

# SYMPOSIUM EVALUATION

***Prof. Dr. İbrahim ÖZDEMİR***

“There is another possibility,” it is said in an Istanbul song. Like this song, this symposium reminded us of another possibility in our social relations and of another history we have.

We have another history. In that history, Muslims learned the Greek science and philosophy from Syrian and Egyptian Christians, Chaldeans and Nestorians. There was a caliph named Ibn al-Ma'mun. As reported by Ibn al-Nadim, he saw Aristotle in his dream. Aristotle was sitting in his throne and al-Ma'mun was in consultation with him. It is impossible to imagine any statesman of the 21st century in such a situation.

Muslim not only learned science from Christians and other subjects, but also they acted as teachers for Jews and Christians from the 8th century to the 15th century. Students from Europe would take lessons from Muslim teachers in the Mosque of Cordoba and the Mosque of Granada. It did not matter if these students were Jews, Christians or Muslims. This symposium shows us that we have different history. Ibn Rushd's greatest student was N. Thoma. Maimonides, one of the greatest philosophers of Judaism, attended the lessons thought by Muslim scholars. He wrote his books in Arabic.

Great scholars came out of the Mosque of Cordoba. Scholars from various religions would meet there. This symposium urges us to revise our social sciences, religious education and history. I must note that we all have in our history a nation-state mentality that relies on otherization. We have a history shaped around a nation-state conception. When I was serving at the Ministry of National Education, I worked with my colleagues from Bulgaria, Greece, etc., and made progress regarding the removal of the nation-state discourse. We tried to remove the wrong information. We believed that if historians write down their history books without reliance on the nation-state mindset, this would contribute to the peace and tranquility of humanity.

Thanks to this meeting, we can be nurture more hopes for the future. We may have an opportunity to make new contributions. Just as businessmen can produce goods in China and take them to another country around the world and market them there, we should try to disseminate our views all around the globe without letting them stay in conference halls and meetings. Let us expand our boundaries and break with the confines of our national boundaries. As it was emphasized as regards with all religions, we have to review our curricula with a humanity-centered approach.

Last year, sociology students in Oxford University went on strike. They argued that they were unable to make sense of the modern world using the books written in late 19th century and early 20th century. The strike sought to persuade Oxford University to abandon its conservatism and the message was taken. As a result, many universities and countries around the world had to change their curricula. I believe this symposium is a modest attempt in this direction. I would like to congratulate everyone who has contributed to this symposium. I hope this initiative is taken forward.

***Doç. Dr. İhsan ÇAPCIOĞLU***

As seen in the cartoon crisis, there are intercultural challenges in defining freedom of speech and hate crime. Sensibilities of practitioners of different religions must be taken into consideration in efforts to prevent intercultural and inter-religious conflicts. In this sense, insulting, humiliating and abusive manners and behaviors against the sacred values of religions must be avoided. This would contribute to the development a culture of mutual reconciliation among diverse cultures.

It is not likely for any religion to endorse violence or terrorism. Given this fact, any insistence on efforts to associate Islam, Muslims and their cultures with violence will be to the detriment not only of Muslims, but also of Western values. Indeed, keeping silent in the face of proliferation of the violence rhetoric or, at least, failing to show sufficiently strong reaction against it would mean endorsing the threats against the very foundations of social trust and peace culture. Accordingly, any sensible person who cares about the future of humanity has to protest all sorts of violence without distinguishing between religions or cultures. A task for policy-makers would be to encourage masses to refuse all sorts of violence and save them from the grip of intercultural prejudices while formulating policies for raising their awareness for promoting high moral values.

NGOs and voluntary organizations that act with a sense of social responsibility should continue to contribute to the elimination of intercultural prejudices with their projects. Such projects will pave the way for the establishment of mutual trust and peace by raising awareness about common values while mitigating the prejudicial, exclusionary, violent and discriminatory rhetoric.

If steps are taken to facilitate mutual sharing of intercultural encounters, all differences will find an opportunity to come together under a common roof regardless of their language, religion, race, color, or gender. This will make us realize that we are not mindless masses brought together by necessities and coincidence, but we are part of a whole that share a common fate as the family of humanity. Eventually, we will stop perceiving each other as burdens, but understand that we are entrusted to each other as closely intermingling arms of the tree of humanity and that life is an invaluable gift to us as a tool for testing who will perform good and beneficial deeds.

*Asst. Prof. Dr. Yusuf SUIÇMEZ*

Values are also closely related to life philosophy. The maqāsid is related to the idea that the determinants of relations are universal values, not power. LEGAL MAXIMS, which developed in Christian culture and civilization, in particular, resembles all the similarities as the idea of maqāsid thought, but these are more similar to the qavāids in Islamic thought that can be universal and local.

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation has issued a new Human Rights declaration on the grounds that human rights violations in countries where Muslims live are in a very high level. The Organization for Islamic Cooperation has expressed its commitment to complement UN human rights, not as an alternative to this declaration.

It is necessary to emphasize here that Muslims must contribute to human rights development. Moreover, it must be said that they need to assume even more responsibility for the development and implementation of these rights, rather than the controversy. They need to be carried out with a sense of divine and human responsibility, not as a necessity for external pressures.

There are two different philosophical interpretations of religions. One of these is the moral imperative of the existence and preservation of values; The other is that the preservation of values is not a moral imperative, but the values are part of the struggle in nature.

According to the second interpretation, religions are the means that people or communities use to reach their personal goals. So it is a kind of justifying tool. Religions are not valuable in their own right. According to the first

interpretation, religion expresses the moral laws of the creation that keep life in a balance and harmony in the name of Allah. With this belief, Muslims should pay particular attention to the protection of fundamental human rights and freedoms.

This objective, if considered together with the later human rights declarations, are understood to have the potential to build a common peaceful and safe world life by building common human values.

When we think together with different human rights manifestos and me Qasid studies, we can say that these efforts have the potential to built on it a World Constitution and a World Court of Human Rights, which represent the common law in the future, depending on common sense and moral development of mankind.

*Ceylan Coşkuner KALIN*

Consequently, travel writings and travel books by itinerants played a major role in the development and establishment of the Eurocentric perspective. In this connection, the impressions of the itinerants and the way they convey them to the readers are important, but the mediation of the thinkers and authors who are other conveyors of them is equally or even more important. Indeed, if narration/description is done in a neutral manner without influencing the readers negatively and without otherifying them, this shapes the way others/readers perceive the people/culture in question. In this context, the way Hegel conveyed Africa in particular had an adverse effect on the readers, causing a shift in the shaping of the dominant mindset. Indeed, these distortions --although there is no proof of Hegel's direct contribution to emergence of racism-- indirectly nurtured/nurtures a colonialist mentality which was essentially racist. However, every culture should be assessed in its uniqueness and under its specific conditions; it should not be compared or benchmarked to no other culture or thing.

*Krasimira BAKARDZHIEVA*

More than 2 years we work in cooperation on the project "The effects of the common values" looking for new ideas, new tools, new approaches. Each of these concerns can be seen as an opportunity to find new and improved solutions.

What we did?

We mapped a current situation on racism and xenophobia in 5 EU countries (Turkey, Bulgaria, Spain, Germany and Czech Republic); we prepared analysis on verses on common values in Islam, Christianity and Buddhism and focus on moral development as an opportunity to reach the highest spiritual level.

Today we are here to say that the religion could be unifying and to show that the moral teachings of sacred writings of various religions have a universal character. This is the eternal wisdom of these books. Religion unites; it doesn't separate people when it is not used for political purpose. It stimulates the development of morality and the innate desire in humans to be improved. This improvement includes all sublime aspirations to truth, good and beauty and most importantly – striving for more complete and perfect life.

For us is now clear; if people listen to their hearts they will be able to live together regardless of their religious differences.

Dear friends, unfortunately we are at the final stage of this project, and here I would like to use the chance to say a big thank you to TOYEV Foundation – represented by Ahmet Gul and Suleyman Aslan for the chance to be part of this project, for their perfect management and organization. Thank you Ahmet, thank you Suleyman – you give us insights and confident that we can manage and reach the purpose. And this symposium shows this. It is a real pleasure to work with you.

I would like also to say thank you to the partners of the consortium – AMEFE, Spain; ASPECT-MIR, Bulgaria, MARIE e.V., Germany and EDU Centrum, Czech Republic - for their hard work and support.

Let's religion could be unifying to all of us!

Thank you!