

VIEW OF THE ISLAMIC SOCIETIES TOWARDS EACH OTHER AND THEOLOGY AND SOCIAL ETHICS IN ANCIENT GREECE (EPHESSUS CASE)

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The scope of this study is to unearth certain social facts regarding theology and social ethics in Ancient Greece which are misknown by the monotheistics or divine religion believers.

These facts regarding Ancient Greece which were not brought into light until now are particularly related to theological and social ethics, as mentioned above. Ancient Greek Society was certainly one of the most intellectually developed societies of the archaic age. It would be sufficient to remember that the History of Philosophy started in the Ancient Greece, to understand that the aforementioned development was far above the development of the other societies.

We wanted to make a research regarding the theology and social ethics in Ancient Greece and write out our observations during our trip to Ephesus, because we realized that our society's perspectives and cognitions regarding Ancient Greece were all wrong. Yet, close observations have always been the best ways of knowledge acquisition. It would be sufficient to see the photographs of Ephesus which will be submitted towards the end of the research, in order to find out that our observations are not groundless. We shall primarily start from the change in the classical historiography, as it was this fact that changed and still changes our standpoint towards Ancient Greece and other ancient civilizations. However, let us mention that the change of histography took place with the start of the Feminist histography. As it is a quite untouched domain, the history of feminism was started to be written with the "Theory of Gynocracy" raised by JJ.Bachofen and Charlotte Perkins Gilman regarding the existence of the history of feminism, which stated the necessity that the history of feminism should be written. Hence, this is a domain which requires further research. Keeping in mind that this is quite an untouched field, let us examine the Feminist Histography and observe to what extent it would contribute to our study. However, prior to the Feminist histography, it would be useful to mention that a historical perspective and methodology was developed which opposed positivist history understanding and considered everything that humanity possessed as materials of history for the observed period. This new methodology claimed that the individual experiences, verbal cultures, diaries, journals, autobiographies, a ring, a picture, a letter, a tape record and everything related to history would be effectively and actively used during the course of any historical research. In addition, criticisms towards the positivist historical approach which appears to be the sole source of subjective historiography and questioning of its understanding of subjectivity take an important place within this new methodology.

History was defined as a discipline which recounts what happened in the past, the periods that the societies passed through by stating time and place and which establishes causal relations between the events and systematically examines these relations by attributing them to documents and remains. Such a historical perspective ignores "human", its freedom and existence within the course of the indicative events conducting and orientating human effectiveness and overpasses everything but the important "people" and significant events. When the societal governance/power relations are considered, those which were outside the aforementioned relations were rendered invisible within a history perception which legitimated, documented and institutionalized only the strongest ones. Rendering the invisible ones visible, revealing the inequalities within these relations, and referring to the past for the aim of adding a humanitarian dimension to the life experiences certainly require another kind of a historical approach. Critical historical approach is an

understanding towards seeing those unseen by the traditional historical approach and interpreting them as tools for solving".¹

The questioning of history has passed. The past and history are two different phenomena and past does not have only one reading. Thus, the same subject of "questioning" may be read in different ways. The past occurs and ends, whereas the history may be restored by the historians by means of books, articles, documents, etc. History is composed of facts brought out of the past by virtue of the efforts of historians. As past cannot be re-experienced, it can only be read by those who wrote it. Although this seems to be a simple statement, it clearly explains how various groups were rendered invisible. Today, history faces incredible but also elevatory problems. The reason for this is certainly that we have never stopped being dependent to concrete societal conditions within the course of existence and variations. History is the child of its own age. Thus, its concern is the same as what we deeply feel in our hearts and ideas. And if the most exclusive and credible methods, programs, answers and concepts of yesterday are clashing today, they clash under the heaviness of our ideas, works, and more importantly our life and experiences. F.Braudel who started his speech in College de France in 1950 with these words mentioned that history was the child of his own era and clearly challenged a historical understanding which is outside the human life, self-appointed and which appears as the whole of the events to be discovered. Braudel describes the world of events as narrow, artificial, transitory, regional and capricious. Although he does not deny the fact that this world has its own realities just like the other segments of history, he states that this world's reality is limited to how it appears to its actors, and is in fact is not what it seems to be. It is the world of individuals' consciousness, insomuch that Braudel's efforts towards seeking the deep and long-term movements that pass beyond the events within his history perspective appear as mountains, lands, peninsulas, seas, time, space and even characterizations. A bit humanitarian and even mystically, Braudel attributes them certain intentions and objectives. The past that we "know" is contingent and is related to our own views and to "now". As we are the products of the past, so the recognized past is our "fiction". The dependence of the past is related to the general social change and questions we pose to the past. The questions we ask today are in turn, seriously related to the problems we experience today. Inclusion of many groups, native societies, coloured people and of course women in history in the past 20-30 years which have never been subjects of history is in fact the result of the differentiation of the questions we pose to the past and the change in the societies' problem focus. Today, many historians who strive for understanding the past are aware of the fact that their extensive efforts towards "understanding" would only be realized by the traditional historical methods, classical institutional analyses or the resolution of historical documents. As past becomes history by means of being transmitted by the written cultures, one of the reasons why certain groups become invisible within the course of history is their inability to use this tool and incapability to transmit their scripts. However, we may as well recognize the past without these materialistic evidences. If historians would have read the novels recounting the villagers, overlords, seigniors of that period or analyse the carpets woven by women, search the meanings of Indian names or try to understand the receipts of nostrums instead of getting lost within the complex language of tax collection documents and ordinances, the diversity of the past would be brought to the present in a better way. Certainly, such a description of the daily life would not lead us to all the details. However, such attempts would be a part of the effort towards achieving the depths of the past. For instance, LucienFebvre stated this effort as follows: certainly, history is made through written documents. However, it may and should also be made without them, in case they do not exist..... history shall be made with everything involved in the substantial discoveries of the historian. History can be made with words as well as with pictures, patches and roof bricks. It can also be made by field types, weed, moon struck and horse reins. History can be made with many years of historical evidences achieved by historians and a chemist's research on the metal used in swords.² Even with a word: History can be made with

¹Timisi, Nilüfer, "*Tarih Çözümlemesi İçinde Sözlü Tarih ve Feminist Sözlü Tarih*", 20.Yüzyılın Sonunda Kadınlar ve Gelecek, Edt: Oya Çitci, Todaie(Türkiye ve Orta Doğu Amme İdaresi Enstitüsü), Ankara-Kasım/1998, İnsan Hakları Araştırma ve Derleme Merkezi Yayınları, s.329-330

²Timisi, Nilüfer, a.g. m, a.g. e., s.330-331

anything that remained from human, related to human, useful to human, depicted by human and everything recounting the existence, interests, pleasures and life styles of human beings.³

As can be seen, this new perspective of history considers everything related to human being and his past as a source. In addition, in this perspective, the limits of subjectivity of history are examined. None the less, unlike the classical history method, the scope of history is never just the states, statesmen or wars in this new reading perspective, and the necessity to include ordinary masses is emphasized. All the masses like women, slaves and workers who have never been included in the history books and have always been excluded from the stage of history up until now should be included in the scope of history.

Additionally, history readings until today should be questioned in terms of the extent of their subjectivity. "No matter to what extent it is justifiable, widely accepted or testable, history is inevitably a personal structure and remains as the expression of the historian's view as a "narrator". Historian takes along many things during his dive in the depths of history. He primarily takes personal belongings such as his own values, views and ideologies along with epistemological presuppositions and assumptions. In addition, the ways of testing the origin, position, reality and credibility, in other words the methodology of the subject should be determined. Finally, the "historian" takes along also the materials written before him (books, articles). Historian who is equipped with these materials naturally does not broadly repose on the "subjectivity" problem. For Annales School traditionalists who consider the theory and subjectivity matters in history as insignificant to deeply discuss, social realities should be approached as these realities are "for" themselves and are their "property". By this statement, the most comprehensive forms of common life, institutions, social architectures and consequently civilizations are intended. This understating which comprises the recognition of the historical influences of human beings and which stresses on their existing power relationships, states that the approach towards social realities as "exclusively for themselves" comprises a conscious "subjectivity" and that the historians who have concerns regarding subjectivity have never argued their subjectivity".⁴

When we look at history from this perspective, we can see that the history of theology and social ethics also vary. Hence, it has a quite significant aspect that the historical events change our national character and our general attitude towards other societies. That is to say, if a nation or a society is considered as a super power within its age, the aforementioned nation may develop a sardonic or dismissive attitude towards other nations and their civilizations. This is one of the most important epidemics by which the perception of "nationalism" of most of the societies is infected.

Traces of this epidemic may also be observed in the perspectives towards the Ottomans and the ancient Turks. While trying to exalt his own ancestor or society, an individual is always in need of insulting or dismissing the other. This situation is understandable to some extent, because almost everywhere, identity is positioned according to the other and what "that's who I am" actually means, is that "I am not anybody else". However, in case this situation becomes an epidemic, it may be extremely dangerous. A simple internet research may show us that this situation has already become an epidemic in our society. One of the most important reasons why this research was realized was to show how wrong and mistaken a biased historical approach and our "prejudgements" deriving from our own identities were.

The sentences below were cited from the forum of an Internet site and are quite important in terms of revealing the same sardonic and dismissive attitudes of Turkish society towards other societies; an attitude which they claimed they have always observed in the Jewish people and other Western societies.

"Washing up in Turkish society is praiseworthy. In Paris, only a few baths exist since half a century. It does not even exist in cities like London, Berlin and Vienna. Today, a European does not fulfil the requirements of

³Timisi, Nilüfer, a.g. m., a.g. e., s.330

⁴Timisi, Nilüfer, a.g.m., a.g.e., s.331-332

self cleaning just as a poor Turkish villager does. These sentences were cited from Dr. A. Brayer's "NeufAnnes a Constantinople", published in 1836. *Yes, it is a fact that Europe learned cleaning and washing up from the Turkish people. The scripts regarding the cleanliness of Turkish people written by the travellers who visited Turkey for many centuries finally fructified and Europe started to wash up. Actually, Western world hasn't always lived in dirt. Their famous uncleanness started with the Renaissance. For some reason, the Medieval Age is considered to be the dirtiest period of Europe, however, from time to time, people placed great importance to cleaning during the medieval age which lasted for thousands of years.* Another characteristic of the Medieval Age is the lack of a commonly accepted sense of shame among the Europeans. Shortly after they woke up, wealthy people used to wash up in a barrel full of water, prepared by their maids. They were not bothered by the existence of women. Some authors state that the sense of shame emerged after the Medieval Age. It was a custom to wash hands before eating, because fork was not invented at the time. **THERE WAS NO SENSE OF SHAME IN THE MEDIEVAL EUROPE!** One of the customs in the Medieval Europe was to lay down naked. Everyone including the overlords, villagers, ladies and maids used to sleep naked and threw themselves in barrels full of water as soon as they woke up. From those times, Europe's tradition of washing up in the standing water came until today. The issue of washing up in baths without the water flowing has always been a surprising phenomenon for us, the Turkish people. Today, Europeans and Americans fill the tub with water and wash up inside or tap the sink and wash their hands and face with the water filled in it. According to our understanding, this is quite simply rubbish. For centuries, Turkish people have believed that they could only get cleaned up by washing up under the flowing water. In addition, Persians also wash up in the standing water, just like Europeans. Arabians and Pakistanis also wash up rarely. **RENAISSANCE MEANS DIRT!** *The condition of hygiene of the European people reversed during Renaissance, people became scruffier and this situation continued until the beginning of the 19th century. Washing up was forgotten, public baths were closed and places allocated for washing up in residences were used for other purposes. While washing up was forgotten, the mess gradually increased and unpleasant smells got worse. Consequently, European people industrialized perfume production, instead of washing up for cleaning.*”⁵

The statements above not only blame the whole European continent for being dirty and not knowing how to clean themselves, but also aggrandise its own society in the sentences below. In addition, these sentences define the period where Europe stepped out of darkness as the era of dirt.

*“TURKISH PEOPLE WERE CLEANER THAN ALL THE NATIONS!...When Turkish people conquered Anatolia after the Battle of Malazgirt, they made some modifications in the Byzantine baths and opened them to public. They built public baths in important cities such as Konya, Kayseri and Alanya. By virtue of the opportunities they provided, Ottomans attached great importance to hygiene. After Bursa was made the capital city, the water and cleaning pleasure of Turkish people culminated. Baths built in Edirne and İstanbul were also worth seeing. After II. Sultan Mehmet conquered İstanbul, he built many significant baths such as Ağahamamı, Ebuvefa Hamamı and Çukur Hamam. In the mean time, Bursa became the city of water. At the beginning of the 16th century, European's visits to Turkey became more often. Among these people, the literate ones recounted all the beauties they saw on every occasion. Among these people were Bassano da Zara; Pierre Balon and PaoloGiovio.”*⁶

⁵ 08.10.2012, <http://forum.memurlar.net/topic.aspx?id=474792> adlı web sayfasından 29 Mayıs 2003 tarihli forum yazısından alınmıştır.

⁶ 08.10.2012, <http://forum.memurlar.net/topic.aspx?id=474792> adlı web sayfasından 29 Mayıs 2003 tarihli forum yazısından alınmıştır.

An understanding towards praising its own society up until this point again turns into accusing sentences. In addition, the author tries to prove his thesis by including certain expressions of a supposedly Christian of the period, yet without a cross reference.

“THERE WERE ONLY A FEW PEOPLE IN EUROPE WHO WASHED UP TWICE DURING THEIR WOLE LIVES In the period of Sultan Kanuni, the scripts of a Spanish traveller who visited İstanbul clearly reflect the hygiene mentality in Europe. “Turks. They claim that we, the Christians are dirty. However, washing up is harmful. No men or women who washed up twice during their whole lives exist in Spain. It was observed that many people suffered from washing up. Especially for us, the Christians, washing up is no good, as we are not used to it.” Greolt who is a writer and who visited Turkey in the 17th century reports in his book published in 1600 as follows: “Turks exaggerate washing up; if they do not wash up that frequently, they would surely be sick less often. As they wash up nearly every day, they become sensile. However, the sanitary conveniences of Turkish people are very clean. Unlike our society, I have never seen anyone emptying his/her bowels near the walls or in proximity of sanctuaries... In fact, this cleanliness is common to Turks. No other Muslim is that clean. For instance, I have seen a mess in Cairo... Turks separate their own dishes from the ones in which they feed cats and dogs. Unlike our society, dogs do not eat the leftovers in a person’s plate. Turks are very crossed with our customs, furthermore I heard many people calling us “dogs” just for that matter.”

The above cited sentences actually prove how an individual’s or a group’s natural sentiments of love towards his/her society are suddenly transformed into slandering statements towards a whole civilization, when exaggerated. However, surfing on the other web sites showed us that this point of view was not a reflection of a singular perspective. The same sentences take place also in this web page⁷.

Three main assertions existed within the sentences of the related Web pages:

- 1-Turkey is the society that taught hygiene to Europe.
- 2-In the Medieval period, European people lacked sense of shame.
- 3-And finally, European people lacked sense of hygiene in the medieval period

It would not be difficult to disprove all these three statements. The society which is the founder of the European Civilization is the Ancient Greek Civilization, and the mainland of Ancient Greek civilization is not only Greece. Greeks succeeded to establish a civilization both in Cyprus and in Western Anatolia. One of the most ravishing examples is the city of Ephesus. As an answer to these assertions, we submit below our observations regarding certain historical artefacts in the city of Ephesus and specific historical realities beyond our observations. On the other hand, we will mention our sociologic observations rather than the historical dimensions of these historical buildings. The below mentioned sources may be referred for detailed information regarding these artefacts⁸

Let us ask three questions respondent to below given assertions and provide answers within the scope of the city of Ephesus.

Our first question would be;

⁷ Aynı satırlar 08.10.2012, <http://www.pcteknik.net/genel-kultur-amp-yasam/108637-batiya-temizligi-biz-ogrettik.html> adlı web sayfasında da göze çarpmaktadır.

⁸Erdemgil, Selahattin, EphesusRuinsandMuseum, Net Tur,stik Yayınları, İst., 2001.

1-What kind of a civilization was located at the centre of improved thought in Ancient Greece?

One of the most significant definitions towards the Ancient Greece is that it was a pagan society.

2-Was the Ancient Greece truly a pagan society?

Our third question would be related to hygiene, respondent to the above cited assertions.

3- What kind of a hygiene understanding dominated in Ancient Greece, the founder of the European Civilization?

Answer to our first question is provided by the two fold library located right at the centre of the city of which the photographs are submitted below. The ancient library located in the city is called Celsus Library⁹ in English, which is perhaps the most remarkable artefact of the city. The building reflects the characteristics of the structures built during the Emperor Hadrian period. At the four column footings of the building, there are four different statues symbolizing four values such as wisdom and ethics. As in the entire city, the statues used in the building served for enrichment, which are significant in terms of understanding how improved the art was in this society at those times. Hence, when the above mentioned library is considered, it can be understood how the Ancient Greek gave birth to the mother of the most important scientific disciplines such as Philosophy, and how developed and civil the society where the classic Greek philosophers such as Thales, Socrates and Plato lived and were educated was, compared to other societies.

⁹Erdemgil, Selahattin, a. g. e., s. 84-86.





The answer to our second question is provided by Trajan Fountain which is a temple located in the upper region of the city. Although this is an old temple and that there are statues everywhere in the city, it is remarkable that no statue exists in this temple. There is just an altar in the temple, for sacrificing animals and submitting gifts to god. This situation shows that although the Greek society was politeist, it was not paganist. In other words, there was not a tendency towards worshipping statues. The reason why statues were used all

around the city was only for enrichment purposes, and there was no intention of making a note of history or witnessing. As mentioned before, the history and archaeological background of the structures may be examined.¹⁰ We will show our observations regarding the city by rather using photographs.



And the answer to our third question is provided by a sink located in one of the four baths¹¹ built in the city (These baths were called as TheSkolastikiaBaths). The reason why the word is plural is that there are four baths in the city. This is an explicit demonstration regarding whether or not a hygiene perception existed in Ancient Greece.

On the right hand side of the wall, there is a prolongation which cannot be seen in the photograph. And on this junction, there is a pipe made of stone which correspond to each sink hole. Warm water passes through this stone pipe so that the people coming to the bath can also wash up. Hence, the people can relieve themselves and take a bath or a shower at the same time. It is an important evidence with regards to finding

¹⁰Erdemgil, Selahattin, a.g.e., s. 65.

¹¹Eracun, Selçuk, Ephesus, Hitit Color Yay., İst., t.y., .s 27-28.

out whether or not the Europeans or the European civilization had a sense of hygiene and in our opinion, refutes all the arguments cited above.

When it comes to the lack of sense of shame in Europe, this sentence actually means that the Europeans or the Western people did not have sexual ethics, which can be argued by asking a different question. If the Europeans or the Western people lacked sexual ethics, then what was the tendency of the western people towards sex at those times?

Another way of understanding this notion is to know which context formed the mental background. The background of a society forms the sacred context of that society. And the attitude of the New Testament towards this issue is quite sharp, which is explicitly stated in A Letter to Corinthians. These sentences are: "When it comes to girls, I have not received a particular order from god regarding them. But as a credible person by virtue of my god's mercy, I state my opinion: "What I think is, it is good for people to remain as how they are, due to the current problems. Don't intend to divorce your wife, if you have one. Don't look for a wife, if you don't have one. However, you would not commit a sin if you get married. Neither a girl would commit a sin, if she gets married. On the other hand, people who don't get married will face certain problems during their lives. I would like to protect you from these problems. Brothers, what I want to tell you is that there is no time left. From now on, let the ones with wives live as if they don't have one, let the mourning ones live as if they are not mourning, let those who buy goods live as if they don't have any belongings and let those who fully benefit from possessions live as if they do not . Because, the world's current condition is transient"¹²

The above sentences propose an abstinent attitude towards the earthly life and particularly towards sexuality. The sentences given below were written before those given above and underline the imperative towards this abstinence even more. You say "you are free to do what you want", but not everything is useful. You say "you are free to do everything", but I will not fall prey to anything". You say "food is for the stomach, and stomach is for food" but god shall annihilate them both. The body is for the Lord, not for prostitution. And the Lord is for the body. God who resurrected the Lord will resurrect us too. Don't you know that Jesus has associates? Shall I make whores from his associates? Never. Don't you know that one who unites with a whore is as one corps with her? Because they are said to be as one. However, one who unites with the Lord is as one soul with him. Avoid prostitution. All the other sins committed by human are outside the body, whereas one who involves in prostitution commits a sin towards his/her body."¹³

All the above sentences cited from the Bible advise on sexual abstinence. This means that the argument which we discussed in the middle of our study stating that the Medieval Europeans lacked sexual ethics does not reflect the reality. Because, the period in question is the Classic Age and it is commonly known by the sociologists that people who lived in the classical age both in the Ottomans and in Europe had a far more religious and even a conservative profile.

What we told up to this point show that the Europeans were neither unclean nor shameless. This is just a reflection of a perspective trying to fictionalize its own identity for reviling against the other, and is quite important in terms of reflecting the eastern perspective towards the Western people. The groundless and wrong assertions given above are actually the results of a psychosis displayed by the Eastern people for masturbation and self comforting who possibly felt lowly under the technical and civil progress of the Western societies in

¹² Yeni Ahid, I.Korintliler,7:25-32

¹³ Yeni Ahid, I.Korintliler, 6:12-19

the last three decades. Certainly, there is much to say regarding the issue, but it should be reminded that this is just an introductory research.

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