

worry and say: "Oh, I cannot go. They will go and let water into the canals

President Süleyman Demirel referring to Tuesday's ceremony at GAP.

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

**D**uring my holiday stay in Istanbul, I regularly read the Turkish Daily News, which impresses me for it being a liberal and open-minded newspaper. Reading the commentary of Dr. Teoman Duralı (The "Obsession with Progress," March 29, 1995), I found this commentary not only to be not liberal and not open-minded, but I also found it to be simply wrong in certain respects. First of all, Dr. Duralı says the whole world has been "obsessed" with progress for the last hundred years. Speaking of an "obsession, he clearly implies that he thinks of the phenomenon he is speaking about as if it were a pathological condition, as if there were demonic forces that have driven the world crazy and "out of its mind." Being a philosopher, Dr. Duralı surely knows, or at least he should know, that he is making a categorical mistake when he tries to apply a concept like "obsession, which originates in a clinical-psychiatric (or religious) area to social or sociological phenomena. Not only does he make in his initial statement a mistake that he would — most probably — dislike if his students made it in their arguments, additionally what he said is obviously wrong: Of course, it's simply not true that "progress" has reached "the whole world" since a hundred years. Isn't it true, that a hundred years ago, e.g., most people in the rural areas of Russia lived under near-slavery conditions? Isn't it true that 100 years ago a diagnosis of tuberculosis was equal to a death sentence in most, if not all, areas of the world? Isn't it true that in large areas of countries like Turkey, the Arabian states, but also in some remote areas of, say, Ireland or France there are not adequate (or optimal) educational facilities for the poorest people? The list can easily be continued. Anyway, Dr. Duralı doesn't say the truth when stating "progress" would have reached the world "since a hundred years."

The next obvious mistake is only a few sentences away! Dr. Duralı first states that we do "not know" where "progress" is going to take us, but if that's true, how can he know that progress is going to take us to something not valuable? If in the succession from A to B, B is undefined ("unknown"), how can our philosopher know that it's "not a progression towards something ... more valuable"? To my knowledge this is simply a logical mistake, something a professor of philosophy should be able to avoid.

Now, when Dr. Duralı says that the world is "obsessed" with "progress," what is he talking about? What is this "progress" that he speaks about as if it were something monolithic or indivisible? Is it progress in the medical area, is it technical or scientific progress (and if so in which area?), is it social progress giving equal opportunities to everyone, is it political

progress (in the sense of growing democracy), is it economic progress in the sense of an ever growing GNP or in the sense that more people do have what they need for their daily lives? Also this remains unclear, and I assume it remains unclear because Dr. Duralı intends to build up a polemical and, in my opinion, demagogical argument in favor of backward-oriented politics.

This comes clear from his putting together right-wing oriented criticism of modern living that is not only characteristic of Islamic fundamentalism, but also of Christian fundamentalism as it can be seen in the U.S.A. or Poland, and also of newly rising nationalism that we presently face in Germany and other European countries. Almost all the ingredients are there: criticism of a "hedonist" lifestyle (golf, discotheques and disco music), criticism of tourism, "economics" and "sexism." If Dr. Duralı would have taken a closer look at what right-wing extremists in Germany or France (e.g., the German journal *Junge Freiheit*) usually publish, he would have been able to see more clearly who those people are whom he obviously wants to join.

The most important mistake Dr. Duralı makes is an idealistic error when he supposes that philosophy, as I would prefer to say, ideology has a status of logical priority over material conditions. Speaking as the psychoanalyst that I am, I would strongly insist on the fact that philosophical and religious belief systems are firmly rooted in the material living conditions of people as they are mediated through the families in which people are raised. Philosophical hypotheses, theories and systems are the reflections of the subjective experience of the material living conditions, and they surely do not have precedence over the material living conditions.

So what Dr. Duralı is favoring is the implementation of a "false consciousness" that keeps people from knowing what the world is all about. An Islamic world view — just as any other religious world view — does not help people to see who exploits them and takes from them the fruits of their daily labor. On the contrary, an Islamic "world view," just like any other prescribed world view, be it Christian, communist or whatever, brings with it the danger that people are forced to give their lives in "crusades" or "holy wars," never being able to recognize that they're only suffering for the interests and for the benefit of other people.

In my view there is no alternative to emancipation and enlightenment, if one hopes to find "peace at home and peace in the world." I wish philosopher Dr. Duralı of Istanbul University would also agree with this aim of Kemal Atatürk.

Best regards,  
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