

Living in a Pluralistic World: Class 13
Ansary - West of Kabul, East of New York: pp. 153-219

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- Looses on Algerian dinars p. 153-155
- American Jake in jeans, boots, bandana, unshaven - biker look
 - Arabs don't perceive this as intimidating at all - don't get the *meaning* that is obvious to an American
 - "Power is a social construct" p 157
- Tamim and Jake with 20 soldiers emboldened by Iranian hostage-takers, burning of US embassy in Libya, US diplomats attacked in Egypt...
 - [why? snowball effect? why all this resentment?]
- Moedjid pinches a woman on the street p 178
 - "A friend of mine is even worse. When he sees unclothed [!] women walking about, like this one I pinched, he all but loses control of himself. He can't keep his hands off them. He starts pawing... It's like a disease, he says. He's like another person... That's why the good God made the rule that women were not to walk around displaying themselves to all and sundry, arousing these temptations and desires--indeed, it's like a disease."
 - He is uncomfortable seeing these things in Tunis, will return to Algiers
 - like Sheik Hamid returned from Cypress to Lebanon after the hotel fire
- Molluk (mullah) in Tunis p. 179-
 - "... Islam. It is the law of the universe, and not just for Muslims."
 - [why not? what implications does this have? remember: to advise is the most important thing.]
 - "It is the law that establishes the reason for the feminine and the reason for the masculine. It is the law that describes for each its duties, for each its place."
 - [sex roles are the center of Islam for him!]
 - can't agree to become a Muslim because it might be a lie... and he can't lie, because he is a Muslim
 - [two different meanings of "Muslim"? variants?]
 - reading 20 books = authority p. 180
 - [fits with Ansary's explanation of the sources of truth in history, God's will, the good: not reason, but authority.]
- Ansary won't sleep with his friend in Paris p. 186
 - believers in God might be good because of, for him
 - "for whom else would I be good?"
 - for Ansary, "It doesn't matter what she knows...It only matters what I know."
 - Ansary feels he has to do what is right because it is right, not because God told him to
 - "The Good constitutes its own imperative. In other words, I am a Mu'tazilite." p. 187
- Turkey secularized by Ataturk after the fall of the Ottoman empire
 - Ataturk was president 1923-1938
 - had been the political center of Islam since about 1300 AD

- Islamic law and courts abolished
- separation of church and state
- obligatory Arabic and Farsi removed from schools
- abolition of the Caliphate in 1924
- Turkish Islamists neither right (neo-Nazi!) nor left (Communist) p. 197
- Turk Uger ("Ooor") sees USSR in Afghanistan as a modernizing influence p. 197
 - [which he sees as good, but a conservative Muslim would see as bad - why?]
- Turkish extreme inflation - makes everything feel out of control p. 199
 - Inflation in Peru
- economic control vs. free market p. 199-200
 - price controls: nothing available except on black market for high prices
 - free market: high prices, but plenty available
 - [which nets out better? which is fairer?]
 - “common sense” is culture-specific, an arbitrary cultural construct
 - [Valentín on price controls for bread, but not for avocados and meat that he sold... what seems clear to us is not always to others]
 - [Driver in Peru: Alán García showed the World Bank by refusing to pay on the national debt... and now the bastards won't lend us any money! He really did not see the contradiction...]
 - [or are some things, like basic economics, actually not arbitrary? Are there limits to this concept? How can you tell where the culture-specific aspects end and the “real” or “absolute” aspects, if any, begin?]
 - [gravity works the same for everyone, regardless of culture]
 - [does economics? Or politics?]
 - 3rd solution (after controlled economy and free market both fail): Islam.
 - No human power can solve the problem, "It's going to take God Almighty. The laws of nature have to be suspended. It's the only hope."
 - [this is just what the PNS editor had proposed - but it comes from a liberal, pro-communist Turk, not an Arab Muslim. ... that is, a materialist, not a Muslim. Is this a reasonable pair of opposed categories: materialist vs. Muslim?]
- Abdul Qayum, converted Muslim Puerto Rican from New York, in Istanbul p. 210
 - other religions have no social project
 - [what does that mean about Islam?]
 - traveled from one Sufi Muslim brotherhood to the next
 - "everywhere you go, you find community"
 - [as some traveling fundamentalist Christians say]
 - there are only Islam and unbelievers; capitalism and communism are just variants of the same
 - in Riaz's terms, capitalism and communism are just variants of materialism; Islam is something else
 - Capitalism and communism are the same in terms of culture, politics, social life, morality, sex

- both are based on banking with interest, not allowed in Islam (??)
 - [Islamic banking – a large industry
 - No interest, but resale for higher price OK
 - Lender and borrower should share risk
 - Often, borrower repays without interest, but during repayment period, lender gets an agreed-upon fraction of the borrower's profits
 - Is this different, or just legalistic trickery for the same thing?]
- social project p. 213
 - no bureaucracy, leadership, police...
 - any Muslim functions as police, court, and punishment, quickly
 - no soldiers unless needed, then all were soldiers
 - "in Islam, there can be no tyranny, because everyone is the same. No one has legitimate power over anyone else." p. 214
 - because all obey law of Allah
 - [but is this true? What about "advising"? what if some people don't obey the law of Allah? What if there is disagreement about Allah's law (as there is constantly)? Who decides?]
 - above the individual is only the community, which elects an emir
 - who has authority only from the Koran and sharia
 - sharia is not restrictive as long as everyone follows the rules
 - there are not actually any punishments, because there are no crimes
 - "there is no room for improvisation in Islam."
 - [absolutist, like admonition to never give in to any temptation whatsoever; like Riaz]
 - [is this representative of ALL Muslims' thoughts?]
 - yet there is room for scholarly debate
 - many Muslims see it as their responsibility to figure out what is or is not required by the Koran
 - in some parts of the world, women are free to come to different conclusions about forms of hijab, and generally respect each other nevertheless