

Watt, kitabının son sayfalarında hem Hıristiyanlara hem de Müslümanlara birtakım tavsiyelerde bulunarak iki tarafı uç noktalardan merkeze taşıma gayreti içine girmektedir. Ona göre Hıristiyanlar için en temel nokta, "Öteki dinlerin de Hıristiyanlık gibi birer din olduklarının ve iyi dinî sonuçlar ortaya koyduklarının kabul edilmesidir." Bu belki zordur; ama imkânsız değildir (s. 208). Watt'a göre diyalog ortamında Hıristiyanlara düşen bir başka sorumluluk da İsa'nın Tanrısallığı konusunda olmalıdır. Ona göre "Hıristiyanlar, sadece İsa Mesih'in tarihsel insanî olgularına tanıklık etmeli ve – kendi geleneği içinde uygun bir yorum bulsun diye-onu diğer din mensuplarına bırakmalıdır." (s. 211) Yine Hıristiyanlar, kendi dünyasında oluşan çarpıtılmış İslâm imajını reddetmeli ve bu dindeki değerleri olumlu yönde değerlendirmelidir (s. 212). Watt, Müslümanlardan beklenenleri de sıralarken "onların eski tekelci görüşlerini bırakmalarını" öncelikle tavsiye eder. Keza "İslâm'ın son din oluşu konusundaki öğretileri" Watt'ı oldukça rahatsız etmiş görünmektedir. Ona göre Müslümanlardan beklenen bu genel tavır değişikliğinin yanında, onların Hıristiyanlarla ilişkileri konusunda da istenen değişiklikler mevcuttur; öncelikle onların Kitab-ı Mukaddes'in tahrifi konusundaki görüşlerini gözden geçirmelerini öğütleyen Watt, bunun, Hıristiyan kutsal kitabının el yazmalarının çok eskilere dayandığı gibi tarihî gerçeklerle geliştiğini iddia etmektedir. Kaldı ki ona göre kutsal kitabı nakledenlerin mükemmel olmaları gerekmez (s. 213-214).

Fuat Aydın, Watt'ın bu eserini Türkçe'ye kazandırmakla son dönem diyalog faaliyetlerine önemli bir katkıda bulunmuştur. Kullandığı çeviri dili-bazı baskı hataları, veya gereksiz yere İngilizce karşılıklarını yazma (mesela, s. 30, 60, 80, 116, 199, 200, 214) gibi konular hariç- oldukça başarılı görünmektedir. Yine Aydın, eserin orijinal adındaki "karşılaşmalar" (encounters) yerine "diyalogu" seçmesi, eserin içeriğiyle uyuşması açısından yerinde bir tercih olmuştur.

Mustafa Alıcı

The Holocaust and Collective Memory: the American Experience

Peter Novick

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This is an exhaustively documented and brilliantly conducted analysis of the American Jewish evaluation and employment of the Holocaust in which Peter Novick, American Jewish historian, discovers the transformation of the destruction of European Jewry from an 'historical event' into a 'sacred myth' and a 'religious dogma.' Although countless books and articles have been written on the Holocaust, few of them deal with the relation between America, American Jews, and the emergence of the Holocaust as an ideology. One such work is Jacob Neusner's *Stranger at Home: "The Holocaust," Zionism, and American Judaism* (1997) in which

Neusner points to the mythologisation of the Holocaust and the emergence of an 'American Judaism of Holocaust and Redemption,' based on a direct association of the destruction of European Jewry with the birth of the State of Israel. Nevertheless, Novick's work gains its significance in being the first historical analysis in which the entire process of the transformation of the Holocaust into a 'myth' and a 'dogma' is meticulously examined with reference to the relation between collective memory and the American Jewish way of remembering the Holocaust. Novick, in this way, not only discusses the formation of American Jewish identity around the symbol of the Holocaust but also sheds a light on the nature of the American-Israeli alliance which coincides with the emergence of the Holocaust discourse. It is important to note that what concerns Novick here is not the Holocaust as an historical event but rather the American Jewish perception of it as a symbol of a 'unique Jewish suffering.' As put by Charles Liebman, 'symbols enforce codes, reinforce images, and socialize to a particular ideology.' And what is at stake in this case is the Holocaust ideology.

Novick shows that the reason why Americans, both Jewish and non-Jewish, became so 'Holocaust conscious' in the 1970s, and not before, has little to do with the 'social unconscious' theory, which explains memory in relation to 'trauma' and 'repression.' According to this theory, the Holocaust had been a traumatic event for the American Jews and therefore was repressed during the immediate post-war years but exploded in the aftermath of the Six-Day War through the return of the repressed, an explanation which is regarded by Novick as contrary to reality. In the lights of certain historical facts, the emergence of the Holocaust discourse, for Novick, can be best explained with the thesis of collective memory, according to which, memory works not through an imposed cycle of trauma, repression, and the return of the repressed but by 'choices' as shaped and constrained by circumstances. So, the emergence of the Holocaust is not the result of an unconscious Jewish mind but, on the contrary, is directly related to certain socio-political circumstances taking place at the time in America and concomitant decisions made by American Jewish and non-Jewish leadership. Novick asserts that, as far as Americans are concerned, the Holocaust did not pose a direct threat nor did it become a matter of concern during the 1940s and 50s when it was freshest in their minds. And this was mainly because of the socio-political and cultural ethos embraced back then in America, which provided the Jews with an opportunity to be able to fully integrate with American society. It was a period in which under the influence of an optimist, universalist, and integrationist ethos Americanisation and heroism were applauded and the American Jewry were totally occupied with being an integral part of American society. Besides, from the Zionists' point of view there was a negative effect of the Holocaust on the birth of the state of Israel. If there were no Jews left in Europe there was no need to establish a Jewish state. In short, talk of Jewish victimhood was not in the best interests of the Jews.

Thus Novick maintains that while *the war years* witnessed the abandonment of the European Jews by a self-absorbed American Jewry as well as the American

administration, the situation was not so different during the immediate *post-war years*. The liberation of the concentration camps did not bring about a real confrontation with the Holocaust among the American Jewry. On the contrary, they were mostly engaged in broadening up the range of Nazi victims instead of presenting it as a unique Jewish suffering. It was totalitarianism as attributed to Russia and communism that dominated the American political agenda while the Nazi extermination of European Jewry was totally marginalised. It was only during the 1970s that the destruction of European Jewry turned into what is known today the Holocaust, an epitome of a 'unique Jewish suffering,' which carries even today certain theological, ethical, and political problems. Again, as regards *the years of transition*, namely the late 1960s and early 1970s, Novick refers to some political and socio-cultural events that took place. These include the rise of an upheaval in American politics and the renewal of ethnicity in American life, the changing balance of power in the Middle East, and the fear of assimilation, as growing among the American Jews, which resulted in the replacement of an universalist-integrationist ethos by a particularist-ethnicity-based ethos in American society and an inward turn among the American Jewry. The latter, in parallel to the general atmosphere of pessimism, particularism, and disintegration, shifted their focus from integration to distinctiveness and physical continuity. In the wake of full Jewish integration with America and the absence of any serious anti-Semitism Jewish continuity was in danger. Under these circumstances what the Jews most needed became an immediate isolation from the surrounding non-Jewish world. However, the emergence of 'survival anxiety' as well as the rhetoric of the uniqueness of the Holocaust among American Jewry, both of which were intended to serve for the Jewish isolation, was first advanced, Novick asserts, in the aftermath of the Six Day war (1967) and continued to be advanced in the years after the Yom Kippur war (1973). The 1970s thus came to witness the creation of a civil religion around the symbol of the Holocaust in both America and Israel. In America it was a 'religion of suffering' and in Israel a 'religion of security,' which centred on an assertion that 'Jewish people is an isolated people confronting a hostile world.' Nevertheless, Novick points to a contradiction embedded in American Jewish, as well as Israeli, portrayal of the state of Israel in the aftermath of the Six-Day war as an isolated and a vulnerable country and their recall of the example of the Holocaust as the only lot of the Jewish people. According to Novick, any feeling of victimhood on the part of American Jews or Israelis could not be the real reason for an American emphasis on the Six-Day war as an ongoing threat of anti-Semitism and introduction of the Holocaust as a unique Jewish suffering. For, coming to 1967, American Jewry had achieved a full integration with American society and had been welcomed in every area of American life. As for Israel, she not only gained a rapid and a clear victory in the Six-Day war but also established itself as the biggest military power in the Middle East and a new ally of the United States. The emergence of the discourse of an ever suffering Jew and the uniqueness of Jewish suffering, namely the Holocaust, in such a promising era did in fact aim at some other goals. These

mainly involved alerting American Jewry to the problem of Jewish survival—because of high rates of Jewish assimilation—, helping to re-rotate American foreign policy, and blocking internal and external criticism of the state of Israel due to its expansionist and exclusivist policies.

Accordingly, the emergence of an American Jewish awareness of the Holocaust after the Six-Day war, that is the transformation of a marginalised event into a central symbolism, of a history into a myth and an ideology, was the consequence of the changing needs of American Jewry as well as the changing American policies *vis-a-vis* some socio-cultural and political issues. So, it was about a semi-conscious and semi-circumstantial decision made by American Jews and non-Jews to turn what was understood so far as Nazi totalitarianism into the Holocaust, the religion of suffering. Thus the Holocaust has come to serve *in recent years* as not only a Jewish memory but also an American memory, by holding certain theological, ethical, and socio-political implications.

Novick also draws attention to dangers attached to the discourse of the Holocaust as a unique Jewish suffering. From the Jewish point of view, the Holocaust consciousness functions as an epitome of Jewish particularity since the term 'unique' indicates a distinctiveness, even holiness, on part of the Jewish people ('secular chosenness'). As far as Americans are concerned, however, the Holocaust consciousness, without losing its association with Jewish particularity, becomes a symbol of everything which is human and good, and therefore universal. The Holocaust in this way is transformed from a tragic historical event into a matter of theological and cosmic significance. On the other hand, the theme of 'suffering' associates Jews and everything Jewish, including the state of Israel, with an ongoing 'innocence' in which Americans, too, are considered to be participating because of their special awareness of the Holocaust. As a result, the narrative of Jewish suffering and innocence gets stuck in a particularist ethos by making Jews as well as Americans see everything from the prism of the Holocaust and, therefore, to say the least, blinding them to other peoples' sufferings. And these are Novick's concluding words:

"In the future, as in the past, changing circumstances will influence the choices we make about remembering the Holocaust. But while circumstances will influence our choices, we ourselves are ultimately responsible for those choices—with all their consequences, intended and unintended. It is in the hope of making those choices more informed and more thoughtful that I have written this book."

Salime Leyla Gürkan