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THE PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS OF REVOLT MORALITY IN NURETTİN TOPÇU

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Muharrem HAFIZ*

Introduction

Although there are quite a few works written about Nurettin Topçu (1909-1975) in Turkish, there is not enough work about his views in general and revolt morality in English. Although there were nearly sixty master and doctoral theses on Topçu's views, and as many books, articles and papers as possible, we aimed to prepare this article because of the lack of English studies especially about Nurettin Topçu's understanding of revolt morality and for those who cannot follow Topçu's understanding of revolt morality from Turkish texts.

Topçu's thesis upon the revolt morality, which can be described as Topçu's moral philosophy as well, analyzes in fact the rational (analytical) rebellion by looking at the revolt of the soul (metaphysics). Before the action of revolt, Topçu elaborates upon the concept of "action" and analyzes the morality of action and the moral consciousness as a morality problem. To him, each action that is the outcome of free will is a leap towards perfection, a more perfect action. An action is essentially the power that rises within us to spread an internal state outwards. Individual's own consciousness emerges only and solely *through* and *with* an action. To him, man knows own self only within an action and knows objects by acting.[1] Thought is not the whole of man; a human being cannot be known unless one enters his or her

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1 Nurettin Topçu, *İsyan Ahlakı* [Revolt Morality: *RM*], Dergah Publishing, İstanbul, 2002, p. 31. The translations that taken from Topçu's books belong to the writer of this article. In addition, references to Topçu's own books will be made in the text according to the first letters of the work.

world of action. According to Topçu to know is to know the law and order. There is a hierarchy in the process from the physical world to the divine or absolute truth. In this respect, if knowledge cannot be thought *with relative (nispet) to infinity*, it will be relative (*izafi*).[2]

Individual life is entirely the outcome of action and it tends to spread over the whole cosmos by not staying there, but by going beyond the individual field. In Topçu's point of view, by virtue of the existence of action, which is uniquely peculiar to human beings, one can make mention of freedom and it reveals itself by means of that action. "If I am not what I wish to be and I am not what I wish to be with all my strengths and with all my actions, then I am not".[3] To be is to want and to act and the morality starts with a voluntary action. In this sense, "action is goodness in itself" (*RM*, 32). Therefore when revolt morality is considered in terms of philosophy of action, it is the moral criticism of conformism to time and social obedience. In this respect, his revolt morality represents a spiritualist movement in the history of philosophy that advocates the priority of moral values over the progressive history philosophies that link man's salvation to material and technological progress.[4]

The "revolt", which is generally used in a negative sense, is not then a destructive revolution and anarchy for Topçu. On the contrary, revolt in Topçu should be understood as a factor that constitutes the universal order in human beings and adherence to universal order of mercy. In this respect, the revolt in Topçu and the destructive revolution are absolutely incompatible.[5]

Therefore, there is no real morality other than the universal order. Yet, the inseparable bond of an action with morality is related to the former's endevaour to participate in the universal order and enveloping the whole cosmos. The preventive elements directing the action from universal towards the pleasures and benefits of an individual and the society are the various forms of the slavery of mankind. Then, the moral action is nothing but overcoming this slavery with some sort of modification in order to *re*-attain universal will.[6] Metaphysics is for him "the expansion of mind into the cosmos and the endeavour to perceive it as a whole" and the morality is "the

2 İhsan Fazlıoğlu, "Nurettin Topçu'da Bilgi ve Bilim Sorunu", *Nurettin Topçu*, ed. İsmail Kara, Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, Ankara, 2009, p. 215.

3 Nurettin Topçu, *Var Olmak* [To Be: *TB*] Dergah Publishing, İstanbul, 2005, p. 15.

4 Fırat Mollaer, *Ruhun Metafizik Ayaklanması: "İsyan Ahlakı" Kavramının Etik-Felsefi Temelleri ve Nurettin Topçu'nun Felsefesi*, Yedi İklim Publishing, İstanbul, 2007, p. 25.

5 Hüseyin Karaman, *Nurettin Topçu'da Ahlak Felsefesi*, Dergah Publishing, İstanbul, 2000, p. 113.

6 Nurettin Topçu, *Ahlak Nizamı* [Moral Order: *MO*], Dergah Publishing, İstanbul, 2012, p. 43.

metaphysics of humans' actions".[7] Natural change as a moral action is to research the universal will to where we are subject with all our actions and thoughts (*RM*, 33).

Topçu establishes his system in six steps that leads from action to revolt and transforms into action anew the with a circular movement: I. The Problem of Freedom; II. Slavery of Mankind; III. Ideal of Responsibility; IV. Thought and Belief; V. Faith and VI. Revolt. These sections may also be considered as the metaphysical stages of his system.

I. The Problem of Freedom

The philosophy of morality in Topçu intermingles with the philosophy of religion. Particularly in his work titled *The Revolt Morality* (*İsyan Ahlakı*), which he submitted in 1934 at Sorbonne as his doctorate thesis titled *Conformismé et Revolt: esquisse d'une psychologie de la croyance*, Topçu proceeds from morality into religion, and vice versa. In this work, he particularly analyzes the problems of morality and then moves on to the problem of belief and eventually reaches God from the revolt morality. In fact, this very draft is quite in conformity to his mystical and spiritual philosophy. The most obvious characteristic of Topçu's moral doctrine is that it elevates man from the material world to the spiritual in the sense of freedom.

It is certain that every issue of morality and religion tangles as to whether man is free or not. Topçu thinks neither science nor art or philosophy is feasible without freedom. As we can perceive the priority and necessity of freedom in man's social life the real important thing is that we can also elaborate upon it as a humane concept that emerges as result of the balancing of an individual's internal world (*TB*, 66-70). Therefore, the revolt as a moral problem needs to be started with an analysis of the concept of freedom.

The revolt to be the subject of the research in *The Revolt Morality* requires the existence of freedom in man's action and revolt in fact is the forerunner of this freedom (*RM*, 39). The rescue of man from slavery is possible by his being made a very human being, i.e. by directing him towards his internal dynamics. The concept of freedom, as stated by Topçu, has been discussed on the pivot of one's establishing his or her own world through his personal beliefs, not through those of others; that is through the spirit's gradual ascension to the One Being starting from its own soils and knowing itself *in* Him. First of all, he explained and criticized the doctrine of freedom of Spi-

7 Nurettin Topçu, *Kültür ve Medeniyet* [Culture and Civilization: *CC*], Dergah Publishing, İstanbul, 2004, p. 50.

noza and Bergson and eventually put his own perception of freedom from the aspect of philosophy of action to where he is affiliated.

A. Spinoza's Perception Of Freedom and Topçu's Criticism

1. Spinoza's Perception of Freedom and Rigid Determinism

Those philosophers that deal with the problem of freedom have needed to consider the place and feasibility of human's freedom before the Absolute Being. In addition, as a pantheist and determinist philosopher, Spinoza attracted the attention of Topçu to a remarkable extent. In Spinoza's system, God and Nature are one and the same. The Nature acts *in* God and vice versa. God is the cause of everything; so only God (One Substance) can be the Real Cause. Everything is necessarily generated of one substance. This being the case, man's actions are linked to the requirement of the Divine Being and the quality of our actions are determined by God. There is by no means absolute or free will in the spirit; man has been forced to do this or that by only a cause. The will is to be named not as a free cause but as a necessary cause; only God or Nature (*Deus sive Natura*) is the proficient cause. In fact, even God cannot transcend the causal limits set by himself.

Accordingly, limitless freedom is merely a fault for Spinoza. In his effort to explicate existence or outer world, Spinoza has attempted to reduce plurality into unity. By this attempt, he tried to elucidate the existence of finite thing and material beings by means of an ultimate and most supreme causal factor. That is to say, he expounded the infinite number of existence of experiment in reference to the unique infinite substance he named God or Nature (*RM*, 39-48). However if the causal dependence of every being upon God is one and the same with logical dependence, there is no place for contingency in the world of material things and freedom in man's world. Therefore, Spinoza, who adopted the metaphysical determinism from the point of existence, adopted -with a similar attitude- a determinist ethical view in the field of ethics. According to Topçu, in Spinoza's system *the apprehension of absolute freedom* has been done away with.

According to Spinoza, the real freedom is then the apparent awareness of the necessity (*RM*, 48). The higher our knowledge about the necessity of existence becomes, the higher the influence of the spirit over its passions (in form of internal identification) occurs. When it is free to such an extent, there is such joy in his spirit as is unknown by the ignorant people. The reason for this joy and tranquility is existent in the knowledge of Truth, i.e. God or Nature.

2. Topçu's Criticism

Nurettin Topçu's criticism toward Spinoza's perception of freedom could be considered from two aspects: The first one is from the aspect of science and determinism, and the second is from the aspect of the action philosophy to where he is affiliated.

Topçu firstly emphasizes that Spinoza agreed to the fact that the field of deterministic existence -as a science of necessary rules- can be known by means of mathematics and particularly geometry, adding that he alleged that the path to ethics would be drawn with this science (*RM*, 50-51). According to Topçu, what is human acts move from what is different from the nature and criticizes Spinoza's tendency to render the principles of ethics understandable on scientific basis. According to Spinoza, as the unique truth exists naturally, the unique true thing in us is that which can be perceived through the intellect. Moreover, the holistic approach of Spinoza, which alleges that the reason and will are not determined as two separate types of existence and that they form the sole and the same thing, viz. God or Nature, has been criticized by Topçu. The first type of criticism developed by Topçu seems to have sourced from his suspicion concerning Spinoza's excessive confidence in reason (*ratio*). Thus, as science is far from furnishing us with complete idea about truth, it is also insufficient in knowing about the ethics as the truth of humanity. Topçu opposes then the thesis that rational truth is solely to be perceived by sciences.

Secondly, Topçu's view, also a principle of the action philosophy, is that the morality starts from the fact that human actions are universal. What is rational for Topçu is neither perfectly spiritual nor real. Therefore, the reason/mind alone does not have the gift to know about what is universal and it can only reach something special that has been extracted from the whole of the truth (*RM*, 52). The determination of freedom is feasible through one's knowing and expressing itself, which is possible only through an action that is eager to be universal.[8] According to Topçu, Spinoza's fault was then to take only one substance as the source of existence and to extract all the actions of man from the rational thought. According to Topçu, action and reason are two different manners of existence and only action can possess man's whole being. Man as man can indulge in eternity only with and by means of action. Therefore, "action is the substance of man" (*RM*, 52). The geometrical

8 In this respect, Topçu's understanding of knowledge can be said "gnostic" (*irfani*), not "argumantative" (*burhani*). Therefore it can be seen as a philosophical doctrine, not a system. Fazlıoğlu, "Nurettin Topçu'da Bilgi ve Bilim Sorunu", p. 217-218.

reasoning that Spinoza put in place of all kinds of thought is far from illuminating the concrete and universal reality of action. In this respect, for Topçu, Spinoza sacrificed human will to a passive knowledge of determinism.[9]

According to Topçu, the only free power is action. In other words, the denial of action is also the denial of freedom (*RM*, 53). With his/her actions, man revolts against the determinism of the nature. Overlooking man's free and universal action is nothing but the description of his slavery. For all these reasons the joy and tranquility based upon the comprehensibility of the determinism in nature longed for by Spinoza is actually contrary to the quality of man's action and freedom.

B. Bergson's Notion of Freedom and Topçu's Criticism

1. Bergson's Notion of Freedom and Intuition

According to Nurettin Topçu, Bergson considers the problem of freedom not in a metaphysical system like Spinoza, but as a psychological and spiritual concept (*RM*, 54-55). For Topçu, Bergson puts forward that the absolute freedom is in absolute error as argued by the determinist claim. In fact, we possess the *intuition* of our freedom at every action. Bergson starts from the point that spiritual states are such qualities as cannot be reduced to pure and rational elements. Topçu states that according to Bergson the analysis of the concept of freedom could be done in two ways: Firstly by means of the pure concept of duration and becoming and secondly the concept of causality and personality.[10]

The states of consciousness for Bergson cannot be imagined as objects are imagined in space. For the changes in these states occur not in space but in *pure duration.* According to Bergson, the fault of determinists originates from the facts that the qualities for the period to be within this time are overlooked and it is observed within the qualities of space. Thus, since the quality of states of consciousness that pass within the pure duration are overlooked, determinism puts it that as all the conditions of an act have been given beforehands, the action is determined with these, i.e. as the road has been drawn before, there is to be one compulsory way thereon. In contrast, the thesis of the supporters of person's free will is as follows: If there are two ways for me to choose, that I prefer one thereof shows that I may also choose the other one. Here no road has been drawn.

9 Mollaer, *Ruhun Metafizik Ayaklanması: "İsyan Ahlakı" Kavramının Etik-Felsefi Temelleri ve Nurettin Topçu'nun Felsefesi*, p. 28.

10 Mustafa Kök, *Nurettin Topçu'da Din Felsefesi*, Dergah Publishing, İstanbul, 1995, p. 30.

Yet, according to Bergson, both are wrong. For the former does not recognize the differences of density and severity of the states of consciousness as regards to the quality, yet the latter errs by substituting the dynamic becoming whereof the consciousness is aware, i.e. the pure duration, with material-concrete truthfulness (space). Topçu states, according to Bergson, that as intuition is direct knowledge which consciousness fails to recognize, freedom also remains indefinable for the consciousness. Nevertheless, its being indefinable does not imply its non-existence. Bergson stresses that duration and freedom are to be considered as equals, that this has risen from the productivity/creativity of life, that life has produced figures the pre-determination whereof is impossible and that this production is not compulsory but voluntary.

On the other hand, for Bergson the one and same cause in the spiritual life often does not reveal itself. For his conception of duration is based upon the impossibility of the resemblance between psychological states. Every psychological event bears its own cause within itself. That is to say, while the cause is inseparable from the effect in a physical event, the study of cause and effect in spiritual events is sort of an error of irregular thought (*RM*, 59). Nonetheless, if personality is becoming within a period, is the notion that there is some power for the endorsement of freedom to be accepted? This power brings along the notion of necessity as well.

According to Topçu, Bergson tries to solve this problem by alleging that the consciousness does not accept an absolute determiner of the acts in future and consciousness is *free spontaneity.* As the definition of the spontaneity of consciousness and freedom also leads us to determinism, according to Bergson, freedom and our being free cannot be defined. In fact, we notice our freedom thanks to the intuition that originates from this spontaneity. The thing that hinders the description and definition of freedom is the fact that we fail to know the causality whereto it is related and again we fail to perceive the transition from cause to effect.

2. Topçu's Criticism

Nurettin Topçu criticizes Bergson in relation between the personality (ego) and the action. Topçu does not see the relation between the power of the ego (I) and the causality as Bergson does. According to Bergson, what informs us of the existence of such causality in the soul's world is the productivity in consciousness. Psychological causality states that the thing that does not exist in the former acts has been produced by the very action; yet, while acting we can solely intuit the productive freedom. According to Bergson,

freedom is to be searched in the plan of intuition. However, for Topçu, duration cannot produce ego (*RM*, 63). In other words, the identity of period and ego does not lead us to the concept of freedom. Because Bergson argues for that the ego and the senses that motivate it are not specific things and therefore they cannot remain identical with themselves during the whole course of operation. According to Bergson, since the ego perceives only the first sense, it changes when the second sense emerges. And at the time of a judgment the ego changes and it also changes both the senses that have motivated it. According to Topçu, within this dynamic series neither freedom nor even ego exists; because for the same reason it is not the previous ego. In order to signify the difference between his understanding of ego and freedom and that of Bergson, Nurettin Topçu gives the following example: Topçu resembles Bergson's notion of ego to a snowball that ever grows as it rolls down. Bergson's ego is something that automatically grows and is integrated with everything it drives forward. Yet, according to Nurettin Topçu, the ego tries to remain *itself* as it improves; as and when is required, it is the central wholeness that ensures to feel the same by perceiving the same influences despite external influences (*RM*, 64). There is a nucleus in the essence of the ego that expands from the center outwards and dyes the external becoming with the colour of its own unity. It always wishes in the same ego and bears the same sensitiveness towards impressions. In fact, what gains the consciousness its personality and freedom is this *unity* and *wholeness*. Like the sovereignty of the whole purpose in an artist over the work of art as a theme, the wholeness in the character and personality also paves the way for the contingence in future and informs the ego that directs our preferences.

C. The Notion of Freedom in Topçu

Nurettin Topçu attempted to solve the problem of freedom by joining the 'Philosophy of Action', which was of the spiritualistic schools of his era, and to which he was affiliated. According to Topçu, freedom may not be the fruit of a speculation. It can specifically be comprehended though *action* and as a matter of fact, it appears to have been placed in the heart of action. Determinism and freedom are actually two notions that are related to each other. It is impossible to define either thereof without the existence of the other one. According to Topçu, freedom may not be perceived without determinism. As for freedom, it is the substitution of the external determinism with the ego's determinism, i.e. the *internal determinism*. The power of this internal determinism is also the measure for freedom. Man's essence is action, and one

can be free in the real sense only after action. Man's actions, freedom and productivity cannot be explicated with the pure self-existence theory that fails to perceive the founding elements as has been alleged by Bergson. This thesis can neither tell human actions from one another nor explicate the difference that distinguishes men among themselves. Bergson claims that the ego that takes action fails to know all its elements and even the very self of ego, for it is in state of constant pure duration and modification. However, according to Topçu, pure becoming during the period imprisons us within our narrow field, in which state of slavery no mention can be made of freedom. Such an ego, says Topçu, is alien to action and freedom. The true action and human free will turn in the direction of eternity and wishes to open into the whole cosmos. This getting out of itself takes the form of *revolting* against its very self for a being other than itself.

The thing in question is the action's *transcendence* for the individual and attempt to turn to the universal order by getting out of itself in order to melt in the eternal being of the universe with a circular movement in such manner as to return eventually to its ego. In conformity with Blondel's thesis, Topçu stresses that an action starts with individual free will, passes through the stages of family, society, nation and humanity and reaches God, adding that almost in each stage is the *action of revolt*.[11] Again, Topçu frequently emphasizes that this is never individual anarchism, but a 'synthesis of man and God'. Action is then revolt in Nurettin Topçu. This is God's revolt in us and it is His revolt particularly against us. One who has never rebelled is one who has never acted; and free action is nothing but revolt (*RM*, 71-72).

To summarize, in Topçu's point of view, neither metaphysical substance based upon the God-Nature identity that vanishes in Spinoza's rigid determinism nor the concepts of pure duration and intuition as productive elements in Bergson can lead us to the real concept of freedom. Placing our actions in the universal order and the love to particularly desire *the other* are the essence of action and freedom.

II. Slavery Of Man

The premise of the free action, i.e. the true freedom and action, is being desired in a universal manner. The free will is enslaved before it has recovered its freedom in order to regain it. In other words, before he is freed, man has demanded slavery before he has demanded himself. In the general sense, slavery, as has been stated by Topçu, signifies the free will's affiliation to a

11 Maurice Blondel, who is also Nurettin Topçu's teacher and the writer of the book *L'action* (1893), laid the foundations of the philosophy of action and made it a doctrine.

particular object. Slavery is the name of getting drowned in the individual and egotistic feeling of satisfaction. The free will is forced to ask for nothingness by not demanding its slavery, says Topçu, adding that thus it shall demand itself for-itself. As a matter of fact, the real meaning of action is being purified from this benefit. Topçu, in this sense, makes mention of three kinds of slavery: Pleasure, Solidarity and Sovereignty.

A. Pleasure

Life is merely a matter that enables action (*RM*, 75). Pleasure is permissible, even compulsory for the continuation of life. Nevertheless, making pleasure the purpose of life is terminating it where started instead of providing it with a free speed of progression towards eternity. The determination of pleasure as the objective of life results from the imperfection of free will. For action as a product of free will is a leap towards perfection, i.e. to a more perfect action (*RM*, 31). According to Topçu, nature demanded pleasure at the beginning not as a purpose but as a compensation or a repair of the life energy. However, the free will has been compelled to overcome it by getting through the passiveness of pleasure. In Topçu's opinion, we shall only attain our salvation by occasionally benefitting from the slavery that originates from our primitive nature.

B. Solidarity

Human solidarity, as stated by Topçu, is a fact. This is man's destiny that he or she will not be able to evade because he is unable to live by himself. According to Topçu, there are two sorts of solidarity: Firstly, man agrees to solidarity with others in order to live and act. This form of solidarity is passive, submissive and which is agreed upon. Second sort of solidarity is that man produces it by bringing about new supports and new powers for others, in which manner man is born as a slave; however, he recovers his freedom by creating his action by himself (*RM*, 78). With its second form, solidarity is an individual's ideal before it has been realized. It is a *means*, not *aim* for the expansion and spread of the individual free will. Here, Nurettin Topçu elaborates upon and criticizes Bourgeois's concept of solidarity. According to Topçu, slavery for an individual in the form of solidarity is both a destiny and requirement. The unity and integrity that are ensured commensurate to the ever-growing chaos of social functioning forms an ever-intensifying pressure for an individual. Under this pressure, the individual freedom is sort of under threat. This pressure says Topçu, originates not from the fact that -as Durkheim claimed- an individual is not in conformity to his task,

but perhaps an individual's task has to some extent been determined by a will other than his free will (*RM*, 82). If an individual is under the psychology of pressure in every field of his life, this slavery is due to the fact that all the functions of his life are managed and directed by a will other than his. A passive solidarity of this sort, as claimed by Topçu, is the annihilation of the individual's freedom. The solidaristic action is productive only and solely on condition that it is affiliated to non-benefit wills. If solidarity is a fact that has been imposed upon an individual, the individual can explore himself and his freedom only by responding to this necessity with his action. The action has passion for what is universal in order to terminate itself and all the beings from an individual to the universe are the steps that action is to get through. Thus, the solidarity is demanded due to this requirement in action.

Freedom, as has been expounded by Topçu over the concept of solidarity, is mentioned as a concept that is possible not as a revolt against all kinds of social formations and unity, but only to the extent it produces *an ideal of responsibility* which is demanded for itself and which constantly expands. According to Topçu, in this sense, rather than that an individual constitutes a part of the social structure, the society is a part of an individual. Rather than we are in the society, it is inside each of us. Such solidarity, rather than being passive and enslaving an individual, provides him with the action to recover his freedom with the consciousness of responsibility.

C. Sovereignty

Finally, Topçu analyzes the concept of sovereignty as a form of an individual's slavery. According to him, the sovereignty is the continuation and the requisite complement of solidarity. Recalling the social agreement of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Topçu states that sovereignty is a power that imposes itself upon the individual (*RM*, 87). In addition, the individual agrees to this with a view to remaining within solidarity. As man wishes solidarity, he or she also wishes sovereignty at the cost of his/her freedom. The general will that is represented by the state means the abandoning of individual wills into the hand of the state. Nevertheless Topçu claims that it is impossible to protect individual freedom in the real sense and in any form of government or even democracy. According to Topçu, after an individual's transferring all his/her rights to the state, he/she has no freedom. From that very moment onwards, his freedom has terminated (*RM*, 88).

In social solidarity, an individual is twice a slave of the exploiters: One is because of his/her conformity, along with all the other individuals, to the

law, a will that does not belong to him/her. Second is because of his/her conformity to all the individuals as so required by social solidarity. Besides, Topçu objects the state's being minimized to the mere service of ensuring the security.[12] According to Topçu, the sovereignty and the state is not only to make justice dominant but also particularly teach it. The individual, therefore, wants the state for he considers it as a thought that is a means between his action and that of the other individuals. The state is to be the consciousness of the action of solidarity; on this sole occasion, it could be the *general will* in terms of Rousseau. The state's task is made up of providing the individual action with the sufficient power and energy so that it can be universal by increasing the productivity thereof. The thing in question is the rescuing of the individual from this slavery and his realization of the sovereignty by establishing it in his very individuality. The individual could be rescued then from slavery by his establishing *sovereignty* upon his very *action* and thus he expresses himself within the ideal of a universal responsibility.

III. Ideal of Responsibility

The responsibility of action in man arises from man's slavery in his nature (pleasure), solidarity and sovereignty (*RM*, 93). Yet man's responsibility transforms into his own will, which further grows after every action. This emotion is the measure of the power of action. Moral responsibility is to find its truth in the consciousness of the person who experiences this truth; it is not to be the *consequence* of a judgment that has been issued about him by others. In point of Nurettin Topçu, moral responsibility is different from legal liability that means the evaluation of an act by a judge. That means to say, responsibility is not a sense that is perceived in light of the terms of penalty or compunction and that emerges *after* an action, but on the contrary that occurs *prior* to the action and increases after the action. That which is responsible is the will. Responsibility is the determiner of the free will. Topçu states this view as "we are responsible before the action, but we are free after the action" (*RM*, 97). We are free because we are responsible, and in this manner the concept of freedom merges not only a prerequisite of responsibility but perhaps as a result of it (*TB*, 66-70). Therefore, the notion of a sanction that follows an action is not moral, but juristical.

Topçu first attempts to explain moral responsibility in terms of the concept of "anxiety", which is an element of pressure for an individual and leads him to freedom. The anxiety that becomes an action through development is

12 As a representative of this view, see Wilhelm von Humboldt's *The Limits of State Action*.

wise and free (*RM*, 100). The action caused by anxiety corresponds to tension in man's moral life. This tension is a thought against those obstacles that are to be overcome and a consciousness against our responsibility. What will motivate us is only this consciousness. This tension corresponds to anguish that leads to rigorous pain in the consciousness. This anguish is the informer of the responsibility ideal and accordingly freedom. According to this, freedom "is an internal light that reaches the depths of the living body beyond the darkening of the ego through pain" (*RM*, 102). One can be free only as an individual (*TB*, 70). Immorality is then the annihilation of action, which means one's denial of himself (*RM*, 102).

IV. Thought and Belief

According to Topçu, there is the freedom of action that totally belongs to an individual and this is a manner of thought that is universal within the concrete and real being. Topçu calls this '*belief*'. Topçu considers thought and belief, as a factor leading to revolt morality, prior to the title of faith and the types thereof. Of course, he approaches these concepts from the aspect of his philosophy of action. Before proposing his opinion, he analyzes the concepts of belief of some philosophers. However, even before this, let us have a brief look at how Topçu explained the forms of knowledge preparing belief.

Before examining belief, Topçu offers two ways of explanation of thought: a) *intuitive thought* as assimilation of mind by the object and as fusion of subject and object; and b) *discursive (logical) thought* corresponding to the distinction of the subject from the object. He attempts to perceive and explain in the first with the concepts of impression, affection, sensation, perception and art. Yet, he explicates the second in light of the concepts of methodical thought, reasoning, experiment, science, thought and intellectual action.

According to Topçu, belief is the assimilation of beings in the consciousness, and adaptation by it. Belief is concrete and unifying. It is active and real only when it is *acting*; viz., this is knowledge that is in state of action (*RM*, 123). In this sense, Topçu, in an overt manner, does not separate the field of *belief* from the field of *knowledge*. In order to see his thoughts better we have to observe the analysis of concepts of belief of some philosophers.

According to Topçu, in Pascal belief is a means of ascension to religious and moral truths. According to Pascal, there are three types of belief: Mind, habits (tradition/custom) and inspiration. The role of mind is neither to be denied nor exaggerated (*RM*, 125). Mind is not the sole way of knowing the truth; we also know it by means of heart. Heart offers us the most obvious

knowledge, the most supreme views and the most precise opinions. However, Pascal by no means sacrifices mind, which, to him, should lead to the sense that envelops the integrity of the spirit.

According to Pascal, the second path of belief is tradition and custom. Tradition is the practice of religion in his sight. However, for tradition and custom to be worthy of submission, it ought to be followed by mind.

Last of all, what is meant by inspiration is super-nature saviour favour. With His favour, God drives us to belief. Besides, one ascends to religion through belief in the sense of supreme truth by separating the truths of that body, mind and religion. In Pascal, mind and heart are placed as contrary to each other. On the contrary, Topçu claims that belief is the source of thought. Belief is the whole of thought and it is within the field of knowledge. The starting point of belief is not the transcendent and supernatural world; perhaps one reaches there at the end. However, its roots are in this world, which is humanly, i.e. in the actions of man. Besides, traditions and customs cannot be the source of a belief according to Topçu, but, if any, a way of this practice.

The exact distinction between belief and knowledge is also found in Kant (*RM*, 128). Putting emphasis on the distinction between theoretical and practical reason in Kant, Topçu claims that practical reason is proposed as a duty. The practical reason convinces for the truths of the transcendent field; however, this field can definitely not be the subject of knowledge. According to Topçu, like in Pascal, in Kant also belief has reasons other than knowledge. While these reasons originate from heart, traditions-customs and inspiration in Pascal, for Kant the source of this belief is the law of morality, which consciousness accepts under the categorical form of a duty. According to Kant, understanding is the constitutive, that is, it constitutes the structure of nature that is the same for all of us, which is possible with Kant's 'Transcendental Apperception' operation, that is, 'Pure Self'. According to Topçu, Kant's attempt to solve the problem of consciousness with an operation composed of mind's supra-sense participation and sole thought is problematic. According to him, the activity of thinking is to be determined as the most supreme principle not of theoretical consciousness, but of practical one. With this aspect thereof, Topçu approaches his opinion to that of Fichte rather than that of Kant (*RM*, 129).

Topçu finds Fichte's (1762-1814) thought closer to himself. To him the world that is the subject of our consciousness is the subject of practical realm. Topçu explains the three stages of knowing in Fichte as follows: 1) The-

sis: 'action' as the 'I's' thinking itself; 2) antithesis: his placing 'non-I against I and placing them together; and 3) synthesis: putting I and non-I with thinking together. According to Topçu, the belief in Fichte is that structure whereupon the entire human knowledge is founded (*RM*, 130-131). That is to say, for Fichte, belief is prevalent in all the fields of knowledge and pertains to the world of moral facts. Nevertheless, according to Topçu, it is out of the question in Fichte to explain sensible and transcendent truths together with the moral facts and the facts of knowledge.

The last philosopher Topçu studies in relation between thought and belief is Hamilton (1788-1856). Belief is the first premise of reason and it is a concept superior to it. Knowledge in Hamilton is dependent upon belief. Belief forms the unique security of our knowledge. The first concepts of consciousness, according to Topçu's analysis of Hamilton, have been given in form of belief rather than being in form of knowledge. In Hamilton, belief falls within the very structure of consciousness. As in our memory is not the knowledge of the past, but the belief thereof, in us is also found the consciousness of belief peculiar to an eternal and absolute being. Accordingly, belief includes knowledge in Hamilton (*RM*, 132). As per a statement he extracted from Hamilton that reads, "we have to believe in the whole of whatever we know and know the whole of whatever we believe in", he defends that it unites knowledge with belief. In this aspect thereof, he considers himself closer to Hamilton. Topçu appreciates as well the emphasis of reason as the first premise in Hamilton's theory. With a further step, Hamilton reduces the principles of knowledge to the action of faith. Topçu agrees to this point of view and seems to defend the theory of Hamilton, who unites the fields of thought and belief with a psychological analysis rather than a metaphysical fact (*RM*, 133).

Nevertheless, Hamilton does not withdraw from discerning knowledge from belief. In Hamilton to know is to know from inside, while belief is a certainty based upon emotion. Topçu says that Hamilton defended that a certainty is called knowledge or belief according to the sovereignty of one of these two elements upon the other, which point differs his thoughts on the relation between belief-knowledge from those of Hamilton (*RM*, 134). However, what is the relation of faith, which starts the revolt action in us, to belief as the previous stage thereof and with knowledge thereof? Let us now elaborate upon this.

According to Topçu, "belief is the action and effect of the ego upon things; it is the real and experienced knowledge" (*RM*, 134). As for thought, it

is the 'internalization' of action in us (*TB*, 21). The name of contacting the truth in our internal world is thought. The duality of consciousness and object, which is the essential premise of knowledge, has been eliminated in faith. The consciousness and the object has become identified, and the object has surrendered to the consciousness, united with it and the two have become one being (*TB*, 22). In Topçu's point of view, the events of emotion, thought and consciousness experienced by the individual are defined as the evolutions of the ego.[13] This evolution and development, which shall later prepare the revolt in the ego, realizes by means of *internalization* and *universalization*. All the obstacles the ego encounters during its effort to complete itself in fact mauls him/herself. However, it is a kind of training at the same time.

The internalization is the turning of the ego toward itself against these hindrances. On the other hand, the universalization is the expansion and dissemination of those judgments of values to where we are attached into the histories of family, nation and humanity after the individual, whereby finding in man's ego (character) the thought of the whole mankind, which is actually meant by the universalization of morality. Belief is then exactly knowing. The unification of the ego (I) with the object is the object's living in I (*RM*, 134). True and non-imitated knowledge is this very belief. Man finds the judgment directed upon his very self by his very own action in his thought. Here the anguish is an extremely significant concept, for one who does not suffer the agony of something neither knows nor loves it (*RM*, 135). Belief is not approval without objective and compulsory reasons, but the revivifying of the internal reasons. Without these reasons would be neither knowledge nor knower thereof. Therefore, "belief is a spiritual sincerity" (*RM*, 136). Topçu, after this point, stresses that character of belief to spread with imitation psychology. If belief were not communicable, there could be neither a society nor a civilization.

V. Faith

Topçu moves from the concept of belief to that of faith, which he defines as the continuation and extension of belief. In fact, the difference between belief and faith is not related to *quality* but the *degree* (*RM*, 145). A belief's turning into faith means it becomes constant in man's soul and thoroughly dominant in his life. In a sense, the belief's turning into faith signifies that belief is transcended and the field of soul is covered thereby. According to Topçu, it is faith's leap towards the mystical world (in a sense to the trans-

13 Nurettin Topçu, *Ahlak* [Morality: *M*], Dergah Publishing, İstanbul, 2005, p. 118.

cendental one), wherein are two reasons: One is the ego's returning upon itself, looking for itself, whereby the faith requires 'self-recognition'. According to Topçu, the ego's, which emerges in belief, possession of being results in faith. This activity of faith, in fact, is a state of *one-being* with the 'Unique' and the 'Necessary Being', in which state the ego - that is distressed against the insufficiency of belief emerging in plurality- approaches itself again to itself in unity and wholeness as an activity of knowing itself. Knowing itself is the result of the attempt of being-one with Him. The second reason for the faith to bear a mystical character is that it provides a great *internal enlightenment*, which casts shadow upon and even dim the light of the thinking mind. In analyzing the concept of faith, Nurettin Topçu claims that his starting point is not transcendence or the super-nature field. To the contrary, he finds it in the philosophy of self-consciousness, which -with a view to ascending to a philosophy that transcends the boundaries of the deficient and imperfect mind- finds the motive in man's own action (*RM*, 147).

Besides, according to Topçu there are two kinds of faith: Aesthetic and religious faith. Aesthetic faith is the 'faith in multiplicity' because of the multiplicity of beings. Yet, faith in the Unique and Necessary Being is determined with 'Faith in One Being' for it is One and Unique.

A. Aesthetic Faith

Aesthetics and philosophy of art is one of the disciplines that Topçu is most engaged in.[14] Topçu emphasizes with this concept that there is an action of faith in the supreme activity of art. Topçu expresses that he does not have any concern about reaching a faith in aestheticism, and expresses that an activity of art on a high level leads the artist to mystic or religious faith, whether he/she is aware or not (*RM*, 150; *M*, 22-26).

In Topçu's eye, art is not in the object, but in man. In addition, art cannot be seen as an arbitrary game and creative synthesis. Still, the essence of art is definitely not in the image of the object that is witnessed by man, viz. in a intuition, but it is in the very self of man, in the deep action of the will and love. The real artist believes in the object's rescuing influence upon itself; and this is an authentic action of faith and a state of transcendence. An artist wishes to give life to the objects in nature in order to ask each item of object to which he has turned for his salvation. Topçu calls this the will of salvation (*RM*, 151). Yet, faith is the growing of being, thought and ego. The will is deficient, imperfect and insincere by itself. It first desires the nature; but

14 Beşir Ayvazoğlu, "Estetik İman: Topçu'nun Sanat Felsefesi", *Nurettin Topçu*, ed. İsmail Kara, Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, Ankara, 2009, p. 312-325.

by also *transcending*, it demands the super-nature in order to complete itself. The will is in an effort to complete itself everywhere, from which effort emerges love; that is, love is the transformation of ego by becoming its own subject. The artist is a metaphysician who returns to his inner world against the worldly events. The artist carefully follows the collision of his/her soul with the world and tells us the mystical rhythm within him/herself (*CC*, 50).

Among the arts, music has a very important place in Topçu. Music assures the unity of the multitude. In this respect, Topçu thinks that music plays an important role in the education of children and young people. "Music is the cleanser; cleans the young soul from the impurities and extracts its thorns. The soul that is not purified with music cannot fly. [...] Music unites us with being and saves us from the pain of multiplicity" (*CC*, 128).

With no doubt, the essence of art is different from religion. Nevertheless, Topçu defends that there is correspondence or equivalence between aesthetic and religious life. Therefore, Topçu attempts to propose the existence of a thoroughly mystical phenomenology that emerges in real arts, which he names aesthetic faith.

B. Religious Faith

After he has accepted the existence of a will of faith that determines man's existence in arts, Topçu explains the religious faith. To him, art is the searching for super-nature in nature and the One Being in the multiplicity. Art leads the man's will to the will of the One Being. With this aspect thereof, a mystic's exercise is the action that transforms the human voluntary powers into the sources of the Unique Necessary Being by hindering human/mundane pleasure, passive solidarity and sovereignty in order to progress of the spiritual life. From this viewpoint, action transcends the insufficiency of the ego in activities of arts and turns to the belief in the Unity of the High Being, which is religious faith. The essence of a mystic is the identification of the spirit with God and becoming the *same* even in the *difference* (*RM*, 171). "As geniuses are the superhuman types of the intellectual life, mystics are likewise the superhuman beings of the spiritual life." Nevertheless, there is still dualism in faith between ego and God. Even in this stage (faith) the ego (I) approaches God as *another* one. Topçu's moral ideal that he has identified with the religious mysticism receives its final form with an analysis of the concept of revolt. The duality between the ego and God could only be removed with the action/morality of revolt.

VI. Revolt Morality/Action

Nurettin Topçu makes mention of two types of revolts: First, one is the revolt that diverges from divine will; and the second one is divine will's revolt *in* man.

A. Revolt Diverging from Divine Will

1. Stirner's Anarchism

Stirner places individual beings' selfishness against everything that comes from outside and restricts it. He *rebels* against nature, society, state, humankind, morality, and religion. According to Stirner, things that are defended by both God and human beings are selfish. Stirner defends the idea that, rather than serving these selfish ones without a benefit, the individual is to be selfish. Man's ideal is to be saved from all kinds of human and divine yokes and to render his ego the center of everything. In a world where is no truth the only things that concerns me is merely selfishness. Anyone who accepts a being other than his ego has failed to be a real ego. According to Topçu, Stirner's attitude is an act of anarchism, which is composed of denial of every transcendent, social and spiritual action. This selfishness, which would later be continued with Nietzsche, takes a position beyond good and evil.

2. Rousseau's Revolt

Unlike Stirner, Rousseau rebels not against all the human institutions but those institutions caused by the social life. According to Rousseau, says Topçu, a social state that keeps the ego under limitation and condition is in fact going backward. Because there is freedom in ego, whereas slavery in society. Rousseau's revolt is then the revolt of the ego against the society and the civilization, which have arisen from the compulsory and oppressive actions that have enslaved him (*RM*, 191). Nevertheless, Rousseau's revolt is not anarchy. The ego is not selfish -or at least- it is not self-sufficient. There is a constant order in the universe to which the ego shall be affiliated like its own true source and this very order is found within the *nature*. Man has prepared his unhappiness by himself by going out of this nature. Topçu stresses that Rousseau discovered God, who addresses the heart in nature. As the ego may not stay alone, it finds its lord in this relation (in this relation with nature). His running away from people and taking shelter with nature is owing to the fact that he has been unable to find in man the *ideal* he has been after. This escape of his, as alleged by Topçu, is not because he dislikes people, to

the contrary, because he loves them so much. Rousseau, says Topçu, penetrated into his consciousness through compassion and was -to put it precisely- self-sufficient there. Nevertheless, in Nurettin Topçu's point of view, that an individual is morally self-sufficient within his consciousness meant his (Rousseau's) returning to the arrogance that he had always refused, for by insisting only upon himself did he surrender to his own pride. Therefore, his revolt, says Topçu, yielded no result within the individualism that needs to struggle against itself. If he had taken the concept of action to his center, says Topçu, his revolt would have been able to establish an order that unites with the super-natural (transcendent) one in conformity.

3. Schopenhauer's Revolt

Schopenhauer's revolt is apparently the being's against itself. In Schopenhauer, to exist is to ask for evil. The path to salvation is to deny existence, viz. rebelling against being (*RM*, 197). His philosophy is a separate philosophy of will. In him, the will is the substance of being. Topçu, rather than Stirner's philosophy of egoism, finds himself closer to Rousseau's individualism. Nevertheless, from the non-being where Schopenhauer reached his will does he reach the Absolute Being and this revolt of transfer seems to help him to depend upon the super-nature Absolute/Unique Being. Still, as he criticized Stirner and Rousseau, Topçu is also against Schopenhauer's revolt. In Schopenhauer, the will is the source of evil, for life that is its work is made up of sorrow (*RM*, 198). According to Schopenhauer, who uttered "joy is a fault of perception, while sorrow is real", the best thing to do in such an evil world is non-being. This tendency for non-being is the last thing in man for his will to resort to. However, this certainly cannot be committing suicide in Schopenhauer. For it is not the denial of the will of living, to the contrary, the strongest confirmation of the will. With the denial of the will of living, one attains the climax of ethics, i.e. asceticism, which begins with the moral world where virtue starts with mercy and affection, and one attains total freedom at the non-being called *Nirvana* upon the completion of asceticism. Accordingly, the salvation is nothing but revolt against the will of living and taking shelter in Nirvana.[15]

B. The Revolt of Divine Will in Man and Revolt Morality

The thing that drives will to the belief in unity, above all, is its self-insufficiency. Action attempts to complete and integrate itself in faith. Action starts with the very endeavour of the ego and is a leap from nature to su-

15 Karaman, *Nurettin Topçu'da Ahlak Felsefesi*, p. 115-120.

per-nature (transcendence). Giving up the supernatural is being satisfied with that which is deficient and which is not real. The move for the completion of the duality of ego (I) and God, which emerges in faith, in the One is the action and *revolt of God in us.* In other words, "revolt is God's action in us" (*RM*, 178). This *revolt* is the *conformism* of ego before God. After this very stage, the ego prefers the free action of God in place of the restricted and finite action. In explaining the theory of revolt morality, Topçu cited Mansur al-Hallaj, who is one of the famous figures of Sufism, as an ideal type. The duality between his action of revolt and God is eliminated and the statement of Mansur al-Hallaj "I am the Truth" (*ene'l-Hakk*) is endorsed with this action of revolt. According to Topçu, this is not the fruit of speculation. It is an experienced with the action of revolt.[16]

According to Topçu, man's revolt starts first against the slavery within his/her nature. In other words, the start-point of revolt is the internal world of an individual. The revolt against narrow and egotistic desires that hinder an individual's movement in the actual sense is also the first stage of an individual's expressing himself. A human being who is rescued from the oppression of his/her internal forces bears universal responsibility and rebels against the temporary pleasures, passive solidarity among people and against the sovereignty of oppressors. He does this through his whole will wishing real and active solidarity and actual sovereignty.

The ideal of responsibility, justice and mercy, which are universal and goes us towards the move of morality, does not frequently occur in those people in whose ordinary lives imitation prevails. This is sort of morality ideal that is based upon revolt action (*CC*, 131). According to Nurettin Topçu, an action merits being called revolt only when it necessarily bears the will of a new and more supreme order (conformism). In only one denial, i.e. in anarchism, is the denial of revolt. Thereofore, Rousseau and Schopenhauer's revolts were not as authentic as that of Stirner.

In Topçu's eyes, one inevitably attains revolt through the analysis of consciousness. The formation of thought from intuition to belief and from belief to faith ends in the revolt action. In Topçu's point of view, a revolt man in the strict sense who holds the character of both anarchism and conformism in himself/herself almost becomes an intermediary between the humanity and the divine being. This is also the *participation* of humankind into that which is divine. Topçu's revolt is, then, the product of mercy, jus-

16 Mollaer, *Ruhun Metafizik Ayaklanması: "İsyan Ahlakı" Kavramının Etik-Felsefi Temelleri ve Nurettin Topçu'nun Felsefesi*, p. 39.

tice and faith. If there is no mercy; reason, emotion, intuition and even love are dangerous (*TB*, 35).

Along with this action of revolt, the divine field (transcendence) emerges being concealed under the cover of the ego in deep. Individualism is then defined as a passage/means between man and God. Yet, the anarchism in revolt is the revolt against all kinds of slavery that hinder our conformism towards God. This state is obedience to God, who revolts against all kinds of slavery movements and only conforming His Will. Therefore, the revolt action in Nurettin Topçu has the feature of saving all kinds of obstacles that prevent the will from reaching infinity.[17]

Conclusion

According to Topçu, who unifies the philosophy of action with his mysticism, the action in man is the result of God and, in fact, there are not two beings who have separated from each other in action at the final point. The ego's participation in God and ascending towards Him is the essence of revolt action, which is the transcendent formation of love in the essence of man. As for the freedom of action, it is the expression of the revolt that causes the action in us. The mystical source from which the morality has risen is the Will of God, that is the Absolute Will. Accordingly, without God is neither real morality nor revolt.

In state of revolt, the conformist act with anxiety. A mystic befriends grief and is in constant contact therewith. The path to grief is the path to divinity. The aim of the internal conflict of a mystic, who has become aware of his/her incompetence, is to *annihilate* this very humane insufficiency in the perfection of the divine consciousness and action, which to some extent is to get deified, and though for a very short time to get lost in the Being of God. This action is the ascension of the consciousness to the One Being and its discovery of the Being who is inside, as was stated by Yunus, "There is One inside me, Who is more close to me than I am". Therefore, "Our God is God of revolt" (*RM*, 210).

As we have witnessed, Topçu starts from the concept of action and analyzes the consciousness, and then passes from thought to belief, from belief to faith, from faith to revolt and thus he establishes his spiritualistic-idealistic system. Experiencing through his/her internal stages, an individual finds the Divine Being in the very *self* of his/her; and thus transforms the revolt into a mystical character by the sole means of obedience to One Unique Be-

17 Karaman, *Nurettin Topçu'da Ahlak Felsefesi*, p. 127.

ing. In this way, through an understanding of *Wahdah al-Wujud* (One Being), Topçu weighs upon the ideal of annihilation of man's free will in God, which quality emphasizes his view for the unity and the inseparability of moral philosophy and the philosophy of religion.

Topçu argues that the revolt morality cannot be integrated into the logic of rationality. Morality should not be sacrificed and instrumentalized in the hands of logical reason. In this respect in Topçu's theory, instrumental rationality is one of the most important factors in the destruction of humanity. In this context, his morality can also be read as a critique of modern science. This criticism can be determined as the removal of science from the love of truth and its application to the relations of interest, the relativization of science in the sense of being removed from the understanding of eternity and the reduction of science to technique.

Finally, we can say that one of the main criticisms that can be developed against Topçu is that he did not later follow the major problem (revolt morality and its philosophy) that he noticed in the early stages of his life. Instead, he has chosen to be a social life thinker who sought solutions to the problems of daily life. Because in his later writings, we cannot find the power of philosophical discourse in the revolt morality. Topçu may have seen sufficient to deal with the problems imposed on him by the social conditions in his later period and could not develop his thesis which he defended early. From this point, he sacrificed himself and his great work for the society. This may be one of the reasons why Muslim thought lacks strong discourse in our age.

Abstract

The Philosophical Foundations of Revolt Morality in Nurettin Topçu

In this article, it will be tried to analyze how Nurettin Topçu (1909-1975), an eminent scholar of the contemporary Turkish-Islamic thought, gave unity and integrity to his thesis called Revolt Morality. In addition, the views of the philosophers whom Topçu considers to be connected with his own philosophical views will be included and the philosophical foundations of the revolt morality, which is based on the concepts of freedom, slavery, ideal of responsibility, thought, belief, faith and revolt will be examined in this work.

Keywords: Revolt Morality, freedom, responsibility, faith

Öz

Nurettin Topçu'da İsyan Ahlakının Felsefi Temelleri

Bu makalede çağdaş Türk-İslam düşüncesinin önemli isimlerinden biri olan Nurettin Topçu'nun (1909-1975), İsyan Hareketi adını verdiği tezine ne şekilde bütünlük ve birlik kazandırdığı hususu analiz edilmeye çalışılacaktır. Ayrıca Topçu'nun kendi felsefi görüşleriyle bağlantılı olduğunu düşünüp eserlerinde temas ettiği filozofların görüşlerine yer verilecek olan bu yazıda, Topçu'nun özgürlük, esaret, sorumluluk ideali, düşünce, inanç, iman ve isyan gibi kavramlarından hareketle tesis ettiği isyan ahlakı tezinin felsefi temelleri incelenecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İsyan ahlakı, özgürlük, sorumluluk, iman

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