

## IN MEMORIAM



Galip Veliu  
(1960-2020)

I would personally like to thank Professor Sejdini for writing this short notice in memorium of our beloved colleague and friend Professor Galip Veliu. Galip was an ardent supporter and close follower of our Asian friendship association for philosophers. The readers will be able to find his articles on the journal's website. It is not merely with sadness that he left us suddenly in this transient world lonely but also knowing that we still had many more projects to complete together. I am confident that his students at the Dituria Foundation established by him will carry on his legacy and achieve the prodigious future projects that he sincerely wished to accomplish for the benefit of humanity. It is this hope that is comforting for us, wishing blessings for him and praying in the Islamic tradition for Allah's mercy and generosity. We also decided to add some notes and brief expressions of feelings by his mentors and colleagues. **Rahmatullahi aleyhi rahmatan wasiah.**

Alparslan Açıkgenç, Editor



Second Dituria Foundation International Conference, on "Contemporary Trends in Philosophy" organized by Dr. Veliu, held on 10-12 July 2016, Scopia, Macedonia

In Galip we lost a great spirit, excellent character, and a person of generosity. His philosophical speculation was always encouraging. The memory of Galip will stay with us for inspiration.

Ernest Wolf-Gazo

When our mentor Alparslan Hoca informed one early morning that Galip passed away, he was crying and hardly could speak. Then, I had the same feelings. We both lost a great friend of excellent character, and a person of generosity. He was my classmate during my Ph.D. at METU for many years. He always was a source of cheer-up and laughter for us. But when you began to present some academic stuff, Galip would turn to be the most critical guy in the class, even to our professors. He would quote from Aristotle, his favorite philosopher for obvious reasons, "Plato is my friend, but truth is a better friend". I hope his smiling face and generosity will never fade in my mind.

İbrahim Özdemir

With overwhelming emotions and never-fading memories, I humbly write these lines about a wonderful friend, Prof. Galip Velu, who left us suddenly and quietly a year ago, and joined his Lord in peace, after having lived a simple life full of spirits and joys. I am sure that most of his close acquaintances, like me, would characterize him in short as a passionate inquirer of truth, a benevolent teacher, and an easy-going and caring friend. His cheerful smiles and thoughtful humors remain with us in our hearts for good.

Bilal Kuspinar

Prof. Dr. Zekirija Sejdini  
The University of Vienna  
Faculty of Philology and Cultural Studies  
Vienna, Austria

In early August, at the age of 60, the thinker, philosopher and Islamic theologian from the village Vrapciste, Gostivar, the university professor Dr. Galip Velu unexpectedly passed away. A great loss, not only for his friends and family, but also for the entire Islamic theological community, as well as for many people and especially students, whom he supported and inspired. With this, this region lost an important Muslim thinker and humanist who was an example to many and a bearer of hope in various aspects.

Undeniably, Galip Velu was a critical mind far ahead of his time. Starting from the premise that only change itself remains unchanged, as a theologian and professor of

philosophy, he devoted himself to the critical treatment of various epistemological approaches and theological topics of social importance throughout his life. He was an ardent supporter of the *International Journal of the Asian Philosophical Association* and in earlier issues he published three articles.

One of his intellectual efforts' chief goals was the establishment of an appreciative approach to the plurality and diversity of thought in Islamic theology. For him, the Muslim theologian's approaches hitherto were quite narrow and dogmatic. It was precisely in this where he recognized the true reason for the current stagnation in Islamic theology, which was not orientated towards the new interpretations' development, but rather at the preservation and administration of what was already known and its presentation as an unalterable truth.

According to him, this dogmatic approach should be deconstructed so a diversity of antagonistic thoughts would be enabled, thoughts which encompass mutual appreciation and gratitude and compete for a better understanding of the truth. These thoughts should have no claim to absoluteness, which is a divine trait and consequently inaccessible to humans as contingent and limited beings.

Human interpretations, especially those related to God, are fragmentary and present subjective perspectives, therefore they must always be critically questioned to advance theological thinking. For him, absolutizations and dogmatizations posed great obstacles to the spiritual advancement. Each generation must reinterpret the eternal word of God for its time, without elevating its interpretation to a dogma and without equating it with the word of God.

Consequently, this was the only way to protect individuals from (religious) immaturity and to advance the social enlightenment. This was the only way of achieving a connection with the glorious times of the past, when Muslims reached the peak of their cultural and scientific development, applying an exemplary and incomparable tolerance in advancing the plurality of different opinions.

In achieving this ambitious goal, or paving the way for it, he always dealt with sensitive topics, just as the famous Greek philosopher Socrates did. He addressed specific topics that were considered theologically untouchable, and "dismantled" them using rational arguments with references to the Qur'an. This way it was made clear that behind the truths that were believed to be eternal, there were human interpretations which, depending on the time or context, could have been completely different.

His critique was not directed at the old Islamic tradition, as some misapprehend it, but at its unsparing glorification and acceptance as an eternal truth. He was not hindered by the old Islamic scholars, who, in his opinion, had interpreted the word of God in the best way within the frames of the possibilities of the time. For him, the issue lies with contemporary

individuals who sublimate these interpretations and elevate them to untouchable dogmas in order to avoid their responsibility to make similar achievements in the time in which we live.

He inferred a rare intellectual courage in addressing uncomfortable theological topics and analyzing them from new and unexploited perspectives. This audacity brought him the same accusation raised against Socrates at the time, that he supposedly diverts people, especially young people, from genuine faith. He accepted this accusation as a confirmation of his work, since his aim was to question and doubt the uncontested authority of the clerical establishment in interpreting religious truths. This way he encouraged people to use their reason not to turn away from faith, but from the self-inflicted immaturity in which they had been seduced through indoctrination in the name of God.

Hence, theology should always be practiced with an interdisciplinary approach and with a plurality of different perspectives, so it is not satisfied just by revolving dogmas and doctrines from the old theological books. The purpose of theology could not be the perpetuation of the previous scholars' thoughts, but the interpretation of religion from its context and enabling new perspectives and opportunities for believers.

With his unique approach he managed - like barely any other Islamic theologian before - to inspire many intellectuals about God and religion. In his epic mosque sermons, he referenced the names of modern philosophers such as Immanuel Kant and Karl Popper, to mention two of his favorite philosophers. This freshness of thought, combined with his straightforward and often harsh but extraordinarily authentic style of communication, changed the image of the imam - the backward leader of Muslim prayers, fostered by the communist regime. He was not the epitome of the classical imam, who had to hide from other intellectuals, to hide his lack of knowledge in other fields. He represented a proud Muslim intellectual, who not only had outstanding knowledge on theology and philosophy, but at the same time was still skilled of thinking further and criticizing different opinions and approaches.

Through this new approach to religion and science, he managed to bring the protagonists of both sides closer. He did this by focusing more on finding common grounds rather than insurmountable contradictions between them, as suggested by certain circles. By this, he pointed out that it is not religion and science that are in contradiction with each other, on the contrary, it is the opinions of different protagonists who speak in the name of religion and science which represent only two approaches and attitudes, which can be found in both fields.

He opposed the science dogmatization with the same zeal with which he fought against religious dogmas. He advised all those who wish to see science as a substitute for religion, not to fall into the same traps as those who proclaimed religious dogmas as absolute truths. He saw the exaggeration of man in this approach, the man who is unwilling to accept that every

human knowledge possesses a subjective character and, as such, only has a limited validity, until it is rejected by other knowledge.

Professor Galip Veliu, was not merely an Islamic thinker and progressive theologian who shaped the intellectual discourse with his active participation. He was also a person who, with all his power, worked tirelessly to raise the individual level of education and implement social change. He was aware that the progress hoped for would require concrete financial support for young people, which prompted him to commit to securing student scholarships for 25 years.

His honesty and courage, just as his devoted commitment to science and religion in the mosque and at the university, brought him into contact with a person of great material well-being, which led to the establishment of the education and scientific research foundation "Dituria". Thanks to the active financial support and untiring commitment of Prof. Veliu, the foundation has managed to provide scholarships to thousands of students over the past 25 years. The scholarship program supported students from a wide array of fields of study, ranging from medical, natural, applied and social sciences to engineering. In addition to scholarships for undergraduate students, he also provided scholarships for master and doctoral studies, a significant number of which were dedicated to students pursuing their PhD abroad.

Apart from the fact that there is barely any other private foundation in the region that invests this much in education, this foundation is characterized, above all, by the fact that, unlike some other religiously motivated foundations, it is open to everyone and does not expect any compensation from its scholarship holders. Neither does their ideological-religious orientation nor their attitude towards religion play a role in awarding scholarships. The only goal is the successful completion of the academic program and the desire that these scholarship recipients, after their graduation, engage that other students gain similar opportunities and consequently the level of education would gradually increase in the society.

Now, this remarkable personality left this life quietly. In the premises of his beloved foundation, he exhaled his last breath, leaving behind a great void that can hardly be filled. Nevertheless, great souls do not perish when they change their form of life, they continue to live until the fire they lit continues to burn, for other people to take advantage of it. It is now in the hands of friends, colleagues, students and donors who supported and benefited from it to continue this mission. In fact, it is a moral duty to take care and preserve the ideals of this noble soul. Not to pay homage to his thoughts and views, but to bring them to life, since ideas and traditions do not live through ash being passed down from generation to generation, but fire.

May God reward this great soul and friend of knowledge and wisdom for his important contribution to our society. To those whom he left behind, may God give them patience, but above all the strength to continue on this path and realize his ideals, to keep him alive.