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Islam and Science

Muzaffar Iqbal

Aldershot, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002. xxii+349 pages.

The book is devoted, in eleven chapters, to the relations and interactions between religion and science in Islamic intellectual history from the “beginning” to the contemporary “new nexus”. Following a general framework of the subject in the first chapter, the author provides introductory information, in the second short chapter, on the Qur’anic sources of Islamic scientific tradition, highlighting the Qur’anic verses on creation and the order of nature. The succeeding two chapters deal with the formation and development of classical Islamic scientific and philosophical thought under the impact of the religious disciplines and the transformation of ancient traditions through contacts with Persian and Greek schools and translations of their texts.

Partly relying on the analyses of A. I. Sabra on the appropriation of Greek science in medieval Islam, the author criticizes the view of reducing Islamic tradition to Greek, or regarding it a marginal activity. He also rejects the idea of a strict opposition between Islamic scientific and religious traditions, commenting that the objections by some religious thinkers to scientific and philosophical ideas were limited to few questions and not a total disapproval. Underlining the different content of Islamic theology (*kalam*) from Christian theology, as a discipline that “includes many aspects of philosophy rather than theology, embracing, for example, logic, epistemology, and cosmology”, the author does not see a continuous tension between “Islamic” versus “foreign” sciences, a formulation that he describes as “nothing but ‘Goldziherism’.”

The fifth chapter titled as “Withering of the Tradition” questions the causes, circumstances and dates of the weakening of the Islamic scientific tradition. Referring to the works of George Saliba and David King on the advance of Arabic/Islamic astronomy in the post-thirteenth centuries, the author suggests that a general categorization of the golden age of Islamic science does not fit all branches of sciences and all geographic places in the history of Islamic world. However, the author apart from emphasizing the high number of untouched manuscripts and complaining about the lack of sufficient studies on the later periods does not bring any contribution to the question with any specific case or region.

The transmission of the Islamic scientific tradition to the medieval and early modern Europe, through translations from Arabic into Latin around 12th century on, and the impact of the West on the changes in Muslim world in the 18th century are the topics of the next two chapters. The rest of the bo-

ok deals with the effects of colonialism during the nineteenth century on the Islam and science discourse. According to the author the colonial interference caused the institutional collapse, changed the educational system, and brought about an intellectual crisis in Muslim mind on the relations of tradition and modernity. Furthermore, "the colonized discourse" of Islam and science, he argues, led a tendency of interpreting religion in the light of the modern science, and created a literature of the scientific exegesis of the Qur'an.

In the last chapter, the author draws attention to the emergence of new critical approaches towards modern science among contemporary Muslim thinkers, due to the results of quantum physics. He gives some examples of these alternatives, such as the "Islamization of knowledge" project and the metaphysical interpretations of Muslim perennial scholars. The book is concluded with the necessity of reviving Islamic tradition of learning, in order to establish a true discourse of Islam and science in modern times, through the resurgence of Arabic language in educational system, and the focus on the metaphysical principles of the Qur'an.

The book, despite some of its generalizations especially regarding the issue of decline, provides a comprehensive survey on the relations of Islam and science in both historical and theoretical aspects. The author is aware of need for further analytical studies in order to solve the existing questions and reach a better understanding of the past developments, and a sound prospective for the future expectations. However, throughout the book there is a tendency of underlining suggestions rather than deep examinations, and more importantly comparative investigations. The book also lacks case studies and specific examples, which would give the author the opportunity of having concrete bases to argue the main points and overall thesis of his work. Apart from these comments, the book with its rich content, interdisciplinary approach, and unambiguous language, is a useful contribution to the readings of religion and science in the context of Islamic civilization.

M. Sait Özervarlı

Çağdaş Dünyada İnsan ve Dinî Sorumluluğu (Fetret Ehli Örneği)

Mustafa Akçay

İstanbul: Işık Yayınları, 2002. 487 sayfa.

Dinî Sorumluluk Açısından Fetret Ehli adıyla 1997 yılında tamamlanmış doktora tezinden hazırlanan eser "Giriş", üç bölüm, "Değerlendirme ve Sonuç"tan oluşmaktadır. Fetret kavramını hem dinî hem de psiko-sosyal bir