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## Önsöz

Elinizdeki kitap, bir doktora tezi (AÜSBF - Siyaset Bilimi) olarak hazırlandı; dolayısıyla, akademik bir çalışmanın tüm olumsuzluklarını ve dezavantajlarını taşıyor. Ancak, tezin yazımının olmasa bile, araştırma ve zihinde olgunlaştırma sürecinin epey uzun bir zaman dilimine yayılmış ve oldukça geç bir yaşta kotarılmış olmasının getirdiği bazı avantajlar da yok değil. Bir kere, insanın olgunluk ve özgüven düzeyi ister istemez biraz artmış oluyor (özellikle ikincisi, kadınlar açısından önemli ve bu niteliği görece geç bir yaşta kazanabilmemiz, başlı başına düşündürücü). Bu ise, gerek içerik, gerekse dil açısından daha cesur ya da serüvenci bir tutum alınabilmesini kolaylaştırıyor. Bu tezi yazarken, kendimi olayların ve dilin akışına kaptırdığım çok oldu. Elimdeki malzeme, özellikle eski yaratılış mitosları ve üç kutsal kitabın dili, böyle bir kaptırışa elbette çok yatkındı. Dolayısıyla, yazım aşaması, sancılı da olsa, yer yer epey keyifliydi.<sup>4</sup>

Ne var ki, aynı şeyi içerik açısından söylemem mümkün değil. Ataerkilliğin yalnızca köklerinin değil, bugün hâlâ varolduğu yetmiyormuş gibi her gün durmadan yeniden üretilen kalıplarının, en azından altı bin yıldır değişmediğini görmek, insanda gerçekten umutsuzluk ve karamsarlık yaratabiliyor. Belki de bu yüzden; yani bir tür, karamsarlıkla başetme yolu olarak, bu tezi yazıp ortaya çıkarmak istedim. Size düşman bir şey hakkında bilgi sahibi olmak, onun üzerinde belli bir güç sahibi olmuşsunuz ve onunla başedebiliyorsunuz gibi bir duyguyu da beraberinde getiriyor. Tezde, Foucault'ya dayanarak teorik bakımdan temellendirmeye çalıştığım bu savın, son derece gündelik ve sıradan bir pratiklik düzeyinde de işe

yaradığını düşünüyorum. En azından, bana iyi geldi! "Umut ilkesi"ni ayakta tutmamız gerekiyor; başka çaremiz yok.

Biraz da çalışmanın kendisine bakacak olursak; din, bireysel ya da kolektif insan yaşamının en derin yönleriyle ilgili bir olgu. Dolayısıyla, insan davranışına yön veren insan *öznelliğini* kavramak istediğimizde, dini de incelememiz gerektiği açık; insana özgü her olgu gibi din de, inanç düzleminde bir tartışmaya girilmeksizin, tarihsel ve toplumsal bir incelemeye tabi tutulabilir. Ve böyle bir incelemeye giriştiğimizde, hemen her konu gibi dinin de, toplumsal cinsiyet bölünmesinin iki kutbu, yani kadınlar ve erkekler açısından farklı anlamlar taşıdığı gerçeğiyle yüz yüze geliyoruz. Özellikle kadınların dinle ilişkisi, her zaman çok karmaşık, çelişkili ve gerilimli olagelmiş. Din, bir dizi simgesel biçim ve imge yaratır; bir kültürün dinsel gelenekleri, o kültürün ifade biçimleri ve anlam yaratma süreçlerinin parçasıdır. Bu nedenle, topluma ve kültüre ilişkin feminist araştırmalar, kadınların ikircikli bir ilişki içinde buldukları din olgusunu çözümlenmeye cesaret etmedikleri takdirde, eksik ve yüzeysel kalmaya mahkûmdur.

Din olgusunu ve kadınlar ile din arasındaki ilişkiyi incelemeye giriştiğimizde ise, çözümü zor sorunlarla karşılaşılıyor. Bir kere din, teoride ve pratikte farklı olabilir; yani farklı toplumsal ve tarihsel bağlamlarda insanlar tarafından hem algılanışı, hem de uygulanışı farklı olabilir. İkincisi, kadınlardan sanki bütünsel ve birörnek bir kategoriymişler gibi söz etmek yanıltıcı; çünkü kadınlar aslında sınıfsal, ırksal, ulusal, etnik ve dinsel ayrımlar içinde *bölünmüş* olarak yaşıyorlar. Ayrıca, kadınlar, erkek-egemen toplumların sınırlamaları içinde yaşamak zorunda kalmış olsalar bile, ataerkil kültür içinde kendine özgü bir kadın kültürü yaratma ve yaşatma olanağı da her zaman varolmuş. Çünkü kadınlar, tarihin "kurban"ı oldukları kadar, onun yapımına katkıda bulunan etkin özneler durumundalar. Bu anlamda, baskı ve egemenlik yapıları aynı zamanda direnmenin de odakları ve bu gerçek, din de içinde olmak üzere, herhangi bir toplumsal/tarihsel olgunun basitleştirici ve indirgemeci yorumunu geçersiz kılıyor.

Kadınların öznelliklerini, yani kendilerini ve çevrelerindeki dünyayı nasıl algıladıklarını anlama çabası ise, işi daha da karmaşıklaştırıyor. Oysa, din olgusunu ve dinin belli dönemlerde kadınlara neden çekici geldiğini anlayabilmek açısından, bu, zorunlu bir çaba;

çünkü din, belki de her şeyden daha çok, bir anlam ve anlamlandırma sistemidir. Diğer yandan, dini yaşayan insanların öznel algılamalarının ötesinde, dinin nesnel yönleri ve işlevleri de vardır: Son derece etkili bir meşrulaştırma ve şeyleştirme aracı olması; katı toplumsal cinsiyet ayrımlarının ve kalıplarının oluşturulup pekiştirilmesinde oynadığı rol; kadının bağımlılığının ve aşağı konumunun bütün tektanrılı dinlerde ortak olan ifade ediliş biçimi ve bu bağımlılığın değişmez kılınması vb.

Bu çalışma, kadınların dine yönelişlerinin nedenlerine de değinmekle birlikte, esas olarak, dinin yukarıda sözünü ettiğim nesnel anlamı ve işlevleri üzerinde odaklaşıyor, Çünkü tektanrılı dinlerin somut içeriğinde yansıyan nesnel anlamı ele alarak *-dinsel ideolojinin, farklı tarihsel/toplumsal koşullarda farklı biçimlerde eklemlenebileceğini ve dolayısıyla değişik uygulamalara yol açabileceğini* göz ardı etmeksizin- dini, bir baskı ve iktidar söylemi olarak çözümlenmek mümkün. Ayrıca, dinsel ideolojinin incelenmesi bağlamıyla sınırlı olmak kaydıyla, "kadınlar"ı bütünsel bir kategori olarak ele almanın meşruluğunu da savunmanın mümkün olduğunu düşünüyorum. Çünkü dinsel metinler bize, kadınlar arasındaki ayrımları göz ardı eden ve kadınların özgün bireyselliğini tanımayan bir "kadın" kalıbı sunarlar ve dahası, bunun kabul edilebilir tek tanım olduğunu öne sürerler.

Kadınların tektanrılı dinler karşısındaki konumunu karşılaştırmalı bir teorik yaklaşım içinde ele almaya giriştiğimizde, kaçınılmaz olarak, toplumsal cinsiyet ile toplumsal iktidar ve denetim olgusu arasındaki ilişki de gündeme geliyor. Bu bağlamda, tarihsel olarak insan bedenine -özellikle de kadın bedenine- ve bedensel varoluşa yüklenen anlamlar ve varoluşun "başlangıcı" ya da kutsal kitapların "yaratılış" adını verdikleri şey üzerinde durmak gerekir. Dolayısıyla da, insan düşüncesinin çoktanrılılıktan tektanrılılığa geçişi sürecine eşlik eden toplumsal/kültürel dönüşümün cinsiyetle rarası ilişkilere nasıl yansıdığını, cinsiyet kalıplarına nasıl bir somut içerik kazandırdığını ve bunun toplumsal iktidar ilişkileri açısından yol açtığı sonuçları ele almak zorunluluğuyla karşılaşırız.

Böyle bir yaklaşım, her üç tektanrılı dinde Tanrı'nın cinsiyetinin neden erkek olarak kavramsallaştırıldığı; bunun kadın ve erkek kimlikleri, otoritenin niteliği ve iktidar yapılarına ilişkin düşüncelerimizi nasıl etkilediği; var olan toplumlarda kadınların soyu üretme gü-

cünün neden küçümsendiği, buna karşılık ve karşıt olarak, erkeklere atfedilen "kültür ve uygarlık yaratma" özelliğinin neden yüceltildiği gibi sorulara yanıt aranması gereğini de beraberinde getirir.

Dolayısıyla bu çalışmada, yukarıdaki sorulara yanıt arayarak ve indirgemeci yorumlardan kaçınmaya çalışarak, tektanrılı dinler ile kadınların statüsü arasındaki ilişkiyi araştırmaya yöneldim. Bu a-maçla, "Giriş" bölümünde kullandığım temel kavramları ve yaklaşımı açıklamaya çalıştım; din ile toplumsal cinsiyet olgularını kavrayan bir teorik çerçeve içinde, konunun gereği olan çok bilimdallı bir yöntemin kullanıldığı ve dinsel söylemin Foucaultcu anlamda bir iktidar söylemi olarak ele alındığını vurguladım. Bunun yanı sıra, iktidar yapılarının aynı zamanda direnme odakları da olduğunu savunarak, kadınların, kendilerini denetleyen bir baskı söylemi ve pratiği olan din çerçevesinde bile, direnme olanaklarının bulunduğu dikkat çektim.

Tektanrılı dinin *genesis* koşullarına ve kendi "yaratılış" öykülerine bakıldığında, can alıcı noktanın, kadının doğurganlığı dolayısıyla varolan can verme gücünün "ideolojik" olarak elinden alınıp, tek erkek tanrıya ve onun aracılığıyla "yeryüzü erkeği"ne aktarılması olduğu görülüyor. Bu, dönüşümün kadınlar açısından belki de en önemli ve olumsuz sonucu, kadının fiziksel olarak elinden alnamayan doğurganlığının küçümsenmesi, soyu üretme yetisinin karşısına erkeklere özgü olduğu öne sürülen kültür yaratma yetisinin çıkarılması ve kadının yeni bir can yaratma özelliğine sahip bedeninin -tam da bu nedenle- kirli sayılarak lekelenmesi ve denetlenmesinin meşru görülmesi. Erkeğin üremede oynadığı rolün, "tanrının dünyayı yaratma" eyleminin fani düzlemdeki yansıması olarak görülmesi; erkek tanrı ile ölümlü erkek arasında kurulan bu bağlantı, ataerkil sistemlerde erkeğin gücünün çok önemli bir bölümünü ve temel ideolojik payandasını oluşturur. Bu nedenle, Birinci Bölüm'de, kadın doğurganlığının açık seçik olgularından uzaklaşarak can verme yetisinin tek erkek tanrının "söz" kudretine aktarılması ve onun dolayısıyla da yeryüzündeki erkeğe geçirilmesi süreci ideolojik düzlemde ele alınıyor. Bu süreç sonucunda kadın, salt bir taşıyıcıya; erkeğin canlı tohumunu barındırıp besleyen cansız toprağa indirgenir.

İkinci Bölüm'de ise, aynı sürecin toplumsal pratiğe yansıyan, kadının statüsünün düşmesi ve bağımlı kılınarak denetlenmesi boyutu

üzerinde duruluyor. Bu olgunun benzer ve ortak toplumsal/hukuksal/kültürel özelliklerini, hem ataerkil sistemin hem de üç büyük tektanrılı dinin beşiği olan Ortadoğu'nun çeşitli kültürlerinde izlemek mümkün. Dolayısıyla, karşılaştırmalı bir yaklaşım, dinsel kültürler arasındaki farklılıklar kadar, hatta onlardan daha çok, benzerlik ve süreklilikleri gündeme getiriyor ve kadınlara ilişkin anlayışların, bu benzerlik ve süreklilikler içinde en belirgin ve direngen öge olduğunu çarpıcı bir biçimde gözler önüne seriyor.

Ataerkil sistemin ortaya çıkıp kurumlaşması ve tektanrılı dinin egemen olması sürecinin bir diğer önemli boyutunu, Eski Yunan'da ruh-madde, Hıristiyanlıkta ise ruh-beden biçimini alan hiyerarşik ikiliğin derinleşmesi ve kadının bu karşıtlığın "aşağı" sayılan kut-buyula, yani beden ile özdeşleştirilerek onun bedeni üzerinde toplumsal denetim uygulanmasının meşrulaştırılması oluşturur. Üstelik bu, zaman zaman öne sürüldüğü gibi, yalnızca Batı Hıristiyan geleneğine özgü bir olgu değildir, İslami kültürde de, kadının bedenle ve bedensel arzuya özdeşleştirilerek "fitne" yaratma özelliğinin bulunduğu varsayılması, onun toplumsal olarak denetlenmesinin ve bu denetimin en somut göstergesi olan örtünmeye zorlanmasının "meşru" gerekçesini meydana getirir. Üçüncü Bölüm'de ele alınan bu konunun da karşılaştırmalı bir yaklaşımla incelenmesi, Hıristiyan ve İslami söylemler arasındaki benzerliklerin en çarpıcı olanının, gene kadınlara ilişkin anlayışlar olduğunu bir kez daha ortaya koyuyor.

Kadının ikincilliğinin doğal kabul edilerek bunun onun bedeninin denetlenmesinin meşru gerekçesi sayılması, her üç tektanrılı dinin ortak özelliği. Bu ortak özellik, tarihsel ve coğrafi olarak üç geleneğin de aşağı yukarı aynı ya da birbirine yakın topraklarda ve benzer maddi koşullarda benzer gereksinimlere yanıt olarak doğup gelişmeleriyle açıklanabilse bile, ilginç olan, *bugünkü* ifadelerinde de kadınlara ilişkin tutum ve anlayışı odak almaları. Nitekim Dördüncü Bölüm'ün konusu olan günümüzdeki Protestan ve İslamcı köktendinciliğe ilişkin çözümleme, her<sup>1</sup> iki dinsel canlanışın da kadının konumu ve denetimi üzerinde yoğunlaştığını ve köktendinciliğin, kendisini, toplumsal cinsiyet ve kadının "doğru" toplumsal rolü aracılığıyla meşrulaştırdığını sergiliyor. Karşılaştırmalı yaklaşım, bu konuda da, partikularizme ve oryantalizme düşülerek dinsel canlanışı salt İslam'a özgü bir olgu olarak görme yanılığısına engel olu-

yor ve köktendinciliğin, İslam'ın "egzotik" alanıyla sınırlı ve anlaşılmaz bir şey olmadığını görülmesine yardım ediyor. Tersine, dinsel yeniden canlanma, moderniteye karşı dünyanın her yanında karşılaşılabilen bir meydan okumanın parçası. Ancak, Protestan ve İslamcı köktendincilik arasındaki benzerliklerin ve ortak noktaların belirtilmesi, iki olgu arasındaki can alıcı bir farklılığın gözden kaçmasına da yol açmamalı. Nitekim, Dördüncü Bölüm'de ortaya koymaya çalıştığım gibi, devletin laik olduğu Amerika'da köktendinci bir harekete katılmak kadınlar açısından bir "seçim" sorunu olduğu halde; bir şeriat devleti olan İran'da, ya da devlet ile erkek müminin çıkarlarının özdeş olduğu ve bu çıkarların hem dinsel İdeoloji, hem de fiziksel güçle korunduğu herhangi bir dinsel/toplumsal çerçeve içinde kadınlara tanınan, seçme özgürlüğü değil, dinin kutsal ayılasıyla çevrelenmiş bir "kader".

Her türlü tarihsel ve toplumsal araştırma, araştırmacının içinde yaşadığı koşullardan, teorik referans çerçevesinden ve dünya görüşünden esinlenir ve etkilenir; dolayısıyla, bu anlamda ve ölçüde, her araştırma kişisel bir özellik taşır. Nitekim, beni kadınlar ile din arasındaki ilişkiyi araştırmaya yönelten nedenler, laik olmakla birlikte İslami kültürün egemen olduğu bir ülkede kadın olmanın yol açtığı varoluşsal sorunlardan ve kaygılardan kaynaklanmaktaydı. Bu sorunlar ve kaygılar, tezin öznel ve nesnel nedenlerle kapsamak durumunda kaldığı yıllar boyunca azalmak şöyle dursun, ne yazık ki daha da arttı. Aynı süreç boyunca, gerçeğin karmaşıklığının; basitleş-tıncı ve indirgemeci bakışlarla bu karmaşıklığı kavramanın olanaksızlığının; ayrıca, toplumsal olaylarda insan öznelliğinin oynadığı rolün büyüklüğünün, giderek daha çok ayırdına vardım. Bu kavrayış, özellikle kadınların kendilerini ve çevrelerindeki dünyayı nasıl algıladıklarına ve anlamlandırdıklarına ilişkin duyarlılığımın derinleşmesine de yol açtı.

Ne var ki, kadının özgürleşmesi açısından en temel ölçütün *seçme hakkının varlığı ve genişletilmesi* olduğunu düşünen bir kadın olarak, aynı süreç boyunca, dinin ne denli güçlü bir meşrulaştırma aracı olduğunu, kadınları tek bir "kadınlık" kalıbı içine hapsederek bağımlılıklarını içselleştirmelerinde ne denli etkili olduğunu da giderek daha fazla kavradım. Bu bağlamda, özgürleşme ve kendini gerçekleştirme çabası içindeki bütün kadınların ve erkeklerin, bir ideoloji olarak tektanrîh dinlerin insan yaşamını sınırlandırma in-

sanı kendisine yabancılaştırma ve verili düzeni koruma işlevleri üzerinde düşünme; bu dinlerin dayattıkları toplumsal cinsiyet kalıplarını ve eşitsiz cinsiyet ilişkilerini sorgulama; kısacası, din olgusuyla bir hesaplaşma gereksinmesiyle yüz yüze olduklarını düşünüyorum. Bu nedenle, "Sonuç" bölümünde, "Giriş"te değindiğim bazı kavramlara geri dönerek, din içinden direnmenin mümkün ve değerli olduğunu teslim etmekle birlikte, dinin değişmez tanımlar koyan sınırlandırıcı etkisinden kurtularak "kendi adımızı kendimiz koymamız" ve bilgi ağacının yasak meyvesine olduğu kadar, "ad koyma kudreti"ne de sahip çıkmamız gerektiğim savunuyorum.

Başta, çok geç bir aşamada tez danışmanlığımı kabul etme nezaketini gösteren Prof. Dr. Mehmet Ali Ağaoğulları olmak üzere, bu çalışmanın ortaya çıkabilmesinde teşekkür borçlu olduğum çok kişi var. Prof. Dr. Necla Arat, son üç yıl boyunca, bu tezin biteceğine olan inancını yitirmeyerek sabırlı desteğini esirgemedi ve yazdıklarımı okuyarak görüş ve eleştirilerinden yararlanmamı sağladı. Kendisine çok teşekkür ediyorum. Ailem ve arkadaşlarım da, bıkmadan bana destek oldular ve hep yüreklendirdiler; kızım Aslıgül, üzerim-, deki en etkili disiplin aracı olan "hâlâ mı bitmedi, anne!" cümlesini yılmadan tekrarladı ve bana sonsuz sayıda kahve pişirdi; sevgili kardeşim Dr. Ali Tanör, ve Andreas Kremer, birçok gece uykusuz kalmayı göze alarak tezin yazım ve düzeltim işleriyle uğraştılar. Hepsine içtenlikle teşekkür ederim. Ancak, en büyük borcumun, bana en değerli şey saydığım başını dik tutma ve boyun eğmeyip direnme ruhunu miras bırakan rahmetli anneannem Melek Gökmen'e ve onun kuşamının kadınlara karşı olduğunu düşünüyorum/Osmanlı imparatorluğumun seri düzeni içinde yetişip Kurtuluş Savaşı'nın acıları ve altüst oluşları içinden geçerek, Cumhuriyetin ilk cesur kadın kuşağını oluşturan ve peçelerini açıp yüzlerini gün ışığına çevirmeye, erkek egemenliğinin en belirgin simgesi olan çarşaflarını çıkarmaya ve yaşamlarını değiştirmeye cesaret eden ve bu arada kızlarının ve onların kızlarının kendilerine daha özgür bir gelecek çizmelerine destek veren o kadınlar kuşağı olmasaydı, bu tez yazılamazdı.

# RELIGION, WOMEN AND RESISTANCE

## A General Framework

Studying the relationship between religion as a socio-historical reality and the position of women, we find this relationship often to be clear and direct but sometimes full of tension and contradictions. Religion in various societies exists in harmony with the specific characteristics of that society, although at times affecting change in some of these characteristics. Therefore, whatever religion is in question, it is valid to claim that no religious dogma remains as pure as it was originally and that it varies according to the different characteristics based on the material conditions of that society. Thus, again, whatever religion we are dealing with, when we study the position and status of women in any religious community, we have to take into account not only the specificities of religious dogma but also all manner of economic, social, political and cultural conditions.

A large and varied body of literature exists relating to the indicators of women's status and the question of her equality, yet it may be worthwhile to state some generally accepted definitions. For example, whatever the social system or the level of development, women's status vis-a-vis the public and the private domain are defined by (a) the power and authority of the women, and (b) the accepted roles of women in that society. Women's equality with men is measured according to the comparison with men of (a) women's ability to have power and authority, and (b) the parameters of social activity and roles accepted as suitable to (and allowed for) the two sexes. In any society it is accepted that "the status of

women presents a coherent and cohesive structure that integrates all the elements of the ideological, familial, social, and economic roles and permissible and impermissible activity areas of social relationships." Amal Rassam's definition, however, presents the same approach a little differently in claiming that women's status must be defined by these three dimensions: (a) the social organization of power, (b) the characteristics of the ideological and institutional agents controlling women's bodies, and (c) division of labor according to gender and gender roles. This definition is especially significant because it clarifies the relationship between the status of women and religion as one of the most effective ideological and institutional means for controlling women's bodies.

Today, many of the situations women resist and have to fight against are related to gender, or in other words, cultural and social prejudices and stereotypes about male and female roles and identity. These socially defined male and female identities and images are very significant in terms of women's existence. These images are the product as well as part of traditions shaped through centuries by religion and culture. Even people who do not consider themselves religious accept these images and use them in their thoughts to "construct" themselves. Religion, especially monotheistic religion, plays a defining role in the construction of these identities and images and their acceptance and internalization, because religion preaches these images as absolute and unchangeable, in a word, "sacred." The religious approach that divides humanity into two separate identities biologically, physically and spiritually is the symbolic expression of the "absolute order" that God, and Nature as God's creation, have brought to a world full of ambiguities and uncertainties.

The religious world view outgrows the boundaries of the faithful and joins the mainstream culture, deeply affecting the conscience and daily lives of all, including unbelievers. Even when a distinction is made between the material and the spiritual realms, these two are closely related and there is a continuous symbolic interchange between them. The values and images, the stories or mythologies it tells us about reality, the conceptualization of the spiritual realm, and all the related imagined constructs are closely linked to the roles, status and images of the women living in that culture. In this connection, it may be claimed that religion plays a homogenizing role for the ideologies and practices which comprise women, family and gender relations. It is in this context that one can refer to "Woman in Christianity" as well as to "Woman in Islam."

The traditions of a culture are its forms of expression, processes of the construction of meaning and image and thus an ordered universe, a cosmos. Moreover, the "conception" of an ordered universe is based on relationships of

society, class and gender. The world view or "edios" of a culture, contains images of women and diese play a significant role in shaping die conceptualization of women for die whole culture. Most of diese images are of religious origin and are mosdy constructed not by women diemselves, but by men. In this context, it is very difficult for women to construct dieir identities inde-pendendy, in short, *to name and define themselves*. There is a close relationship between this reality and both die establishment of patriarchy and die rise and institutionalization of monodieistic religions.

Women internalize the "images of women" constructed by die dominant culture; therefore, in their way forward, they need to struggle not only against pressures and obstructions from die outside but also against definitions of die dominant culture that diey carry within themselves. Moreover, diese dominant images and stereotypes continue to exist even after social change has achieved palpable and concrete aims, because diey have penetrated die deepest nooks and crannies of our consciousness and have more profoundly affected our identities dian we have ever been able to realize. Changing these cultural patterns often requires the creation of alternative patterns. At this point, religion looms against women's efforts as the greatest impediment since it is one of the strongest sources of image construction and one of die most effective means of legitimation (dius of internalization).

When women embark on die padi to self-definition and self-determination diey inevitably will have to deal widi and eventually get rid of die images of "Cursed Eve" or 'Woman as Source of Fitna.'" Achieving diis requires a coming to terms with die all-pervasive gender stereotyping of die culture and of monodieistic religions. Then, understanding die nature and function of religion is perhaps most important, especially for women.

### Religion: An Effective Agent Of Legitimation

Religion in general, may be defined as a system of faidi and practice relating to a sacred world. Sociological analyses of religion and secularization in the 20di century owe a great deal to Eniife Durkheim and Max V^feber. Weber describes the human being as a "meaning-seeking animal," and Durkheim as a "community-building animal." But these two perspectives, the first of which stresses the meaning function of religion and die second, religion as community (and, conversely, community as religion), do not necessarily exclude one anotiier.

For Durkheim, religion has its source in man's perception of power outside himself, bodi constraining him and providing him with support This

"power," in fact, is the power of society. Religion, then, is society's consciousness of itself. Religious ideas, in this context, are collective ideas representing collective realities, and are based on a division of the world into the sacred and the profane; hence, religious rites are manifestations of the integrated nature of *the group*. Here, it should be noted that this approach does not take into account the internal division and structuration of societies, collectives around difference, inequality, and relations of subordination and domination. According to the Weberian position, on the other hand, religion as a meaning system is an explanation of what the world is all about. Clifford Geertz, following Weber, holds that religion is a cultural system, that is, a system of meaning and explanation by which people order and interpret their lives: "Man turns to his religious symbols not merely to provide him with interpretation but also to help him cope with the critical question of interpretability."

But the perception and interpretation of symbols in general are socially and historically determined. Thus, when religion, which also incorporates the "supra-real" or the sacred element in human life, claims not only to describe the ultimate nature of reality but also to be able to tell people how they must live in order that they might be in harmony with that ultimate reality, a tension arises between "giving meaning" in the sense of explaining and "giving order" in the sense of moral certainty.

Religion, with its claim to divine and eternal truth, inevitably leads to a situation where socially and historically determined interpretations of reality harden into fixed and unchangeable prescriptions and practices. Serif Mardin defines religion as "one of the intellectual constructs that provides the mechanism for the perpetuation of a society" and one that insures the structure of the society remain unchanged. Or as Nicholas Abercrombie puts it, religion has been, historically, "the most obviously successful symbolic universe" in that its symbolism is typically far-removed from the realities of everyday experience. Hence, it is able to provide a peculiarly all-embracing framework of legitimation:

Religion is an effective agency of legitimation because it creates an ordered and total world in which all experience has a meaningful place. Religion makes the world seem an objective fact independent of man's volition. However, the more effective it is in this function, the more alienating a force it becomes, for plainly the more autonomous and coercive a religiously legitimated world is, the more man is unable to conceive of his role in creating and maintaining that world. Thus religion is a powerful force for reification.

Of course, it is not only religion that alienates and reifies as it legitimates. Any legitimation agent, insofar as it provides a total and objective canopy of meaning, will do the same. This is perhaps why the French philosopher Michel Foucault is deeply suspicious of "global," "totalizing" theories, and wishes to stay close to the local, the lived experience, the historical. According to Foucault, history is a morphology of knowledge/power, which opens up new perspectives for a new kind of social history:

Foucault is an historian of discourse above all else. He argues for the power effects of knowledge rather than its truth value. He is acutely aware of the way discourse shapes practice, the way knowledge is a material force in history. In this context, monotheistic religions as discourses of knowledge/power and also as sources of symbolic meaning have been effective factors in the subordination of women and their acceptance and internalization of imposed (hierarchical) definitions.

### The Ideal And The Real

At this point we have to deal with the relationship between ideas and social reality. This relationship which is here situated within the context of the close ties between the birth of patriarchal system and the rise of monotheistic religion has aroused a debate and controversy that reaches far back. According to one contending proposition, ideas govern the world; it is they which shape social realities in the first place. The major religions or political ideologies that seem to have shaped people in their own image are cited as examples. The second proposition, on the other hand, contends that a society cannot be reduced to the ideas its members may develop about it. It exists independently of ideas about realities, first among these being material realities and the social relations which organize them.

The relation between ideas and social reality is obviously a dialectical one; the matrix of any idea is reality. Ideologies and ideas spring from social realities; but in turn, they set the limits of behaviour and *define* the meaning of experience, and in a hierarchical world assume material force as discourses of power. While Foucault refuses to divide ideas and action into separate realms and traces the emergence of different patterns of discourse/practice without privileging any, Maurice Godelier probes deeper into a theoretical understanding of the question.

According to Godelier, any social relation whatsoever contains *within itself* an *ideal* element, an element of thought, or representations that are not

merely the form that this relation assumes in our consciousness, but are a part of its content. These representations appear to be an integral part of social relations as soon as the latter begin to take shape, and they are *one* of the conditions of their formation. Ideas are not, here, an "instance" separate from social relations. But Godelier points out that "while there is an element *oiideel* any-where, this in no way implies that everything that is socially real is *ideel*." Godelier's notion that any social relation necessarily contains an element of thought which is not necessarily either "illusory" or "legitimizing," and which forms part of this relation from the moment of its formation, is, I think, crucial for a deeper understanding of religion as a form of ideology

Thus, following Godelier, we may straightaway turn down the narrow 18th century European Enlightenment notion that religion was just a pack of lies invented by priests—who never believed a word of it—in order to deceive the ignorant people and to bend them to their domination. "By definition," says Godelier, "a myth is only a 'myth' for those who do not believe in it, and the first to believe in it are those who 'invent' them." likewise, theories of religion which treat some religious beliefs as part of the dominant ideology of a society, and which argue that the principal function of such an ideology is to provide "social opium" for the oppressed classes which thereby diminishes their "revolutionary potential," are reductionist, and are always somewhat off the mark historically. For there are instances, particularly in times of social and economic change, where religion has played a creative and even revolutionary role.

Furthermore, those theories that regard religion as "social cement" which binds together members of societies as well as the social obligations that help to unite them, may also be one-sided. As many auditors have pointed out, religion functions ambivalently as a social integrator. Although it seems to play a social role as an integrative, cohesive and even conservative force, at times it can also tear a society apart. The very fact that religion powerfully binds together its own group of worshippers, means that if a religion is not shared by all or most members of a given society, it may be sharply divisive and even a destructive force. In a society where different religions exist, religious conflict can be dysfunctional for social unity.

Bryan Turner argues that it is often difficult to distinguish between the Durkheimian conception of religion as "social cement," and the vulgar interpretations of the Marxist metaphor about religion as "social opium":

Despite their very different assumptions and approaches, the idea that, through ritual, religion integrates the social group by reaffirming common values, has the same analytical status as the idea that religious ideologies unite divergent social classes behind the gar-

ment of religious institutions and beliefs. Both types of theory are faced with the perennial difficulty of explaining the existence of conflict, opposition and revolt within societies which apparently have dominant ideologies. Here, Godelier's question becomes relevant: how to account for the fact that in a given society and at a given moment in time, ideas held to be true by the majority of a society's members can come to be considered as false by various minorities? Or, to put it in another way, how is it possible to raise a "principle of hope" against the existing order? According to Godelier, this hope resides in the "contradictions that break beyond the bounds of thought and lie within the functioning itself of social relations among men in this society and with the nature surrounding them." Utopias, for example, as representations of the "principle of hope," are distinguished not only by the fact that the content of the ideas in question is different, but also in that they entail a different relationship with the existing social order, "a relationship that is born of contradictions entailed by the functioning of this order."

Hence, remaining within Foucault's analytical framework, it seems that a distinction can be drawn between discourses whose powers strengthen existing modes of domination, and those that work to undo them, because the very mode of domination gives rise to contradictions which in turn open the way to "the creative response of the oppressed to their conditions of life. Furthermore an analysis of specific instances of power and domination such as those suggested by Foucault render these (instances of power and domination) intelligible so that they may be better resisted. Such a theoretical framework, I think, enables us to understand the oppressive and constricting quality of dominant ideology as well as the presence of resistance to it. Thus the importance of a comparative analysis of power and domination that studies every such discourse/practice in its own specificity becomes obvious.

#### Social Control, Body And Religion

Bryan Turner, drawing on the insights of Engels, Durkheim and Weber, and following Foucault closely, offers a "materialist conception of religion." According to Turner, a materialist perspective on religion, far from treating religious beliefs and practices as inconsequential and trivial, situates religion in the experience of physical and psychological reality. As such, materialism is perfectly in tune with the physicality of the Christian tradition, and by extension with the Abrahamic roots of Islam and Judaism. Following Foucault, Turner is primarily concerned

with "the body of individuals and the body of populations," that is, with the role of religion in the production of societies and the reproduction of individuals.

Turner, without negating the traditional theme that one of the functions of religion is achieving social control (and social integration), offers a new perspective through an examination of the body in society. The etymology of "religion"—from *religio*, an obligation or bond—points to its social functions of discipline and bondage, and Turner, now following Durkheim, suggests that religion may be defined as a set of beliefs and practices relating to the sacred which create social bonds between individuals. This definition also implies the Weberian notion that religious behaviour is ultimately directed towards the existential problems of humanity, and is oriented to *this* world. Thus, Turner suggests that the discipline of bodies in Western Christian societies has been directed at the material conservation of economic and political power; according to him, the historical and sociological importance of religion as fundamental to human life can only be grasped through an analysis of the relationship between religion, the body, family, and property.

Turner's grounding of the problem of religion in the accumulation of wealth (property) via the organization of sexuality as a bodily phenomenon opens the way for a discussion of religion that takes into account the concepts of patriarchy and gender, for "the two features of this world which are crucial for the social functions of religion are the control of property through the family and the organization of bodies in social space."

In Western societies, the Christian religion has been, historically, the principal means for the control of women's bodies; hence, the movement for female emancipation was also a struggle against religious conceptualizations of sexuality. Turner points out that in Catholic Europe, the Church is still seen as an important part of that public apparatus by which women are allocated to subordinate social positions. The struggle against female domestication, in Italy for example, involves a struggle against Catholic teaching on marriage, reproduction and divorce. Of course, it is not only Catholicism that has sought to control women's bodies and reproductive capacities; the Protestant tradition has also played an important role in this regard. It is no mere coincidence that the political struggle to change the position of women in society should have come to involve, essentially, an attempt by women to gain control of their own bodies. As Turner points out, this has required a double confrontation with medicine and with religion, the two main discourses which have sought to define women and their role in society.

Islam, as a prophetic, monotheistic religion, has had very close ties historically and theologically with Christianity, and the relationship between

sexuality, community and religion can be traced equally well in die Islamic tradition. According to Tunisian scholar A Bouhdiba,

.. .one function of sexuality resides in its ability to unite individuals to the community.. .Sexual life is unifying and the Islamic *umma* rests.. .on the genetic life. The total, social unity of men is a resultant of sexual dynamism. And conversely, die community of the *umma* also imposes its own requirements, its own tendencies, on die individual s drives. In Islam, the sexual function is in itself a sacred function. It is one of those signs (*aya*) by which die power of God may be recognized. To accept one's sex is to accept being witness to Allah. Hence it is only "natural" that the Koran should give special attention to regulating sexuality. And given that the revelation and preaching of the holy texts (both the Bible and the Koran) took place not widiin a vacuum but within very specific socio-histori-cal contexts which have been patriarchal, it is not surprising that the regulation of sexuality has generally meant the control of women's bodies and of their sexuality. The holy texts, as far as diey are human, social, constructs, are perhaps the most influential and pervasive factors in constructing, reinforcing and promoting certain gender roles and dichotomies. Aldiough particularly in die West, the process of secularization has involved a transfer of norms of religious disciplinary practice into the secular regulative practices whereby they are subjected to bureaucratic control and scientific measurement, one can nevertheless argue diat diey have become common-sensical knowledge backed by divine audiority, and diat diey also involve a moral discourse revolving around family and sexuality: as such, they constitute a strong ideological weapon, a discourse that entrenches existing power and gender relations. This is especially true of die various forms of Fundamentalism, all of which argue for a return to die scriptures: "Fundamentalism tends to represent the holy texts as timeless, out-of-time and so valid for all time. By asserting the eternal verities of scripture it im-plies an ahistorical world-view."

#### Common Characteristics Of Monotheistic Religions

The birth of monodieistic religion is related to a specific historical and sociological "moment"; thus all three versions of monotheism exhibit common characteristics. Without dismissing die differences among them and the specificities of each, these common characteristics, through interaction with die birth and institutionalization of die patriarchal system, have come to manifest themselves as die demand for the absolute hierarchical division

of men and women into gender roles, sanctifying the patriarchal family with male dominance over women and die legitimating and legalizing of the control over women's bodies.

The norms monotheistic religions preach concerning die "nature," status and roles of women take as dieir basis the values of patriarchal hierarchical society that gave rise to diem and diat they in turn legitimated. In the course of historical development the patriarchal system emerged in ancient Mesopotamia and as it strengthened its hold as die dominant system, it institutionalized die right of men to control women, especially their bodies, and to avail themselves of die "function" and service of women for reproduction and sexuality. After die patriarchal system was legitimated as die functional system of complex hierarchical relations, it effected a change in all social, economic and sexual relations and came to dominate all thought, paving the way to die acceptance of a series of prejudices relating to sexual roles and identity.

According to die historian Gerda Lerner, die patriarchal prejudices and hypodiseses may be summarized as follows: Men and women are different not only biologically, but also in terms of their needs, capabilities and functions. God is understood to have created men and women differendy and dius dieir social functions are different Men "by nature" are physically stronger and more logical; therefore diey were created to control and to be die dominating sex. It is assumed diat men are die "political sex" and tius better suited to govern. Women, on die odier hand, "by nature" are weaker as well as inferior in dieir logical and rational qualities. Unbalanced emotionally, they are diere-fore disqualified from political participation by their unreliability.

Men owing to their rational mental qualities can interpret and order the world. Women because of dieir reproductive and nurturing capabilities take on die perpetuation of die species and of daily life. Even diough bodi functions are considered important, men's function is thought to be superior. In other words, while men are busy with transcendent activities, women, like die lower classes of bodi sexes are busy widi immanent activities. Or, to put it in anpdier way, while men produce immortal cultural products, women reproducing only mortal beings are considered inferior to men.

Men have die right to control women's sexuality and reproductive capabilities. It is out of die question for women to have such a right Men are subjects thiat mediate between God and human beings; women can reach God only through the mediation of men.

These unproven and unprovable hypodiseses are neidier natural law nor social law, but often diey have been considered as such and included among

man-made laws. Moreover, the sacred texts of monotheistic religions have integrated them into their dogma, giving them divine qualities and permanence.

#### A New Theoretical Approach, A New Research Method

The fluctuations in the functioning and popularity of these patriarchal hypotheses, on different levels and in different forms and different degrees in various periods of history, in practice define the changes in the condition and status of women in a specific society at a specific time. Therefore it is necessary for a researcher trying to understand women's position in any society to observe developments in the perception of gender.

Today, "woman" is the focus of study and research as never before. In every field of social change, gender is being used as an analytical category. In other words, all social and economic problems, all areas of development and progress are also being evaluated in terms of women's participation and its effects on society. In the field of academic research, especially in the humanities and the social sciences, gender as an analytical category has not only affected the consequences of research but has also brought about a change in the questions asked and the methods used. The feminist analytical method, which allows gender to be used as one of the categories among class, race, ethnicity and nationality, ensures that the results are more realistic and more encompassing. Another function of the concept of gender is to prevent the study of women as a single category—"woman"—by allowing for women's fragmented existence along lines of race, class and nationality, and also by including studies of men's condition and the comparative positions of men and women within relations between them. Such a comparative and comprehensive approach requires the study to proceed from many angles and various perspectives. Hence, these are the concerns which make gender research go beyond the theoretical boundaries of various disciplines and employ a multi-disciplinary method.

A comparative framework ensures the acknowledgement of the differences and similarities among cultures. Otherwise, as shall be noted in the course of this study, it is difficult not to be confined by particularism and take as absolute the differences in form and degree. Similarities among cultures are equally significant as differences, and the cultural relativist who is blind to this fact prevents the possibility of reaching a dialogue among cultures and finding universal values. Let us not forget that "it is precisely in inter-cultural dialogue that we become most clearly aware of our own categories of thought"

### Woman: Victim Or Historical Subject?

As noted previously, religion in general and fundamentalism in particular tend to present gender roles and relations as the ultimate reality and hence unchangeable. But, as Gerda Lerner writes, "the law sets the norms for 'desirable' (ideal in its own conceptual framework) conduct, which usually does not represent actual conditions." Thus, women have often found ways of expressing themselves and acting within and through the seemingly rigid confines of religion. Despite living in a world defined and dominated by men, they have also shaped and influenced that world. In fact, before women reached the consciousness necessary for finding political solutions to their problems, religion was *the* arena of Western culture where they sought their independence. Initially, women had to struggle against patriarchal hypotheses that branded them "inferior" and prove that they were human beings inferior in no way to anyone. This struggle was mostly directed against religious beliefs as the strongest carrier of patriarchal definitions. It is not women's fault that these struggles and efforts at redefinition rarely appear in historical writing. The field of history today, however, accepts that in the past the dominating historical discourse largely omitted women and made them "invisible." In a Foucauldian approach this question of women's invisibility becomes a question of power: Women, as a continuation of their subordinate position, are denied status as historical actors, and the historical discourse that denies women visibility also perpetuates their subordination and their image as passive recipients of others' acts.

The notion of women as (only) victims and historical objects obscures the role of women as subjects affecting history and maintains the power of the male-dominated historical discourse. This saddles the feminist historian with the task of testing the possibility of a female culture existing within the dominant patriarchal culture in each specific instance.

Writing women into history, making their contribution to history visible, requires a search for new analytical categories as well as a profound critique and transformation of existing concepts and practices that go beyond specific disciplines.

### The Discrepancy Between The Real And The Ideal: The Source Of Resistance

When we follow Weber in accepting that religion is a system of meaning valid for the present, we are faced *with*, the problem of meaning. To pursue meaning, we need to deal with the individual *subject* as well as with social

organization, or "mode of domination," and to articulate the nature of their interrelationships, because both are crucial to understanding how gender works and how change occurs. Or, in other words, we have to study both the "social power" and the "resisting subject" as well as the relation between them, keeping in mind that social power is not unified, coherent and centralized, but that it consists of "dispersed constellations of unequal relationships, discursively constituted in 'social fields of force.'" Such an understanding of power is crucial if dichotomies such as public-private, political-personal, objective-subjective are to be rejected, and if the need to integrate theory and practice is to be stressed.

Studying power relations in each specific case, historically and culturally, begs for a theory that takes differences, the lived experience of different groups of people (in this case, women), into account, and which, while studying the oppression of women, also makes room for the possibility of a counter-culture and of resistance. One may even argue that women themselves are better situated to search for "modes of resistance" because of their peripheral or marginal position in society.

Mary Douglas, who distinguishes between the main morality and the peripheral cults within a society, argues, that, unlike those who have internalized the prevailing classifications of society and who accept its pressures as aids to realizing the meanings those classifications proffer, people who are peripheral to the central focus of power and authority are pinned only weakly into the central structure of the society they live in. It is this lack of strong central articulation that provides people with the ability to criticize the existing order, and leads them to seek alternative, Utopian forms of expression: "This is how the fringes of society express their marginality." In relation to the established authority, this area of the social structure is the wilderness from which new ideas emerge. Women, along with the oppressed classes, or, to use Douglas's formulation, "any in a state of subjection," constitute the category of the peripheral, and reside in a margin where the possibility of questioning the existing order may take shape, where the "principle of hope" may be raised: "All margins are dangerous... Margins are where any draught system is weakest"

This situation explains how women who live on the margins of a male-dominated society and culture—in a way both inside and outside—can go beyond these boundaries of the traditional consciousness that keeps them oppressed and can attempt to define themselves. Feminist historian Joan Kelly (in keeping with Godelier, who finds the possibility for resistance in the contradictions of the system "that break beyond the bounds of thought") argues

that feminist theory as an oppositional/utopian alternative develops from the marginality of women. Or in other words, from the "discrepancy between the real and the ideal" that those living on the margins of the dominant culture experience.

like the slave in Hegel's famous metaphor, woman experiences an "unhappy consciousness," a form of alienation that makes her at once a participant in the culture that oppresses her, and a stranger to it. She is in an uncomfortably paradoxical situation—she is marginal. Out of this marginality arises the possibility of existential awareness of her situation, and of naming, and opposing, it. And it is this perspective that has paved the way for feminist theory, which again according to Kelly, has emerged at points in history when women living "on the boundary" of male society and culture have pushed beyond traditional consciousness and have engaged in active struggle. Hence, we can say, with Foucault, that the analysis of domination paves the way for resistance.