

Revival and Civilizational Resumption (2): Philosophy of Revival within the West

Lutfi Abu Muhammad- Algeria

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In the pursuit of finding the potential equation for revival, Western thinkers and philosophers attributed the reason for the advance of Western countries as freedom in a comprehensive and universal sense. It is surmised that freedom unlocks the secrets of individual creativity, leading to progression and revival. Freedom's advocates consider slavery, dictatorship and restrictions of all kinds as a barrier for creativity and achievement, inevitably leading to decline, backwardness and regression. This is what made them almost certain that the attachment to the unseen and so-called intangible spiritual beings, as well as monasticism and asceticism, increases the degree of backwardness of the people. According to their beliefs, spiritualism leads to inappropriate departure from this worldly life, progress, vitality and reality. In order to affirm their thought, they compared what happened in Europe during the Middle Ages, when there was Christianity, compared to today.

Historically, religious Europeans viewed that there was a conflict between religion and revival; in other words, there was a conflict between the spiritual and material. Will Durant laments this tendency amongst religious Europeans by stating in Volume 3 of the "The Story of Civilization," regarding "Caesar and Christ," that "*The sense of sin took on a new intensity with the belief that all mankind had been tainted by Adam's fall, and that soon the world would end in a judgment of eternal punishment or reward. Many Christians were absorbed in the effort to come clean to that dread assize; they saw a lure of Satan in every pleasure of the senses, denounced the "world and the flesh," and sought to subdue desire with fasts and varied chastisements. They looked with suspicion upon music, white bread, foreign wines, warm baths, or shaving the beard- which seemed to flout the evident will of God.*"[1].

Regarding the matter of criterion for action, the spiritual father of the Protestant doctrine, Martin Luther, expressed remorse at the secularism's endorsement of human reasoning over revelation as a criterion for action. Luther launched a violent attack, maintaining that reason has an exclusively pragmatic value in a limited realm, whilst asserting that reason is "*blind and dark*" in spiritual matters. Luther stated that, "*Reason is the devil's greatest whore; by nature and manner of being she is a noxious whore; she is a prostitute, the devil's appointed whore; whore eaten by scab and leprosy who ought to be trodden under foot and destroyed, she and her wisdom . . . Throw dung in her face to make her ugly. She is, and she ought to be drowned in baptism . . . She would deserve, the wretch, to be banished to the filthiest place in the house, to the closets.*" [2]. He cautioned how reason undermined the commands of God, stating that, "*Usury, drunkenness, adultery—these crimes are self-evident and the world knows that they are sinful; but that bride of the Devil, 'Reason', stalks abroad, the fair courtesan, and wishes to be considered wise, and thinks that whatever she says comes from the Holy Ghost.*"

The philosophers of European history came to the conclusion that the hegemony of religion over life's affairs in the Middle Ages was the cause for its decline. One of their most prominent evidence was the feudal system that was deeply rooted in injustice and cruelty, that subjugated Europeans but was justified by the notion of divine right granted to the king. Durant points out that in the temporal view, the king was subordinate to God, who rules with his divine right, meaning that God permitted him to rule, and then God authorized him to rule, saying, "*The Christians, despite bitter oppression, had rarely revolted against the state; their teachers had inculcated submission to the civil powers, and had taught the divine right of kings.*" [3]. They maintain that European history is representative of the history of the world, according to their understanding. They provide analysis of the revival, beginning with events that fueled the conflict that erupted between the Catholic Church that dominated society, on

the one hand, and reformists and revolutionaries who challenged that control, on the other. The primary demand was to reduce the involvement of the Church. One of its most prominent advocates was Huldrych Zwingli, the Protestant reformation leader who established that there is no basis for the spiritual authority which is called the Church in the Christian scriptures, proclaiming that, *“the temporal authority arrogated by priests belongs to the civil government. Whom all Christians are obligated to obey. Provided they do nothing against God.”* [4].

What acutely intensified the issue were the demands raised by philosophers who rebelled against priestly thought, considering it a scourge upon Europe. Their call was centered around the separation of religion from life, society and the state, effectively quarantining religion within the Church. As for Machiavelli, the famous Italian thinker who died in 1527 CE, he believed that Christianity - at its best - teaches erroneous virtues. According to him, Christianity teaches submission, humiliation, denial of the body and turning the other cheek, confining the hope of man to joy and happiness in the Afterlife alone. Machiavelli's idea about virtue was in stark contrast with Christian virtue. He was inspired by the nobility of man and the glory of life on earth. He believed that this nobility is expressed not in the humiliation of the soul but in its glorification. [5]. Similarly, Voltaire, who died in 1778 CE, criticized the Biblical and Christian view of development of society in his writings. He drew broad lines for the history of humanity. According to him, the philosophy of history is based on the idea of progressive development of a society through its independence from the will of God. He fought against priesthood and against what he viewed as religious imagined superficialities. Christianity and the Catholic Church were the main targets of his mockery, as he considered them as the primary obstacles to progress. [6]

Then there is Jean-Jacques Rousseau, whose book, *The Social Contract*, was considered as the pillar for the French Revolution, becoming a bible for the French people after the French Revolution. Rousseau called to the belief in God, but to reject revelation [7] as a source of ruling for the state, thus calling for the separation of religion from life. He believes that the lawmakers subservient to rulers and kings, attributed the laws and legislations to God only to endow a sense of obligation towards those laws, inciting fear in the hearts of people about violations. He said, *“Thus the legislator is unable to employ either force or argument, and has to have recourse to another order of authority, which can compel without violence and win assent without arguing. That is why the founders of nations have been forced in every period to resort to divine authority and attribute their own wisdom to the gods, in order that their peoples, who are subject both to the laws of the state and those of nature, should recognize the same power in the creator of man and in the creator of society, obeying freely and submitting meekly to the enforcement of public felicity.”* He added, *“It is the decisions of this higher reason, beyond the scope of average men, that the legislator ascribes to the Immortals, so that those who cannot be moved by human prudence will be led by divine authority. But it does not lie in every man to make the gods speak, nor to be believed when he proclaims himself to be their spokesman.”* [8] The French Revolution, which broke out in the year 1789 CE, permanently excluded the Church from society, the state and politics. Will Durant drew attention to the fact that although most revolutions before the French Revolution were either against the state or against the church, it was rare that they broke out against both at the same time. He asserted that the French revolution attacked both monarchy and church simultaneously, assuming the dual dangerous task of overthrowing the two worldly and religious pillars of the existing social order. [9]

Thus, contemporary Western thinkers and historians consider the progress in Europe, coinciding with the declining influence of the Church on society, as living proof of their theory. As religion and religiosity receded from public life, they found the greatest proof for their theory in the French Revolution that heralded their modern history. The Church was excluded from society and the theory of divine right was discarded. Freedom was unleashed upon society. The European renaissance movement continued its march, bearing fruits about which the Westerners are boasting until now. This historical ideological theory of Western thinkers was the reason behind the emergence of rational doctrine adopted by the West

since the beginning of modern history. This is what made it a basis for its thoughts and as an intellectual leadership for its society, which is the "Separation of religion from the Life."

Thus, they went on to explain any revival movement through this theory. Accordingly, when they want to explain the phenomenon of Communist revival and its decline, they attribute that revival to the absence of religious influence on life in the Communist society, particularly since Communism is based on atheism, declaring religion as the opium of people, associating the Communist people with matter and materialism. As for the rapid decline of that ideology, in their opinion, it is neither due to atheism nor due to the absence of religion, but due to the absence of freedom. In their view, freedom sought by man when he emancipated himself from slavery to the clergy and the unseen was turned into servitude to the state and the ruling party by the Communist Party, robbing the people of freedom. They view the people who revolt against communism today from the angle that they want emancipation from the servitude of state in order to practice freedom and to join the ranks of liberal Western civilization. Francis Fukuyama wrote, in *The End of History and the Last Man*, "In the past, people rejected liberal democracy because they believed that it was inferior to monarchy, aristocracy, theocracy, fascism, communist totalitarianism, or whatever ideology they happened to believe in. But now, outside the Islamic world, there appears to be a general consensus that accepts liberal democracy's claims to be the most rational form of government, that is, the state that realizes most fully either rational desire or rational recognition." [10].

This is the summary of the present day Western concept about decline and revival in history. When we ask the West about the secret of the revival of Islamic civilization during the Middle Ages, they cannot explain this phenomenon according to their aforementioned theory. So, they pose different interpretations to prove their theory. The era when the Islamic civilization witnessed the greatest revival ever known in history was an era of religion and worship. Moreover, the Islamic civilization, including its society, state and its way of life, is based on a spiritual doctrine that connects man with what is before and after the worldly life. Such an example is a living proof and definite evidence for the corruption of the Western theory in explaining revival and decline. Any rational thought is authenticated with its agreement to reality, whilst it is rendered false when it does not agree with that reality, as in the case of Western theory. The philosophy of revival is a serious matter where presumptive theory must not be accepted, such as the Western theory. Instead, it should be a definite conclusive thought that agrees with the tangible reality, capable of explaining all revivals and declines of civilizations with a sound explanation.

Civilizational Resumption:

Many Muslims lament their condition by comparing it to developed nations. Some of them exaggerate the situation of Muslims by asserting that there is no way out for the Muslims. They add that the West has quickened its pace, such that Muslims can never catch up now. In reality, the progress that people target is but a physical manifestation of the adoption of a viewpoint towards life, which in turn is derived from an ideology. This viewpoint is the starting point for determining the treatments for the problems of life, as agreed upon by the society and the state through laws and legislations. The decline suffered by the Muslims cause them to make comparisons resulting in internal defeat, caused by the absence of differentiation between the demands of people and political will. The difference between the two terms needs some clarification. People as a whole may demand certain thoughts which they hold as correct. In order for the thoughts to become a reality in governing the whole community, it is necessary for these thoughts to be adopted by a state, manifesting a political authority to actualize the demands of the people within a practical framework, consolidating all energies to practically bring them about into existence. This definition applies to all nations, whether they are emerging or ancient nations. However, an important distinction arises when the demands of a people are the commands of the Creator of the Universe (swt), aiming to achieve worship in all dimensions, practically implementing all the commands, ensuring their protection and carrying them to the world.

Non-Muslims cannot comprehend the reality of the blessings, justice and prosperity endowed by Islam, if they do not see Islam implemented practically through an executive entity that represents the aspirations of the Ummah to obey its Creator, protect Prophethood and the concepts related to it. Achieving the revival, or what is known as development, requires complete integration between the ruler and the people towards the goals and strategies emanating from the intellectual standards that are agreed upon, becoming general convention amongst people. Thus, the state provides the means, whilst the people provide loyalty and sacrifices, a sense of belonging by offering sincere advice, reducing the gaps that lead to failure in achieving development. What we see now in the Muslim World is the lack of that homogeneity and harmony between the ruler and the ruled. The reluctance within a large group of people to pursue revealed goals is because they overlooked an important element, which is the existence of a single unifying intellectual basis for both the ruler and the ruled. Thus, a unified breakthrough evades the Muslim World. Consequently, there is an absence of a sense of belonging, with many gaps, making it inevitable for infiltration by corrupting elements.

People cannot achieve progress if they do not appoint a representative leader by establishing an entity to perform the functions of political will and practical implementation. Islam considers the state to be an essential element of Islamic life, by which successes of the Ummah are achieved. This is because the state represents the Islamic thinking and 'Aqeedah of the Ummah, allowing a whole host of achievements until the fall of Ottoman State. Then the Ummah fell behind, weakened and began to follow the tails of other nations. Accordingly, the people as a whole neither produce technology nor civilization. Instead, it is the thought which they embrace, along with the political will which they establish, which translates their thoughts into reality. Therefore, those who desire revival must have a clear vision of the project which they want to bring into being. They must adhere to the basic principles and thoughts held by the entire Ummah, including Islam's rich historical and legislative legacy that is capable of turning the tide in favor of the Islamic Ummah, restoring its might and glory. This matter requires diligent work from the aware, who are capable of translating thoughts into productive actions.

Civilizations collide and clash each other and the criteria for the civilizational defeat is surrendering, as described by Ibn Khaldun, كل مغلوب مفتون بتقليد الغالب "All the defeated are fascinated by imitation of the victorious." The Capitalist civilization, adopted by both the East and West, establishes a certain concept about life by which it leads the entire world. As Huntington stated, "The qualities that make a society Western, in contrast, are special: the classical legacy, Christianity, the separation of church and state, the rule of law, civil society." Capitalism claims that the Creator of the universe has nothing to do with running the affairs of people. The legislation that emerged from secularism proceeded in a twisted direction, neglecting the human being by considering him as merely a consumer. Capitalism is only concerned with increasing and diversifying the wealth. Capitalism widens the gap between the rich and the poor and legalizes exploitation under various names. The law of the jungle that has descended upon the world is the consequence of capitalism, its thoughts and institutions.

The Capitalist construction began to falter after its roots and foundations were shaken as a result of the accumulated crises to the point that many economic analysts have lost confidence in many of its fundamentals. All these wildernesses lived by the world is the natural result of Capitalism with all its thoughts and institutions. Accordingly, attention is directed to Islam, as it is the only ideology capable of correcting the twisted course and bringing humanity back to its original course. Islam's rich jurisprudential and historical heritage makes it the natural leadership for the world. Islam and its distinguished legislation have historically proven an ability to elevate man and society. The Islamic legislation emerged from correct comprehensive thought that submits the universe, man and life to the Majesty of Allah (swt).

So the world will be straightened in its course and the concept of true servitude of Allah (swt) will be realized. Any attempt to change will lead to failure if it does not adhere to the

goal of molding society within a single Islamic framework. Therefore the work is intellectual work that presents a project with human and practical considerations, devoid of unrealistic philosophy. It should be considered that Islam has matters which are not to be compromised or revoked and are matters of life and death, vital issues. The Islamic Ummah is not like any other nation as it has a responsibility upon its neck towards itself and other people. It is the Ummah of Messengership whose manner of address was understood by the Companions (ra), including the Khulafa'a Rashideen. It is reported that Umar ibn al-Khattab (ra) said, من سره أن يكون من هذه الأمة؛ فليؤد شرط الله فيها **Whoever likes to be amongst this Ummah, then let him fulfill the condition which Allah has set in it**” and then he (ra) recited the verse, كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ **You are the best nation produced [as an example] for mankind. You enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and believe in Allah.**” [Surah Aal-e Imran 3:110]

Reference:

[1] - Will Durant - The Story of Civilization - Part 11 – p. 282.

[2] -Ibid - part 24 - p. 55-56.

[3] - Ibid - part 14 - p. 429.

[4] - Ibid - part 24 - p. 117.

[5] - Ernesto Landi - Article in the book 'The Flags of Political Thought' -. Western Political Philosophers: A Background Book compiled by Maurice Cranston pg 42

[6] - Ibid - Voltaire.

[7] - Ibid. - Rousseau

[8] - Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 'The Social Contract' p. 85.

[9] - Will Durant, The Story of Civilization - Part 42 p. 397.

[10] - Francis Fukuyama, The End of History and the Last Man, p. 68.