

A CRITIQUE OF ‘ECONOMIC SUCCESS’ IN THE POPULAR CULTURE AND HISTORIOGRAPHY: A SEARCH FOR ALTERNATIVE PERSPECTIVES*

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Abstract

Historians in the West are tacitly unanimous on what we could call ‘economic success’ in the historical context: Those who have produced most physical output in the historical process are the most successful. In particular, the narratives on Industrial Revolution reflect this mindset, or assumption. On the other hand, the popular culture defines what economic success is or should be, not historians. It is obvious that historians are influenced by modern economic understandings, and by interpreting economic success presentmindedly, they fall into the trap of anachronism. Nonetheless, it is possible to find alternative economic understandings in pre-modern texts.

Keywords: *History, historiography, economic success, popular culture.*

Tarih Yazımı ve Popüler Kültür Çerçevesinde ‘Ekonomik Başarı’nın Eleştirisi: Alternatif Bir Tarif Arayışı

Özet

Tarihsel çerçevede neye ‘ekonomik başarı’ adını verebileceğimiz noktasında Batılı tarihçiler dillendirilmemiş bir ittifak içerisindedirler. Buna göre tarihsel süreçte ekonomik başarı fiziki çıktı imalatında maksimum üretkenlik gösterenlere aittir. Özellikle endüstri devrimi anlatılarında bu anlayışın, veyahut varsayımın izlerini

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sürmek mümkün. Diğer taraftan, ekonomik başarının ne olduğunun veya olması gerektiğinin tarifini tarihçiler değil popüler kültür yapmakta. Açık bir biçimde, tarihçiler modern zamanlara ait popüler ekonomik telakkilerin tesirinde kalıyor, ve tarihsel bağlamda ekonomik başarıyı bugün odaklı bir perspektiften yorumlayıp anakronizme düşüyorlar. Halbuki, modernite öncesi metinlerde bugünün ekonomik algılarına alternatif anlayışlar bulmak mümkün.

Anahtar kelimeler: *Tarih, tarihyazımı, ekonomik başarı, popüler kültür.*

O Children of Adam!...eat and drink, but do not be wasteful. Indeed, Allah does not love the wasteful.¹

[And] render to kindred their due right, as to those in want, and to the wayfarer; but squander not [your wealth] in the manner of a spendthrift. Verily, spendthrifts are brothers of the Evil One; and the Evil One is to his Lord ever ungrateful.²

...When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you...'³

...The exceeding of the bounds of his just property not lying in the largeness of his possession, but the perishing of anything uselessly in it.⁴

Introduction

What do we consider as 'economic success' in the historical and modern global context; and whom do we refer as 'economically successful'? It goes without

¹ Qu'ran, 7:31.

² Qu'ran, 17:26-27.

³ Luke, 15:17-20, NIV.

⁴ John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government* (1690), v. 37-38, 46; quoted in Tristram Stuart, *Waste: Uncovering the Global Food Scandal* (W. W. Norton & Company, 2009), xiii.

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saying that the economic success in the twentieth century – and the word success here is used universally – has become a result oriented term, and it is still so in our mentality to remarkable extents. Likewise, when the historical actors have achieved a pre-determined goal of an economic action, it is called ‘economic success’ in the historiography, and the actor is rewarded with the title of the ‘economically successful.’ However, as far as today’s worldwide social, cultural and economic realities are concerned, these expressions need to be revised and redefined both in modern and historical context. Given the existing consumer habits and the hunger statistics at this very moment even in the world we call *developed*, we have to re-determine what we should classify as economic success.

Definition of Success in the Popular Literature

In the modern culture the word success primarily refers to a personal or institutional achievement. Its usage in the vernacular, first and foremost, connotes acquisition of an asset or a position after accomplishment of a task or realization of a goal. Its meaning is always accompanied by a psychological and emotional satisfaction. More importantly, this satisfaction is often a one-sided gain. That is to say, unless the contrary is explicitly stated, it is the success of a natural person or a legal personality – be it a corporate, a body politic or a state - at the expense of others. In other words, today’s success is competitive. In order to be considered as successful, one has to overcome a variety of challenges by a number of challengers as if all fields of life have become venues of competition in the sense of a sports race. The same understanding has also invaded the historiography on the Industrial Revolution. Although many historians today clearly defy and satire any Eurocentric notion, most of them still believe that the non-Western world failed in responding to the might of the Industrial Revolution in the like way, and thus lost their once superior position in the world stage.⁵ Later in the paper I will give examples of how economic

⁵ J.R. McNeill and William H. McNeill, *The Human Web: A Bird’s-Eye View of World History* (New York-London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2003), 213; Kenneth Pommeranz, *The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy* (Princeton University Press, 2001), 207; Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, 1450 1680. Vol. II: Expansion and Crisis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 267; Robert B.

success is interpreted as a mere material concept in the historiography, but historians themselves neither discuss nor describe what [economic] success is or should be in the historical context. It is done by the popular culture through the popular literature. Let me present you some examples.

The following are the titles of some bestselling popular books on success:

1. *-The Success Principles(TM): How to Get from Where You Are to Where You Want to Be*
2. *-Success Is Not an Accident: Change Your Choices; Change Your Life*
3. *-Outliers: The Story of Success*
4. *-Secrets of Success: The Science and Spirit of Real Prosperity*
5. *-Success: Advice for Achieving Your Goals from Remarkably Accomplished People*
6. *-Quantum Success: The Astounding Science of Wealth and Happiness*
7. *-The Law of Success: The Master Wealth-Builder's Complete and Original Lesson Plan for Achieving Your Dreams*
8. *-How I Raised Myself from Failure to Success in Selling*
9. *-The Real Truth about Success: What the Top 1% Do Differently, Why They Won't Tell You, and How You Can Do It Anyway!*
10. *-Masters of Success: Proven Techniques for Achieving Success in Business and Life*
11. *-Your Road Map for Success: You Can Get There from Here*
12. *-The Law of Success in Sixteen Lessons⁶*

One may argue that the given titles allude to the assumptions and common principles of what one may aptly call a popular 'success theory'. According to these titles, firstly, success is to acquire something in the future that we do not possess in the present. That is to say, one's search of success is assumed to be a direct function of one's dissatisfaction and discontent with the

Marks, *The Origins of the Modern World: Fate and Fortune in the Rise of the West* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007).

6 http://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss?url=search-alias%3Dstripbooks&field-keywords=success&x=0&y=0&ih=7_0_0_0_0_0_0_0_0_0_1.123_112&fsc=-1, Search made as of September 10, 2010.

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existing conditions. Secondly, success is achieved via certain but secret methods and techniques which may together form a mystical/magical science. Success is attained at the expense of others and is a fairy-tale that ends with [economic] *prosperity*. Additionally, and interestingly, those who have reached that prosperous end are not good people. They are egoistic and avaricious because they refuse to share their wisdom with the masses. Nonetheless, the rest of us are still envy of their wealth and the so-called success, and we supposedly crave to discover their secret.

To see a personified example of this ‘success theory’ one should look at Jack Canfield’s *The Success Principles(TM): How to Get from Where You Are to Where You Want to Be*, a bestseller. Canfield is such a *successful* author that he holds the Guinness record of having had seven books simultaneously on New York Times Best Seller list in 1998. I would like to share with you a lengthy but remarkable paragraph from the first page of Canfield whom one may call a modern-day popular scholar of success:

*My **success** includes being the author and editor of over 60 best-selling books with over 80 million copies in print in 39 languages around the world, holding a Guinness Book world record for having seven books on the May 24, 1998, New York Times bestseller list, **earning a multimillion-dollar net income every year for over the past 10 years**, living in a beautiful California estate, appearing on every major talk show in America (from Oprah to Good Morning America), having a weekly newspaper column read by millions every week, **commanding speaking fees of \$25,000 a talk**, speaking to Fortune 500 companies all over the world, being the recipient of numerous professional and civic awards, having an outrageous relationship with my amazing wife and wonderful children, and having achieved a steady state of wellness, balance, happiness, and inner peace. I get to socialize with CEOs of Fortune 500 companies; movie, television, and recording stars; celebrated authors; and the world’s finest spiritual teachers and leaders. I have spoken to the members of Congress, professional athletes, corporate managers, and sales superstars in all of the best resorts and retreat centers of the world—from the Four Seasons Resort in Nevis in the British West Indies to the finest hotels in Acapulco and*

*Cancun. I get to ski in Idaho, California, and Utah, go rafting in Colorado, and hike in the mountains of California and Washington. And I get to vacation in the world's best resorts in Hawaii, Australia, Thailand, Morocco, France, and Italy. All in all, life is a real kick!*⁷

There are some significant elements in this paragraph which represent a cultural atmosphere. Success, according to the paragraph above, is first and foremost related to the personal pursuit of career and holding of positions desired (*I am the author, editor*). The major unit of measurement for success is material achievements which benefit only to the first person singular (net income, speaking fees). Correspondingly, success is enjoyed most when the pleasure is maximized. I argue that the author's participation in the major talk shows, his weekly columns or well-paid public lectures do not intend to create a shared social benefit. His one and only goal is to guide other personal success stories. One may argue that it is plausible that many individual achievements may eventually result in a collective prosperity but it is not realistic given the inborn characteristics and nature of the humanbeing.

Scholarship and critiques

The scholarly domain, too, is not excluded from the modern society's predominantly material understanding of success. Despite the fact that the word success *per se* is not an academic one, there seems to exist a tacit agreement on an unintentional mindset within the historical literature with regard to what economic success is, or should be in the historical context. An analysis of the questions asked and the language used particularly in the comparative global history books reveals that, intentionally or unintentionally, this mindset assumes that there has always been an economic rivalry and competition between the nations, states, empires, or even civilizations. In accordance, the scholars search for "what went wrong"⁸ with a certain community as another one became

⁷ Jack Canfield and Janet Switzer; *The Success Principles(TM): How to Get from Where You Are to Where You Want to Be* (Harper Paperbacks, 2006), i-ii (emphasis added).

⁸ Bernard Lewis, *What Went Wrong: The Clash Between Islam and Modernity in the Middle East* (New York: Perennial, 2002).

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economically more successful by producing more physical output. The [material] imbalance and unevenness between them is referred as a “gap,”⁹ one that grows in the advantage of the [materially] more productive. Examples of this interpretation are particularly extensive in the narrations of the Industrial Revolution.

The so-called “rise of the west” and the Industrial Revolution are designations that have strong material, developmental and progressive connotations. Indeed, in the recent decades the historiography on the West is bitterly criticized and the Eurocentric premises concealed in the entire body of the social sciences are disclosed. Among others, William McNeill and Kenneth Pommeranz, two pioneers of the world history, have produced apologetic monographs which have claimed to deconstruct the materially superior image of the West within the world historiography. In the light of many statistical and geographical data, they and others have attempted to refute the historiographical economic supremacy of the West since Renaissance. But howsoever they extended into the future the material competitiveness of the pre-modern non-Western world, the Industrial Revolution has appeared in many studies as an economic launching ramp for Europe in the nineteenth century, and eventually led to the so-called “rise of the West.” Nevertheless, since that expression is excommunicated from the literature, the scholars named it “the great divergence,” or “the great departure,”¹⁰

I argue that in the final stage such designations are unintended stylistic euphemisms. Insofar as the historical and historiographical context they are used is concerned, these terms still imply superiority, a material one, on the part of the West, and thus reproduce the connotations associated with the “rise of the West.” In fact, the historians who use such expressions satire the long assumed hegemony of the Western culture in historiography, and explicitly derogate the Eurocentric assumptions and approaches. That is why they are unintended. This, notwithstanding, makes one think that the materially oriented popular descriptions of success is so profoundly rooted in the modern *Zeitgeist* that even scholars are influenced by it. Now, what exactly then did the Industrial Revolution provide for the Western world that the historians interpret as economic success? Or, in the light of today’s factual data on the wastefulness of

⁹ Robert B. Marks, *The Origins*, 123.

¹⁰ Kenneth Pommeranz, *The Great Divergence*; Robert B. Marks, *The Origins*, 155.

the modern production and consumption cycles, is the West really economically successful?

In the conventional historiography the major success of the Industrial Revolution is the capability it provided to Western Europe in overcoming “the biological old regime”. A global historian explains the biological old regime with frequent references to the major arguments in the literature on the Industrial Revolution.¹¹ Both John R. McNeill and Kenneth Pommeranz have praised the book as one of the most concise, accessible, comprehensive, and consistent books within its field. So, one may assume that the book is moderately illustrative of the Western academic approach to the Industrial Revolution. The biological old regime, according to Marks, was a predominantly agricultural environment that set natural and material limits to the productivity of the human communities. In that regime, the human population was a direct function of the available and cultivable lands. Human force was the main energy source. Famines and diseases were unpredictable and unpreventable. Marks argues that between 1750 and 1850 the intense use of coal to produce heat and energy enabled the industrialization, first in England and then elsewhere in Europe and North America. The West was “no longer limited by annual flows of solar energy,” capture of which would determine the production levels in the biological old regime.¹² Meanwhile, the non-Western “old regime economies were beginning to push up against serious ecological constraints that would have stopped all of them from developing an industrial revolution” because they lacked the much needed technology.¹³ Technology, according to Marks, is “the means by which humans gain mastery over natural processes for their own productive or reproductive ends.”¹⁴ Having thus discussed the so-called material advantages and benefits that the Industrial Revolution yielded Marks argues the following:

Indeed, there is every reason to think that cotton textile production would have reached serious limits within the biological old regime, leading not to an industrial revolution but to an economic dead

¹¹ Robert B. Marks, *The Origins*, 22-32.

¹² Robert B. Marks, *The Origins*, 95.

¹³ Robert B. Marks, *The Origins*, 102.

¹⁴ Robert B. Marks, *The Origins*, 111.

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*end, had it not been for coal, the steam engine, and iron and steel production that truly launched the Industrial Revolution and allowed Britain to break out of the constraints imposed by the biological old regime.*¹⁵

Within this regard, to be more specific, the question should be restated: Did the overcoming of the biological old regime result in better social/economic conditions for the world population which we may collectively call success? It goes without saying that the humanity should be truly grateful to the Industrial Revolution. Beyond any comparison with the past the life has become, and becoming easier. One does not need to go far. A simple example that comes right away to mind is the mass produced electricity. Home appliances, cars, planes, and satellites are actively used in daily life. For the purposes of this paper, I do also invite the reader to think of the grocery store in neighborhoods where, at any given time, one can find plenty of food enough for the entire neighborhood for several weeks thanks to a fundamental innovation of the industrial revolution: the mass production line. Due to the mass production line even urban populations have deeply internalized the abundance of food and plentiful supply of fundamental human needs. Today, what surprises the urban populations is not the large quantities of food available at a given time and space. What surprises them most is the insufficient supply or complete lack of food. This is true although they are not participating or contributing in the food growth process. This is true, although they are not equally concerned about whether the same amount of food is available to other world geographies in the same quantity or quality. Is this what we call economic success? Looking at the magnificence and the glory of the Industrial Revolution in the global historiography, it should be. But in the light of how well we distribute the harvests of the industrial revolution today, it should not be. Indeed, considering

¹⁵ Robert B. Marks, *The Origins*, 101-102. (Stress is mine) Marks builds his argumentations in the book on a set of factors created by “historical contingencies, accidents, and conjunctures” which have eased the way of the Industrial Revolution in eliminating the biological old regime. Actually, a perspective that reduces the coming of the Industrial Revolution to tide of fortune and spontaneous coincidence involves severe intellectual problematics because it eliminates the desires, ambitions and the purposeful conducts of the humanbeing. However, that aspect of his narration is subject of another historiographical discussion, therefore beyond the scope of the current article. See page 10.

particularly how well the most fundamental need, food, is delivered to the entire world, or how accessible it is at a given time to any single humanbeing, we can call it a success neither in the historical context nor in the modern.

Some Factual Data

Let me introduce you some factual data on how efficient we use and distribute the highly industrialized and mechanized products. “Ninety-four percent of world income goes to forty percent of the people, while the other sixty percent must live on only six percent of world income. Half of the world lives on two dollars a day or less, while almost a billion people live on less than one dollar a day.”¹⁶ Despite today’s unimaginably fast and large scale food processing facilities and the ease of transportation to almost any location on the earth, the undernourishment in the world has been on the rise since 1995 according to a report by the Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Food Program.

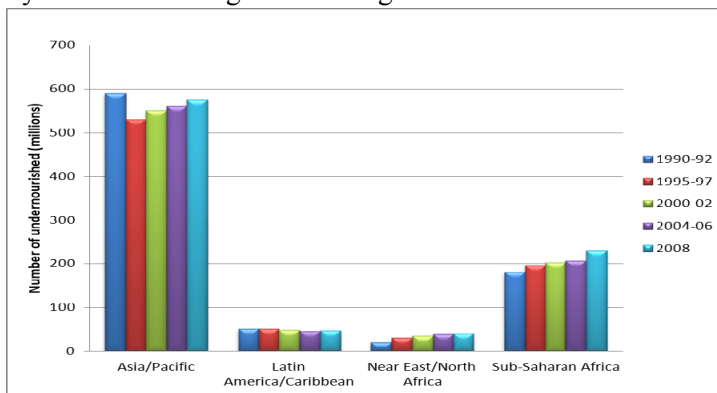


Figure 1, *The State of Food Insecurity in the World (FAO&WFP, 2009), 9.*

“The US, UK and Europe have nearly twice as much food as is required by the nutritional needs of their populations, and up to half the entire food supply is wasted between the farm and the fork. If crops wastefully fed to livestock are included, European

¹⁶ Muhammed Yunus, *Creating a World Without Poverty: Social Business and the Future of Capitalism* (New York: Publicaffairs, 2007), 3.

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countries have more than three times more food than they need, while the US has around four times more food than is needed, and up to three-quarters of the nutritional value is lost before it reaches people’s mouths.”¹⁷

This happens as there are about four million people unable to access a decent diet in Britain, as there are around thirty-five million people in the US living without secure access to food, and as there is an estimated forty-three million people in the EU living at risk of food poverty.¹⁸

The numbers make one think about material solutions. The functioning market philosophy of capitalism defines problems and proposes solutions in numbers and quantities. *However, the problem is perceptual, and the solutions should seek to alter the existing perceptions.* Quality, for instance, in the capitalist market economy, is usually regarded a luxury, often priced much more than the reasonable. Organics are good examples. Today, chemicals and genetic modification are used in order to give certain shapes to vegetables and fruits, as well as to increase the volume of production. For centuries, however, humanity had no idea about what those are, and food was already natural, by nature. Therefore, in effect, the word *organics* is a market invention that opened companies a new area of investment and plausibly higher profit, by means of doing things as how they already should be done in accordance with their nature. Besides, in general, the company oriented cost-benefit analysis is the key determinant of the price of an item in the market. Although the manufacturing is mechanized, serial and industrialized, the market allows low prices only when the per capita consumption increases. The most common deal presented to the costumers in a grocery or department store is “buy more, pay less.” This is seemingly a consumer friendly offer, but in fact it does not lead to a more effective or prudent market environment. A researcher comments that “throughout the developed world food is treated as a disposable commodity, disconnected from the social and environmental impact of its production.”¹⁹ An Australian survey, dated 2005, found that “60 percent of people felt guilty about

¹⁷ <http://www.tristramstuart.co.uk/FoodWasteFacts.html>

¹⁸ Tristram Stuart, *Waste* (W. W. Norton & Company, 2009), xviii.

¹⁹ Tristram Stuart, *Waste*, xvi.

buying and then wasting items such as food.”²⁰ It is true that, after all, the consumer habits play a role in the wastefulness of the market. But the problem lies in the very heart of the mentality of the free market economy which first and foremost aims at profit maximization, not social benefit.

Muhammad Yunus, a Bangladeshi banker and economist educated in the US, has developed an alternative to profit businesses, and named it “social business.” Yunus and the Grameen Bank he established in Bangladesh have received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2006 on account of their efforts to minimize the poverty in the country by implementing the idea of “social business.” I will not give a detailed explanation of the business system that Yunus put into practice, and actually I leave its operational critiques to the experts. What principally concerns me in the efforts of Yunus is the economic philosophy and the perspective guiding his economic system. Yunus argues that the corporations in the capitalist market economy “are not equipped to deal with social problems.” He points out that the capitalist concept of business is ill defined, and disregards the human nature. According to Yunus, “the pursuit of maximum profit” takes “a narrow view of human nature.”²¹

...I think things are going wrong not because of “market failures.” The problem is much deeper than that. Mainstream free-market theory suffers from a “conceptualization failure,” a failure to capture the essence of what it is to be human...In the conventional theory of business we’ve created a one-dimensional humanbeing to play the role of business leader, the so-called entrepreneur. We’ve insulated [humanbeings] from the rest of life, the religious, emotional, political, and social. [We are] dedicated to one mission only – maximize profit. [Some humanbeings are] supported by other one-dimensional humanbeings who give [the former] their investment money to achieve that mission. To quote Oscar Wilde, they know the price of everything but the value of nothing....And today’s world is so mesmerized by the success of capitalism [that] it does not dare doubt that system’s underlying economic theory.”²²

²⁰ Tristram Stuart, *Waste*, 84.

²¹ Muhammed Yunus, *Creating a World Without Poverty*, 17.

²² Muhammed Yunus, *Creating a World Without Poverty*, 18 [emphasis added].

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As far as the introduction of the Industrial Revolution as a historically successful enterprise is concerned, the contemporary historian should think twice. Depending on the perspective, the historian may categorically interpret and define the Industrial Revolution and its natural child free market economy as successful, because they enabled a remarkable material progress within history. Nevertheless, from a viewpoint that prioritizes the inborn characteristic of the human nature, the Industrial Revolution is a failure in many senses, because despite the unprecedented quantifiable benefits it brought about, it has alienated humanbeings from their very being. As one may notice, there are clear parallelisms between the popular perception of success that prioritizes the pleasure maximization, and the historiographical celebration of the Industrial Revolution which led to the free market economy that prioritizes profit maximization. Indeed, both ‘pleasure’ and ‘profit maximization’ have increased the inequality among human communities within history. Karl Polanyi had severely criticized Adam Smith’s argument on the “propensity [of people] to barter, truck and exchange one thing for another”. Polanyi blamed Smith for erroneously historicizing the “economic man,” or the so-called *homo-economicus*, and commented that “no misreading of the past ever proved more prophetic of the future.”²³ That is to say, Polanyi had claimed that the *homo-economicus* is rather a constructed and imagined figure that did not exist historically. Polanyi’s perspective transforms the veneration of the Industrial Revolution into a historiographical falsification, and the historical presence of the Industrial Revolution into a destructive deviation.

Another Perspective is Possible

Indeed, in a time span stretching from the Middle Ages through the modernity, the social principals have evolved substantially, as well as our comprehension of the rules and laws regulating the modern social life. Not only in religious texts such as the Qur’an and the Bible, but also in the writings of the pre-modern scholars, poets, and moralists one may find the philosophical and intellectual roots of the modern environmentalists, naturalists, anti-

²³ Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001), 45.

consumerists, and even freegans. A survey of these historical texts reveals how the present popular interpretations have alienated themselves from the once universally observed concerns.

Sabri Ülgener (1911-1983), a Turkish historian of pre-modern Islamic economic mentality, stated that a legitimate reason to travel and see the world in the pre-modern Islam would be to take lessons and learn from the novelties and secrets of the outside world; it could not be material profit.²⁴ In that world, goods and material gainings could not have absolute values; what established their value was the purpose they were made use for.²⁵ Persian Sufi poet Sa'di (1184 – 1283/1291?) wrote that goods are needed for peace, law and order; life cannot be spent to collect and possess more and more goods. Correspondingly, the seventeenth century Ottoman poet Nâbi (1642-1712) noted that being “light-laden” with materials was the capital of salvation. A Muslim was expected to be an “*insan-i kâmil*,” an expression used extensively in the Islamic literature and may loosely be translated as the “perfect human” on the example of the prophet of Islam.²⁶ Correspondingly, according to the descriptions of the moralists Kinalizâde (1510-1572) and İbrahim Hakki Erzurumî (1703-1780), the perfect human was someone wise and clever who never troubled himself with this worldly needs by thinking about tomorrow.²⁷ Moderation and temperance were tokens of this mentality. Ülgener stressed that unlike the modern Western mind which preferred an activist struggle against the world [even when its means and ends are negative], the Islamic mind sought peace and tranquility in passive submission to what fortunes and destiny bring.²⁸ In an idealized world, contentedness with what one has was a basic feature of the Islamic culture. Worrying about the income of the days that is yet to come was satirized, disapproved and denigrated in the vernacular and literature.²⁹

²⁴ Sabri Ülgener, *İktisadi İnhitat Tarihimizin Ahlak ve Zihniyet Meseleleri* (İstanbul: İsmail Akgün Matbaası, 1951), 47.

²⁵ Sabri Ülgener, *İktisadi İnhitat Tarihimizin*, 63.

²⁶ It is still used occasionally in modern vernacular in countries where population is dominantly Muslim.

²⁷ Sabri Ülgener, *İktisadi İnhitat Tarihimizin*, 66.

²⁸ Sabri Ülgener, *Zihniyet ve Din: İslam Çözülme Devri İktisat Ahlakı* (İstanbul: Derin Yayınları, 2006), 35.

²⁹ One should not misunderstand this picture. Islam cannot be against profit or business since Muhammad himself was a merchant. The point here is that Islam expects one to feel and live pleased with what one possesses at a given time, irrespective of how wealthy or poor.

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The Qur’anic verse on the wastefulness, “eat and drink, but do not be wasteful; indeed, Allah does not love the wasteful,” is one that is taught to the Muslim children with extra attention. Likewise, the followers of the Bible teach their children the “Parable of the Rich Fool,”³⁰ a farmer who build bigger barns to store his grain and food as if he would live for many years. It is known that Augustine, commenting on the parable, warned people to avoid hoarding food that may be given to the poor. Augustine wrote that the farmer “was planning to fill his soul with excessive and unnecessary feasting and was proudly disregarding all those empty bellies of the poor.”³¹ One may also remember the regretful “Prodigal Son,” another Biblical story which, as the name implies, teaches not to be wasteful. Also, in the Proverbs the companions of the profligates are disgraced.³² Both Gregory the Great and Thomas Aquinas have had considered gluttony - over indulgence and over-consumption of food and drink - one of the seven deadly sins. Both church fathers had listed eating too soon, too expensively, too much, too eagerly, too daintily, and too wildly as acts of gluttony.

Thus one may conclude that pre-modern texts are indeed introducing a powerful institutional alternative to the profit oriented market structure, and suggesting the collective delight of altruism in place of personal pursuit of pleasure and happiness. In its current mindset, the market economy provides only an illusionary and transient enjoyment of delusion; one that is momentary and never satisfactory. I believe that what the popular descriptions of success indoctrinate, and what the historiography celebrates in the Industrial Revolution is in fact alienation to our nature. I would like to finish with a passage from the seventeenth century thinker John Locke.

...But if they perished in his possession without their due use - if the fruits rotted or the venison putrefied before he could spend it, he offended against the common law of Nature, and was liable to be punished... if either the grass of his enclosure rotted on the ground, or the fruit of his planting perished without gathering, and laying

³⁰ Luke, 12:13-21, NIV.

³¹ Arthur Just Jr., *Luke: Ancient Christian Commentary on the Scripture* (InterVarsity Press Academic, 2003), 208.

³² Proverbs, 28:7, NIV.

up, this part of the earth, notwithstanding his enclosure, was still to be looked on as waste, and might be the possession of any other....He was only to look, that he used before they spoiled, else he took more than his share, and robbed others. And indeed it was a foolish thing, as well as dishonest, to hoard up more than he could make use of. If he gave away a part to anybody else, so that it perished not uselessly in his possession, these he also made use of. And if he also bartered away plums, that would have rotted in a week, for nuts that would last good for his eating a whole year, he did no injury; he wasted not the common stock; destroyed no part of the portion of goods that belonged to others, so long as nothing perished uselessly in his hands...the exceeding of the bounds of his just property not lying in the largeness of his possession, but the perishing of anything uselessly in it.³³

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³³ John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, v. 37-38, 46 [emphasis added].

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