

In the Name of Almighty

EUROCENTRISM AND ISLAMOPHOBIA

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“They wish to extinguish the light of God by uttering blasphemies; but God will not have it so, for He wills to perfect His light, however the unbelievers be averse.”

(Al-Taubah., verse: 32)

Eurocentrism has formed the basis for a trend of thought that believes that human civilization is fundamentally built upon the domain of Rome, Paris and Athens, and the blossoming of human society, is indebted to European thinking.

Eurocentrism is a culturalist phenomenon in the sense that it assumes the existence of irreducibly distinct cultural invariants that shape the historical paths of different peoples. Eurocentrism is therefore anti-universalist, since it is not interested in seeking possible general laws of human evolution. But it does present itself as universalist, for it claims that imitation of the Western model by all peoples is the only solution to the challenges of our time.

Eurocentrism is a specifically modern phenomenon, the roots of which go back only to the Renaissance, a phenomenon that did not flourish until the nineteenth century. In this sense, it constitutes one dimension of the culture and ideology of the modern capitalist world.

Eurocentrism refers to an essential dimension of the capitalist ideology, its manifestations would be characteristic of the common dominant attitudes of all of the societies in the developed capitalist world, the centre of the world capitalist system (Amin, 1989).

This view sees all the creations, phenomena, innovations, and the 'General Thinking' theories in the branch variety of sciences as being European. Inside such an atmosphere, the great human civilizations, which have ancient historical track records, are overwhelmingly neglected and forgotten.

The great non-European theoreticians, and scientists are constitutionally not mentioned. Specifically, Muslim theoreticians were suppressed along the way, and kept under cruel oppression. Giants like Ibn Al-Khaldoon in social sciences and sociology; Kharazmi and Ibn Hathim, in mathematics, Mohammad Ibn Zakaria-e Razi in medicine, mathematics, astronomy, and many other sages, who have been the shining stars, in the universe of knowledge and science, ... They are the historical pioneers, and have scientific superiority over many Europeans. Their thinking has consistently not been referred to along the evolution of experimental sciences and humanities, or if it has it is on the whole faintly coloured.

In reality, Eurocentrism is founded upon a racialistic view point, accompanied by a kind of hallucinated phobia of crediting the mindful-thinkers in the Islamic world. Hence, in one glance, Eurocentrism is rooted in the phobia of Islam, and the work of Muslims.

Therefore, the only thing they project as a picture of Muslims is a phobic picture. Indeed, This phobia is the reflection of the phobia of the power of Islam.

Examples of some of the consequence of Eurocentrism which needs elaboration and exploration in more detail, are the flow of Information (Tunstall, 1977 and Varis, 1985), Media and Cultural Imperialism (Boyd-Barrett, 1977, Lee, 1980 and Tomlinson), Cultural Dependency (Fox, 1992), standardization of political, cultural, social and economical structure of society based on Western pattern (Schiller, 1976) monopolization of academic and informational services and fragmentation of independent identities.

My effort in this lecture, is to rest on three historical samples. Namely, parts from Islamic thinking of Ibn Khaldun, Umar Khayyam and Mohammad Ibn Zakaria-e Razi, and to analyze this current of ostracizing Muslim thinkers, in the expression of scientific theories. Focusing on Islamic studies, its intensity and capacity, over the last two decades in the west, is another sign of this 'phobia-centrism', which is supporting scientific trends, in the west.

Also in this article, there will be an analysis of the scientific and postgraduate studies that have been researched, over the last decades, in American, British and other European universities which can illustrate the direction and interest of Islamic studies in Western universities.

Ibn Khaldun

Ibn Khaldun's work is one of the hallmarks in the history of social thought. When his intellectual legacy was rediscovered in modern times, his famous work the *Muqaddimah* was soon translated into many languages. Savants and students from different scientific backgrounds approached the *Muqaddimah* and found it remarkable in terms of the organisation of the book, the topics Ibn Khaldun had discussed, the language he had used to explain social events and the new theories he had created (Jamshidiha, 1997).

There is no doubt that Ibn Khaldun as a social thinker was the founder of Historical Sociology, and Urban Sociology as well as being a very important theorist in the Sociology of Revolution. Nevertheless, he was not considered as a sociologist or a social thinker in the social theories of western scholars. This is due to the general trend of marginalizing non-European Scholars.

Some of Ibn Khaldun's commentators have ranked the *Muqaddimah* among the books of history (Lacoste, 1984), or claimed that the main theme of the *Muqaddimah* was the analysis of historical reports (Tabatabaei, 1995).

Umar Khayyam as a Philosopher and Scientist

There is no figure in the history of Persian literature and in fact of Persian and Islamic thought in general who is so famous in the West, and yet remains so unknown as far as the totality of his thought is concerned as Umar Khayyam.

Khayyam wrote little, yet what he did write is of great significance. His some dozen surviving treatises include not only the most important work on Algebra before the modern period, and the famous study of the Euclidean axiom according to which from a single point only one line can be drawn parallel to another line, ..but also his work on

devising the Jalali Calendar which is used in Persia to this day, and which is more accurate than the Gregorian Calendar (Nasr, 1996: 175)

Mohammad Ibn Zakaria-e Razi

Mohammad Ibn Zakaria-e Razi, a philosopher and a grand physician of Islamic World, was born in the city of Ray (in Iran), in 865 A.D. Razi has written One Hundred and Eighty-Four books and articles, in several fields of science, such as Medicine, Chemistry, Philosophy, Logic, Mathematics, Astronomy and Divinity. He became the most distinguished scientific figure of his period. His books and articles are named by Ibn Abi Asi`boed, and number up to Two-Hundred-and-Thirty-Five. This grand scientist of the 9th century CE, had Fifty-Six writings on various subjects in medicine alone. He is counted as

one of the most famous critics of Galena's works, the founder of experimental medicine. His book of *Jaame ul-Kabir* (The Large Comprehensive), which is known as *Haamy* (The Embody), embodies the most important, and advanced chapters of his works. Indeed it is credited as a Medical Encyclopedia. According to Razi's own words, this book is the product of Fifteen years of effort, during night and day. The book of 'Haawy' was translated to Latin, in 1279 (A.D), by Faraj Ibn Salem (Farragot), on the request of King Charle Enjo of Sisily, under the name of "Continens". The first publication of 'Haawy' in Latin was made in 1486 (A.D), in the city of Brescia, and then was re-published in, 1505, 1506, 1509, 1542 (A.D), in Venice. 'Haawy' was one of the nine books that formed the Medical department's library of the University of Paris, in 1395 (A.D). The ninth book of *Haamy*, which is specifically on discussion about 'The Knowledge of Various Medicines', was one of the resources of pharmacology, in Europe, ..even for a long time, after the scientific renewal period (Renaissance). His writings on Mathematics and Astronomy are also innovative, and they stand out. His composition with regard to The Earth's sphericity, and The Earth's rotation about its axis, and also in regard to Astronomical science, in the period, when the Ptolemaic theory was dominant, is another distinguished treatise of Razi at source.

In Philosophy, on consideration of Ancient Philosophy, he has expressions and criticism on the views of the apologists, specifically a critic of the 'Mo`tadhelah' (Schismatics) point of view. Furthermore, he has considerations and criticism on Greek philosophers, Aristotle and Plato. Finally, he has expressed innovative and projecting views, on Divinity and Metaphysics.

In these short words, the insight and the theoretical views of Razi can not be emphasized in depth. In termination, the attending subject, is the exposition of the 'Gigantic Minds' of Muslim scientists, in the arena of knowledge and science, ...that have been totally ostracised in the west. Not only is there no mention of Muslims as 'sages', but also consistently, Muslims are portrayed with poverty, inability, backwardness, race discrimination, controversial with human rights and rights of women. On all these accounts, they pass judgement in oppression. This aggressive state towards Muslims, ...has of course, a particular psychology, which indeed is a kind of hallucinated justification of the defeat made by the opponent, on 'the perceived thought'. In other words, when the opponent appears to be strong in the universe of 'contemplation', and they do not find a logical perception, they engage in conspiring, and labelling, in order to compensate this hallucinated "Phobia" (Mohaghegh, 1989).

A Brief Study on The Ph.D. Theses of Universities In The West

From 1915 to 1996 (A.D) the number of Ph.D. theses, the subjects of which have been related to Islam, number Nine-Hundred-and-Forty-Nine, researched and studied in the Universities of Northern America, Canada, and some European Universities. The first Ph.D. thesis is researched by Ms. Kate Chambers, entitled, 'Muslim Schism and Sects, Al-Fark Bain Al-Fark, Being the History of the Various Philosophic Systems Developed in Islam, By Abu-Masur Abd-Akahir,' she graduated from the University of Colombia in America. The start of researched works around Islam, on ethnographical studies, by an American student, in it self states the scientific viewing angle of universities in the west, towards Islam. The next thesis is researched in 1927 (A.D), ..by another American student, named M. Thorston, under the title of, 'The Religious History of Islam in India.'

The way Islamic thinking and Muslims are viewed in both of these theses, the search for having a planning view, over the cultural, social and political structures of the Muslim community, is all due to the present situation, as well as having a historically rooted view. As you can see in figure 1 the focal concentration point of these studies rests on seven basic domains:

In the collection of the Nine-Hundred-and-Forty-Nine theses, Three-Hundred-and-Four researches are devoted to the study of the sociological aspect of the Muslim community. After which the most endeavour is put on the analysis of the historical roots of the thinking, the ideology, the culture, sectional differences, social characteristics of the Muslims in various countries such as, Iran, Indonesia, Pakistan, India, Afghanistan, Iraq, Algeria, Malaysia, Egypt, Senegal, Yemen, Turkey, Kuwait, Syria and Jordan. One-Hundred-and-Six Ph.D. theses have been written up along this domain.

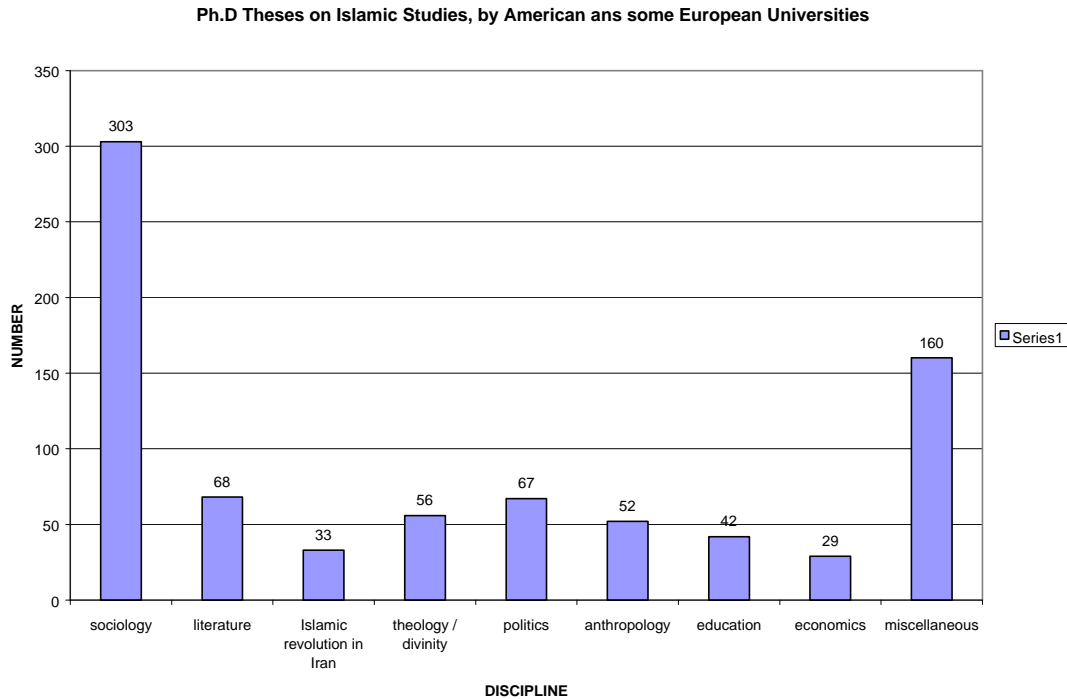
The next subject, is Literature, that exposes an important part of the national and religious culture of the Muslim community. [This] ..has been attended by the researchers and students of the Ph.D. courses. In this respect, there have been Sixty-Eight theses in composition.

On the fourth level, the political dimension of thought and Muslim community, and the study of constitutional decision-making centres, ..power, ruling and basically, the political system of Islamic thought, and the study of the Muslim community, are attended to with a view of power recognition. Sixty-Seven writings are accomplished in this area. The point to note is that 92% of this research has been fulfilled during the last two decades. In other words, the politicization of Islamic thought, and looking at Islam in respect of a power source and a governing word, during the last two decades, bares a significant peak.

In the fifth domain, the study of Islamic ideology, Fifty-Six researched writings, with a view towards religious studies, followed by the study of anthropology in the Muslim community, where 52 researched writings, have been noted. In particular anthropological studies, in which the researcher is deeply familiar, with the native culture of the nation, the endeavour of the western researchers has mostly been the eastern scholars. Sixty percent of these researches, have been completed by western students.

The next domain, which lies on the prime section of the contemporary studies in western universities, are encircled around the 'Islamic Revolution in Iran', where, up to now, Thirty-Three Ph.D. theses have been investigated.

Figure 1:



The way western research views Islam and Muslims, tells the story of a kind of 'phobia' and restlessness towards Islam's might, and studies this in different dimensions, as a very powerful and resourceful phenomenon in Sociology and Politics, which is the constitutive obstacle in the way of western dominance and authority.

Therefore, the structural factors in political and social thinking of Muslims have consistently been under research, from many sides and levels, by the universities in the west. And the Muslim community have precisely been put under telescopic observations, as a Social Abnormality, or a social illness, through social studies, in order to find the ways in which Muslims could be confronted, ostracized and be kept on the fringe. ...This point of view is probably a sceptical view. However, if one pays attention, Buddhism, and Hinduism, are two religions with mass followers and the population of their followers are near to a Milliard. On these two great religions, the social structures of the Buddhist and the Hindu community, over the same period of last century, only Ninety-Six Ph.D. theses have been accomplished, and the majority of the research has been done by the followers of the religions. This is in a state, where over the same period of time, Nine-Hundred-and-Forty-Nine researched theses, have been required on Islam.

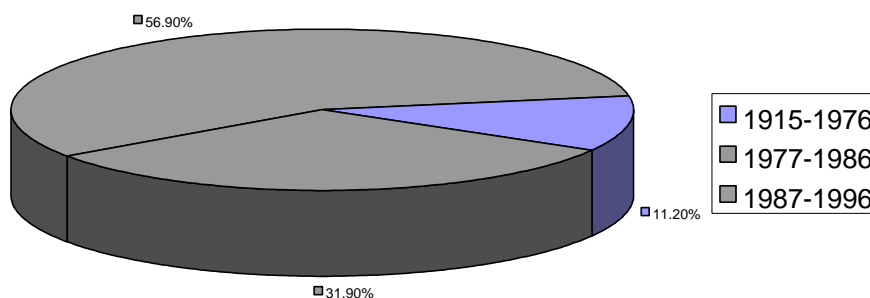
TABLE 1: Statistics Related To The Ph.D. Dissertations and Authors.

RESEARCH ED BY	FIGURE	1915-76	1977-86	1987-96
Muslim Students' Ph.D.	445	38	136	271
European & American students' Ph.D.	504	68	167	269
Total	949	106	303	540

As it is seen in Table 2, Fifty-Three percent of these researches are drawn by American and European researchers. And of course, the Muslim researchers' attention is more and more drawn to the study of Muslims' affairs in western universities. During 1915 to 1976, only 35% of the researches were done by Muslims, and between 1987 to 1996 this figure is increased by 50%. If we accept this derivation, that ...the directorship of several departmental studies regarding humanities, in the west, is not separated from the general policy making and strategical planning of the west's political, economical and confidential systems, the subjectivity and directivity (objectivity) of the studies in western universities, would find a clearer understanding and meaning. ...Hence, Eurocentrism and Islamophobia, as two policies, will find a concerning perception and definition, ..of more sensibility. The other point is the increase, in the Islamic studies on Islam.

FIGURE 2

STATISTICS OF Ph.D THESES IN USA & SOME EUROPEAN COUNTRIES



As it is seen from the figure, (1), during 61 years, from 1915 to 1976, only 106 Ph.D. researches are related to Islam, among the American and some European universities. Then during 1977 to 1986, which is only ten years, the researched works has jumped to 303, and this figure increased, in the following decade, with a sharper skew, to 540 theses. This means that during the last two decades, the studies on Islam, is approximately nine folds over the total, of the last 60 years. This scale of attention is surely due to the political and social facts of the Islamic world. ..Islam during the last two decades has been glorified, in the cast of grand social movements, in Iran, Algeria, Sudan, Lebanon, Bosnia, Nigeria, Turkey and even in the United States of America, and are shaped to a serious religious-political movement, and has changed to a 'global' religious-political movement. ..This is the fact that has involved the west, with all its visible and non-visible scientific ability, to embark on research and investigation, ...to be followed by sociological plans.

For example, the Islamic studies in Harvard University, during 1956 to 1996 is numbered to 31 theses, of which 21 have been accomplished by American and European researchers, and only 10 are researched by Muslims. The collection of these studies covers a large area of the subjects, which are projected by Table 3.

The theories by Huntington, on confronting western civilization and Islamic civilization, are more witness to the exposition of western uneasiness with Islamic might. All these are to theorize the political thinking of the west, and are the language of the papers and the media in the west, along the lines of confrontation with Islam and Muslims.

Yet, ...What the reality is, ...Islam as a religion and ideology, ...Muslims as the followers of this thinking, ...and The characteristics they posses, requires one, other chance and discourse. But in short, there is no doubt that Islam and Muslims, are the compassionate towards humanity. I rest assured, to the Homage ...and the Risen Head of the Muslims of the world, ...and ...to the Salvation of the Human Community.

Wa as-Salaam un-Alaikum wa Rahmat ul-lah-e wa Barakatoh.

Saied Reza Ameli.

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