vreun moment impresia d'Artagnan că ar avea îndoieli asupra adversarilor cu care duelează?!

Cine a fost Maria Magdalena?

Unii însă vor spune că paralela aceasta nu rezistă din alte motive: personajul d'Artagnan este complet inofensiv și faptele sale nu impietează în nici un fel asupra istoriei reale a Franței, *nici măcar în ipoteza*

absurdă în care ar fi adevărate. În schimb, tezele prezentate de Dan Brown sînt extrem de periculoase şi impietează asupra istoriei bisericii creştine, *chiar dacă sînt false*[7].

Ce anume stă la baza acestor teze, pentru a fi atît de detestabile în ochii celor care le condamnă, ne-o spune chiar autorul: încercarea de reabilitare, împotriva unei istorii de două milenii, a sacrului feminin. Dat fiind că tentativa sa se desfăşoară în cadrul teologiei creştine, personajul principal asupra căruia se concentrează eforturile sale este Maria Magdalena, presupusă a figura în tabloul lui da Vinci, *Cina cea de taină*. Ceea ce susţine el despre acest personaj este, nici mai mult nici mai puţin, decît că ar reprezenta adevăratul „Sfînt Graal", fiind purtătoarea descendenţei lui Iisus. După moartea acestuia pe cruce, ea ar fi plecat în secret în Galia (Franţa de astăzi) unde ar fi născut o fiică, Sarah – ai cărei descendenţi ar fi inclus, între alţii, o serie dintre regii Franţei. Autorul invocă în sprijinul tezelor sale parte din scripturile apocrife descoperite la Nag Hammadi, şi respectiv aşa-numita „Evanghelie după Maria".

Dacă toate aceste amănunte biografice sînt mai degrabă nesigure, foarte puţini fiind cei care se încumetă să le susţină ca fapte istorice[8], există o controversă recentă legată de figura Mariei Magdalena, exact în contextul surselor documentare menţionate mai sus – respectiv *Codicele de la Nag Hammadi*, descoperit în Egipt sau *Evanghelia după Maria*, publicată la Berlin în 1955. Aceste controverse privesc însă mai degrabă rolul jucat de Maria Magdalena în interiorul primei comunităţi creştine, încercînd un fel de reabilitare tardivă a acesteia.

Unii autori susţin că acest interes recent pentru figuri de tipul Mariei Magdalena din Noul Testament (sau al lui Miriam, sora lui Moise, din Vechiul Testament) nu aduc nimic nou în privinţa datelor documentare, ci reprezintă mai degrabă „un proiect pentru un anume tip de teorie feministă angajată ideologic"[9]. Ceea ce se urmăreşte prin acest proiect ar fi demonstrarea existenţei unui conflict între bărbaţi şi femei în iudaism sau creştinismul timpuriu, conflict care ar fi fost tranşat în favoarea bărbaţilor, ce ar fi făcut tot posibilul pentru ştergerea urmelor în textele canonice (exemplu tipic de reacţie patriarhală). În cazul lui Miriam, faptul că ar fi fost „profeteasă" de rang egal cu fratele ei; în cazul Mariei Magdalena, faptul că ar fi fost „apostolul apostolilor", de importanţă egală (dacă nu mai mare) decît Petru.

În opinia lui Kenneth L. Woodward, aceste teorii sînt greu de susţinut în contextul studiilor biblice şi ele relevă nu atît de vreun posibil adevăr istoric, cît de dorinţa autoarelor feministe de a-şi regăsi temele favorite legate de critica patriarhatului în domeniul propriu de studiu. Mai mult, chiar, ele „ar fi sfîrşit prin a se identifica cu obiectul lor de studiu", din prea mult ataşament faţă de acesta[10].

În schimb, una dintre autoarele „învinuite", Karen King, profesoară la Harvard Divinity School şi autoare a unei cărţi despre Maria Magdalena, consideră că lucrurile stau oarecum diferit faţă de prezentarea făcută de Woodward. Ea arată că documentele de tipul *Evangheliei după Maria* şi *Codicele de la Nag Hammadi* conduc la o revalorizare a importanţei pe care a jucat-o Maria Magdalena în societatea creştină timpurie. Fără a susţine teze de genul căsătoriei cu Iisus sau chiar de mamă a copiilor acestuia, care i se par dificil de demonstrat[11], autoarea precizează că imaginea Mariei Magdalena din aceste noi surse diferă oarecum de cea din Noul Testament. Ele prezintă un personaj puternic, care, departe de a fi prostituată, este discipola lui Iisus care l-a înţeles cel mai bine şi pe care acesta a preţuit-o cel mai mult (astfel explicîndu-se „favoarea" pe care i-o face, fiind prima căreia i se arată după înviere). O anumită rivalitate trebuie să fi existat între ea şi Petru, însă aceasta este departe de „războiul" de care vorbeşte Woodward[12].

Probabil că cea mai interesantă observaţie a autoarei se leagă de faptul că povestea Mariei Magdalena oferă o istorie alternativă a primelor secole creştine, asemeni diferitelor Evanghelii care nu au fost incluse în textul canonic al Noului Testament. Acest lucru nu le face automat „adevărate", adaugă Karen King, deoarece faptul trebuie validat de instituţia bisericească şi de masa credincioşilor; însă oferă o perspectivă inedită asupra unei părţi a istoriei creştinismului, atunci cînd acesta nu îşi găsise încă varianta „canonică" (consfinţită prin Crezul de la Niceea sau prin Noul Testament) şi cînd diferitele interpretări posibile nu deveniseră încă erezii[13].

Religie, feminism, sacrul feminin

Personajul Maria Magdalena nu este la rîndul său decît una din ipostazele prin care s-a manifestat sacrul feminin de-a lungul istoriei, mai vechi de două milenii, a religiilor în general[14]. Cînd vorbeşte despre ea, şi în general despre sacrul feminin, autorul menţionează simultan orientarea ideologică ce şi-a propus, în diverse moduri, să conteste dominaţia masculină în diversele registre ale societăţii – şi anume, feminismul. Autorul nu ezită, de altfel, să folosească propoziţii ce trebuie să sune şocant pentru cineva care se situează în interiorul religiei creştine, de tipul „Iisus a fost primul feminist din istoria omenirii"[15]. Probabil că acest lucru este unul din motivele pentru care cartea sa a fost întîmpinată cu atît de multă vehemenţă în mediile religioase, în special în cele conservatoare.

Această apropiere asumată de feminism constituie, simultan, unul din punctele forte ale romanului, dar şi una din slăbiciunile sale. Punct forte: mai întîi, pentru că autorul alege o orientare care îi oferă cadrul conceptual şi mijloacele cele mai potrivite necesare demonstrării tezei sale (chiar dacă respectiva teză este falsă, oricum faptul în sine este secundar, aşa cum am încercat să arătăm prin discutarea ne-apartenenţei romanului la paradigma adevăr/ fals). Lucrul acesta apare cu evidenţă, dar nu este întotdeauna sesizat, deoarece puţini sînt familiarizaţi cu paradigmele teoretice feministe. Altfel spus, dacă cineva doreşte să propună o reinterpretare a istoriei (fie ea a religiei, sau a oricărui alt domeniu) care să revalorizeze valorile feminine, este obligat să treacă prin aparatul conceptual al feminismului – fie şi pentru simplul motiv că munca sa de documentare îi va fi considerabil uşurată. În cazul de faţă, trimiterile la Zeiţă, revalorizarea păgînismului, reinterpretarea personajelor feminine din Biblie, menţionarea tradiţiilor tip Wicca, chiar şi pasajele referitoare la androginie reprezintă locuri comune în teologia, mai bine zis „thealogia"[16] feministă, pe care cei familiari cît de cît cu domeniul le vor recunoaşte imediat[17].

În al doilea rînd, feminismul reprezintă un cadru conceptual foarte bun pentru o teorie de tip deconstrucţionist în general (fie că ea se referă sau nu la femei). Mai bine spus, pornind de la modelul oferit de feminism, se poate elabora o critică similară a altor sisteme. Acest lucru face de altfel ca relaţia feminism-postmodernism să fie simultan atît de strîns legată, cît şi de contestată[18]. În ce priveşte romanul, diversele priviri deconstructive aplicate fie unor realizări artistice (vezi de pildă analiza tabloului *Cina cea de taină*), fie unor secţiuni întregi din istoria omenirii sînt extrem de explicite pentru această tendinţă. Suplimentar, se poate adăuga gustul (postmodern de astă dată) pentru ironie, anagrame şi alte modalităţi de deturnare şi mascare a sensului, chiar diversele *măşti* pe care le poartă unele personaje (vezi cazul Învăţătorului).

În al treilea rînd, anumite curente feministe sînt destul de apropiate de teoria conspiraţionistă. Prin asta nu trebuie să se înţeleagă că feminismul în ansamblu ar

fi o teorie conspiraţionistă, însă anumite texte şi anumiţi autori pot primi acest calificativ. O versiune sofisticată a modelului conspiraţionist este oferită chiar de lucrarea lui Pierre Bourdieu, *Dominaţia masculină*, unde nu doar sistemul social, dar chiar şi sistemul posturilor corporale (nu doar al dominanţilor, ci şi al dominaţilor) trădează „povestea conspirativă" a dominaţiei[19]. În privinţa cărţii lui Dan Brown, se poate spune că autorul exploatează această dispoziţie profund omenească de a imagina comploturi şi scenarii neverosimile, pe care întreaga istorie a încercat să le camufleze.

În fine, şi acesta ar fi un merit poate neintenţionat al cărţii – şi extrem-contextual, respectiv în ţările mai puţin familiarizate cu ideile de tip feminist, cum este şi România – romanul reuşeşte să popularizeze idei de tip feminist mult mai eficient decît ar face-o o lucrare declarat feministă. Datorită etichetei de „best-seller", şi datorită calităţilor scriiturii extrem de accesibile a autorului, *Codul lui Da Vinci* „riscă" să intre în case în care nimeni, niciodată, nu va fi auzit de Betty Friedan[20]. În felul acesta, romanul lui Dan Brown capătă un rol neintenţionat educativ, dar al cărui potenţial nu trebuie neglijat.

Dar tot aici rezidă şi pericolul ascuns (şi din nou contextual, deci neintenţionat) al romanului: dată fiind mixtura de sentimente religioase care stă la baza nucleului acestuia, în cazul unei reacţii de respingere, aceasta se va răsfrînge şi asupra diverselor presupuse etichetări şi afilieri ale autorului însuşi: „american", „liberal" şi pe deasupra „feminist". Mulţi neavizaţi vor rămîne cu ideea fundamental greşită că a fi feminist înseamnă, între altele, să susţii că Iisus s-a căsătorit cu Maria Magdalena (!). Şi pentru *această* categorie de cititori, chiar dacă vor mai auzi vreodată de Betty Friedan, va fi prea tîrziu, pentru că prejudecata şi stereotipul se vor fi format deja.

Religiozitate şi (auto) referenţialitate

În continuarea acestei analize, ne putem întoarce asupra a ceea ce, deşi ne-am propus să lăsăm deoparte, a revenit constant, deşi insesizabil, de-a lungul întregului demers: şi anume, faptul că romanul este ceea ce se cheamă un *best-seller*: respectiv se vinde foarte bine (25 de milioane de exemplare traduse în 44 de limbi), producînd o mulţime de avantaje materiale autorului şi întregii industrii construite pe marginea sa[21] şi, prin aceasta, se răspîndeşte în nenumărate locuri, producînd efecte neaşteptate[22].

Efectul este cel de bulgăre de zăpadă: cu cît romanul este mai bine vîndut, cu atît presupusele sale consecinţe (pozitive sau nefaste) se răsfrîng asupra unei categorii din ce în ce mai extinse de persoane, afectîndu-le unora temporar viaţa (se organizează deja pelerinaje Da Vinci la obiectivele turistice menţionate în roman, iar fanii urmăresc cu cartea în braţe traseele personajelor din carte). În plus, diversele controverse iscate pe marginea sa nu fac decît să amplifice aceste efecte: scandalul religios declanşat de unii clerici sporeşte curiozitatea marelui public care, din simplul motiv că află că respectiva lucrare este rău văzută în lumea bisericească, o cumpără şi mai abitir. Iar în jurul cărţii s-a creat deja o adevărată plajă de sub-produse – de la site-uri pe internet, articole de ziare, artefacte, pînă la volume întregi – care, prin simpla asociere cu produsul contestat, îşi măresc circulaţia (vezi cazul cărţilor de tipul *Codul spart al lui Da Vinci*, care îşi îmbogăţesc editorii), determinînd o creştere în spirală a popularităţii respectivului produs.

Această referenţialitate – şi auto-referenţialitate – promovate de întreaga reţea de produse ce se leagă într-un fel sau altul de roman este tipică ideologiei spectacolului cărora se conformează produsele

mediatice, respectiv efectului pe care, într-o lucrare recentă, Umberto Eco îl denumeşte „Presa vorbeşte despre presă"[23]. El vorbeşte despre un fenomen ce se petrece pe plan mediatic şi este lesne de sesizat chiar şi în contextul românesc (cutare personalitate face o declaraţie într-un ziar; respectiva declaraţie e comentată la două posturi de televiziune; ziarele de a doua zi scriu despre comentariile de la TV, ceea ce provoacă dezminţirea la radio a respectivei personalităţi ş.a.m.d.): şi anume perpetuarea (Eco o consideră artificială) a unor evenimente prin simpla reflectare şi re-reflectare în oglindă în mass media. De un astfel de efect de oglindire are parte şi romanul lui Dan Brown, a cărui popularitate sporeşte prin continua propagare a imaginii sale în diverse medii. Am adăuga chiar că diferenţele de percepţie şi/sau perspectivă creează puncte de tensiune care, sesizate de un ochi cunoscător, intră la rîndul lor în spirala ascendentă a mediatizării, fiind potenţial exploatabile la infinit.

Care poate fi explicaţia pentru acest efect de oglindire, pînă la urmă pentru succesul acestui tip de roman? Pentru că, dincolo de meritele incontestabile ale scriiturii lui Dan Brown – alertă, mereu ironică, cu schimbări rapide de planuri şi răsturnări de situaţii ce o fac, din start, ecranizabilă[24] – este limpede că „responsabilă" de cifra de vînzări este în principal tema romanului şi tot ghemul de controverse şi complicaţii ce pornesc de aici. O explicaţie francă, în stilul său caracteristic, o oferă Cristian Tudor-Popescu[25]: oamenii cumpără *Codul* lui Dan Brown din acelaşi motiv pentru care şi-au luat bilet la *Patimile lui Iisus* al lui Mel Gibson: pentru că vor să afle ceva nou despre Iisus Hristos. Cu alte cuvinte, **dimensiunea religioasă** a temei ar constitui principalul motiv al fascinaţiei pe care aceasta o creează.

Este limpede că asistăm, la începutul acestui mileniu, la o revenire a religiozităţii care cu greu poate fi explicată cu resursele disciplinelor tradiţionale – motiv ce determină, de altfel, constituirea unui nou domeniu, interdisciplinar, de analiză: studiile religioase. Cu siguranţă, teza secularizării societăţii, propusă în secolul trecut, se vede azi infirmată, atît la modul violent, de mişcările integriste şi fundamentaliste, cît şi la modul lax şi difuz, de diversele mişcări de reînnoire spirituală gen New Age – şi respectiv cu toată gama de nuanţe intermediare între aceste două tipuri. Un exemplu recent al acestui interes determinat de religie, potenţat de dimensiunea globalizării, îl reprezintă manifestaţiile fără precedent prilejuite de agonia şi respectiv moartea Papei Ioan Paul al II-lea[26].

Ceea ce caracterizează această revigorare a religiozităţii recente este aparenta sa dislocare în raport cu cea veche: cu vorbele lui Eliade, astăzi sacrul nu se mai camuflează în stîlpul din centrul cortului, şi uneori nici în catedralele goale, ci în spectacolul telenovelelor sau în marile reprezentaţii prilejuite de meciurile de Liga Campionilor[27]. Pe un palier similar pot fi aşezate şi fenomenele mediatice de tip *Codul lui Da Vinci* sau *Patimile lui Iisus*.

Iisus între Codul lui Dan Brown şi Patimile lui Mel Gibson

Însă ce anume au acestea două în comun, dincolo de trimiterea (mai degrabă vagă în primul caz) la întemeietorul creştinismului – şi respectiv de succesul de casă? În aparenţă, cele două sînt mai degrabă opuse: dacă romanul lui Dan Brown se situează în extrema contemporaneitate, filmul lui Mel Gibson pretinde că reconstruieşte, în mod istoric, ultimele 12 ore din viaţa Mîntuitorului (anul 33 e.n.); primul e postmodern, ludic

şi parodic, celălalt e grav pînă la grotesc, căutînd veridicitatea pînă la numărul de sfori din biciul romanilor.

Un prim element comun, aparent neaşteptat, este acela că, în ambele, *personajul Iisus este de nerecunoscut*. Dacă acest fapt este evident în romanul lui Dan Brown (unde Mîntuitorului îi este atribuită căsătoria cu Maria Magdalena şi respectiv şirul de descendenţi ce duc pînă la regii Franţei), cum poate fi susţinut în cazul filmului lui Mel Gibson, care pretinde că reprezintă cu maximă exactitate personajul biblic? Cei care au văzut însă filmul şi hectolitri de imitaţie de sînge folosiţi acolo, pot confirma că imaginea personajului principal seamănă prea puţin cu reprezentările clişeizate, oarecum eterate, propagate de biserică referitoare la acesta. Cu alte cuvinte, şocul de a-l vedea pe Iisus în postură de Silvester Stalone, plin de sînge din vîrful firelor de păr pînă la călcîie şi încasînd pumni, bice şi palme pe toată durata filmului, este cel puţin similar şocului de a descoperi că acesta ar fi putut avea urmaşi.

De aici rezultă un al doilea element comun: imensa controversă pe care ambele le-au creat *în cadrul bisericilor tradiţionale*. Am amintit deja anatema simbolică azvîrlită asupra *Codului*; în privinţa *Patimilor*, ele au provocat revolta mai puţin a bisericilor creştine, cît a comunităţilor evreieşti, care au sesizat prezenţa unor replici ce justificau incriminarea întregului popor evreu de moartea lui Iisus[28]. Cu alte cuvinte, religiozitatea prezentă în ambele este, dacă nu contestată deschis, cel puţin suspectă din perspectiva discursului religiilor tradiţionale.

Un al treilea element este reprezentat de *potenţialul religios inovator* (intenţionat sau neintenţionat) pe care cele două producţii mediatice îl creează. Dacă în cazul filmului au fost discutate efectele asupra a numeroase persoane care şi-au relatat experienţele mistice declanşate de acesta, în privinţa romanului se pot aminti pelerinajele făcute de fani la „locurile sacre" menţionate în textul cărţii: diverse obiective turistic-arhitecturale, de la Catedrala unde este înmormîntat Isaac Newton şi pînă la muzeul Luvru[29]. Efectul iese, de fiecare dată, din cadrele religiozităţii tradiţionale.

Mai departe, un alt element care face legătura dintre religiozitate şi succesul de casă, este *violenţa* prezentă în ambele: de la tonele de pumni, pietre şi lovituri de bici încasate de Hristosul lui Mel Gibson, pînă la cadavrele semănate de Silas şi Teabing pe parcursul romanului. Violenţă care apare, în bună tradiţie *post*-Oliver Stone, aproape gratuită: dacă Iisus tot urmează să fie crucificat, te întrebi de ce anume are nevoie regizorul să-l aducă în stadiul de plagă deschisă pe tot corpul pînă la capătul filmului; la fel, o parte din omorurile din carte sînt considerate fără sens chiar de făptuitorii lor, iar prima secvenţă, în care apare corpul despuiat şi lipsit de viaţă al lui Sauniere, mînjit de sînge şi aşezat în ipostaza *Omului vitruvian*, dincolo de mesajul încifrat pe care îl transmite, codifică exact genul de violenţă senzaţională pe care Hollywood-ul l-a făcut atît de familiar. Motivul? Violenţa vinde foarte bine produsul mediatic – cu referire la succesul de casă al celor două producţii. Celălalt motiv? În ambele cazuri, violenţa are conotaţii sacre evidente: dacă lucrurile nu au nevoie de explicaţie în cazul filmului, poate nu e lipsit de interes de remarcat faptul că principalul făptaş al crimelor din roman este un membru al ordinului religios *Opus Dei*, care practică suplimentar şi auto-violenţa (purtarea brîului cu spini şi auto-flagelarea)[30].

În strînsă legătură cu tema violenţei se poate evidenţia o alta, conexă – *războiul dintre bine şi rău*. Această împărţire clară a personajelor din ambele producţii în două tabere – pozitive şi negative – este limpede atît în cazul romanului (unde avem ca

personaje „bune" pe Robert Langdom, Sophie Neveu, inspectorul Fache şi personajele „rele": Silas, episcopul Aringarosa, Sir Teabing) cît şi al filmului (unde portretizaţi pozitiv sînt Iisus, Maria, apostolii iar portretizaţi negativ apar evreii, romanii, Satana şi, desigur, Iuda). Nu lipsesc răsturnările de situaţie: Sir Teabing, iniţial văzut ca aparţinînd taberei „binelui" se dovedeşte în final a fi chiar capul taberei adverse; inspectorul Fache, care la început îi persecută pe eroi, se revelează la final ca ţinînd de tabăra cea bună. Însă acest lucru nu schimbă cu nimic ierarhia prestabilită, mai degrabă o întăreşte. Avantajele acestei lecturi în „alb-negru" sînt evidente: cititorii nu trebuie să-şi bată prea tare capul cu dedesubturile personajelor; poziţia lor va fi clară: ei „ţin" instinctiv cu partea bună şi îi vor savura victoria finală. De altfel, impresionaţi de imaginile „războinice" existente în filmul lui Gibson, unul din analiştii săi a comparat „războiul" din film cu războiul contra teroriştilor aflat pe ordinea de zi a societăţii americane după evenimentele din 11 Septembrie[31].

În fine, fără a epuiza lista similarităţilor, se poate spune că ambele produse *conţin premisele pentru o eventuală (şi mult sperată) continuare*. Mel Gibson îşi poate exersa talentul regizoral şi efectele de make-up pe faptele apostolilor (masacrele acestora avînd un potenţial de violenţă încă ne-explorat la adevărata lui valoare de piaţă), iar Dan Brown a promis deja că va „produce" o continuare, un indiciu pentru fanii amatori de enigme fiindu-le deja oferit pe coperta originală a *Codului*. Trăim într-o eră a simulacrelor, anunţa deja Baudrillard, iar semnul tipic al acestora este faptul că sînt mereu multiple, cel puţin duble, mereu repetitive şi predispunînd la continuări, pastişe şi *remake*-uri[32]. Astfel, cele *două* produse mediatice se înscriu în logica culturală a erei simulacrului, anticipîndu-şi propriile dubluri.

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Să fie acestea cele mai potrivite chei de înţelegere ale romanului lui Dan Brown? Şi respectiv, combinaţia plagiat-blasfemie-feminism-religiozitate new-ageistă reţeta succesului? Fără îndoială, autorul ne va răsplăti în curînd setea de curiozitate şi de senzaţional cu un nou (previzibil) best-seller. Dar să nu anticipăm. Dincolo de ceea ce poate fi scris pe marginea şi în răspărul romanului, cartea merită citită, măcar pentru a înţelege, ca să-l mai parafrazăm încă o dată pe Eco, „în ce cred cei care nu (mai) cred".

Notes:

[1] Citatele sînt extrase din grupajul de pe pagina 5 a *Adevărului*, vineri, 13 mai 2005, grupaj initulat sugestiv: "Industria de tipizate literare a lansat un nou model de success: <<Codul lui Da Vinci>>".

[2] Remarcile aparţin Cardinalului de Genova Tarcisio Bertone, unul dintre apropiaţii Papei Ioan Paul al II-lea. În MSNBC News Services, "Cardinal's Plea: Don't read 'Da Vinci Code'. Theologian calls novel insulting 'sack full of lies'", March 16, 2005. Online, http:// www.msnbc.msn.com

[3] Este vorba despre volumul "Codul spart al lui Da Vinci" (autori: James L. Garlow şi Peter Jones), recent tradus la editura Aqua Forte din Cluj. Informaţia a fost preluată din ziarul *Clujeanul*, 16-22 mai 2005, pp. 4-5.

[4] În articolul apărut în *Clujeanul*, "Mişcarea <<Browniană>>", Doru Pop enumeră cîteva dintre ele: cartea "Holy Blood, Holy Grail" (autori: Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh şi Henry Lincoln); romanul lui Nikos Kazantzakis, "Ultima ispitire a lui Iisus Hristos" şi filmul cu acelaşi nume a lui Martin Scorsese.

[5] Remarca îi aparţine studentului Iancu Ion, autor al panseului "Iisus, jucăria noastră…", apărut în *Adevărul*, vineri 13 mai 2005, p. 5.

[6] Procesul a fost organizat de experţi în artă şi clerici consevatori. Cf. Camelia Ciobanu, Mona Bica, "Nebunia Codului lui Da Vinci", în *Ziua*, 16 martie 2005. Online, http://www.9am.ro/revistapresei/Monden/6492/Nebunia-Codul-lui-Da-Vinci

[7] Este poziţia editorului clujean al *Codului spart al lui Da Vinci*, Voicu Bojan, care spune: "Dar nu poţi să zici <<Şi ce-i cu asta!>>, fără să vezi consecinţele pe termen lung ale acceptării unor asemenea idei". Pe aceeaşi poziţie se situează şi cardinalul Tarcisio Bertone, atunci cînd spune: „Nu putem păstra tăcerea asupra adevărului cînd sîntem puşi în faţa tuturor minciunilor şi invenţiilor din această carte". În MSNBC News Services, "Cardinal's Plea: Don't read 'Da Vinci Code'. Theologian calls novel insulting 'sack full of lies'", March 16, 2005. Online, http:// www.msnbc.msn.com

[8] Una dintre aceştia este Margaret Starbird, ale cărei lucrări sînt citate în *Codul lui Da Vinci*.

[9] Este opinia jurnalistului Kenneth L. Woodward, "A Quite Contrary Mary. Like Jesus, Mary Magdalene is now the subject of a cultural makeover. What agenda do feminist scholars have in mind?". Online, http:// www.beliefnet.com/story/131/story_13188_1.html

[10] Ibidem.

[11] Vezi poziţia sa în cadrul unui documentar NBC, în Stone Phillips, "Secrets behind 'The Da Vinci Code'Dateline travels throughout Europe to investigate best-selling novel's controversial claims", April 20, 2005. Online, http:// www.msnbc.msn.com/id/7491383

[12] Karen King, "Letting Mary Magdalene Speak. Tradition is not fixed. Newly-discovered texts like the Gospel of Mary let us hear other voices in an ancient Christian debate". Online, http://www.beliefnet.com/story/131/story_13186_1.html

[13] "Evanghelia după Maria ne permite să auzim o altă voce în dezbaterea antică, ce a fost pierdută pentru aproape 2000 de ani. Ne extinde înţelegerea asupra dinamicii creştinismului timpuriu, însă nu ne oferă o voce dincolo de orice fel de criticism". Karen King, ibidem.

[14] Pentru o prezentare a istoriei sacrului feminin în marile religii, vezi Catherine Clement, Julia Kristeva, *Femeia şi sacrul*, Ed. Albatros, Bucureşti, 2001.

[15] Dan Brown, *Codul lui Da Vinci*, Ed. RAO, Bucureşti, 2004, p. 265.

[16] Dacă mai clasicul "theo-logie" provine din grecescul "theos" (formă masculină), compusul elaborat de feministe, "thea-logie", este derivat din varianta feminină a acestui termen.

[17] Pentru o trecere în revistă a relaţiei feminism-religie, vezi Mihaela Frunză, "Feminitate şi ocultism" , în

[18] Deoarece postmodernismul, în viziunea unor feministe, nu oferă motivaţii pentru a prefera un sistem non-oprimant unuia oprimant.

[19] Pierre Bourdieu, *Dominaţia masculină*, Ed. Meridiane, Bucureşti, 2003.

[20] Feministă de orientare liberală, consacrată în timpul valului al doilea, cunoscută în special pentru lucrarea sa *The Feminine Mystique*.

[21] Cine caută pe Google referinţe la roman va fi inundat de diverse site-uri pe teme conexe

– gen anagrame, tablourile lui Da Vinci şi misterul cavalerilor templieri.

[22] Un prieten american care lucrează la un muzeu de artă ne-a povestit că, prin simpla asociere cu *Codul lui Da Vinci*, una dintre conferinţele despre Leonardo da Vinci găzduite de respectiva instituţie s-a bucurat de prezenţa a cîteva sute de vizitatori, în locul celor cîteva zeci cu care erau obişnuiţi.

[23] Umberto Eco, "Despre presă", în *Cinci scrieri morale*, Ed. Humanitas, Bucureşti, 2005, p. 69.

[24] Cartea va fi de altfel ecranizată, în rolul principal fiind actorul Tom Hanks, ceea ce reprezintă deja un prim indiciu că succesul filmului va fi cel puţin comparabil cu cel al romanului. O altă confirmare a efectului de bulgăre de zăpadă despre care vorbeam mai sus.

[25] Acesta susţine că: "Cu cît Occidentul se îndepărtează în viaţa creştină de practica şi teoria creştină, cu atît creşte interesul pentru story-urilor christice – vezi block buster-ul <<Patimile lui Iisus>>". Cristian Tudor Popescu, în *Adevărul literar şi artistic*, nr. 754, 8 februarie 2005.

[26] Vezi pe această temă articolul "Forţa religiei. Cîteva reflecţii pe marginea unui articol", semnat de Rodica Binder în *Dilema veche*, nr. 69, 13-19 mai 2005, p. 24.

[27] De altfel, Rodica Binder observă în articolul mai sus citat: "spiritul religios care pluteşte în aer, străin de dogme şi ritualuri, avînd acest incontestabil caracter particular, individual, pare a se afla el însuşi în căutarea unui adăpost, **altul decît i-l pot oferi formele tradiţionale ale catolicismului, creştinismului sau chiar, prin extrapolare, ale celorlalte confesiuni monoteiste**" (subl. n.).

[28] Pentru o prezentare a dezbaterilor iscate de filmul lui Mel Gibson în societatea americană, în special în cercurile evreieşti, vezi J. Shawn Landres and Michael Berenbaum (eds.), *After* The Passion *is Gone: American Religious Consequences*, AltaMira Press, Lanham MD, 2004.

[29] De asemenea, un politolog american, Richard Wightman Fox, susţine că romanul lui Dan Brown „speculează valul de repulsie împotriva corupţiei Bisericii Catolice", încercînd să exploateze dorinţa americanilor de a-l regăsi pe adevăratul Iisus, aşa cum a fost el". Cf. Romulus Căplescu, „Un fenomen numit Codul lui Da Vinci (II)" în *Adevărul literar şi artistic*, 15 martie 2005, p. 14.

[30] Despre legătura sacru-violenţă, vezi Rene Girard, *Violenţa şi sacrul*, Ed. Nemira, Bucureşti, 1995.

[31] Este opinia lui Mark Juergensmeyer, autor între altele al unui volum despre evenimentele din 11 Septembrie 2001. În acest caz, ne referim la articolul "The Passion of War", în J. Shawn Landres and Michael Berenbaum (eds.), *After* The Passion *is Gone: American Religious Consequences*, AltaMira Press, Lanham MD, 2004.

[32] Vezi Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacres et simulation*, Minuit, Paris, 1987.

Religie și Putere în America - de la Alexis de Tocqueville la administrația Bush jr. -

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This text is meant to bring to the fore the connection between politics and religion, as it was reflected in theory that Alexis de Tocqueville dealt to in his book entitled „De la démocratie en Amérique". In the same time, it takes into consideration the well-known meeting between J. Habermas and J. Ratzinger (2004, January), which was carried out at the Catholic Academy in München. Here, a debate regarding the pre-political moral foundations of the state took place.

The interest in such a topic has streamed from what some people consider to be the „dogmatic-religious policy" concerning social philosophy, which the Bush Administration put into practice.

În „Despre democraţie în America" Tocqueville este un adevărat susţinător al educaţiei instinctului politic individual. Valoarea educativă a democraţiei reprezentative constă în aceea că ea introduce indivizii în viaţa politică, provocând dezbateri şi co-interesându-i în participarea la viaţa publică. Remediul propus de Tocqueville împotriva tendinţei de apatie politică este acela al separării puterilor, dar a unor puteri orientate spre susţinerea voinţei de libertate.

În jurul ideii de libertate se concretizează concepţia privitoare la relaţia dintre ordinea religioasă şi ordinea politică. Pornind de la afirmaţia că „orice om care acceptă o opinie numai pe baza afirmaţiilor făcute de cineva îşi înrobeşte spiritul"[1], Tocqueville crede că tipul de autoritate morală şi intelectuală este salutar pentru faptul că acordă individului puterea şi răgazul de a se

sluji de libertate. Este conturată încă de la început ideea separării celor două arii pe care le guvernează spiritul religios şi spiritul libertăţii: „Dând spiritului soluţia clară şi precisă pentru un mare număr de probleme metafizice şi morale, importante şi greu de rezolvat, religia îi dă puterea şi răgazul de a acţiona în linişte şi energic în tot spaţiul pe care i-l lasă în seamă; spiritul uman a înfăptuit lucruri deosebit de importante în secolele de credinţă nu atât datorită religiei cât libertăţii şi calmului pe care aceasta i le-a dat"[2].

Specificul religiozităţii americane constă în aceea că *religia nu mai este receptată atât ca doctrină revelată, cât mai ales ca opinie comună pe care majoritatea o asumă*, scutind individul de obligaţia de a-şi face păreri proprii. Omnipotenţa politică a majorităţii nu se datorează instituţiilor politice ci egalităţii generate de democraţie, în condiţiile căreia „domnia intelectuală a celor mulţi" este absolută[3].

Pentru funcţionarul Restauraţiei, problema nu este de a accepta existenţa autorităţii intelectuale ci care îi sunt limitele şi cum funcţionează relaţia dintre religie şi putere. El recunoaşte că toate acţiunile umane sunt determinate de idei generale despre Dumnezeu, neamul omenesc şi îndatoririle către semeni, idei care sunt sursa comună absolut necesară care îndepărtează îndoiala, neputinţa şi hazardul din toate acţiunile umane. Ca şi în politică, oamenii sunt dezorientaţi, în lipsa unei autorităţi religioase, de independenţa nelimitată şi libertatea fără margini care li se deschide în faţa spiritului. De aici, convingerea că „dintre toate credinţele dogmatice, cele mai de dorit mi s-au părut a fi credinţele dogmatice în materie de religie"[4], aceasta chiar în condiţiile în care interesul nostru se îndreaptă exclusiv către această lume.

În America, ordinea religioasă, diferită de ordinea politică, nu a fost zdruncinată iar legile au putut fi schimbate cu uşurinţă. În plus, religiozitatea împreună cu obiceiurile naţionale concură la alimentarea sentimentului patriotic – de aici forţa ei. Dar, deşi puternică în ordine spirituală, religiozitatea americană îşi cunoaşte şi impune singură limitele; de aici puterea ei, alta decât cea politică: „creştinismul şi-a păstrat deci o mare autoritate asupra spiritului americanilor şi, ceea ce vreau să subliniez cu deosebire, el nu domneşte numai ca o filozofie adoptată după ce a fost examinată ci ca o religie în care crezi fără a o discuta"[5]. Examinată din perspectivă strict umană, chestiunea relaţiei dintre religie şi putere ridică întrebarea asupra modului cum se păstrează autoritatea religioasă în condiţiile funcţionării democraţiei. Tocqueville observă, în acest sens, că religia trebuie să activeze în limitele proprii, prin depăşirea cărora şi-ar pierde credibilitatea[6]. Separarea foarte clară a sferei religiei de zona publică mai presupune, după Tocqueville grija ca, prin activitatea ei specifică, religia să nu „ofenseze fără rost ideile general admise şi interesele permanente ale masei"[7].

Condusă şi respectând ideea că majoritatea domină, religia în America nu are amestec în politică, dar acceptă opiniile generale ale timpului, fiind, la rândul ei, susţinută de opinia publică, prin forţa căreia, laolaltă cu cea a majorităţii, se impune credinţa.

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Spuneam, la început, că ideea libertăţii este cea în jurul căreia se concretizează concepţia privitoare la relaţia dintre ordinea religioasă şi ordinea politică. Trebuie să remarc faptul că atunci când scrie referitor la această problemă, Tocqueville se referă, în special la creştinism, şi cu precădere la creştinismul catolic. Afirmând că „pe lângă fiecare religie există o opinie

politică care i se alătură prin afinitate"[8], Tocqueville crede în capacitatea spiritului uman de a reuşi să uniformizeze cele două ordini, politică şi divină, „să *armonizeze* cerul cu pământul". Speranţa aceasta, aparţinând deopotrivă unei mentalităţi restauratorii şi credinţei milenarist – apocatastazice, este metamorfozată de gânditorul politic în convingerea că, în Lumea Nouă[9] „de la început, principiul politic şi religia au fost în acord şi de atunci n-au încetat să fie". De aceea Tocqueville consideră creştinismul american eliberat de autoritatea papală, „democratic şi republican"[10].

Este evident că faptul că Tocqueville privilegiază, între toate religiile, creştinismul care „este cel mai favorabil libertăţii" şi „egalităţii". Dar el admiră cu precădere catolicismul care, departe de a fi un inamic al democraţiei, este considerat cel mai favorabil egalizării condiţiilor (spre deosebire de protestantism, pentru care valoare mai are independenţa decât egalitatea). Cum se întâmplă ca cei mai fideli şi zeloşi în credinţă să fie şi cei mai republicani şi democratici? Explicaţia stă în modul în care este organizată comunitatea religioasă catolică (singur preotul este deasupra celorlalţi oameni) şi în atitudinea faţă de dogmă şi cult (nu se face diferenţa pe criterii profesionale, de avere sau de autoritate). Apoi, compatibilitatea dintre catolicism şi democraţie se fundamentează şi pe argumentele istorice care iau în considerare condiţia socială precară a credincioşilor catolici, pe de o parte, şi situaţia demografică minoritară în care se află ei. În aceste condiţii, pentru ca ei să ajungă la putere, trebuie ca toţi cetăţenii să ajungă la putere; şi pentru ca să-şi poată exercita drepturile, e nevoie să fie respectate toate drepturile. În această logică apare ideea pluralismului religios care uzează de argumentul privind drepturile unei minorităţi religioase.

Dar pentru Tocqueville este mai important catolicismul în direcţia argumentării distincţiei şi separării sferei religioase de sfera puterii. Astfel, teoria dublului adevăr care funcţiona în dogmatica romano-catolică este transferată în aria organizării democratice a cetăţii, cu deosebirea că raţiunea şi autoritatea ei au fost aplicate dimensiunii politice a existenţei umane: „Preoţii catolici din America au împărţit sfera intelectuală în două jumătăţi: întruna au rămas dogmele revelate cărora li se supun fără discuţie; în cealaltă u plasat adevărul – politic, considerând că acesta a fost abandonat de Dumnezeu căutărilor libere ale omului". Acest argument este hotărâtor pentru ca Tocqueville să conchidă că cei de credinţă catolică sunt, pe de o parte, supuşi dogmei religioase şi, pe de altă parte, cei mai independenţi cetăţeni din lume[11].

Separarea dintre religie şi putere duce la conturarea, din perspectivă politică, a noţiunii de *religie civilă*, în legătură cu care nu se pune problema adevărului. Problema adevărului este una individuală, în schimb pentru societate este important ca cetăţenii să profeseze o religie, indiferent de adevărul ei. Separată de putere, religia nu exercită vreo influenţă asupra legilor sau a politicii în general, ci contribuie la odinea în stat prin dirijarea moravurilor, orânduirea familiei şi puterea asupra inteligenţelor. Orice aspect al vieţii private era dominat de convingerea religioasă. Dacă în viaţa publică totul este pus în discuţie şi „pare abandonat dezbaterilor şi încercărilor omeneşti"[12], în lumea morală totul este sigur pentru că se fundamentează pe preceptele religioase.

De pe aceste poziţii, Tocqueville critică lipsa de credinţă a unor europeni (referindu-se, probabil la francezi) considerând-o îndobitocire şi ignoranţă. Dacă în Franţa spiritul religios şi spiritul libertăţii sunt contrare, în America ele, deşi (sau poate tocmai pentru că) distincte, sunt intim legate. De aceea, legătura dintre religios şi politic, pe de o patre, şi separarea dintre Biserică şi Stat, pe de altă parte, sunt considerate de

Tocqueville cauzele esenţiale ale „stăpânirii calme exercitate de religie"[13].

Şi totuşi, mirarea gânditorului politic rămâne: „cum de s-a putut întâmpla ca, diminuând forţa aparentă a religiei, să i se sporească puterea reală". Părăsindu-şi vocaţia universală şi aliindu-se cu puterea politică, religia va avea, inevitabil, putere doar asupra unei părţi a comunităţii, pierzându-şi speranţa de a domni peste întregul corp eclezial. Acceptând să se manifeste în limitele puterii politice, religia părăseşte esenţa ei veşnică şi rolul de a răspunde unui interes veşnic şi acceptă să se contamineze de caracterul trecător al puterii pământeşti. Lecţia istoriei trebuie învăţată foarte bine, cu atât mai mult cu cât este o lecţie simplă: orice guvernare fundamentată pe stăpânire şi constrângere este trecătoare şi „nu s-a văzut niciodată o guvernare care să se sprijine pe o predispoziţie invariabilă a sufletului omenesc sau să se întemeieze pe un interes veşnic"[14].

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„*Religia [...] trebuie să fie considerată prima dintre instituţiile politice*"[15]. După 164 de ani de la scrierea volumului 2 al *Democraţiei în America*, avea loc la Academia Catolică din München întâlnirea cu tema „Fundamentele morale pre-politice ale statului de drept" dintre Ratzinger şi Habermas[16]. După mai bine de un secol şi jumătate (de când Tocqueville scria că religia, chiar dacă nu dă ea gustul libertăţii, măcar uşurează folosirea ei), umanitatea parcă s-a oprit să mediteze asupra destinului ei, şi asta într-un timp de mari tensiuni spirituale şi politice care au în spate proiecte continentale sau mondiale. La această întâlnire, esenţială pentru istoria mileniului al treilea, nu s-a susţinut (nici

nu era cu putinţă) că „religia este necesară pentru menţinerea instituţiilor republicane" (Tocqueville), dar punctul de vedere comun emis acolo a privit religia ca discurs, respectiv ca fenomen social extrem de importante ale căror drept de existenţă şi manifestare sunt esenţiale pentru societatea democratică. Condamnarea celor care vor să impună tăcere discursului religios şi afirmarea neutralităţii constituţionale şi a toleranţei (Habermas) se întâlneşte, din direcţia opusă, cu semnalul referitor la necesitatea recorelării religiosului cu raţionalul şi la reclamarea (în discursul de investitură ca Papă) a „tiraniei relativismului"[17].

Cert este că se impune în mediile intelectuale are Europei şi Americii rediscutarea rolului dimensiunii religioase a existenţei umane într-o societate democratică în care valorile toleranţei şi a respectului pentru alteritate trebuie să fie nu doar „flautus vocis". Plecând de la îngrijorarea exprimată de cardinalul Ratzinger referitoare la pericolele izvorâte dintr-o înţelegere laică a vieţii, trebuie formulată întrebarea dacă o anume înţelegere şi practicare a libertăţii (în plan ştiinţific, moral, politic) nu costă prea mult destinul umanităţii. Şi cât de naivă ni se pare acum remarca lui Tocqueville conform căreia „până în prezent n-am întâlnit pe nimeni în Statele Unite care să îndrăznească să afirme maxima că totul e permis în numele societăţii"[18]. În atari condiţii, nu ştiu cum s-ar putea interpreta măsura Administraţiei Bush jr. de a restricţiona accesul la fonduri a unor proiecte propuse de ONG-uri care promovează odată cu combaterea HIV, legalizarea prostituţiei[19]. Faptul că Administraţia de la Washington promovează abstinenţa şi fidelitatea ar fi privit de Tocqueville drept o curiozitate: nu ar înţelege de ce valori ca acestea trebuie să intre în sfera preocupărilor politice. Evident că statul ar trebui să fie neutru în materia religioasă, dar s-ar putea replica: nu despre o chestiune religioasă este vorba, ci despre

îngrijorarea autorităţii politice referitoare la fenomene care duc la disoluţia societăţii. Nu ştiu cât de practice ar fi alte soluţii precum dezincriminarea prostituţiei[20] şi nici nu cred că este vorba despre o politică dogmatic-religioasă în chestiuni de filozofie socială. Cred doar, împreună cu Tocqueville, că libertatea nu poate fi gândită independent şi împotriva unei evaluări din perspectivă religioasă. Altfel ar fi nevoit să vadă că zelul religios nu se mai poate încălzi la flacăra patriotismului[21] şi să constate că există contradicţii între legea care permite poporului american să facă orice şi religia care îl împiedică să conceapă totul şi îi interzice să îndrăznească orice[22].

Vizitând America (1830-1832), Tocqueville observa că cei care (mai) cred (dintre francezi) „au văzut că în patria lor, omul şi-a folosit în primul rând independenţa pentru a ataca religia, se tem de contemporanii lor şi se îndepărtează înspăimântaţi de libertatea pe care aceştia şi-o doresc". Este expresia unui impas, sesizat cu mult înaintea noastră, dar pe care noi îl trăim, uneori îl experimentăm, fiind nevoiţi să renegăm din când în când, în numele unor valori incerte, propria umanitate pe care, într-un viitor nu prea îndepărtat, s-ar putea să nu mai fim în stare s-o recunoaştem.

Note

1. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Despre democraţie în America*, Humanitas, 1995, vol. 1, p. 15. de acum, în text *DA, 1*.
2. *DA, 1*, p. 15.
3. Tocqueville prevede chiar că „opinia generală va deveni o religie al cărei profet va fi majoritatea" (*DA, 1*, p. 17). De altfel, în legătură cu receptarea religiei ca opinie comună, este interesant de ştiut că formula „In God we trust" ar putea fi citită ca o formulă strict religioasă, dar ea se asociază cu dimensiunea fundamentării pactului social aşa cum a fost el definit de John Locke. Termenul „trust" (încredere), utilizat în context politic, caracterizează legătura dintre cei care guvernează şi cei guvernaţi (http://eduscol.education.fr/index.php?./D0126/fait_religieux_monnanteuil.htm). Totuşi, Tocqueville explică religiozitatea americană şi din perspectivă istorică, arătând că pe continentul american nu a avut loc o revoluţie democratică, aşa cum s-a întâmplat în Europa (cazul Franţei este cel mai evident) unde veche autoritate şi credinţe religioase s-au tulburat.
4. *DA, 1*, p. 26.
5. *DA, 1*, p. 12.
6. Fără a ignora că, de-a lungul istoriei lui, creştinismul a fost şi el instrumentalizat politic, sunt de acord cu remarca autorului conform căreia, spre deosebire de Islam, unde maximele politice, legile civile, penale sau teoriile ştiinţifice îşi găsesc locul alături de principiile religioase, Evanghelia, în principiile ei esenţiale, se preocupă doar de „raporturile generale ale oamenilor cu Dumnezeu şi cu ei înşişi" (*DA, 1*, p. 29). De la această observaţie, Tocqueville arată incompatibilitatea Islamului cu democraţia şi prevede perpetuarea creştinismului în societăţile democratice.
7. *DA, 1*, p. 33.
8. *DA, 2*, p. 367.
9. Lumea Noului început, în termenii lui Mircea Eliade, trebuia să se fundamenteze pe o nouă religie, cu caracter pronunţat civil, de orientare catolică, al cărei viitor, în Lumea Veche a Europei fusese retezat. S-ar putea argumenta, dar nu e locul, ideea că gândirea politică a lui Tocqueville are un pronunţat caracter profetic, un profetism politic ale cărui rădăcini sunt, în fapt, religioase.

10. Cu Tocqueville, în prima jumătate a secolului al XIX-lea şi după Conciliul II Vatican, este rezolvată, din perspectivă teoretică problema compatibilităţii dintre democraţia liberală şi catolicism, iar cu Max Weber este demonstrată legătura dintre etica protestantă şi capital-ism. Problema teoreticienilor de azi ai politicului este dacă o valoare şi o „invenţie" occidentală (drepturile omului şi democraţia) sunt compatibile cu religiile din afara spaţiului euro-atlantic (creştinism ortodox, islam, budism, confucianism).

11. *DA, 2*, p. 369.

12. *DA, 2*, p. 372.

13. *DA, 2*, p. 376. Cu tristeţe, între altele fie spus, poate că aceasta este lecţia pe care ar trebui să o descopere ierarhia BOR: „I-am văzut desprinzându-se cu grijă de toate partidele şi evitând orice contact cu patima interesului personal" (*DA, 2*, p. 377).

14. *DA, 2*, p. 379.

15. *DA, 2*, p. 373.

16. Textele celor două intervenţii în „Zur Debatte", no. 1, 2004, München, 2004.

17. vezi şi comentariul lui Virgil Nemoianu, *Religios şi laic în registru filosofic*, în „Adevărul literar şi artistic", nr. 769, 24 mai 2005.

18. *DA, 2*, p. 373.

19. vezi Gabriel Andreescu, *Tema prostituţiei în România şi Administraţia Bush*, în „Ziua", 5 mai, 2005.

20. Susţinătorii acestor practici prezintă argumente de genul „dreptul de a uza de propriul corp".

21. *DA, 2*, p. 374.

22. *DA, 2*, p. 373.

Religion and Politics in the Making of American Near East Policy, 1918-1922

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This study deals basically with the combination of religion and politics in American foreign policy in the Near East in the immediate aftermath of the First World War. The diplomatic activities regarding the protection of American religious, educational, philanthropic institutions, the safety of American interests and missionary activities and the safeguarding of a future for the Ottoman Armenians are examined in two parts: the first dealing with the spread of Protestant missionary activities in the Ottoman Empire, and the second, coping with the US political struggle for protecting American political, religious and commercial interests during the Paris Peace Conference through an analysis of diplomatic correspondence in the US archives.

Introduction

Following the American religious revivalism in the Second Great Awakening period between the 1790s and the 1830s in New England, New Hampshire and rural Connecticut, not only many conservative Yale Seminary graduates started to become ministers to expand religious fundamentalism to the easternmost regions of the U.S., but also a bunch of regional missionary, benevolent and moral and religious reform associations were established to spread various walks of Protestantism towards the West. Methodist, Baptist and Presbyterian missionaries organized countless missions for American Indians in the Western half of the United States during the period; the Baptists increased the total Church membership from approximately 65.000 in 1796 to 814.000 in 1844.[1]

In the beginning of the Awakening, the missionary activity in the U.S. looked like a civilizing mission of the middle class people of New England for the people who, the evangelical Christians thought, were culturally, socially and economically different from themselves. However, the missionary activity soon turned to an evangelical zeal, the aim of which was to provide religious services and spread Christianity to the other peoples of the world. The American religious revivalism developed with the help of the religious ideology that the US were the chosen as the territory for the Protestants to be settled and to spread their denominations to the non-Christian peoples around the world. The London Missionary Society established with the ideology of American Puritanism in 1795 to evangelize India was followed by societies, associations and institutions in New York in 1796, Connecticut in 1798 and in Massachusetts in 1799 for the expansion of revivalist Christianity by evangelical churches and schools. The merge between societies produced in 1826 the American Home Mission Society in New York; and American Baptist Home Mission Society in 1832 in Oregon and New York. In 1809 the London Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews had a primary goal of expanding Protestantism among the Jews in the Holy Land.[2] The missionary activity was strengthened by the establishment in 1810 of a Congregationalist-Presbyterian society, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM). The Board funded by the US governments "civilization fund" worked not only to evangelize Native Americans but also organized missions to India, China, Ceylon and the Middle East to expand Protestantism as well as American commercial activities.

The US policy of expanding the American sphere of influence was basically founded on utilizing the civic, religious and philanthropic institutions in accordance with the American interests throughout the world. American political, economic and/or commercial interests were to be represented, furthermore developed worldwide by the missionary organizations, which in turn were to be protected by the US diplomatic activities and political protection. Another dimension of providing diplomatic security to American interests throughout the world was to offer protection to the communities that were available for carrying out the necessary functions of US policies abroad. Therefore, the minority communities here and there were attracted to the US interests by the Protestant missionary activities, which became one of the key instruments of American diplomacy.

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I. Religion: The Expansion of American Evangelism in the 19th and the Early 20th Centuries in the Ottoman Empire

The arrival of the US Protestant missionaries to the Middle East in 1820 added yet another component to the

religious mixture of the Ottoman Empire. The social organization of the Ottoman Empire was based on the recognition of each religious community within its place vis-à-vis the state, and Christian communities, whether Catholic or Orthodox, had their autonomy in their internal affairs as the Muslim and Jewish communities. The Catholic missionaries, the Jesuits and Franciscans, were active starting from the 16th century especially in the Levant until 1773 when the Jesuit order was dissolved. While the influence of Catholic missions continued to remain limited due to the conflict between Catholic and Gregorian sects, the Protestant missionary activity aimed to expand not only individual Protestant piety, but also to increase the Anglo-Saxon influence over the religion and culture of societies abroad. Therefore, Catholic churches and the Orthodox Patriarchate in the Ottoman Empire reacted against the work of Congregationalist missionaries and produced traditional churches' and Catholics' pressure over the state to limit (and if they could do so, to prevent) Protestant impact over their respective communities. However, the Protestant missionaries had more that religious aims; they had the greatest impact over Ottoman Christian populations.

The Americans presented Protestantism in a simplified manner excluding the rites, rituals and the use of charms and relics. In lieu of unintelligible language of the traditional churches, the American interpretation of Christianity was based on the use of the Bible in the vernacular language of the Middle Eastern communities. The missionaries excluded the use of traditional materials in the worship as well as de-emphasized the clerical hierarchy by ruling out the monopoly of traditional clergy in their churches. They started to evangelize the Nesturians, Greek Orthodox, Assyrians, and especially Gregorian and Orthodox Armenian communities. The priests, bishops, archbishops and patriarchs of the Ottoman communities considered the American Protestantism as a threat to their own power and authority over their own church members.[3] Despite the failure of American missionaries in converting Orthodox Christians to Congregational Protestantism due to the conflict between the clergies of each denomination, the Protestant Church was accepted as another "millet" (community) by the Ottoman authorities in 1850.[4] The ABCFM's evangelical activity in the Ottoman Empire produced, in 1906, 520 Protestants in Jerusalem, 956 in Damascus, 2128 in Beirut, 13.144 in Aleppo, a significant number of which comprised the converted Armenian population.[5]

The re-institution of Catholic missionary in the Ottoman Empire through opening up of the schools like Université Saint Joseph led the Protestant missionaries to concentrate their efforts on the emancipation of Catholic, Orthodox and Gregorian Christians of the Ottoman Empire from their own churches' pressures and on the liberation and "enlightenment" of these communities. Also these efforts coincided well with the Ottoman attempts at educational modernization mostly in French manner and in French medium, and the American Protestants started to focus on the field of education to challenge the Catholic missionaries' activities over the Ottoman Christians. The initial settlements of the American Protestant missionaries, Izmir, Istanbul and Beirut became educational centers for newly-established Protestant communities. The basic administrative and financial support for the American schooling and philanthropic activities in the Ottoman territories came from the American Evangelical societies. The ABCFM, the American Baptist Missionary Church, Bible Society, Presbyterian Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, American Tract Society, YMCA and the Episcopal Missionary Church were among the many to establish and rule American educational, benevolent and philanthropic societies in Turkey. The advantage of the

Protestant missionaries over other missionary activities stemmed from the fact that the American missionaries acted not only in the expansion of Protestantism but also the expansion of an American life-style through many institutions including hospitals and medical centers, orphanages, educational institutions for the adults, Sunday schools in their churches and many social activities like informal meetings and sermons.[6] The missionary activities were organized in three basic areas, education, publication and health services, each of which was carefully coordinated. The Protestant missionaries created a special system of education for the Ottoman Christian missionaries by opening up the first Protestant school in 1824 in Izmir. The number of the missionary schools was soon to reach 71 in 1860, 331 in 1900 and 450 in 1913. The number of students in Protestant educational institutions rose from 2742 in 1860 to 25.922 in 1913.[7] The Protestant education was extended to the Ottoman Christians, basically to the Ottoman Armenians, for several reasons: the missionary education at the primary and secondary levels required teachers for higher missionary education and local clerics for Protestant churches. But, more important than that, the missionary education was to spread Protestantism and a spiritual way of life among the local communities as well as to respond their demands for upbringing educated and qualified youngsters who would have the word in the national development of their communities. The first higher education institution, the Robert College, though not directly belonged, but strongly related to the ABCFM, was established in Istanbul in 1863, followed by the Syrian Protestant College in Beirut in 1866.[8] These schools were managed by a Board of Directors, composed by the businessmen, US and British consuls, and Protestant missionaries and the members of local Armenian churches; ruled by the local Armenian Protestants as in the case of the Central Turkey College

and the Armenia (then Euphrates) College, and served mostly to the Armenian community in the Ottoman Empire.[9] The American Protestant missionaries were definitely successful in spreading literacy among the Ottoman Christians. Almost half of the immigrants (46.7 %) from Syria to the US between 1899 and 1910 had their education in Protestant missionary schools. In 1912, there were 133.100 students in Armenian schools ruled by the Armenian Patriarchate with the help of the American missionary schools.[10]

The missionary activities and the American concern for the protection of the Ottoman Armenian community became basic obstacles in naturalizing the relations between the US and modern Turkey after the First World War. Added to the already available difficulties were the works of the Armenian groups established in the US for furthering the Armenian cause in the Ottoman territories. The American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief was established in 1915 for raising funds for the refugees in the Anatolian countryside. The Committee adopted itself to the missionary activities and carried out a propaganda campaign favoring the Armenians, disfavoring the Turks, and protecting American commercial and philanthropic interests in the Near East. Supported by the former US ambassador to Istanbul, Henry Morgenthau Sr., the Committee became the Near East Relief to serve the Armenians and to advance American and Armenian causes in Turkey.[11] In the same period, some US-based organizations such as Armenia America Society and American Committee for the Independence of Armenia were working to secure an American mandate over the Ottoman Armenians, and if possible Turkey, while the diplomatic activities were carried out to protect the economic and commercial rights and privileges of American individuals and companies in Turkey. The American policies were made in the post-War period in such a mixture of concerns.

II. Politics: Armenian Question and the U.S. Near Eastern Policy

Diplomatic relations between the United States and the Ottoman Empire, which started with a comprehensive trade agreement in 1830, were interrupted on April 20, 1917 with the U.S.' declaration of war on Germany, the Ottoman partner in the World War I. However, the U.S. did not proclaim war against the Ottoman Empire because of a vigorous concern of protecting the interests of American commercial enterprises, and missionary, educational and philanthropic investments in the Empire. Even after the declaration of war against Germany, the U.S. policy-makers were in favor of maintaining good relations with the Ottoman Empire. The former ambassador to Istanbul, Morgenthau met with Lansing, the Secretary of State, and convinced him that Turkey might reach a separate agreement with the Allies because of bitter disagreement between Turkey and her German masters. President Wilson, approving the idea of maintaining the relations, decided to send Morgenthau to Palestine to investigate the situation of the Ottoman Jews. Since Morgenthau's mission required the participation of Jewish leaders, the British Government was asked for the participation of Dr. Chaim Weizmann in the mission. However, Lord Balfour, the British Foreign Secretary did not want to solve the Palestinian problem without complete defeat of the Ottoman Empire and gave Weizmann the duty of convincing Morgenthau to abandon his investigation project.[12] The British, depending on their secret agreements with France, Italy and Russia over the partition of the Ottoman Empire during the war, naturally were not in favor of the U.S. intervention in the Near Eastern question.[13]

After the Axis lost the War, it was decided by the Mudros Armistice on October 30, 1918 that all Ottoman possessions in Arabia, Syria, Iraq and Africa were to be placed under Allied military control, the Straits were to be open and all fortifications to be occupied by the Allies, who also had the right to occupy any strategic point against any threat to Allied security.[14] In fact, in the two weeks after the Armistice, Istanbul was under the *de facto* occupation of the Allied fleet of sixty vessels conducted by Admiral Calthrope, representative of the Allies in Mudros.

On November 30, 1918, in the immediate aftermath of the Armistice, the U.S. Secretary of State Robert Lansing instructed Lewis Heck, Secretary of American Embassy in Switzerland to return to Istanbul as a commissioner in order to gather information for the State Department, but without any official relations with the Ottoman government.[15] On August 28, 1919, Rear Admiral Mark Lambert Bristol was appointed as American High Commissioner to conduct the consular -but not the diplomatic- relations of the States from the American Embassy in Istanbul. Therefore, the Swedish Embassy has discontinued to manage American affairs with the Ottoman officialdom[16], since the new American High Commissioner was to conduct the official business under the protection of the Allied military and naval forces occupying the Ottoman capital.

At the end of the War, the Allies were to implement their plan of the partition of the Ottoman Empire, so-called the sick man of Europe. President Wilson was one of the head figures of this plan with his famous address on January 8, 1918, the twelfth point of which was dealing directly with granting sovereignty to the Turks as well as autonomous development and self-determination to the Ottoman non-Muslim subjects. His

ideas were based on his vision of getting the Turks out of Europe including the capital city of the Empire. He was suggested by a report of the American Delegation at the Paris Peace Conference on Jan 21, 1919, stating that an international state should be established in Constantinople under the governance of the Great Powers, an Armenian state in the Eastern Anatolia under the U.S. mandate and a Turkish state in central Anatolia under the mandatory principles and without any power of governance.[17] In fact, for the American government, not the Turkish question, but the establishment of an independent Armenian state had the greatest importance in making the peace. In his message to the American Commission to Negotiate Peace at Paris, Secretary of State Robert Lansing stated on August 16, 1919 that should the Turkish authorities not take the necessary measures to prevent any massacres and atrocities by Turks, Kurds and other Muslims against Armenians, there would be a complete alteration of the condition of peace and the absolute dissolution of the Empire.[18] In fact, Professors Albert H. Lybyer and Colin Day, of the American Peace Commission, as well as Colonel T.E. Lawrence, were in favor of an American mandate over the Straits and the future Constantinopolitan state, with the hope of having an Armenian mandate.

The British opinion in the Peace Conference was in complete agreement with President Wilson's ideas. The British defended the implementation of the Fourteen Points of the US President, suggesting that it was required to recognize Armenia under one of the Great Power's mandate, Thrace and Smyrna under Greek control, and the separation of Cilicia, Lebanon, Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia from the Empire. Each state's rights of self-determination were to be recognized and each were to be independent under certain limitations of Great Power supervision in the name of Conference and, ultimately, of the League of Nations. Additionally, Zionist Jews and Armenians were to have special consideration because of their unique situation and numerical strength in the Middle East countries. Since the Armenian mandate was to promote justice between the nationalists, to reconstruct the country and to establish political institutions for the independence, the Peace Conference itself should have intervened in the Armenian national state.[19]

At the Paris Peace Conference, on January 29, 1920, the British delegation circulated a draft resolution stating that Armenia, Syria, Mesopotamia, Palestine and Arabia must be completely detached from the Turkish Empire because the Ottoman authorities misruled and mistreated the subject peoples and the Armenians.[20] Despite the British declaration for the Armenian cause to attract the U.S. government's attention, for the British, all the questions of the Near East, in fact, were to be taken into account as a whole. Not only the Armenian case, but the problems of Arab territories of the Empire and the delicate situation of Palestine were well outlined in the British statement:

"The problems of Palestine are parallel in several respects to problems already discussed in relation to other Middle Eastern countries: (a) in Palestine, as in Thrace, the Straits, the Smyrna district and Armenia, the population is mixed and has not a common will; (b) though the great majority of the population is Arab, the Jewish agricultural colonist in Palestine like Armenians and Greeks in the areas above mentioned, are a minority which, on account of the historic past, its superior vigor and ability, the barbarous methods by which its numbers have recently been reduced, and its reservoirs of potential immigrants, from which its losses can be made good, is certain of a future which entitles it to consideration out of proportion to its present numbers; (c) the Christian, Jewish and Moslem Holy places in Palestine, like the waterway in the zone of the Straits,

constitute a world interest of such importance that it should take precedence, in case of conflict, over political aspirations of the local inhabitants.[21]

Lloyd George, the head of the British delegation, strongly supported that the Conference could best deal with the difficulties of Near Eastern problems through mandates conferred on single powers. However, President Wilson had indicated in the first draft of the Covenant of the League of Nations, on January 10, 1919, that territories formerly belonging to the Ottoman Empire should be placed under some kind of trust under the projected League of Nations and not being the subject of annexation by any power.[22] The U.S. President did not share entirely the views of the British delegation and felt that it was not the appropriate time to discuss the partition of the Empire. Although there were rumors of an American mandate, President Wilson was not sure whether he would be able to convince the American people to accept one. It was suggested that American troops should even occupy Constantinople or Mesopotamia, but it was evident that they could not do so, since the U.S. was not at war with Turkey. Therefore, it would be unwise for the U.S. to accept any form of mandate until they knew how it was intended to work.[23]

At the Conference, the Armenian delegation was led by Mr. Aharonian, representing the Armenian Republic, and Boghos Nubar Pasha representing the group called National Delegation of all Armenians, who presented their case of independent Armenian state on February 26, in front of the Council of Ten. The Armenians demanded Cilicia including the Marash and Adana Sanjaks with the port of Alexandretta on the Mediterranean,   the port of Trabzon on the Black Sea, in addition to six eastern vilayets of Erzurum, Bitlis, Van, Diyarbakir, Harput and Sivas. Also included in the Armenian plan was the territory of the Republic of Armenia in the Caucasus, Erivan, southern Tiflis,

southwestern Elisabetpol (Gümrü) and Kars, with the exception of northern Ardahan. They also demanded that it was necessary to place Armenia under the joint protection of the Powers with a twenty year mandate once it was liberated from the Ottoman Empire.[24] However, for the Council, the problems of Armenia were complicated by the fact that for generations the Armenians had been scattered, mostly by their commercial pursuits, to the far-flung corners of the Ottoman Empire and even the world, and there was hardly any region in which they constituted a clear-cut majority of the population.[25]

The Ottoman Delegation was also granted a hearing by the Supreme Council at the Paris Peace Conference on June 23, 1919. Instead of an Armenian independence, the establishment of the Constantinopolitan state and the partition of the Empire by the Allies, the Ottoman demands were focused on the preservation of the territorial integrity of the Empire and the sovereignty of the Sultan. The protection of the rights of minorities would be under the constitutional form of government in accordance with the Wilsonian principles. Also demanded were the appointments of American supervisors to governmental offices and ministries in the capital and an American Inspector-in-Chief in every province in the Empire. As for the Armenian Republic at Erivan, if this state was to be recognized by the Entente, the Ottoman delegation was going to discuss *ad referendum* the frontier line to separate the new Republic from the Empire. In addition, Damad Ferid Pasha stated in the memorandum that the Imperial government was ready to grant all facilities in its power to the Armenians who wished to expatriate themselves to establish the Republic. However, as regards to those who might have wished to stay in Turkey, they were to enjoy, like the other minorities, free cultural, economic and moral developments. The Ottoman government,

nevertheless, could not have accepted any dismemberment of the Empire, or any mandate of the Great Powers, neither in the Arab territories, nor in parts of so-called Armenia in Asia Minor.[26]

It was obvious that President Wilson wished to obtain a mandate for Armenia and an American high commissioner had been appointed. He asked for part of Cilicia and eliminated the option of accepting another mandate for Istanbul since this was one of the greatest problems of European powers.[27] By this date, in addition, the Supreme Council of the League of Nations met under the French Premier Clemencau at Paris on January 19, 1920 agreed that the government of Armenian state had been recognized as the *de facto* government. However, the acting Secretary of State, Polk notified Mr. Wallace, the U.S. ambassador in France, that the U.S. government had reached no definite conclusions as to the recognition of the Republic of Armenia, since the relations of the United States toward the Armenian state to be created under the Turkish peace treaty have been under consideration.[28] This decision to not recognize the Armenian state by the U.S. was sent by Mr. Wallace to Colonel William N. Haskell, Allied High Commissioner appointed to represent the United States, Great Britain, France and Italy in Armenia. However, since it was believed by the U.S. government that such a recognition would not be perceived by the Moscow government as the beginning of an attempt to dismember Russia, the new Secretary of State Bainbridge Colby sent a dispatch to the Representative of the Armenian Republic on April 23, 1920, stating that by the direction of the President, the government of the United States recognized, as of that date, the *de facto* government of the Armenian Republic in Erivan.[29] This action was taken, however, with the non-recognition of territorial frontiers which were subjects for later delimitations. This future arrangement of the frontiers was addressed on April 27, 1920, to President Wilson by the Supreme Council of the League of Nations as an appeal to accept the mandate for Armenia, including the question of the boundaries of the new state. For the Supreme Council, since the President was already familiar with the cause of "larger Armenia" , there remained on the shoulders of Mr. Wilson the solution of the question of what portions of the vilayets of Erzurum, Van, Bitlis and Trabzon, still in the possession of Turkish authorities, could have properly and safely been added to the existing Armenian state of Erivan, and, what means of access to the sea should have been provided in order to ensure to the new Armenia a self sufficing national existence.[30] In other words, it remained to be settled how the exact boundaries on the west and south should have been inserted in the peace treaty with Turkey. The boundaries of Armenia on the northwest, north and northeast were expected to be solved by mutual agreements with the adjoining states of Georgia and Azerbeijan which were also recently recognized by the League of Nations in the same date with the recognition of Armenia.

Irrespective of the mandate and the boundaries, there were additional considerations which the Supreme Council wished to call to the attention of the U.S. government. Central to these additional issues was the promise and assurance of external aid in order to provide security and existence of the new Armenian state. Therefore, the United States was asked to participate in the aid program to Armenia as well as to undertake military responsibilities for its security. Although the American Relief Administration under the chairmanship of Colonel Haskell had already delivered ninety two thousand tons of flour and one hundred and eight thousand tons of food and supplies to Armenia and opened forty hospitals and seventeen orphanages, according to the Council, its immediate needs were "the

provision for the military forces required to defend it against external attack and provision for the financial means that will enable it to constitute an orderly administration and to develop its own economic resources".[31] By this date, arms and ammunition have already been provided by the Allied Powers to the existing forces possessed by Armenian Republic of Erivan, however, this was not enough to occupy and administer territories belonging to Turkey and to enforce the treaty of San Remo in making Turkish territories more accessible to Armenian arms. Therefore, the Supreme Council asked from the United States government the possibilities to raise volunteer troops in America as well as to provide aid, credits and loans. Although President Wilson expressed his willingness to undertake to act as mediator for the Armenian boundaries[32], the Secretary of War, Newton D. Baker rejected sending American troops to Armenia. In his memorandum on June 2, 1920, depending on the report of General Harbord, Chief of the American Military Mission to Armenia, it was stated that it was impracticable to maintain in Armenia American forces of occupation estimated to be approximately 27.000, as to insure the protection of that state against invasions by force.[33] In fact, it was the right time for the U.S. to expect the risk of attack from the Bolshevik forces. By this time, a Soviet army of approximately 70.000 had been advancing southward through the Caucasus, had recently occupied Baku, and had entered Russian Armenia.

The Sèvres Treaty between Turkey and the Allies was signed by the Ottoman representatives on August 10, 1920. As was stated earlier, the main reason of this delay for Turkish peace was due to disputes over Ottoman lands relinquished to Russia and the future of the Armenian state. In order to break the deadlock over the boundaries of Armenia, the British ambassador Geddes sent a dispatch on August 6, 1920 to the Secretary of

State, Bainbridge Colby, asking whether the President's decision as to the boundaries of Armenia might be expected in the near future since this question has become a matter of urgency owing to the imminent signature to the peace treaty with Turkey.[34] Although President Wilson did not draw the borderline between Turkey and Armenia before the signature of the Treaty, the long awaited Sèvres Treaty provided the Allies with their shares and spheres in the Ottoman territories, as well as giving the Armenians and the other subject peoples of the former Ottoman Empire everything they demanded in terms of independent statehood. While Part III, Section 6, Article 88 of the Treaty remarked that Armenia was recognized as an independent and free state by the Sultan's government, Article 89 stated that

"Turkey and Armenia as well as the other High Contracting Parties agree to submit to the arbitration of the President of the United States of America the question of the frontier to be fixed between Turkey and Armenia in the vilayets of Erzerum, Trebizond, Van and Bitlis, and to accept his decision thereupon, as well as any stipulations he may prescribe as to access for Armenia to the sea, and as to the demilitarization of any portion of Turkish territory adjacent to the said frontier"[35].

The Treaty did not mention anything about an American mandate over Armenia since the Congress had not accepted it because the reports of both King-Crane Commission and General Harbord's Commission regarding a greater U.S. mandate for Anatolia, Rumelia (Thrace), Constantinople and Transcaucasia were to bring the biggest share of the postwar burdens to the United States. In fact, the Harbord Report provided factual background for an American decision on the Armenian mandate proposal. This report, dated October 16, 1919, after examining the history and current status of Armenia favored the mandate with thirteen points of reservation. The Report emphasized the importance of

mandate for humanitarian reasons, however, it stressed that the estimated cost of $ 756.014.000 for a five year period was a strong factor against the mandate. Harbord's recommendations came to the White House just at the time when President Wilson was having his fight with the Senate over the entrance of the United States to the League of Nations and the ratification of the Versailles Treaty. Therefore, he could not have much influence on the U.S. decision on accepting the mandate.[36] In his letter on December 1, 1920 to Paul Hyman, President of the Council of the League of Nations at Geneva, President Wilson wrote that the invitation to accept a mandate for Armenia had been rejected by the Senate and although the fate of the Republic of Armenia had always been a great interest to the American people, he was unable to authorize any material contribution or to employ military forces for the relief of Armenia without the approval of the Senate, whose actions could not have been forecasted by the Executive.[37] The assumption of mandate over Istanbul and Armenia was, therefore, not favored by the Congress, a point, which was clearly explained later by Charles Evans Hughes, Secretary of State in the Harding and Coolidge administrations between 1921-1925. For him, this "would directly and immediately involve this [the U.S.] government in one of the most vexing political and territorial problems of the world -the storm center of historic rivalries and bitter contests".[38] In fact, it is not wrong to say that the Wilson administration was right not to accept the mandate on the troublesome Turkish territories since the nationalist movement organized in Anatolia against the Allied occupation of Turkey was resisting any similar aggression of the Armenians in the eastern provinces as well. Like the attitudes of the Turkish nationalists against the British, French, Italian and Greek forces in the central, southern and western Anatolia, the feeling against Armenia gaining any territory in the eastern provinces was most bitter and stronger than ever before. No one in the High Commissions in Constantinople believed that the Turks would evacuate any territory ceded to Armenia and would have to be forced to make such evacuation.[39]

The Turkish nationalists under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal started to organize military resistance and wage war against the Allied occupation in order to succeed in reversing the defeat of the World War and avoid partition. But Ankara carried out a successful diplomatic campaign along with the military fighting. The military victories in the years 1919 to 1920 could never have been gained without an astute foreign policy, which paralleled military campaigns, aided them and won international recognition for the results of the military advances. The bases of foreign policy were determined by the creation of independent and sovereign Turkish state, a commitment to the maintenance of territorial unity and complete abolition of all such extraterritorial rights in matters of justice, taxation and economic exploitation, as foreigners had enjoyed, and remarkably abused, under the Ottoman Empire. Already from the days of the Sivas Congress in September 1919, which established the Representative Committee of the new nationalist administration and the Association for the Defence of Rights of Anatolia and Rumelia as the bases not only for the national struggle against imperialism but for the future independent Turkish state, it was proclaimed that all Turkish territory inside the Mudros Armistice frontiers was regarded as an indivisible whole within which no foreign intervention should be allowed, nor any independent Greek or Armenian state. The Muslim majority, 'a veritable fraternity', would grant no special status to non-Muslim minorities such as the former Ottoman system had permitted. No mandate or protectorate over Turkey would be considered. Foreign scientific or economic assistance would be accepted only

if it were untainted with imperialism. The national will must control the Sultan's government, which should have convoked a National Assembly.[40] Though the Sivas Declaration still considered the Istanbul government of Sultan Mehmet VI to be the lawful one, it rejected Istanbul's policy of acquiescence and submission to the Allied demands. Mustafa Kemal later explained in his famous Speech in 1927 that his aim had already from the beginning extended to the creation of a new and independent Turkish state, since continued allegiance to the Sultan's government was unacceptable to him.[41] Therefore, Mustafa Kemal tried to force his foreign policy upon the new Istanbul Cabinet of Ali Riza Pasha, which was much more sympathetic to the nationalists than the former cabinet of Damad Ferid, who had been accused of subservience to the Allied, especially British, leadership.

Highly influential on the Turkish foreign policy, Mustafa Kemal also gained a clear nationalist majority in the elections for the new parliament held in December 1919. Mustafa Kemal was elected as the deputy from Erzurum, however, he hesitated to go to Istanbul to attend parliamentary meetings because of the danger to him both from the Sultanate and the Allies. Despite this, the new Istanbul Parliament led by Rauf [Orbay], a close friend of Kemal and a member of the Representative Committee since the beginning, voted and confirmed the nationalist demands accepted in the Sivas Congress as the National Pact. The Allies were thus notified of the Turkish demands which, in Kemal's view, had to serve as the basis for peace negotiations.[42] The Pact emphasized complete -territorial, political, judicial and economic-independence; nothing like the capitulations would be accepted. There has been no mention now of foreign assistance as there had been at Sivas. The territorial claims extended from Armistice frontiers to include Kurdish areas as well, while plebiscites were demanded for Kars, Ardahan, Batum and Thrace. Only regions with

an Arab majority were specifically excluded. Minorities in Turkey would have no special privileges beyond the rights commonly recognized in the minority treaties of the peace settlement. If Istanbul, seat of the Sultanate and the Caliphate, were secure, regulations on traffic through the Bosphorus and Dardanelles could be made jointly by Turkey and other interested parties. These principles were declared by the National Pact as the minimum conditions for a just and lasting peace.[43]

In fact, the British occupation of Istanbul on March 16, 1920, the recognition of Armenian state in the Turkish territories, and the partition of the Empire by the Allied statesmen at San Remo, were the main reasons for the creation by the Turkish nationalists of the Government of the Grand National Assembly (GNA) in Ankara on April 23, 1920. The Assembly, in the next day of its opening, elected Mustafa Kemal as the President of the GNA and also as the head of the Council of Ministers elected by the GNA. The Government did not declare the Sultan deposed, but called him an Allied prisoner whose acts were, therefore, invalid. Moreover, the decisions that sovereignty unconditionally belongs to the nation and the Grand National Assembly is the sole representative of nation were taken. Thus, the GNA implied by these declarations that it never recognized any agreement previously made by the Sultan's government with the Allies. From this time on, the GNA assumed the responsibility to act on behalf of the nation, to declare war and to sign peace, to conclude treaties and to receive diplomats, despite the Allied recognition of Istanbul governments. Allied Powers were again officially notified that the GNA alone represented the people of Turkey and that it would preside over the present and future destiny of Turkey so long as the unjustified occupation of Istanbul continued.[44] In addition, the National government in Ankara that represented the vast majority of the Turks never recognized the Sèvres Treaty signed by

the Sultan's Istanbul government, and was fighting against the Allies in the West and the Armenians in the East. The Armenian government declared war on Turkey on October 10, 1920 with the assistance of Georgia, however, during the fall and winter of 1920 Turkish troops with the help and cooperation of its only ally, Moscow, excluded all Western Powers and Armenians from the settlement in the area, despite the rivalry between Ankara government and the Soviet Union over the control of Eastern Anatolia. Azerbaijan was by then Soviet-dominated, and the last British troops had evacuated Batum in July. Upon the rejection of Ankara's ultimatum by Armenia regarding the withdrawal of Armenian troops from the region, General Kazým Karabekir, an outstanding Turkish military leader, delivered an attack from Erzurum in late September that swept through Kars, Ardahan and Alexandropol in six weeks. These had been centers of the American Near East Relief Organization working for aid, funds, independence and statehood for the Armenians. Moscow then engineered a coup to capture the Armenian government, which was wholeheartedly accepted by the Armenians to forestall any further Turkish advance. General Karabekir signed Ankara's first international treaty at Alexandropol on December 2, 1920, which returned Kars to Turkish control and again made possible direct land connection with the Soviet Union.

Meanwhile President Wilson completed his task of drawing the frontier between Turkey and Armenia with the creation of the greater Armenia, which included Trabzon as the major sea port, and Erzurum, despite its overwhelming Turkish majority.[45] However, before the opening of negotiations between the Armenian government at Erivan and the nationalist government at Ankara, and even before the appointment by Wilson of a mediator between the Armenians and the Kemalists, it was officially declared on December 2, 1920 that the

Armenian Republic at Erivan joined the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The Armenian Cabinet formed a week before was overthrown and a new Armenian government was formed with a joint committee of Bolshevik commissaries and the members of the Armenian nationalist Dashnak Party and was immediately recognized by Moscow. During the peace conference between Turkey and Armenia at Kars, the local government at Alexandropol was made Bolshevik and the Armenian frontier towns of Foulkspril and Delijan were also occupied by the Russian troops.[46] The cooperation between the Turkish nationalists and the Russian Bolsheviks, therefore, had led to the abrogation of the Western plans for the creation of an independent Armenian state under the U.S. mandate to act as a buffer zone between Russia and the Middle and Near East on the one hand, and between Turkey and the central Asian Turkic states on the other, in spite of the existence of Soviet republics themselves, being such a buffer for the latter. As a result of the correspondence between the acting Secretary of State, Davis, the U.S. ambassador in France, Wallace and the President of the Council of the League, Hymans, it was decided not to send the Armenian boundary decision of President Wilson to the press for publication.[47]

During 1921 and 1922, the war of Turkish nationalists continued in Asia Minor against foreign occupation and especially against the Greek advance moving through Central Anatolia, coming as close as 70 kilometers to Ankara. The friendly relations between Ankara and the Russian Socialist Federated Socialist Republic were concluded on March 16, 1921 with the signature of Treaty of Friendship which confirmed Turkey's northeastern border arrangements.[48] Through this treaty, the Kemalist government of Ankara was strengthened against the Allies diplomatically, and with the Soviet logistic and financial assistance, militarily. At

this juncture, interesting strategic developments started to divide the Allies into separate camps. France concluded a separate Agreement for the Promotion of Peace with Ankara[49], providing the withdrawal of French forces from occupied Cilicia behind the Syrian borders, and a special administrative regime for the district of Alexandretta. This allowed Ankara to pull the Turkish troops from the Cilicia region and to transfer them to a more heated war zone in Western Anatolia. In August 1922, the reinforced Turkish army defeated the Greeks and expelled them from Turkish territory within less than a month. Kemalist Turkey thus won the war which helped lead not to the restoration of the former sick man of Europe, but to the establishment of the Republic and the survival of the Turkish people as an independent nation.

While the Turkish national liberation war was progressing in Anatolia, the Armenian question played a prominent role in the United States' 1920 presidential campaign and became an important part of the foreign policy of the Harding presidency until his death in August 1923[50]. The Republicans were against accepting a mandate and the Democrats were in favor of every possible and proper aid for Armenian autonomy and independence. As was the case for Wilson, church groups, missionaries and philanthropic associations, along with the active Armenian lobby formed by the American Armenian societies, loaded the Harding administration with petitions on behalf of the emancipation and liberation of Armenia, a pressure which embarrassed particularly Charles E. Hughes, since he was once the head of the American Committee for the Independence of Armenia. However, the American concern for the Armenian state and people at the political level was replaced by the worries for the protection of American interests, the US missionary activities and particularly by the possibility of future access to Mesopotamian oil. The latter concerns, namely securing oil concessions in Mesopotamia added more to the intermingling of U.S. religious and political interests in the beginning of the 1920s, which forced the new administration to concentrate its attention more on the Middle East, in order to gain a possible access to Mesopotamia by defending the rights and status of American religious, educational, philanthropic and missionary activities.

Notes:

[1] Bret E. Carroll, The Routledge Historical Atlas of Religion in America, N.Y. and London: Routledge, 2000, pp. 62-65.

[2] Bruce A. Masters, Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Arab World: the Roots of Sectarianism, Port Chester, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press, 2001, pp. 147-148.

[3] Robert L. Daniel, "American Influences in the Near East before 1861", American Quarterly, Vol. 16, No. 1 (Spring 1964), p. 77.

[4] The social organization of the Ottoman Empire based on the denominational representation of Muslim, Jewish, Orthodox and Roman Catholic communities provided a vacuum for the Great Powers of Europe to intervene in internal affairs of the Empire. Russian Empire declared itself as the protector of Orthodox community while the French played its card for the Catholic, mostly Maronite population in Greater Syria. The acceptance of the Protestant "millet" by the Ottoman Empire gave a big chance to the British to enjoy the role of the big brother of the Protestant community, since the US hesitated to interfere in the social and political affairs in another country in such a remote distance. Another reason for the British supremacy over Armenian Gregorian and Protestant populations of the Ottoman Empire was the American ideology of religious liberty and the defense of American missionaries the separation of the state and church. For a detailed analysis of the relations between the state and Ottoman millets, and Great Power intervention in the Ottoman affairs, see: Enver Z. Karal, Osmanli Tarihi, Vol. V: Nizam-i Cedit ve Tanzimat Devirleri, 1789-1856, Ankara: Turk Tarih Kurumu Basimevi, 1947; Matthew S. Anderson, The Eastern Question, 1774-1923: A Study in International Relations, N.Y.: St. Martin's, 1966; Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis (eds), Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: the Functioning of a Plural Society, N.Y.: Holmes and Meier Publishers, 1982.

[5] Masters, Ibid., p. 151.

[6] Seçil Karal Akgün, "Mormon Missionaries in the Ottoman Empire", Turcica: Revue d'Etudes Turques, Vol. 28 (1996), p. 347.

[7] Uygur Kocabasoglu, "Osmanli Imparatorlugunda 19. Yuzyilda Amerikan Yuksek Okullari", Bahri Savci'ya Armagan, Ankara: Mulkiyeliler Birligi Vakfi Yayinlari, 1988, pp. 305-306.

[8] Ibid. p.306.

[9] The details of the missionaries' educational activities and their school system are out of the limit of this study. For more information see: Uygur Kocabasoglu, Kendi Belgeleriyle Anadolu'daki Amerika: 19. Yüzyilda Osmanli Imparatorlugu'ndaki Amerikan Misyoner Okullari, Istanbul: Arba Yayinlari, 1989; Secil Karal Akgun, Amerikali Misyonerlerin Ermeni Meselesinde Rolu, Ataturk Yolu, Vol. 1, No. 1 (May 1988), pp. 1-12; Omer Turan, "Missionary Activities in Turkey From the Ottoman to the Republican Period" in The Great Ottoman-Turkish Civilization, Vol.I, Ankara: Yeni Türkiye Yayinlari, 1999, pp. 513-519.

[10] Masters, Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Arab World, Ibid, p.151. Comparing the number of students in the other Ottoman schools may give a better opinion about the functions of American missionary activities: In the Empire in British Protestant schools had 12,800 students in 1912. The government schools had 81.226 while the schools under the Orthodox Patriarch of Constantinople had 184,568 students, the French schools had 59.414, and Russian educational institutions had about 10.000 pupils. Ibid, p.151.

[11] Robert L. Daniel, "The Armenian Question and American-Turkish Relations, 1914-1927", The Mississippi Valley Historical Review, Vol. 46, No.2 (Sep. 1959), pp. 254-255.

[12] Frank Jewett, "Why We Did Not Declare War on Turkey", Current History, V.14 (April-September 1921), pp. 989-990.

[13] Kamuran Gürün, The Armenian File: The Myth of Innocence Exposed. N.Y.: St. Martin's Press, 1985, pp. 240-241; for the texts of the secret agreements between the Allies, see also, J. C. Hurewitz, Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East: A Documentary Record, 1914-1956, V. II, Princeton, N.J.: van Nostrand, 1956, pp. 11-12, 18-22, 23-25.

[14] Hurewitz, Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East: A Documentary Record, Ibid, pp. 36-37.

[15] Metin Tamkoç, "The Question of the Recognition of the Republic of Turkey by the United States", The Turkish Yearbook of International Relations, 1960, I, Ankara: SBF Yayinlari, 1961, pp. 94.

[16] The Department of State, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1920, V. I (Washington, 1936), pp. 210-218; the Correspondence between the Department of State and the Swedish Embassy at Istanbul. The Papers will be mentioned, from now on, with the abbreviation of FRUS, year and volume.

[17] Harry N. Howard, The King-Crane Commission: An American Inquiry in the Middle East, Beirut: Khayat, 1963, pp. 10-11, and for the text of the recommendations of the American Delegation, Hurewitz, Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East.., pp. 40-45.

[18] Tamkoç, "The Question of the Recognition of the Republic of Turkey...", pp.96-97.

[19] Howard, The King-Crane Commission: n American Inquiry in the Middle East..., pp.10-15.

[20] FRUS, Paris Peace Conference (PPC), V. III, pp. 785-786; 795-796; V.XI, pp. 1; 5.

[21] Howard, An American Inquiry in the Middle East, p. 18.

[22] Harry Howard, The Partition of Turkey: A Diplomatic History, 1913-1923, Norman, Oklahoma: the Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1931, pp.218-219.

[23] *FRUS, PPC, V. III*, p. 788.

[24] Howard, An American Inquiry in the Middle East..., pp. 26-27, and FRUS, PPC, V.IV, pp. 147-157.

[25] Howard, An American Inquiry in the Middle East..., p. 27.

[26] Hurewitz, Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East..., pp. 60-61; Howard, An American Inquiry in the Middle East...,pp. 28-29.

[27] *FRUS, PPC, V. VII*, pp. 14, 193-194, 198, 200-201.

[28] *FRUS, 1920, V. 3*, pp. 775-777.

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 778.

[30] *Ibid.*, p. 780.

[31] *Ibid.*, pp. 781-786. The monetary value of American aid to Armenia totaled $ 21.012.000 of which only $ 560.000 came from the British government. Ibid., p. 786.

[32] *Ibid.*, p. 783.

[33] *Ibid.*, p. 785.

[34] *Ibid.*, p. 787.

[35] *Ibid.*, p. 796.

[36] For the text of the General Harbord's Report, see: FRUS, 1919, V. 2, pp. 841-889 and The U.S Congressional Record, 66. Congress, 2nd Session, V. 59, Part 8, (May 25 - June 5, 1920), pp. 7877-7886 and for the texr of the King-Crane Report, see: FRUS, PPC, 1919, V.XII, pp. 745-863.

[37] *League of Nations*, V. 4 (1921), Boston; World Peace Foundation Pamphlets, 1921, pp. 193-194. In fact, President Wilson already knew what attitude the Senate would take in relation to the assumption of the mandate. The Senate's reservation to Article 10 of the Covenant of the League of Nations, relating to the territorial sovereignty and political independence reads as follows:"The United States assumes no obligation to preserve the territorial integrity or political independence of any other country by the employment of its military or naval forces, its resources, or any form of economic discrimination, or to interfere in any way in controversies between nations, including all controversies relating to the territorial integrity or political independence, whether members of the League or not..." Dexter Perkins, "The Department of State and American Public Opinion", The Diplomats, 1919-1939, ed. by Gordon A. Craig and Felix Gilbert, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1953, p. 285.

[38] Charles Evans Hughes, "Recent Questions and Negotiations: An Address Before the Council on Foreign Relations, New York, January 23, 1924", Foreign Affairs-Special Supplement, V.2, N.2 (December 1923), p. 350xiii.

[39] Letter of Admiral Bristol, the U.S. High Commissioner in Istanbul to the Secretary of State on September 18, 1920, FRUS, 1920, V. 3, p. 788.

[40] Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, A Speech Delivered by Ghazi Mustafa Kemal, President of the Turkish Republic, October 1927, Leipzig: K.F. Koehler, 1929, pp. 131-132.

[41] *Ibid.*, p. 27.

[42] *Ibid.*, pp. 306-310.

[43] Hurewitz, Ibid., pp. 74-75.

[44] Roderic H. Davison, "Turkish Diplomacy from Mudros to Lausanne", The Diplomats, 1919-1939, pp. 181-182

[45] *FRUS, 1920, V.3*, pp. 789-804, letter from Bainbridge Colby on the Wilson's decision to Ambassador Wallace in Paris, on November 24, 1920.

[46] Telegram of Moser, American Council at Tiflis to the acting Secretary of State, Davis at Washington, on December 4, 1920, Ibid., p. 806.

[47] *Ibid.*, pp. 807-809.

[48] Hurewitz, Ibid., pp. 95-97.

[49] *Ibid.*, pp. 97-100.

[50] *Congressional Record, 66. Congress, 2nd Session*, V. 59 (1919-1920), Part.3 p. 2934, Part 4 pp. 3907, 4108, Part 6 p. 5660, Part 8 pp. 7549-7553, 7876, 8071; 67. Congress, 1st Session, V. 61 (1921), Part 4 p. 4202; 67. Congress, 2nd Session, V. 62 (1921-1922), Part 1 p. 475, 690, Part 5 p. 4500, Part 6 p. 5760, Part 9 pp. 8773-8779, Part 11 p. 11267.

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Egyptian Islamists and the Status of Muslim Women Question

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This paper will explore the gender discourse of contemporary Egyptian Islamists and argue that their gender discourse is not merely a religious and traditional discourse, but that this politico-religious Islamic ideology articulates a quite modern construct of gender equality. The gender discourse of a number of important Egyptian Islamists, al-Banna', Qutb, al-Ghazali, al-Qaradawi and Ezzat will provide illustrations of these modern developments. Modern elements incorporated in today's Islamist revivalist approaches create new understandings, neither purely traditional, nor purely modern, that are 'modern constructs' that attempt to remain traditional, while integrating specifically modern components. The presence of these two seemingly opposing and contradictory elements may account for the present popularity that Islamist discourses enjoy in many Muslims countries.

In the last century, a variety of ideologies flourished in the Muslim world that was still grappling with the long lasting effects of its encounter with the West. A number of discourses on gender, all purporting to better women's lives, were popular, at one time or another: the discourses of secularism, modernism, reformism, traditionalism, state feminism and even Islamism. In the early 20th century, Modernist voices were championing women's cause, at a time when Islamists began to make similar claims. Islamists have now become the new traditional, and often the most vocal, forces of contemporary Muslim societies, resistant to some, but not all changes. The religio-political activism of Muslims holding college and university degrees, many of whom are professionals and who belong to the new urban middle-classes, focuses on the rejection of any type of dichotomy between the religious and the secular realms. Islam must shape and mold all aspects of Muslim society and Muslims must strive, in any way they can, to achieve this goal. Contemporary Islamism, however, is far from being mere religious traditionalism. In what follows, it will be argued

that contemporary Egyptian Islamist discourses are quite modern constructs. This can best be illustrated by presenting diachronically the gender discourses of a number of important Egyptian Islamists.

The founder of the foremost contemporary Islamist movement, the Egyptian Muslim brotherhood (founded in 1928), Hassan al-Banna (d. 1949) envisioned an Islamist project that would restore the past glories of the Muslim world.[1] This utopian ideology would become reality only by way of a return to the 'true' Islam and an elimination of any kind of foreign dominations over the Muslim world.[2] With such a utopian goal, the Islamist 'restorative' project was to develop into a highly political ideology. In an ever-changing world, Islamist activism continues to 'reaffirm' Muslim values and thus provides the movement with its deep moral underpinning that is not without any consequence for the status of Muslim women. Al-Banna wrote that the movement must struggle in order "that a free Islamic state may arise in this free fatherland, acting according to the precepts of Islam, applying its social regulations…," a political project that led the movement to be outlawed in Egypt in 1954.[3] The movement is still unable to officially participate in Egyptian political life.

The discourse of the Muslim Brotherhood movement emerged as a 'product of crisis' and the result of the 'cross-cultural interplay' between Europe and the Muslim world. This encounter led the Islamic world to espouse a 'revivalist mentality.'[4] The earlier formulations of the Islamist discourse of the Muslim Brotherhood movement remains quite typical of a number of contemporary Islamist discourses that are, for the most part, indebted to the earlier Islamist ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood movement. The cross-cultural interplay between the West and the Islamic world has helped shape the nature of the Islamists' traditional, yet simultaneously modern discourses on women.

Qatar-based Egyptian Yusuf al-Qaradawi, who recently turned down the leadership of the Muslim Brotherhood,[5] and Egyptian Heba Raouf Ezzat, two contemporary Islamist figures, propose 'Islamically progressive' views on Muslim women's role, status, and rights in Muslim societies. A number of these views have gained in popularity among many segments of the Muslim population, but one may ask to what extent, and in what sense can their views on Muslim women, claimed to be 'progressive,' be truly modern? Claims made by contemporary Islamists al-Qaradawi and Ezzat can be shown to have their roots in the writings of earlier Islamists, such as al-Banna and his most important successor, Sayyid Qutb (d. 1966), who wrote during the second quarter of the 20th century, and whose ideas found an expression in the social and political struggle of Zaynab al-Ghazali. The claimed 'progressive' views of earlier Islamists on women's issues have never really ceased to be part of the revivalist discourse of Islamists on Muslim women, as attested by the recent views of al-Qaradawi and Ezzat.

New discourses on women's role, status, and rights emerged out of the Muslim world's encounter with the West and its modernity (understood in a broad sense). This encounter triggered the emergence of novel cross-cultural developments, even in the religious realm. Various Muslim groups advocated a number of rights for women, albeit often within the traditional religious framework. For instance, the Egyptian Society for the Progress of Women (founded in 1908) tried to show Muslim women how Islam had historically provided them with more rights than their Western sisters.[6]

Appeal to the traditional discourse of the Islamic religious tradition to argue for more rights for women remains paradoxical, but not without its own justification. Kandiyoti has tried to explain women's adherence to traditional discourses, their relationship with women's rights and traditional Muslim societies by appealing to a

notion of 'patriarchal bargain,' whereby change is endorsed through the accommodation of traditional religious values.[7] Accommodation allows women to negotiate greater freedom from within the strictures of patriarchal society and with the values and principles it upholds. The same phenomenon occurs today in Iran. Khosrokhavar identifies this strategy as the actions of 'lateral actors' who possess, nonetheless, real agency: "formally respecting the social norms and rules and contesting them in a responsible manner … embedding it within Iranian tradition, religion, and culture … in such a way as to undermine it [that is, male domination] from underneath."[8] The strategy has remained a viable alternative all over the Muslim world throughout the last century. Paradoxically, this strategy appears to have increased in popularity in the last two or three decades, especially within the ranks of urban, middle-class women Islamists.

The increased demands for greater rights for women are indicative of on-going changes that have befallen the Muslim world.[9] Muslim women's lives have undergone tremendous changes during the last hundred years. Women were provided with education, became literate and entered the labor market in increasingly greater numbers. These changes have gradually altered Muslim attitudes towards women's role in society. These changes have fashioned a new awareness and played a role in the emergence of new gender discourses, a new 'episteme' with which to think about Muslim women.[10] At the outset of the 20th century, women of all political and ideological persuasions campaigned for women's cause. Egyptian women formed associations, started journals, wrote in the nationalist press, and associated themselves to political parties.[11] Islamist women joined in these new social and political activities during the latter part of the 1800s and the 1900s.

The project of the Islamists to 're-Islamize' Egyptian society, through Islamic education and the services provided by their charitable organizations, had but one goal: the establishment of a 'truly' Islamic society ruled by an Islamic government.[12] Capitalizing on human resources, the Islamist movement of the Muslim Brotherhood encouraged Muslim women to struggle, side by side with men, for the Islamic 'Call' (*da'wa*). Social activism was not prohibited. Women were permitted, even encouraged to be engaged in the social realm and, to a lesser extent, in the political realm, as long as their social and political activities for the Islamic cause were not undertaken at the expense of their domestic responsibilities. Al-Banna believed that "destroying the integrity of the family and threatening the happiness of the home" was one of the social causes of the dissolution of the Islamic state.[13] This new call for the social and political activism of women was, however, quite new and modern. The Islamist movement developed its own distinctive gender discourses, a mixture of traditional religious conservative ideas, along side modern ones, producing a new hybrid, neo-traditional gender discourse compatible with its 'restorative' ideological project.

In the early 1950s, Sayyid Qutb (d. 1966) became the new leader of the Muslim Brotherhood. In his *Social Justice in Islam*, he identified human equality as one of the foundations of social justice in Islam.[14] Although he did not discard a number of traditional gender-biased conceptions, Qutb was, nonetheless, calling for greater gender equality, in line with new emerging discourses of equality between women and men. He provided explanations and justifications for some of the inequalities found in the Scriptures and the religious (legal) tradition. For instance, he explained the different shares inherited by men and women by appealing to men and women's different 'responsibilities.' He asserted that women have

a 'natural capacity and skills' for managing the household, making it possible for him to appeal to women's 'greater right to care' and man's 'right of management.' Qutb's 'distributive' notion of equality remains a staple of Islamist discourses. The notion of equality is often opposed to, or even replaced with a notion of 'complementarity,' that is, women and men are equal, yet different, thus providing some grounds for a justification of some of the religious inequalities. Qutb insisted upon equality, not only in religious and spiritual matters, but also in economic and financial matters, which he traced back to the Scriptures, where it is stated that both men and women share a common origin (Qur'an, 7:189), making each one of them an "equal half of the one 'soul'."[15] Islamist interpreters of the religious tradition and of the Qur'an will argue for some kind of Islamic women's rights. Their works have become models for hundreds of similar works on women in Islam whose sophistication and success remains to be analyzed.

In spite of the traditional roles of mothers and wives that it promoted, the Islamist discourse of the Muslim Brotherhood appealed to a growing number of Muslims. Their discourse provided Islamic 'empowerment' to Muslim women in the social and political spheres, as long as they were working for the Islamic 'Call.' Zaynab al-Ghazali, for example, joined the first Egyptian women's organization, the Egyptian Feminist Union, but was soon discontented as women's liberation movement is a 'deviant innovation,' the result of Muslim's backwardness. Al-Ghazali believes that the departure from the true teachings of Islam was the cause of women's suffering. The only solution to this suffering is the return to true Islamic teachings. Al-Ghazali's solution was to found her own Muslim Women's Association. Eventually, she joined the Muslim brotherhood (in 1949) as an active member,

was arrested in 1965, tortured for belonging to a banned organization, and eventually released.[16]

Like the projects of al-Banna and Qutb, Zaynab al-Ghazali's project was the re-Islamization of society. Islamists were being discredited by the secular and modernizing forces for their backwardness, but they held steadfast to the belief that the real backwardness of Muslim society was the result of Muslims' estrangement from Islam. A renewed social activism was required to promote a return to Islamic values. The Islamists' call for women's social and political activism is, nonetheless, a product of modern times and has never been a historically significant element of the Islamic tradition. The new impetus provided by these ideas is illustrated with al-Ghazali's own life story. She included in her first marriage contract a stipulation that allowed her to obtain a divorce if her husband disagreed with her Islamic activism. Her second husband provided her with a written agreement that stipulated that he would help her in the Islamic 'Call.' After the death of her second husband, al-Ghazali could argue that she had fulfilled her religious duty in marriage, refused to remarry and dedicated the rest of her life to the Islamic 'Call.'[17] Women have used a number of 'Islamic' stipulations into their marriage contracts to better their conditions, but stipulations like those included by al-Ghazali are almost unheard. Islamist women are thus willing to use the resources of Islamic legal prescriptions to their own advantage, opening new Islamically defined opportunities that enables them to venture into traditionally inaccessible male public spheres.

The social and political activism of women such as al-Ghazali, in the name of the Islamic 'Call,' although a modern novelty, remains in line with al-Banna's and Qutb's vision of women's social activism for the Islamic cause. For al-Ghazali, women constitute a "fundamental

part of the Islamic call." She argued that women can be more active than men, because, in accordance with the Islamist vision of gender relations, men are the providers of the household. In addition, women's social and political roles constitute undeniably a highly ethical endeavor. Muslim women "build the kind of men that we need to fill the ranks of the Islamic call." Women are the pillars of a virtuous Islamic society. To fulfill their role in the re-building of the Islamic nation, women need to be edu-cated, cultured, and knowledgeable about the precepts of the Qur'an, the Islamic tradition, of world politics, etc. Once they have fulfilled their god-given roles, the "first, holy, and most important mission is to be a mother and wife," something they cannot "ignore," they can then embark on their utopian mission.[18] It should come to no surprise that the roles of Muslim women as mothers and wives become religiously 'essentialized' roles. Domesticity becomes the envisioned horizon of women's natural and primordial activities.

Islamists are calling for greater gender equality in a number of specific social spheres. Women Islamists ad-vocate gender equality, especially in the realm of educa-tion. The right to education no longer remains restricted to men alone. Al-Ghazali did send a memorandum to the Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia to have girls educated.[19] In a sense, Islamists have internalized the modernizing aims of the modern Muslim states, embodied in their insis-tence on the nation-building values of education. Similar 'transformative values' can now serve the Islamist 'restor-ative' project which they often envision as resting more specifically on religious education. Al-Ghazali's own per-sonal social endeavors for the Islamic 'Call' included teaching classes on the Qur'an.

Traditional religious Islamic views on women were undergoing a parallel process of change that was to ac-commodate notions of greater equality between the gen-ders. During the 1960s and the 1970s, attitudes among the religious class continued to change. Mahmud Shaltut, rector of the Egyptian Sunni al-Azhar University from 1958 to 1963, and 'Abd al-Halim Mahmud, rector from 1973 to 1978, upheld what Stowasser labels a 'more egalitarian gender paradigm.' Their novel, albeit discreet discourses on women originated from within the wall of the thousand year old Sunni religious institution of higher education.[20] During the same period, the ideologue of the Islamic regime in Khartoum (Sudan) proposed similar Islamist views on gender equality in his *Women in Islam and Muslim Society*.[21] Other leading reli-gious figures and intellectuals, like Muhammad al-Ghazali, a much read Islamist author throughout the last quarter of the 20th century, and Yusuf al-Qaradawi, both al-Azhar University graduates, although not part of the Egyptian religious 'establishment,' proposed novel Islam-ist gender discourses articulated in terms of women's and men's 'humanity and personhood.' In fact, it was only during the last twenty years "that the affirmation of women's political rights emerged in the clerical and Is-lamist discourse" which Stowasser wonderfully illus-trated.[22]

Two contemporary proponents of a renewed Islamist discourse on gender equality, Yusuf al-Qaradawi and Heba Raouf Ezzat, co-founded the popular Qatar based web site on Islam.[23] Al-Qaradawi has become one of the Arab world's foremost media religious leaders (*ulama*) with his popular weekly TV program on Islam that reaches over 20 million Arabs, the Islamic version of American televangelists. Al-Qaradawi's status of cleric and the legitimacy provided by his Al-Azhar Sunni Univer-sity training allows him to propose novel interpretations of Islam to a receptive audience. In the same manner, he can criticize traditional interpretations and the causes of their prevalence. He can propose interpretations that

attempt to bridge the gap between tradition and modernity. In his 1994 *Collections of Fatwas* (2 vols.), al-Qaradawi rejected a number of traditional interpretations on women and politics that signaled a significant development within traditionalist circles.[24] Zaman has shown the relevance of ulamas, or religious leaders, as 'custodians' of change in the contemporary Muslim world,[25] while Hooker has shown how contemporary *fatwas*, or religious legal opinions, can reflect social changes.[26] The fact that a religious scholar of Islamist allegiance is voicing these new views indicates a growing consensus on these matters. An increasing number of religious leaders appear to have become more receptive to the reassessment of the place and role of women in Muslim society. One reason may be the efforts of a growing number of religious leaders to align themselves with new realities and understandings of women's contemporary political and social roles.

Al-Qaradawi advocates greater social and political roles for Muslim women who are engaged in the 'Call.' He condemns the increased shunning of women in Islamist gatherings and the views that advocate greater control and restriction on women's social and political participation. He criticizes the "misogyny [that] abounds in the pronouncements of many Islamic 'scholars' and 'imams' " that he believes are responsible for the fact that entire societies "have mistreated their female members despite the fact that Islam has honored and empowered the women in all spheres of life. The woman in Islamic Law is equal to her male counterpart."[27] Al-Qaradawi attempts to empower women within the Muslim community, especially in the public sphere, where women have historically been excluded. His position is reminiscent of the ones upheld by earlier Islamists, like al-Banna and Qutb who both envisioned a more active role for Muslim women who were working for the 'Call.'

Al-Qaradawi still needs to argue for this equality between women and men. He argues with theological and jurisprudential arguments that were put forward earlier by Shaltut (d. 1963) (for example, equality regarding 'blood-money,' the money that must be paid to the family of the victim to compensate a death, equal liability for one's actions, and equality of testimony, since women's "testimony is demanded and valid in court").[28] Al-Qaradawi rejects the idea of inequality, first, by means of an exegesis of scriptural passages (Qur'an, 33:33-34) that allows him to 'contextualize' revelation and to highlight historical counter-examples to seclusion. He then proceeds to present early interpretations that contradict later misogynic interpretations. He also provides an argument, from an Islamic legal (*shari'a*) point of view, that confinement is not the normal state of affair, but that it rather constitutes only a Qur'anic legal punishment for adultery (Qur'an, 4:1-5). The extension of exclusion is thus narrowed (but not eliminated) to its specific legal context. Finally, al-Qaradawi introduces the concept of modesty to replace the one of seclusion (Qur'an, 33: 33).[29] Although the Qur'an remains at the forefront of any Islamist interpretation of equality, attempts are made to overcome traditional unequal understanding of the place of Muslim women in Islam that find their origins in the Scriptures.

For Islamists, the blueprint for a truly Islamic society and the Islamic ideals of gender equality remains the Scriptures. The interpretative strategies with which they attempt to make sense of scriptural discrepancies in the face of their claims to gender equality reflect the measure of their willingness to engage with modernity. Al-Qaradawi does not discard unequal Qur'anic prescriptions, such as the testimony of two women equating that of one man or discarding women's testimony 'altogether' for major crimes and those requiring 'retaliation' (that is, the blood-money to pay to the family of the victim), but

instead provides what may be labeled 'naturalistic' reasons for these Qur'anic injunctions. By appealing to women's intrinsic 'nature,' he, cannot fail, in the end, to justify and legitimize these unequal prescriptions. He can only state that the explicit inequality of treatment between women and men found in some Qur'anic passages does not take anything away from women's 'humanity and integrity.' Attempting to salvage tradition, al-Qaradawi reasserts a certain type of gender inequality, although he attempts, at times, to argue that some aspects of Islamic Law 'do' recognize gender equality. A number of al-Qaradawi's arguments for equality rest on those that were developed by Shaltut. Al-Qaradawi does not, however, use Shaltut's refutation (for example, that a woman's testimony cannot be equated with that of a man) to draw the 'necessary' conclusion for a 'real' equality between women and men. This is indeed a prudent traditionalist reflex in view of his more traditional audience.

A tension inevitably subsists between new discourses on Islamic equality and those of traditional interpretations. A similar tension arises regarding al-Qaradawi's ideas on women's authority and gender differentiation. Al-Qaradawi's negotiations with modern and traditional understandings clearly illustrate possibilities of thinking outside the boundaries of the tradition, although he refuses to openly take more perilous stands. The main concerns of Islamists remain to ensure that women are provided with the social and political opportunities that will enable them to become productive contributors of society, first and foremost, as mothers and wives of steadfast Muslims, but also as active members of Muslim associations, working for the 'transformative' project that rests at the heart of the Islamic 'Call.' Islamists like al-Qaradawi may, in fact, be viewing women's social and political activism in a rather 'instrumentalist' fashion, in a manner not so different than al-Banna's own earlier po-

sition. Gender equality takes a second place to the requirements of the Islamic 'Call' which requires an increasingly greater number of socially and politically active Muslim women.

More recently, however, women Islamists have advocated their own brand of social activism and, as a consequence, have become Islam's new interpreters. Unhappy with the term feminism, they often deconstruct it in an attempt to take into account their own experiences and to 're-appropriate' their own Muslim identity. In so doing, these women challenge western understandings of the term. The gender discourses of these women Islamists put forward familiar ideas. For instance, Heba Raouf Ezzat promotes a number of al-Qaradawi's ideas. It may well be legitimate to ask what might the relation between al-Qaradawi's views and those of women Islamists on gender equality be. Al-Qaradawi's new 'womanist' discourse may, in fact, signal recognition by religious leaders of the inescapable challenges that the increased voices of Muslim women in general and Islamist women in particular create for Islam, al-Ghazali and Ezzat being two cases in point.

A political theorist lecturing at Cairo University and at ease with western scholarship, Ezzat belongs to the new generation of university-educated Islamist women who write about women in Islam. She analyzes gender equality in light of the Scriptures and those Qur'anic verses that promote an Islamic notion of 'gender complementarity,' a notion that pays full respect to 'housewifery' and motherhood. Ezzat's motto is to "liberate women, and still keep the family," the latter consisting of the primary and fundamental social structure of Muslim society.[30] The objective might be laudable in itself, but it determines, from the outset, the conclusions she will draw in her political analyses of women role in society. Although women 'can,' do 'have' the choice to hold a public office, their primary domestic responsibili-

ties prevent the majority of them to succeed in the political arena, as "only few women can practically manage both the responsibilities of family and jurisdiction [that is, holding a public office]."[31] Domesticity appears to be lurking not far away from her 'exception' rule.

Political opportunities, available to both women and men, at least for the few 'exceptional' women, need to be matched with similar social opportunities. A call for unlimited access to both education and employment now defines this new social equality between the genders. In this perspective, the veil becomes a means of 'empowerment' for women who can now "use the veil pragmatically to get room to maneuver, enlarge their scope of action and increase their independent mobility … in the social world outside domestic boundaries, a strategy that is legitimized by religious authoritative discourse."[32] Such statements exemplify Ezzat's use of the 'patriarchal bargain' to advocate change through a process of accommodation of traditional religious values and to negotiate greater freedom from within the strictures of the patriarchal society. The promotion of both education and women's social involvement (not merely employment) remains a main feature of today's Islamist gender discourse, but, as mentioned earlier, the emphasis on and legitimization of women's social activities goes back at least to the first quarter of the 20th century. Her renewed demands for the social betterment of women's situation, through education and employment, do not appear to be something significantly novel in the writings of Ezzat who belongs to the third generation of Egyptian Islamist. Such demands, nonetheless, point to the sustained relevance of a number of modern ideas present in Islamist discourses.

Ezzat's fight for woman's rights, albeit within the confines of the Islamic tradition, can be labeled a feminist struggle, as her aim remains the betterment of women's situation. Ezzat, however, understands feminism in Islamist terms. Feminism is the product of the secularization of western society, one of the stages of its development that is fundamentally incompatible with Islam.[33] For Ezzat, fighting for women's rights undoubtedly does not transform one into a feminist: "I am not an Islamic feminist"[34] and "I don't search [for ideas] outside Islam, and there's no such thing as Islamic feminism."[35] In a fashion akin to the criticisms made by critics of cultural relativism, Ezzat criticizes the universal claims that feminism makes, as mere historical and contingent products, based on her Islamist assumption that Islam's own version of women's rights is the only universal version of women's rights. This is where some of the limitations of her feminist understanding may rest.

Ezzat also attacks feminism for having been co-opted by the State. The State is responsible for the 'erosion' of Islamic Family Law and the State's curtailment of the activities of Islamic groups, such as the Muslim Brotherhood and has used feminism to achieve its goal. Historically, legal approaches have been privileged in the Arab and Muslim world in order to introduce legal changes in the States' efforts to promote more gender equality. Ezzat criticizes these legal approaches primarily because they did not address the real causes of inequality which have economical, political and social causes. Her major qualm rests with the erosion of traditional Islamic Family Law, the underlying assumption of her criticism of the State and feminism being that such legal changes would be unnecessary if Muslim states provided justice and equality (social, political, economic, etc.). A true Islamic state would and should uphold precisely the type of justice and equality which the Muslim Brotherhood movement is advocating. More fundamentally, however, her concerns rests with her belief that the existence of Islamism itself that is threatened: "the feminist movement has become one of the allies of the regimes against the 'fundamentalist' threat."[36] In addition to being an exter-

nal western threat, feminism becomes an internal threat, as an instrument of the State in its efforts to eliminate the Islamists.

The meeting of the discourses of tradition and modernity once again creates a tension. Like al-Qaradawi, Ezzat adopts, on the one hand, traditional values, those of motherhood, housewifery and the primacy of Islamic Family Law (without any discussion of its consequences for women) and, on the other hand, modern values, those of active social, economical and political roles for women. The latter modern values have certainly been historically absent from traditional interpretations of women's role, rights and status in Islam. The work of Lois Lamya al-Faruqi on Islamic identity and the 'alien' influences that have been imposed on Muslims exhibits similar tensions. Al-Faruqi identifies feminism as one of the "certain alien ideological intrusions on our societies, ignorance, and distortion of the true Islam, or exploitation by individuals within the society."[37] Her 'nativism'[38] pushes her to focus on, and appeal to genuine indigenous values and culture (associated with Islam), allowing her to state that "if feminism is to succeed in an Islamic environment, it must be an indigenous form of feminism" which most Muslim women would believe is Islam's true egalitarian principles of justice. For today's Islamists, Muslim women's salvation is in Islam: "prescriptions that are found in the Qur'an and in the example of the Prophet Muhammad […] are regarded as the ideal to which contemporary women wish to return."[39] The tension between traditional and modern values is only one of the manifestations of a 'struggle for identity' for contemporary Muslims in the face of increasing western encroachment and an even more rapidly increasing globalization. This tension is also reflected in the gender discourses of Islamists.

The few examples provided illustrate how even contemporary religious Islamist discourses, although intrinsically traditional in nature, attempt to align themselves with contemporary values, such as gender equality and women's rights discourses. These examples provide some credence to Hymowitz's claim that "Islamic feminism can affirm the dignity of Islam, while at the same time bringing it more in line with modernity."[40] The manner in which Islamists achieve this goal still remains to be fully examined, but the preceding contextualization of some present day Islamist discourse, in the light of earlier Islamist discourses on women yields, however, unexpected results and illustrates how the contemporary views of al-Qaradawi, Ezzat, or al-Faruqi on Muslim women, their role, status, and rights find their roots in the earlier Islamist discourses of al-Banna', Qutb, and even al-Ghazali.

The modern elements incorporated in today's Islamist discourses on gender equality and women's rights, none of which are merely traditional discourses, are equally important to understand the Islamist discourse. Their revivalist approaches create new modern understandings, neither purely traditional nor purely modern.[41] Today's Islamist discourses constitute 'modern constructs' that attempt to remain traditional, while adopting specifically modern components.[42] Contemporary values such as education and the possibility for women to engage in social and political activities, especially for the Islamic cause, have become intrinsic parts of their new contemporary claims.[43] The presence of these two seemingly opposing and contradictory elements may account for the present popularity that Islamist discourses enjoys in many Muslims countries.

Notes:

[1] Al-Banna, Hassan, Five Tracts of Hasan Al-Banna' (1906-1949): A Selection from the Majmu'at Rasa'il al-Imam al-Shahid Hasan al-Banna', translated from the Arabic and annotated by Charles Wendell. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978, 6-7.

[2] Al-Banna, Five Tracts of Hasan Al-Banna', 31.

[3] Al-Banna, Five Tracts of Hasan Al-Banna', 31.

[4] Al-Banna, Five Tracts of Hasan Al-Banna', 7.

[5] Al-Jazeera, "A-Qaradawi Turns down Top Brotherhood Post," Monday 12 January, 2004; <http://english.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/F7E30839-EFA2-4F86-9E05-887DEECEB3D1.htm> (1 July 2005).

[6] Beth Baron, The Women's Awakening in Egypt: Culture, Society, and the Press, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1994, 176-8.

[7] Deniz Kandiyoti, "Bargaining with Patriarchy," Gender and Society, 2.3 (1988): 274-290.

[8] Farhad Khosrokhavar, "Toward and Anthropology of Democratization in Iran," Critique, 16 (2000): 3-29, esp. 24-5.

[9] Valentine M. Moghadam, "Engendering Citizenship, Feminizing Civil Society: The Case of Middle East and North Africa," Women and Politics, 25.1/2 (2003): 63-87.

[10] Roxanne D. Marcotte, "Identity, Power, and the Islamist Discourse on Women: An Exploration of Islamism and Gender Issues in Egypt," in Islam in World Politics, eds. Nelly Lahoud, Anthony H. Johns and Allan Patience, London, Routledge Curzon, 2005, 67-92, esp. 75-7.

[11] Baron, The Women's Awakening in Egypt, 115.

[12] Janine A. Clark, Islam, Charity, and Activism: Middle-Class Networks and Social Welfare in Egypt, Jordan, and Yemen, Bloomington, IN, Indiana University Press, 2004.

[13] Al-Banna, Five Tracts of Hasan Al-Banna', 26-27.

[14] William E. Shepard, Sayyid Qutb and Islamic Activism: A Translation and Critical Analysis of Social Justice in Islam, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1996, ix-x, and chap. 3; cf. Sayyid Qutb, Social Justice in Islam, rev. ed., translated from the Arabic by John B. Hardie, translation revised and introduction by Hamid Algar, Oneonta, NY, Islamic Publications International, 2000.

[15] Shepard, Sayyid Qutb and Islamic Activism, 62-4.

[16] Valerie J. Hoffman, "An Islamic Activist: Zaynab al-Ghazali: Translated from the Arabic by Valerie J. Hoffman," in Women and the Family in the Middle East. New Voices of Change, ed. Elizabeth W. Fernea, Austin, University of Texas Press, 1985, 233-254, esp. 235; Margo Badran, Feminists, Islam, and Nation, Gender and the Making of Modern Egypt, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1995, 163.

[17] Hoffman, "An Islamic Activist," 237.

[18] Hoffman, "An Islamic Activist," 236-7.

[19] Hoffman, "An Islamic Activist," 244.

[20] Barbara Stowasser, "Old Shaykhs, Young Women, and the Internet: The Rewriting of Women's Political Rights in Islam," The Muslim World, 91.1/2 (2001): 99-119, esp. 101.

[21] Hasan Abdalla Al-Turabi, Women in Islam and Muslim Society, 1973, <http://www.jannah.org/sisters/turabi.html> (1 July 2005).

[22] Stowasser, "Old Shaykhs, Young Women, and the Internet," 101-2.

[23] IslamOnline.net, cf. <http://www.islamonline.net> (1 July 2005).

[24] Stowasser, "Old Shaykhs, Young Women, and the Internet."

[25] Muhammad Qasim Zaman, The Ulama in Contemporary Islam: Custodians of Change (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002).

26 Michael B. Hooker, Indonesian Islam: Social Change through Contemporary Fatawa, Crowns Nest, NSW, Asian Studies Association of Australia with Allen & Unwin, 2003.

27 Yusuf al-Qaradawi, The Voice of Woman in Islam [written after 1995]; <http://www.jannah.org/sisters/qaradawi.html> (1 July 2005).

28 Al-Qaradawi, The Voice of Woman in Islam.

29 Yusuf al-Qaradawi, The Islamic Movement and Women's Activity; <http://www.jannah.org/sisters/qaradawimov.html>, (1 July 2005).

30 Heba Raouf Ezzat, "Rethinking Secularism…Rethinking Feminism," 1 June 2002; <http://www.islamonline.net/English/contemporary/2002/07/Article01.shtml> (1 July 2005).

31 Heba Raouf Ezzat, "Women and the Interpretation of Islamic Sources," Women Issues, October 1999. <http://www.islam21.net/pages/keyissues/key2-6.htm> (1 July 2005).

32 Heba Raouf Ezzat, "Ask About Islam, Question and Answer Details: The Voice of Muslim Women," IslamOnline.net, 19 May 2003; <http://www.islamonline.net/askaboutislam/display.asp?hquestionID=4059> (1 July 2005).

33 Ezzat, "Rethinking Secularism," and Idem, "Women and the Interpretation of Islamic Sources,"

34 K. el-Gawhary, "An Interview with Heba Ra'uf Ezzat," Middle East Report, No. 191, Nov-Dec.: 26-27.

35 Ezzat, "Rethinking Secularism"; cf. Sanna Negus, "A Chosen Identity. Columnist and Social Critic Heba Raouf Espouses Social Equality without Feminism and Islamic Values without Islamism," Cairo Times, vol. 3, issue 25 (22-6 January); <http://www.cairotimes.com/content/archiv03/raouf.html> (18 July 2003).

36 Ezzat, "Rethinking Secularism."

37 Lois Lamya al-Faruqi, "Islamic Traditions and the Feminist Movement—Confrontation or Cooperation?"; <http://www.jannah.org/sisters/feminism.html> (1 July 2005).

38 For a use of the term in an Iranian context, cf. Mehdi Boroujerdi, Iranian Intellectuals and the West. The Tormented Triumph of Nativism, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1996, 14-9.

39 Al-Faruqi, "Islamic Traditions and the Feminist Movement."

40 Kay S. Hymowitz, "Why Feminism is AWOL on Islam," City Journal, winter, vol. 13, no. 1 (2003): 36-51; <http://www.city-journal.org/html/13_1_why_feminism.html> (1 July 2005).

41 Bruce B. Lawrence, Defenders of God: The Fundamentalist Revolt against the Modern Age. 2nd ed., Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1995.

42 Roxanne D. Marcotte, "How Far Have Reforms Gone in Islam?" Women's Studies International Forum, 26.2 (2003): 153-66, esp. 162-3.

43 Helen Hardacre, "The Impact of Fundamentalisms on Women, the Family, and Interpersonal Relations," in Fundamentalisms and Society: Reclaiming the Sciences, the Family, and Education. Vol. 2 of The Fundamentalism Project, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993, 129-50; cf. Hoffman, "An Islamic Activist."

Gyemant Maria
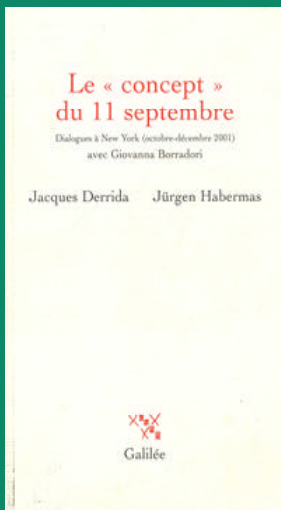
J. Derrida, J. Habermas, Le "concept" de 11 septembre, Dialogues à New York (octobre — décembre 2001) avec Giovanna

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În data de 11 septembrie 2001 am stat cu toţii în faţa televizoarelor nevenindu-ne să credem ceea ce vedem. În decorul american cu care eram cu toţii obişnuiţi datorită mulţimii de filme pe care le-am consumat avea loc un eveniment atroce pe care, într-o primă fază, ne simţeam incapabili să-l deosebim de ultimul film SF urmărit. Pentru prima dată a schimba canalele nu mai însemna nimic: toate televiziunile din lume difuzau aceeaşi imagine pe care o reluau la nesfârşit. Iar noi priveam cu gurile căscate cum al doilea avion, alb-negru ca într-un film de epocă, lovea unul dintre turnurile gemene ale World Trade Center-ului, cum un avion venit parcă din altă lume lovea în ordinea mondială, în economia mondială şi în orgoliul statului care constituia centrul acestei lumi. Dar în acele momente toate aceste simboluri erau estompate de şocul pe care orice om din această lume l-a avut când a realizat că ceea ce vede nu este un film, o ficţiune, ci că omul care sărea de la etajul al 90-lea care era în flăcări, şi care apărea pe ecranele noastre ca un punct gri, era un om real, viu şi care în câteva secunde va fi mort. După primele câteva vizionări ale imaginilor primele bănuieli apocaliptice au început

să se înfiripe în minţile noastre. Să fie vorba de un nou război mondial? De un sfârşit al lumii sub zeci de ciuperci nucleare? Pentru prima dată Statele Unite păreau cu adevărat aproape de noi, atât de aproape pe cât de probabil era ca furia lor nucleară să bulverseze pacea mondială cu care am avut timp să ne obişnuim şi s-o considerăm garantată în ultimii 50 de ani în care războaiele n-au încetat să se desfăşoare dar o făceau în mod discret, în zone pe care nu întotdeauna ştiam să le arătăm pe hartă. În acele momente 11 septembrie era o realitate fără nume, un eveniment ce se impunea cu forţa cu care se impune piciorul patului în momentul în care te loveşti cu degetul mic de el. Dar, într-o lume în care istoria se produce instantaneu, n-a fost nevoie de mult timp pentru ca evenimentul să capete un nume convenţional, "11 septembrie", nume care să servească demersului de conceptualizare, respectiv de asumare, apropriere, disecare şi clasare, metodă proprie culturii occidentale, prin care aceasta face să dispară prin asimilare tot ce nu corespunde cadrelor ei de înţelegere.

Astfel, la două luni de la eveniment, Giovanna Borradori reuşea să obţină câte un interviu cu privire la evenimentul din 11 septembrie de la cele două voci majore ale filosofiei zilelor noastre: Jürgen Habermas şi Jacques Derrida. Aceste interviuri au constituit nucleul cărţii *Le "concept" de 11 septembre*[1]. Putem, deci, examina în această carte primele impresii pe care evenimentul ce va rămâne înregistrat în istorie sub numele de "11 septembrie" le-a lăsat asupra culturii mondiale. Este vorba despre o primă încercare de conceptualizare, uşor forţată, având în vedere lipsa de distanţă istorică ce caracterizează opiniile celor doi mari filosofi. Cu toate acestea, ea nu este lipsită de valoare, dimpotrivă, este o mărturie autentică a opiniei publice a acelei perioade, o mărturie venită nu din partea oricui, ci chiar a creatorilor de opinie. Putem identifica ideile lui Habermas şi Derrida în politica pe care statele cărora ei

le aparţin au dus-o în legătură cu acest subiect şi, de asemenea, putem identifica germenii ideilor care au circulat în Europa şi America acelei perioade. Această carte oferă deci o surprinzătoare imagine exhaustivă a relaţiilor internaţionale datate "11 septembrie". Cei doi mari filosofi ai lumii occidentale, amândoi europeni, venind din cele două ţări cu cea mai grea pondere în Europa, anume Germania şi Franţa, şi reprezentând fiecare opinia publică a ţării respective în cea mai înaltă formă a ei, îşi dau cu părerea asupra unui eveniment ce a marcat izbucnirea conflictului între Statele Unite, cea mai mare putere mondială şi reprezentantă a lumii creştine şi Islam, luat ca termen general pentru a defini toată acea lume obscură, marginalizată, pe care ne-am dori s-o putem ignora, ce se află mai la est de anumite limite aleatorii. Evident, Statele Unite nu luptă în numele creştinismului, de aceea s-a renunţat la nefericita exprimare cu privire la "cruciada antiteroristă". De asemenea, adversarul nu este Islamul în totalitatea lui, ca lume musulmană definită prin credinţa ei, ci terorismul fundamentalist, imposibil de delimitat şi de identificat. Dacă ne-am obişnuit să-i privim pe Habermas şi pe Derrida ca pe susţinători ai unor puncte de vedere în general opuse, în cazul evenimentului din 11 septembrie ei cad de acord asupra unei unice chestiuni: reacţia Statelor Unite a fost exagerată. Vom încerca să prezentăm pe rând punctul de vedere al fiecăruia dintre cei doi filosofi. Vom arăta într-o primă parte că poziţia pro-democratică a lui Habermas, speranţa lui neclintită în posibilitatea dialogului este, pe cât de generoasă, pe atât de imposibil de realizat. În a doua parte a textului vom prezenta viziunea lui Derrida cu privire la fenomenele de auto-imunizare ce caracterizează lumea de după sfârşitul războiului rece expunând dezvoltările, recunoscut utopice, pe care el le aduce în interviul din 22 octombrie 2001, cu privire la conceptul de ospitalitate. În final, vom încerca să privim căderea World Trade Center-ului din perspectiva zilelor noastre, prin prisma consecinţelor pe care le-a implicat. Ne vom întreba asupra posibilităţii unei soluţii a acestei aporii care a ajuns la termenul ei, anume aporia globalizantă a statului democratic unic şi asupra perspectivei unei noi ordini mondiale şi a elaborării a noi strategii, fie ele de luptă sau de pace.

Jürgen Habermas, cunoscut drept filosof al dialogului, a crescut în Germania de după al doilea război mondial, unde democraţia era aplicată cu convingere. Astfel, în toată filosofia lui Habermas străbate acea încredere fără rezerve că democraţia, ca încununare a spiritului iluminist şi ca izbândă a raţiunii şi a consensului asupra pasiunii cu care sunt susţinute părerile cu pretenţie la universalitate, este singura şi cea mai bună soluţie politică şi că dialogul este unicul mod de a regla conflictele. Întrebat cu privire la 11 septembrie, Habermas descrie evenimentul în cuvinte vii, făcând apel la imaginea unor avioane pline de pasageri şi încărcate cu combustibil care devin proiectile vii. Dar şocul acestui eveniment constă, după părerea lui, în special în noutatea şi în surpriza pe care o provoacă: teroriştii sinucigaşi nu pot fi traşi la răspundere, obiectivul distrus are o deosebită putere simbolică şi întreaga lume este martorul direct acestei atrocităţi prin intermediul media. Pentru Statele Unite este vorba de o palmă uriaşă şi neaşteptată, iar faptul că sursa ei nu poate fi identificată şi că în cazul unei identificări, aceasta nu vizează un stat căruia să i se poată declara război a dat naştere unor reacţii exagerate atât în rândul cetăţenilor al căror naţionalism virulent se pronunţă în varii moduri, cât şi la nivelul statului care declară război terorismului în general fără a putea prin aceasta identifica vreun duşman precis. Încet-încet, acest concept vag de terorism capătă contur datorită intervenţiei media şi a declaraţiilor politice. Dar, odată cu această conceptualizare apar şi o serie de confuzii grave. Se pune întrebarea dacă există

vreo diferenţă între terorismul naţional, de exemplu luptele de guerilă sau terorismul palestinian, care au cu siguranţă un scop politic, şi terorismul internaţional, al cărui exemplu îl constituie 11 septembrie. Terorismul naţional ar fi o luptă cu obiectiv politic la finalul căreia teroriştii devin membrii onorabili ai noii societăţi pentru libertatea căreia au luptat. Dar Habermas crede cu tărie ca 11 septembrie nu relevă de nici un fel de determinare politică, iar ceea ce poate fi condamnat pentru această atrocitate este fundamentalismul unor oameni ca Ben Laden. Fundamentalismul, acea "dispoziţie a spiritului prin care cineva se obstinează să impună propriile convingeri şi motivaţii când acestea nu sunt în nici un caz acceptabile de către toţi ceilalţi"[2] este reacţia secundară a fenomenului globalizării, care presupune uniformizarea unui sistem social de sorginte occidentală, mai mult, iudeo-creştină, în care anumite culturi se văd marginalizate, umilite, excluse. Fundamentalismul, văzut din această perspectivă, este "o reacţie de apărare împotriva angoaselor produse prin eradicarea violentă a unor forme de viaţă tradiţionale"[3].

Aceasta fiind situaţia actuală, Habermas identifică drept cauză a violenţei faptul că nu există dialog între cele două părţi ale conflictului. "Spirala violenţei începe printr-o spirală a comunicării perturbate care, *via* o spirală a neîncrederii reciproce incontrolate, conduce la o ruptură în comunicare"[4]. Dacă în interiorul unei societăţi unitare apar astfel de conflicte, aplanarea lor revine terapeutului sau justiţiei, tematizarea verbală a conflictului fiind primul pas spre rezolvarea lui. În contextul conflictelor dintre state apare însă o problemă. Deşi există, dreptul internaţional actual este încălcat adeseori. El nu reprezintă decât o soluţie secundară prea rar luată în considerare atât la nivelul statelor europene, care au luptat câteva secole pentru recunoaşterea identităţii naţionale şi nu sunt dispuse să renunţe la suveranitatea lor în favoarea binelui mondial, cât şi la

nivelul Statelor Unite care, de pe poziţia lor de super-putere, preferă să regleze conflictele ce le privesc în tribunale militare proprii. Ceea ce pune în şah dreptul internaţional este, practic o unică problemă: incapacitatea de a depăşi punctul de vedere al identităţii naţionale şi al intereselor naţionale spre o ordine ce să vizeze binele general. Habermas prevede însă, în lumina evenimentelor ce au bulversat lumea, o trecere de la dreptul internaţional clasic la o ordine cosmopolitică ce are părţi bune şi părţi rele. Este bine ca drepturile omului să fie puse mai presus de suveranitatea naţională, astfel încât să se poată interveni în caz de urgenţă, dar, pe de altă parte, această intervenţie este zădărnicită de faptul că organismele ce garantează dreptul internaţional şi legitimează fiecare stat în acţiunile lui nu deţin o forţă proprie care să-i dubleze autoritatea juridică, astfel neavând mijloacele să oblige statele naţionale să le respecte deciziile.

Soluţia pe care o oferă Habermas, consistentă cu întreaga sa filosofie, este aceea a unui dialog de pe poziţii egale, care să se bazeze pe o toleranţă reală. Politica nu rezidă, afirmă Habermas reluându-l pe Carl Schmitt, "în capacitatea unei identităţi colective de a se afirma împotriva altor identităţi colective altfel constituite"[5]. Este nevoie de o democraţie reală, constituţională, care să se hrănească chiar din opiniile adverse ei, pe care le tolerează, făcând astfel din minorităţi părţi integrante. O democraţie în care bazele dialogului sunt comune, iar respectul este reciproc este o democraţie deschisă, gata să-şi modifice propria perspectivă, failibilă aşa cum e failibilă orice construcţie umană, îmbogăţind-o prin dialog şi prin acceptarea perspectivei celuilalt. Trebuie astfel eliminată acea violenţă latentă prezentă în comunicare, ce dă seamă şi de caracterul paternalist al toleranţei care este adeseori unilaterală, în sensul unei concesii condescendente. În alte cuvinte, soluţia lui Habermas este renunţarea la discursurile universaliste,

ideologice şi la impunerea valorilor proprii şi adoptarea unei poziţii de respect reciproc bazat pe acceptarea aceloraşi norme morale.

Derrida, pe de altă parte, adoptă o poziţie mai puţin echidistantă, poziţie încă prezentă în opinia publică franceză. Este vorba despre ideea că Statele Unite sunt cele care au creat cadrul în care un eveniment precum 11 septembrie se înscrie, dând dovadă prin aceasta de o paradoxală predispoziţie către o auto-imunitate sinucigaşă. Eveniment major, atât prin gravitatea lui cât şi prin panica pe care a produs-o, inserând în conştiinţa cetăţenilor americani convingerea că ce e mai rău urmează abia să vină, 11 septembrie a încetat să mai fie o simplă dată, devenind numele celei mai îngrozitoare spaime a oricui, spaima de un necunoscut agresiv care poate lovi oricând şi nu poate fi prevenit. Această spaimă poate fi înscrisă sub numele de teroare, o tensiune permanentă vizând viitorul incert şi este efectul dorit al oricărui act terorist, desfăşurat împotriva unei forţe în faţa căreia nu are nici o şansă şi pe care o destabilizează inserând teroarea în inima populaţiei civile. În acest context, Derrida observă ceea ce va numi fenomen de auto-imunitate, după modelul biologic al organismului care dezvoltă un sistem de respingere a propriilor sisteme de apărare, producând prin aceasta propria moarte. Acest fenomen poate fi constatat la trei nivele în ce priveşte Statele Unite şi relaţia lor cu teroriştii. Este vorba, în primul rând, de o agresiune ce vine din interiorul Statelor Unite, sub forma unui avion propriu ce a pornit de pe un aeroport propriu pentru a lovi pe propriul teritoriu într-unul dintre simbolurile principale ale Statelor unite. Dar caracterul sinucigaş, de agresiune auto-indusă, poate fi constatat ca pregătindu-se de mai multă vreme. În timpul războiului rece, Statele Unite au fost cele care au înarmat diverse populaţii din Orientul Mijlociu, le-au antrenat şi le-au pregătit pentru diverse atacuri. Odată cu sfârşitul războiului rece, aceste populaţii, "consecinţă reziduală atât a războiului rece cât şi a sfârşitului acestuia"[6], rămase fără rost se autodistrug trăgând după ele şi entitatea care le-a creat. Simbol al comerţului american, World Trade Center cade, victimă a foştilor cumpărători, a foştilor clienţi ai Statelor Unite. În sfârşit, atentatul din 11 septembrie şi consecinţele lui scot în evidenţă cercul vicios al violenţei, paradoxul agresiunii care justifică reacţiile agresive ale victimei făcând ca violenţa să se perpetueze la infinit. De unde provine însă această simpatie pentru cel mai slab, proprie opiniei publice franceze? Părerea noastră este că ea este alimentată de substratul istoric ce hrăneşte şi determină această opinie publică: este vorba de Revoluţia franceză, izbucnirea poporului împotriva asupritorilor cu mult mai puternici, căci afirmaţia lui Derrida că "recursul la cea mai rea violenţă este adesea prezentat ca singurul "răspuns" ce poate fi dat unei "urechi surde""[7] ne duce cu gândul la răsturnarea monarhiei absolutiste în Franţa anului 1789. De asemenea, avem exemplul rezistenţei franceze din timpul ocupaţiei germane, exemplul prin excelenţă, cel puţin în mediul european, de terorism de guerilă, vizând eliberarea naţională. Chiar dacă este evident că 11 septembrie nu are a face cu o astfel de luptă, care ar putea fi eventual legitimată, în opinia publică franceză a existat întotdeauna o identificare mai degrabă cu aceşti luptători obscuri decât cu supra-puterea americană care le este în general antipatică pentru simplul fapt că este prima putere în lume. Astfel, Derrida pune în discuţie conceptul însuşi de "terorism", deconstruindu-l prin demonstraţia că ceea ce denumeşte el se modifică în funcţie de cel care îl foloseşte. Făcând aceasta, Derrida extrapolează sensul de "terorism" până la a afirma că acesta nu ţine doar de cazurile în care există violenţă şi morţi, ci că putem numi terorism chiar şi faptul de "a lăsa să moară" şi "a nu vrea să ştim că lăsăm să moară" oameni din Africa de exemplu, ce mor de foame şi de

SIDA. Derrida se întreabă dacă nu putem vedea în această atitudine "o strategie teroristă "mai mult sau mai puţin" conştientă şi deliberată"[8]. Acest punct de vedere pare, pe cât de exagerat, pe atât de răuvoitor, mai ales având în vedere soluţia pe care Derrida o oferă. Aceasta constă în regruparea statelor Europei în jurul unei autorităţi care să garanteze un drept internaţional şi care să aibă forţa de al impune. Până aici, opinia derrideană coincide cu cea a lui Habermas. Însă Derrida consideră că această forţă trebuie să fie laică, orice conotaţie teologică încă prezentă în ideea de stat suveran, deci de autoritate divină trebuind să fie evitată. Evitând orice conotaţii religioase este evitată şi posibilitatea unor conflicte de ordin religios, idee generoasă în sine, dacă n-am putea citi printre rânduri că autoritatea în jurul căreia ar trebui să se grupeze ţările europene este Franţa, singurul stat european unde laicitatea a mers atât de departe încât a surclasat drepturile omului[9], or mare parte dintre statele Europei sunt state declarat catolice care ar avea un cuvânt de spus în ce priveşte acest proiect. În sfârşit, în completarea acestei democraţii dotate cu forţa de a-şi impune punctele de vedere dar nerelevând de autoritatea vreunui stat, fie el chiar şi un stat mondial, Derrida dezvoltă ideea unei ospitalităţi necondiţionate care ar trebui să ia locul toleranţei creştine, caritabile, proprie întotdeauna unui discurs al puterii. Această ospitalitate presupune acceptul incursiunii unui străin, unui altul, în spaţiul tău şi acceptarea lui ca atare, ca şi altul, fără nici o încercare de asimilare. Aceasta ar fi soluţia unei democraţii "à venir", care se află pentru totdeauna în această situaţie de promisiune irealizabilă, un fel de soluţie tip Habermas dusă la extrem.

Acesta a fost felul în care 11 septembrie a fost tematizat, conceptualizat, analizat înainte ca anul 2001 să ia sfârşit.

Există oare între naivitatea viziunii lui Habermas, care doreşte o democraţie bazată pe dialog în contextul absenţei unei limbi comune şi a unei dorinţe de comunicare, şi scepticismul lui Derrida, care consideră orice formă de dialog un atentat la integritatea culturală a celuilalt, o cale de mijloc? Conştientizarea nevoii unei noi filosofii a politicului, a eticului şi a socialului este marea consecinţă de lungă durată a evenimentului din 11 septembrie, iar noi vom avea ocazia să participăm, probabil, la acest demers în anii care urmează.

Note:

[1] Cartea a apărut sub titlul original Philosophy in a time of terror în 2003 la The University of Chicago Press.

[2] Ibid., p. 61.

[3] Ibid., p. 63

[4] Ibid., p.68
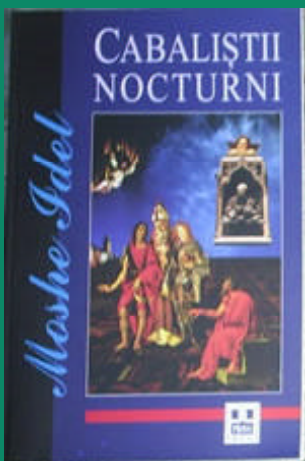
[5] Ibid., p. 72.

[6] Ibid., p.150.

[7] Ibid., p. 181.

[8] Ibid., p.162-163.

[9] Avem în vedere ceea ce astăzi e cunoscut sub numele de "problema voalului" şi care, chiar dacă în formularea juridică nu atentează direct la drepturile musulmanilor, a fost percepută de opinia pubică drept o măsură de a interveni în cultura musulmană pentru a elibera femeile de autoritatea exclusiv masculină.

Ciprian Lupşe

Moshe Idel, Cabaliștii nocturni
Editura Provopress, Cluj-Napoca, 2005, 81 pp.

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Cabală, cabalist. Termeni care „profanilor" le-ar sugera cel mult proximitatea misterului, iar exegeţilor le indică spaţiul unei vaste polisemii ce îndeamnă la travaliu hermeneutic, sunt analizaţi de Moshe Idel ca specii proprii registrului nocturn al spiritualităţii ebraice.

Cabaliştii nocturni aduce în faţa celor interesaţi probleme de bază ale ceea ce generic s-a numit ştiinţa cabalei. Un accent deosebit se pune, titlul fiind aici definitoriu, pe statutul oniric al tehnicilor de inducere a revelaţiei sacrului şi, respectiv, până acolo, pe tehnicile de declanşare a viselor revelatorii. Un prim pas în acest demers îl face Moshe Idel indicând diferenţa netă între tehnicile iudaice – cabaliste şi necabaliste – şi cele „clasice" (ale antichităţii greceşti şi, ulterior, eleniste) marcate de obligativitatea existenţei unui centru eminent de sacralitate, cum ar fi sanctuarul şi templul. Dacă forma clasică a onirismului revelator presupunea prezenţa unui *genius loci*, a unei zeităţi tutelare asociată spaţiului arhitectonic sacru, cea iudaică îşi regăseşte agenţii în persoana mesagerilor angelici, reprezentanţii unei puteri divine mobile.

Cabaliştii secolului 13 considerau starea de vis ca o formă specifică a conştiinţei, stare a cărei articulaţie liminară cu cea de veghe este susceptibilă să producă revelarea divinului. Conform lui Moshe Idel este de reţinut faptul că în cabala extatică aspectele de ordin teoretic, de doctrină, mai precis studiul lor, ţin de de registrul diurn, iar cele practice, în esenţă tehnicile mistice se supun recomandării de a fi efectuate noaptea. Astfel îşi fac apariţia în cabală două poziţii distincte, complementare dealtfel, nemarcate de vreo formă oarecare de radicalism, care privilegiază, fiecare în parte, onirismul sau starea de veghe, şi care se constituie concomitent drept cadre de referinţă axiologice şi ontologice în definirea experienţelor mistice trăite de subiecţii ce recurgeau la una din tehnicile extatice. Aşa se face că, între tehnicile de acces la divinitate, o importantă parte a literaturii cabalistice concede pozitiv cu privire la statutul înalt al visului. Totul în ideea că, oficial, adevăratul autor al acestei literaturi este Dumnezeu şi, uneori, anumiţi arhangheli.

Problema tehnicilor onirice este tratată de Moshe Idel în cadrul delimitat de scrierile cabaliste apărute în Spania celei de-a doua jumătaţi de secol 15, preluate ulterior de alţi autori şi îmbogăţite prin noi interpretări. Pe baza acestui corpus de lucrări sunt prezentate cititorului probleme de nuanţă care marchează diacronic pseudo-istoria curentului cabalist. Întâlnim aici un mod specific de ierarhizare axiologică a revelaţiilor – contaminat de idealizarea unui trecut utopic – în *întrupate*, *cu rostire* (din trecut) şi *onirice*, *personale* (din prezent). Medierea între divinitate şi recipientul mesajului este rezolvată în diverse modalităţi: fie prin apelul la concepţia veşmântului (similară teoriilor neoplatoniciene şi gnostice ale spiritului care descinde în lume, asumându-şi progresiv o corporalitate materială), o entitate angelică transcendentă care îl ia în stăpânire pe cabalist, fie recurgând la mediatori cu un grad ridicat de

„personalizare", cum ar fi Ilie sau chiar diverse forţe malefice, invocate pentru atingerea unor scopuri practice. De aici decurge modul specific conform căruia cabaliştii percep paralelismul dintre „felul în care îngerii şi demonii apar în această lume".

Statulul înalt al onirismului nocturn este accentuat de cabală prin apelul la dihotomia metodologică între raţionalitatea prezentului, văzută ca decadentă, şi visare, considerată de cabalişti drept compromisul cu istoria care permite recuperarea parţială a stării originare de graţie. Activitatea literară în stare de veghe, raţionalitatea (în esenţă filosofia greacă), au contaminat cultura iudaică de o aşa manieră încât registrul diurn al spiritualităţii a devenit indezirabil. Modalităţile specifice de manifestare ale acestui registru, finalizate în uitarea Torei, sunt văzute ca fiind direct responsabile de exil. În acest context cabala, tehnică de elecţie a registrului nocturn, este singura care mai poate apropria iniţiatului o oarecare autenticitate. Onirismul cabalistic este suma de reguli ce trebuie respectate, este organonul care permite aplicarea corectă a tehnicilor de acces la divinitate în vis. Stările onirice sunt tehnici mistico-magice de obţinere de la entităţile transcendente a unor răspunsuri la întrebările cabalistului. Cel mai adesea întrebările vizează dezvăluirea unor aspecte ascunse ale istoriei fixate de Dumnezeu. În pofida determinismului strict, rolul cabalistului nu este unul pasiv; interesul său pentru atari probleme reprezintă în cultura iudaică o formă specifică de religiozitate. În plus, ca o accentuare şi o adeverire a acestui mod de a privi lucrurile, se observă că subiecţii mai bine pregătiţi, mai bine dezvoltaţi spiritual, pot avea contacte cu „tărâmurile îngereşti şi divine" chiar în stare de veghe. Pregătirea misticului este aici hotărâtoare. Sub aspect general Moshe Idel menţionează existenţa a două poziţii în cabală: unii cabalişti consideră realitatea acestei lumi, şi implicit trăirile extatice în stare de veghe, ca fiind inferioare, în timp ce pentru alţii realitatea în stare de veghe are un ascendent asupra extazelor onirice. Abţinându-se să dezavueze radical şi explicit visul, ultimii continuă să îl considere „o modalitate licită de abordare a necunoscutului".

Din punct de vedere tehnic Moshe Idel ne prezintă diverse practici ale unor personaje renumite şi ale unor mişcări din interiorul cabalei. Aşa este un Sabbatai Tzevi cu modul său specific de atingere a extazului prin succesiunea: izolare de societate-disocierea sufletului de corp-concentrarea mentală. Totul sub imperiul registrului nocturn. Tot aici sunt menţionate tehnicile *she'elat ḥalom* la hasizii aşkenazi, care induc un anumit tip de vise ce intermediază legătura dintre divinitate şi lume. La hasizii aşkenazi visul presupune o dimensiune interpretativă; visul e text de descifrat în vederea cunoaşterii ordinii introduse de către divinitate în lume şi pentru identificarea, regăsirea, divinului din „această ordine". Prin restrângere la anumite cazuri personale decurge de aici că nu toate visele constituie experienţe mistice ci numai acelea care aduc informaţii despre statutul cuiva „în lumea care va veni". Reciproc, manifestarea viselor mistice, revelatorii, reprezintă proba religiozităţii, a venerabilităţii, în lumea materială a celui care le trăieşte.

Prin modalitatea concisă de expunere a surselor, faptelor şi argumentelor Moshe Idel atinge în lucrarea de faţă un dublu deziderat: specialiştii şi, după caz, iniţiaţii regăsesc aici o întemeiere suplimentară a informaţiilor deţinute, sistematizându-şi-le din nou (pentru a câta oară ?), în timp ce lectorilor mai puţin avizaţi le înfăţişează panorama unor puncte de reper în abordarea unui subiect a cărui aprofundare academică, şi nu numai, le poate aduce satisfacţii pe măsura pasiunii potenţiale de care sunt chemaţi să dea dovadă prin înseşi paginile acestei cărţi.

Draiman Sebastian

Florea Lucaci, Creatie si fiintare. Un temei în ontologia umanului
Editura Dacia, Cluj Napoca, 2002

Conceptul de creaţie a făcut să curgă multă cerneală pe colile cărţilor de filosofie şi nu numai.

Florea Lucaci încearcă în lucrarea de faţă să relegitimeze posibilitatea unei ontologii a umanului în contemporaneitate. În acest discurs de legitimare aduce argumentele multor filosofi începând din antichitate şi terminând cu gânditorii contemporani. Prin acest tur de forţă prin istoria filosofiei, Florea Lucaci redă creaţiei şi fiinţării locul pe care îl ocupau altă dată în analizele filosofice.

Studiul de faţă este structurat pe cinci capitole care vin în urma unei introduceri, bine formulată. Încă din introducere autorul ne informează că reconsiderarea ontologică a existenţei umane a devenit proiect explicit numai în secolul al XX-lea. Problema care se poate întrezări pentru început poate fi, folosind cuvintele cercetătorului, faptul că ontologia umanului riscă să rămână o simplă schiţă, un proiect neîmplinit într-un capitol viitor din istoria filosofiei.

Întrebarea „cine este omul?", derivată din întrebarea primă „ce este fiinţa?", rămâne deschisă spre logic şi structural. Acesta este tipul de discurs care va fi dezvoltat de către autor pe parcursul demersului său. Un prim pas în acest demers este o perspectivă, chiar una antitetică, ce are următoarea teză: *„Omul este fiinţa privilegiată prin care cunoaştem şi reconstruim existenţa."*

În acest fel, spune autorul, noi putem construi ontologia, pornind de la o existenţă privilegiată ca şi în cazul lui Heidegger, în analitica Dasein-ului. Dar ideea conştiinţei ce dă unitate experienţei, dezvăluind-o ca lume transcendentală, este dezvoltată şi de I. Kant. Ea apare încă la Aristotel, care arată că sufletul este într-un fel fiinţarea ce se constituie şi este cognoscibilă în această modalitate de a fi.

„Antiteza: Omul a murit, iar raţiunea a pierdut calitatea de principiu existenţial şi de cunoaştere a fiinţei." „Moartea omului" a survenit precum ştim după „moartea lui Dumnezeu" proclamată de Nietzsche. Cele două expresii, implicându-se una pe cealaltă ca succesiune, figurează în fapt criza raţiunii ca principiu fundamental al umanismului modern. Concluzia antitezei, ne arată Florea Lucaci, relevă moartea metafizică a omului şi deci imposibilitatea unei constituiri a ontologiei umanului.

Al doilea paragraf al introducerii vrea să recupereze atât omul cât şi reconstrucţia ontologiei. Dar cum putem noi să recuperăm omul şi cum să construim sau cum să reconstruim o ontologie a umanului? La aceste întrebări, autorul studiului de faţă, încearcă să răspundă apelînd la istoria filosofiei. Ajuns în antichitatea greacă, Florea Lucaci crede că Socrate este gânditorul prin care omul şi-a întemeiat o lume a sa, asemănătoare cu lumea divină. Socrate este „cel ce porunceşte: *nosce te ipsum"* adică „cunoaşte-te pe tine însuţi", pentru a descoperi zeul şi cugetarea.

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În vederea clarificării conceptuale, autorul ne propune să acceptăm că creaţia ca temei ontologic şi conceptul de creaţie implică existenţa lumii umane. Lucaci mai precizează că umanul, ca mod de fiinţare, îşi întemeiază existenţa şi devenirea pe acelaşi patern, mai concret pe creativitate.

 Omul pentru a cunoaşte trebuie să pună cât mai multe întrebări, afirmă autorul, dar odată cu interogaţia, omul deschide ochii raţiunii sale de a fi. Lucaci se sprijină pe afirmaţia lui Heidegger, care afirmă că întrebarea este o întâietate ontologică, iar actul de a întreba este „mod de-a fi al unei fiinţări" particulare.

Cu acest ultim argument, cercetătorul nostru porneşte mai departe, spre a dezvolta cercetarea sa de-a lungul următoarelor capitole.

Capitolul *Ontologia umanului sau centrarea pe subiect* este structurat pe prezentarea conceptelor a trei mari gânditori. Un prim gânditor la care se opreşte este Kant. Această reîntoarcere la Kant trebuie înţeleasă, specifică autorul, ca o redescoperire şi ca o resemnificare din perspectiva prezentului, a subiectivismului uman ca principiu de creaţie al „producţiei" de cunoştinţe de cultură, respectiv a unei lumi în vederea omului.

Al doilea gânditor la care se referă în acest capitol este Heidegger. Lucaci consideră că analitica Dasein-ului este un punct de plecare generos, din perspectiva proiectului de construcţie, conceptului de creaţie, ca principiu al fiinţări şi devenirii.

Pentru această reconstrucţie, autorul îl invocă şi pe filosoful român Constantin Noica. Acesta a demonstrat că limba poartă cu sine, sau că ea conţine, universalul. Aşadar şi limba română poartă sau este purtătoare a adevărului şi în această limbă fiinţa se rosteşte iar creaţia ca ipostază a devenirii îşi găseşte rostul.

Această reconstrucţie a ontologiei bazată pe creaţie, pe acea reconstrucţie auto-generativă, afirmă Lucaci,

avută în vedere de Whitehead, este sortită unei deschideri perpetue.

În capitolul *Creaţia . Referinţe spaţio-temporale,* spaţiul şi timpul apar ca referinţe ontologice ale omului. Astfel Florea Lucaci distinge între:

a) ceea ce este dat aici şi acum, care să constituie ca punct arhimedic în reconstrucţia raţional-simbolică a naturii ca lume a omului;

 b) lumea umanizată, care este în expansiune spaţial-simbolică   şi supravieţuieşte în secvenţe temporal paralele cu succesiunea interpretărilor simbolice, adică lumea îşi adaugă o imagine paradigmatică.

Lucaci îşi continuă analizele cu o serie de observaţii asupra spaţiului sau mai bine zis asupra geometriei lui Euclid. Însă, spaţiul şi timpul în viziunea cercetătorului sunt forme intuitiv - simbolice, sensibile şi logice totodată. Autorul nu are în vedere spaţiul şi timpul dat în percepţii şi reprezentări psihice. El are în vedere modelele de reconstrucţie imaginativă şi ideatică a lumii, a acelor referinţe proprii actului de creaţie. În acest nou context creat simbolic al celor două concepte, se extind şi supravieţuiesc tipurile ideale de fiinţare umană.

În capitolul *Creaţia. Delimitări şi interferenţe conceptuale*, autorul abordează problema creaţiei din perspectiva întrebării „cine este cel care creează?"

Pentru început, Lucaci supune noţiunea de creaţie cenzurii interogaţiei. În acest fel se observă că noţiunea de creaţie nu mai poate fi indusă în clasa noţiunilor vagi. Dar investigaţia analitică în perspectiva istoriei relevă că însuşi nucleul acesteia este schimbător. Iniţial termenul de creaţie îl cuprindea exclusiv pe Dumnezeu. Această cuprindere era definită prin Crezul de la Niceea ca unic Creator al lumii.

Autorul lucrării observă că de-a lungul istoriei noţiunea de creaţie a fost atribuită în secolul XVII şi

poeţilor, mai precis s-a vehiculat ideea că şi poeţii creează. În perioada romanticilor, aceştia au impus ca legitimă perechea categorială : artă- creaţie. În ultimele decenii ale secolului XX în sfera noţiunii de creaţie se pot identifica activităţi şi obiecte ale preocupărilor ştiinţifice, economice, politice etc. În acest fel, vechiul nucleu mistic pare să fie ascuns cu totul.

Observaţiile cercetătorului merg mai departe susţinând că deşi s-a „democratizat" noţiunea de creaţie, aceasta are totuşi o limită. Mai precis, deşi s-a acceptat că proprietatea de a fi creator, desemnează un atribut esenţial, acesta nu este distribuit tuturor oamenilor.

În acest capitol autorul descrie creaţia într-un plan al idealităţii asumate la nivelul prozaic al individului şi al societăţii şi al interpretării ei în raport cu noţiunea de cunoaştere.

În capitolul *Structură şi sens în devenirea umanului*, Florea Lucaci ne îndrumă să privim asupra „poveştii" devenirii umane aşa cum ne este propusă de Constantin Noica. Ducînd mai departe gândul lui C. Noica, autorul face un experiment hermeneutic. La acesta, participarea implică două atitudini care se presupun reciproc, una fiind firul povestirii iar cea de a doua ar fi justificarea critică a necesităţii creaţiei.

Experienţa ontogenezei şi a istoriei, afirmă Florea Lucaci, fac dovada aproximativă că omul este nedesăvârşit. Omul reprezintă, aşadar, o parte a devenirii căreia se străduieşte să-i dea o împlinire sub chipul adevărului neschimbător şi etern. De aici se pot extrage câteva concluzii :

1. Umanul nu este şi nici nu poate fi gândit ca o esenţă imanentă dată sau care apare în mod necesar dat de o cauză misterioasă.

2. Umanul gândit ca operă a omului care se sustrage efermităţii şi nimicniciei materiei vii poartă cu sine, în esenţa sa, şi sensul existenţei finite, adică aspiraţia omului de a se înţelege pe sine ca fiinţă dedublată.

3. Reconstrucţia umanului îşi are un punct arhimedic în geneza şi natura limbii şi a limbajelor în general.

4. Creaţia culturală a indivizilor sau a unei epoci cere o validare, ceea ce implică o analitica conceptelor şi a normelor cu caracter constitutiv şi regulativ, care dau seamă de modul de a fi a omului.

În capitolul final, întitulat *Valorile de întemeiere şi creaţia axiocentrică*, Florea Lucaci încearcă să ne convingă de faptul că între orientările obiective şi subiective s-a conturat un realism naiv care readuce valorile la proprietăţile diferitelor lucruri. Iar atunci când analiza este particularizată la un anumit domeniu se conturează şi alte orientări privind natura valorilor. Astfel, diseminările ce apar din punct de vedere epistemologic impun o abordare privilegiată a valorilor din perspectiva creaţiei ca principiu în ontologia umanului.

În lucrarea sa de o certă valoare pentru specialişti, şi nu numai, Florea Lucaci lasă deschis discursul asupra ontologiei umanului, indicând chiar o serie de căi pentru abordări viitoare. În mod foarte convingător şi plin de substanţă, filosoful Florea Lucaci reabilitează prin studiul său creaţia şi fiinţarea ca un pas decisiv în reconstrucţia continuă a ontologiei umanului.

Cătălin Vasile Bobb

Petru Moldovan, Moshe Idel. Dinamica misticii iudaice
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Primul lucru pe care îl sesizează cititorul cărţii lui Petru Moldovan este dificultatea temei abordate, dublată de scriitura complicată şi uneori chiar criptică a tânărului autor. Cu toate acestea, Petru Moldovan pare a fi singurul autor din România care reuşeşte să trateze într-o manieră exhaustivă o problemă atât de complexă cum este cea a misticismului iudaic, aşa cum este el teoretizat în opera lui Moshe Idel. Rigoarea şi meticulozitatea exasperante, care uneori îţi lasă impresia că cel ce se revendică a fi ucenicul lui Moshe Idel vrea să spună mai mult decât magistrul său, îl recomandă pe tânărul cercetător clujean ca un nume ce nu mai poate fi ocolit atunci când vrei să vorbeşti despre Moshe Idel. În acelaşi timp, mă bucură în această carte tentaţia specializării, a cunoaşterii cât mai vaste a unui anumit subiect singular.

Încă din începutul cărţii, Petru Moldovan mărturiseşte ce anume îşi propune să prezinte în lucrarea sa: "cabala teozofică, alături de curentul contemporan ei, cel extatic; rolul lor în cultura europeană, aspectul mesianic al acestor curente, hasidismul, hermeneutica cabalistică, şi, nu în ultimul rând, modalităţile de percepere a Torei şi motivul Golemului".

Cultura occidentală recunoaşte, fără ocolişuri, a purta înăuntrul său amprenta palimpsest a iudaismului. Creştinismul canonic nu-şi refuză dreptul de a apela la cartea sfântă, Tora, fără a face din acest recurs o posibilă tipologie axiologică. Influenţele fac parte din firul firesc al istoriei. E îndeobşte cunoscută recuperarea, mai mult sau mai puţin afirmată, a lui Platon în patristică, a lui Aristotel puţin mai târziu, în scolastică etc, ca să numesc aici exemplele cele mai celebre. Adică, în orice operă vom putea regăsi împrumuturi, idei similare, într-un cuvânt sincretisme culturale absolut naturale. Însă, ceea ce m-a frapat în cazul cărţii de faţă este că Petru Moldovan, urmărind modul de gîndire al magistrului său, susţine ideea imaculării aproape totale (probabil că forţez uşor lucrurile, însă ideea rămâne) a misticismului iudaic. Anume, dacă înăuntrul iudaismului putem regăsi o dinamică, în sensul unei mişcări pe axa istoriei, aceasta este neutră oricărei influenţe exterioare; adică este singulară, în sensul păstrării identităţii proprii şi unică, în sensul regăsirii în întreaga cultură a unui singur curent mistic, cel al misticii iudaice.

Urmărind firul gândirii lui Moshe Idel, Petru Moldovan prezintă Cabala teozofică (o modalitate ritualică de a intra în contact cu divinitatea) analizînd problema celor 10 Sefirot ca pluralitate a antrophos-ului divin. Pe de o parte, dacă desluşim între copierea (mimesis-ul) Sefirot care creează omul, atunci putem regăsi o variantă cunoscută a panteismului, iar pe de altă parte, în contra-partidă putem discuta, ne spune Petru Moldovan, şi despre o altă tendinţă cabalistică, aceea de a

vedea cei zece Sefirot ca făcând parte din om, nefiind altceva decât o reflectare a decadei divine.

Cabala extatic-profetică este discutată în special în legătură cu Abraham Abulafia - care propune o serie de tehnici mistice pentru a putea intra în contact cu Divinitatea. Printre acestea putem aminti: recitarea numelor divine, numerologia, etc. În acest context, problema hermeneuticii devine una de o reală importanţă. Petru Moldovan analizează cu claritate cele şapte modele interpretative ale sensului Torei propuse de Abulafia. Dintre acestea ţin să menţionez două modele de interpretare a sensului. Mai întîi, *restauraţio literarum*, metoda prin care „literele sunt întoarse în starea lor de materie primordială ". Se poate observa, astfel, cu uşurinţă, importanţă literelor care refac traseul iniţial al creaţiei ceea ce revine la a spune că există o metodă umana de cunoaştere ontologică. În al doilea rînd, cea de a şaptea metodă analizată de autor, *Sfânta Sfintelor*, al cărei scop este acela de „a aduce contemplatorul Torei la stadiul profeţiei prin transformarea versetelor Torei în alte propoziţii, adică în Nume Divine". Fundamentală aici este tentaţia cunoaşterii creaţiei, unde contemplatorul poate intra în contact direct cu Divinitatea.

Petru Moldovan reconstruieşte gândirea lui Moshe Idel într-o manieră, cum îi place să afirme, aparent cronologică punând în evidenţă metodologiile dispersate pe care magistrul său le foloseşte. Fiind vorba de *work in progress*, maniera interpretativă pe care Petru Moldovan i-o atribuie lui Moshe Idel pare a fi cea a *tool box*-ului adică, cea a diferitelor metode utilizate pentru subiecte care nu sînt foarte diferite. Dacă spre exemplu filologia, recursul la textele disponibile pe acest subiect, nu dă roade în analiza Golemului, atunci se poate analiza istorico-psihologic impactul fiinţei umano-divine asupra perioadei în care acesta ar putea fi regăsit.

Registrul analizei lui Petru Moldovan poate fi cu greu sistematizat. Autorul nu resimte nici o dificultate în a-şi apropia, spre exemplu, metoda istorică în analiza fenomenului studiat. Apoi, pare-se, pregătirea filosofică de care dispune îi permite şi o abordare fenomenologică. Desigur, nu în sensul husserlian al cuvântului, ci într-unul care îi permite regăsirea anumitor tipologii fenomenale în contexte diferite. Însă, ceea ce i sar putea reproşa tânărului autor este faptul că nu-şi acordă destulă libertate hermeneutică, rămâne apropiat şi prea fidel textului magistrului său. Se pare că paricidul, atât de natural în cultură, va surveni în acest caz mult mai târziu.