

“TURKISH HUMANISM PROJECT” IN THE EARLY REPUBLICAN PERIOD

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Güneş Altınbaş Serezli

ABSTRACT

THE “TURKISH HUMANISM PROJECT” IN THE EARLY REPUBLICAN PERIOD

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This dissertation aims at analyzing the debates among intellectuals concerning humanism, and concurrently designed “Turkish Humanism Project” during the nation/identity-building process in the early decades of Turkey’s Republican Era.

During İnönü Era (1938-1950), the nationalism and westernization of Atatürk’s reforms turned into an uncompromising secularism, and consequently humanist culture and “humanism” became the quasi-formal ideology of the state. In order to spread the newly designed cultural policy, then unnamed “Turkish Humanism Project” was developed. The present dissertation starts with debates on humanism among those intellectuals who were influential over the decision of the state to support humanist culture. Following that, it analyzes the three pillars of the project, namely, Greek and Latin lessons in high school curriculum, establishment of the Translation Office, and opening of the Village Institutes, respectively.

In the dissertation, the emergence of humanism in the country is discussed in an historical perspective. Moreover, the general understanding of both the intellectuals and the state of humanism as a solution to the problems faced in cultural and national identity-building process and in westernization movement is demonstrated. As that perception evolved into another perception that humanism was now the cure to all kinds of problems in the society, humanism was charged with tasks too burdensome for such a project to accomplish. This evolution is also demonstrated in the dissertation.

The failure of all three pillars of Turkish Humanism Project is attributed not only to the political turmoil during the period but also to the inability of country's intellectuals to conceptualize any phenomena in question as well as their turning the project into a "utopian romanticism" in the course of time. Nevertheless, the most important factor behind the failure is defined as the rejection by then existing social structure of a concept to alien Turkish national-being, imposed on the society.

While the dissertation aims at revealing the intellectual map of the early Republican intellectuals, it also attempts at making an inventory of the debates about "humanism", and hence modestly contributes to the existing relevant literature which is insufficient and at times inaccurate.

Key Words: Turkish Humanism, Humanism Debates, Translation Office, Village Institutes, Blue Anatolia Humanism.

ÖZ

ERKEN CUMHURİYET DÖNEMİNDE “TÜRK HÜMANİZMİ PROJESİ”

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Bu tez, erken Cumhuriyet Döneminde Türk ulusal/kültürel kimliğinin inşası sürecinde, aydınlar arasında ortaya çıkan hümanizm tartışmalarını ve beraberinde tasarlanan “Türk Hümanizmi Projesi”ni incelemeyi hedeflemiştir.

1938-1950 yılları arasında İnönü Döneminde, Atatürk Devrimlerinin milliyetçilik ve Batıcılık karakteri, tavizsiz bir laikliğe ve hümanist kültüre dönüşmüş, “hümanizm” devletin yarı-resmî ideolojisi olmuştur. Yeni belirlenen kültür politikasının yayılması için adı konmamış bir “Türk Hümanizmi Projesi” geliştirilmiştir. Tezde, hümanist kültürün devlet eliyle desteklenmesini başlatan aydınların hümanizm tartışmalarından yola çıkılmış ve daha sonra Proje’nin üç ayağı olan liselere Yunanca ve Latince dil derslerinin koyulması, Tercüme Bürosu’nun kurulması ve Köy Enstitülerinin açılması çabaları incelenmiştir.

Hümanizmin ülkede ilk benimsenmeye başlanması, aydınların ve devletin hümanizmi ülkenin kültürel/ulusal/Batılılaşma kimliğine bir çare olarak görmesi, her türlü sorunun ilacı olarak algılaması ve ona kaldıramayacağı görevler yüklemesi üzerinde durulmuştur.

Türk Hümanizmi Projesi’nin üç ayağının da hayal kırıklığı ile sonlanması ise, dönemin siyasi çalkantılarının yanı sıra, ülke aydınlarının kavramsallaştıramama sorununa ve zamanla Proje’nin “ütopik bir romantizm”e dönüştürülmesine ama en önemlisi de Türk milletinin bünyesinde var olmayan bir kavramın, benimsetilmek istendiğinde sosyal yapının bunu reddetmesine bağlanmıştır.

Tez, erken Cumhuriyet döneminin aydınlarının düşünce haritasını çıkarmayı amaçlarken, ülkede “hümanizm” kavramı tartışmalarının da bir dökümünü

yapmayı, bu sayede bu konuda eksik ve yanlış olan literatürün düzeltilmesine ufak da olsa bir katkıda bulunmayı hedeflemiştir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Türk Hümanizmi, Hümanizm Tartışmaları, Tercüme Bürosu, Köy Enstitüleri, Mavi Anadolu Hümanizmi.

To My Beloved Husband Tuğhan Serezli

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Westernization movement in Turkey which formally started in 1839 with the Tanzimat Period, continues to be a debated issue in stalemate. The reforms, which have been made for over approximately two hundred years all aimed at rebuilding the social and cultural fabric of the Turkish society.

Saffet Engin explains how Westernism took root in Turkey. At the beginning of the 1800s, not only European goods and services but also ideas were flowing into the country. Western institutions were being adopted and an intense relationship with the West was developing. The economic relations between Turkey and the West diversified in time into a rigorous social intercourse. In addition to this, from the early years of the 1890s, Turkish students who went to Europe for educational purposes started to return to the country with new ideas and customs as well as their experiences in a different social structure. As the number of such students increased, European ideas, languages, mentality, and the concept of being European penetrated into the country. Afterwards, this European stream gained a national character. Being Turkish, Turkish history, Turkish civilization, and Turkish literature became popular themes as, the idea of modernity and nation-state ascended, and a literature on these issues started to emerge. These modernist currents were going to prepare the ground for the great Turkish revolution of a new Turkey in near future.¹

This “New Turkey” in the minds of the proponents of these currents was to be a totally new country, in terms of its economic, social, and cultural fabric. For this reason, there was a tendency among these people to reject the cultural accumulation of thousands of years which conveyed traditions, culture, and the ways of life of its predecessors to the present society; that is to say, not only the whole Ottoman culture but also the preceding Turkish culture was to be ignored while the West was to become the main reference point. The proponents of these currents saw the West as

¹ M. Saffet Engin, *Kemalizm İnkılâbının Prensipleri – Büyük Türk Medeniyetinin Tarihî ve Sosyolojik Tetkikine Methal I-II-III*, Cumhuriyet Matbaası, İstanbul, 1938, Vol.1, pp. 11-12.

the solution to their cultural-identity crisis. While they were striving to adopt the cultural and social aspects of the West, they realized that the “root” of these aspects were not identical to that of their own.

The “culture-identity crisis”, which surfaced in relation with this very difference between the “roots”, has been one of the biggest problems Turkish society has faced and tried to solve but failed to do so since the late Ottoman times.

In the early years of the Republican era many intellectuals² tried to address this crisis in various ways. While some of the intellectuals advocated following the East because of their “roots” (including religion, traditions, and customs), certain others supported the emulation of the material aspects of the West as well as the preservation of the origins of Turkish culture. On the other hand, still another group of intellectuals proposed the emulation of both the culture and the material aspects of the West, since in their view both aspects of a civilization could not so easily be separated from each other.

One of the common things among these seemingly very different viewpoints was “humanism”. Although each of these currents perceived “humanism” from their own perspective, this concept became a hot issue in which all intellectuals and different currents were interested, especially between 1938 and 1950.

Within Turkish nationalism that was being constructed, there were various different paths proposed. Although humanist culture was supported by a faction in the government (and especially by İnönü), and there were some attempts made within that path, humanist culture did not leave its mark during the period as the most dominant path. Regarding that period, it is hard to identify a general tendency, and it should be added that not all the policies devised during the period revolved around “humanism”. In this thesis, “humanism” shall be analyzed in two respects, namely, humanism confined to the intellectual milieu, and humanism as a policy supported by İnönü and Hasan Âli Yücel. The idea among the intellectuals that “humanism” was the solution to the crisis in culture and identity was expressed in the prominent journals and newspapers of the period, and, after a while, this current of

² The meaning of “intellectual” has been debated since its coinage during the “Drayfus Affair” in France and has been always vague as to which “group of people” or “who” is represented with this concept. In this thesis, the group “intellectuals” comprises prominent politicians, academics, and columnists in newspapers and journals of the period covered.

thought became widespread to the extent that it became the quasi-formal ideology during the so-called İnönü era. This quasi-formal ideology was put in practice as a cultural policy by the then Minister of Education, Hasan Âli Yücel, through various means to disseminate humanism within the country. In this thesis, the totality of these means is taken as a “project” as, they were devised in advance and then implemented. The main aim of all these means was to develop a specifically a “Turkish Humanism” [Türk Hürmanizmi]. Several of these implementations were: Bearing in mind the foundations of humanism, Greek and Latin courses were included into the curriculum of high schools, a Translation Office was established by the state to translate ancient Greek and Latin literature and the works of humanist authors of the Renaissance into Turkish; and, finally, the Village Institutes were established to disseminate humanism in every corner of the country to be adopted by young generations.

As shall be demonstrated in this thesis, the overall project aiming at developing “Turkish Humanism” did not work properly. Political problems during the İnönü era led to suspension of the state support to various projects. Besides, intellectuals of the time lost their prior enthusiasm and belief in this grand project and, consequently, the current of humanism was confined to a fraction of intellectuals, failing to reach out to the common people.

In fact, in the beginning, the current of humanism was thought to be the solution to the ills of the society and expectations were running high. Humanism was something akin to a saviour. It would become the foundation of a national and cultural identity and the way Turkish society would express itself. Humanism, with its ideology, would transform Turkish nation into a nation now having a Western national and cultural identity. The ancient Greek civilization, which had its roots in Anatolia, would fill up the cultural void which the country was, presently in, and young generations would turn into Europeans through specific educational projects.

Unfortunately, humanism could not deliver almost all of the expected results mentioned above. On the one hand, humanism’s secular approach clashed with Turkish nationalism; on the other, the European roots of humanism led to an incompatibility with the country’s existing cultural fabric. At the end, the development of “Turkish Humanism” failed as a project.

Thus the thesis aims at investigating the short yet intensive experience of the humanism movement in Turkey between 1938 when the so-called İnönü era started and 1950 when the concept was no more on the agenda of the country. In the first part of the thesis, the concept of “humanism”, on which no consensus has been reached due to its vague and unclear meaning, shall be defined with reference to its historical roots. Thereby, the historical development of the concept shall be analyzed. Nevertheless, the concept of humanism, which has emerged in the Renaissance and took on different meanings in the course of time, shall be studied vis-à-vis its meaning during Renaissance.

The main part of this thesis, namely Turkish Humanism, starts with an investigation of how the concept was introduced into Turkey’s scene. The reason why pre-1938 period is analyzed is to compare the previous period with the post-1938 period when the concept came to the forefront on the country’s agenda, and to demonstrate how the discussions about the concept evolved in the course of time. The main themes of the debates among intellectuals and how the concept was perceived as a tool in filling up the void in cultural and national identity in this era shall also be discussed in this part of the thesis. Moreover, humanism as an ambitious project supported by the state in the late 1930s shall be examined. In this respect, the three pillars of this project, namely Greek and Latin courses in high school curriculum, the founding of the Translation Office, and the Village Institutes shall be analyzed in detail with reference to planning and implementation of these pillars, and how they contributed to the project of humanism in Turkey.

As already stated, in the 1950s humanism as a project lost its popularity and, instead, it became a phenomenon that was confined to the intellectual community and could not reach out to the common people. In the meantime, as regards to the roots of humanism, it was now argued by a current of thought named “Blue Anatolian Humanism” [Mavi Anadolu Hümerizmi] that the roots of humanism lay not in the ancient Greek and Roman civilizations but in were ancient Anatolian traditions. The beliefs and ideas of the members of this current need therefore be included in this analysis. Following that, Suat Sinanođlu’s book, *Türk Humanizmi* (1961), which analyses the concept of humanism within the framework of East-West dichotomy, shall be critically reviewed.

In the “Conclusion”, such questions as whether or not Turkish Humanism Project achieved its goals, and if not, the reasons behind its failure, and apart from the “project”, why humanism could not survive in the country shall be addressed.

This thesis therefore aims to decipher the relationship of a current of thought which was confined to the literature of an era. Humanism as a current of thought has never been perceived as a “project” and investigated in depth as such. In the literature there is only one recent book that dwells on Turkish Humanism as well as the debates among intellectuals regarding the topic.³ However, due to the educational background of its author (theology), it can be argued that the book exhibits a strongly subjective attitude. Apart from this, other studies regarding the concept dwell on only one of its aspects, namely, the Village Institutes and the Translation Office. Nevertheless, these attempts are not seen as a part of the whole, namely building a “humanist culture” in Turkey. The studies on “humanism” during the İnönü era lack focus concerning this concept. In sum, because the relevant literature is insufficient, and sometimes subjective and inaccurate, this study dwells on the essays⁴ and memoirs of the intellectuals who either supported or opposed humanism.

It should be noted that no categorization is made among regarding these intellectuals who supported humanism. Such categorization can be observed in various studies and it misleads the reader in properly understanding the subject and the intellectuals of the era.⁵ The intellectuals who supported humanism in the Republican period cannot easily be categorized under one or various groups. Although some shared common views on several issues, each intellectual was unique

³ Yümni Sezen, *Hümanizm ve Atatürk Devrimleri*, Ayışığı Kitapları, İstanbul, 1997.

⁴ To refer to the works of the Turkish intellectuals of the time, the word “essay” is used instead of “article” because, as shall be seen in the thesis in detail, their works were not academic; they were written for newspapers and journals and their content was formed of personnel views, sentiments, and observations.

⁵ Yümni Sezen in his book *Hümanizm ve Atatürk Devrimleri* attributes all the ideas in Suat Sinanoğlu’s *Türk Humanizmi* to the so-called “Turkish Humanists”. Nevertheless, all the mentioned things in this book are informed by Sinanoğlu’s arguments and ideas. On the other hand, Orhan Türkdoğan in his book *Değişme Kültür ve Sosyal Çözülme* (Birleşik Yayıncılık, İstanbul, 1988) labels all the intellectuals who advocated humanism, as “Cultural Humanists / Kültürde Hümanistler”. Besides, he does not clearly state what he means by the word “humanist” despite the fact that he employs such label. The meaning of humanist is as vague as that of humanism.

in terms of his/her view. Besides the vagueness of the concepts debated, makes it hard to make generalizations.

Nevertheless, one generalization can temporarily be made regarding Turkish intellectuals and Turkish society at large, namely their lack of interest in the(ir) past and their narrow focus only on the “present”.⁶ The interest only in the “current” state of affairs and the perception of the past as “just the past” leads to difficulties in solution of many problems within the country. It is always forgotten that one arrives at today via the past when everything is taken on with a focus on the “present”. This thesis aims to analyze the thoughts and the goals of intellectuals regarding humanism in the nascent Republican Turkey which was founded on the heritage of seven centuries long Ottoman Empire. Hence the main argument of the thesis can be stated as follows: The profile of the intellectuals in this era, and why a concept like humanism which did not emerge within the social structure spontaneously; instead being imported from “outside” and imposed on the society via such projects -other concepts can also be deemed as such regarding their emergence- clashed with the “roots” of being Turkish, the structure of Turkish society, and how the latter reacted against humanism, are demonstrated. On the other hand, it will be clear not a coherently formulated and defended a “Turkish Humanism”, but certainly there was the reality of Turkish Humanists.

⁶ For details, see: Kurtuluş Kayalı, *Türk Düşünce Dünyasında Yol İzleri*, İletişim, İstanbul, 2003 [2001].

CHAPTER 2

HUMANISM

2.1. The Meaning of Humanism

The concept of “humanism” has always suffered from a vague meaning. Besides both “humanism” and “humanitarianism” are inappropriately used interchangeably in inappropriate contexts. Despite these problems, one can attempt an overall definition of humanism by probing into its roots, historical development, as well as cultural, ideological, and philosophical aspects attached to the concept.

The corresponding abstract noun, “humanism”, was first used in the German language. The word *humanismus* was similarly used in the education in Germany in the early Nineteenth Century to refer to the traditional classic education built around humanities.¹ Zekiyan inquired into the roots of “humanism” and found out that the word “humanism” was derived from the word *humanismus* in Latin. *Humanismus* comes from the word *humanus* and is the adjective form of *homo* – referring to *human* – and it means something peculiar to, inherent in or related to man. By removing the *us* from the word *humanus* and adding *ismus*, the noun, *humanismus* is formed. Generally, this word leads to an “anthropocentric” way of thinking.²

The word *humanismus*, along with the word *philanthropinismus*, was first used by a German professor Friedrich Immanuel Niethammer (1766-1848) in his article “Der Streit des Philanthropinismus und des Humanismus” (1808), which was concerned with methods of teaching this concept. The term became widespread among philologists in the period of 1870-1875 and usually meant to refer to a historical era (Renaissance Period) as well as a specific moral attitude. For Zekiyan, the spirit of *humanismus* lies in the *humanistas* morals, which were accepted and

¹ Richard Norman, *On Humanism*, Routledge, London, New York, 2004, p. 9.

² Boğos Zekiyan, *Humanizm (İnsancılık), Düşünsel İçlem ve Tarihsel Kökenler*, İnkılâp ve Aka, İstanbul, 1982, p. 15.

developed by the modernized man that adopted Greek and Roman moral principles during the Renaissance Period as a model.³

The word *humanistas* and its historical roots and development are further explained by Zekiyan.⁴ *Humanistas* refers to human nature, human community and also virtue and habits which are unique to man. *Humanistas* was first used by Cicero in 80 B.C. and it was not derived from the word *homo*, which meant the being of man, but from the adjective *humanus*, which means the distinctive human ideal. This human ideal was also used as a method of educating man. Such education was centred on knowledge, science and man's reason. Cicero identified methods which would bring up a man, and called them *studia humanitatis* or *studia humanitatis et litterarum*. After Cicero, *humanistas* was used more often among Latin philosophers not in a moral manner, but as the opposite of *divinitas*, which referred to the poor, sinful and mortal characteristics of man. This usage of *humanistas* continued during the medieval age. In the Renaissance period Leonardo Bruni (1369-1444) was inspired by Cicero and reshaped *studia humanitatis* for human education, meaning a new soul for all humanity.⁵

The word *humanistas* actually refers to *paideia* in ancient Greek life. *Paideia* is a kind of education/training of the man's mental and physical faculties, having the aim to create a shared cultural and political ethos and a common outlook in the Greek society. Therefore, the origin of the word *humanism* can be traced back to ancient Greeks, thanks to its shared ideal with *paideia*.

2.2. The Renaissance Humanism

Although the Greek word *paideia* and Latin word *humanismus*, both of which refer to a method of teaching, are dated in ancient Greek and Roman civilizations and the medieval period, respectively, humanism could only become a current of culture

³ Ibid. p. 16. Referring to: Georg Voight, *Die Wiederbelebung des klassischen Altertums oder das erste Jahrhundert des Humanismus*, 4. Press, Berlin, 1859 [1960].

⁴ Boğos Zekiyan, *Humanizm...*, pp. 17-19.

⁵ Ibid. p. 22.

during the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries in the Renaissance period.⁶ Human-beings and their lives which were transformed and developed during this period constitute a very wide topic. For this reason, the historical development of the Renaissance period, which was taken as an example by the Turkish humanists and also during which the current of humanism became widespread, need to be examined, and the transformations, which human beings experienced as a consequence of anthropocentric view throughout this period has to be briefly underlined.

It is widely believed that the conquest of Istanbul by Mehmet the Conqueror and the subsequent flight of Byzantium's men of letters to Italy is the main reason behind the emergence of the Renaissance. Nevertheless, Westerners learnt ancient Greek philosophy already in the Twelfth and Thirteenth centuries through the Islamic civilization. Besides, they were aware of the ancient Greek art through Romans.⁷ Stephen states:

[T]his language [Greek], which had virtually disappeared from the West during the Middle Ages, spread during the fifteenth century not, as is often supposed, with the flight of scholars from the East after the Turkish capture of Constantinople in 1453, but as a result of invitations extended to Byzantine scholars like Manuel Chrysoloras to lecture in Florence and Rome in the 1390s.⁸

Once Islam penetrated the West starting with the Twelfth Century through Sicily and Andalusia, a great era of translation in Italy was ushered in.⁹ Manuscripts in ancient Greek and Roman were translated and reprinted at a great pace. Initially, these works were used in the field of education. However, in the course of time, members of the bourgeoisie developed interest in these texts which became increasingly popular among commoners.

⁶ The word "Renaissance" was used before the Nineteenth Century in various meanings. Nevertheless, none of these usages meant the concept with upper case "Renaissance" that specifically referred to rebirth in art and literature. See: Lucien Febvre, *Rönesans İnsanı*, Mehmet Ali Kılıçbay (trans.), İmge, Ankara, 1995, p. 13.

⁷ Hilmi Ziya Ülken, *Uyanış Devirlerinde Tercümenin Rolü*, Vakıf, İstanbul, 1935, p. 16.

⁸ Stephen J. Lee, *Aspects of European History 1494-1789*, Routledge, London, New York, 1984 [1978], p. 1.

⁹ Hilmi Ziya Ülken, *Uyanış...*, p. 237.

It was not a coincidence that the Renaissance first emerged in Italy and not somewhere else, since Italy was the busiest European region in terms of social, cultural, and political activities because of its unrivalled status in trade. It was partially a democratic structure formed by city states. Within such a structure, all cities became independent states and developed themselves freely.¹⁰

Humanism was also born in France between 1490 and 1520, mainly through the attempts of members of various classes to change their class-status. The ancient thought could only surface under such new volatile circumstances in France.¹¹ When these two examples are examined, it can be argued that humanism emerged in both countries “spontaneously” in accordance with different social circumstances. This phenomenon, as shall be examined in greater detail, addresses the question why the project of Turkish Humanism quickly lost its function. After the Turkish Revolution, it was widely believed that a “Renaissance Period” would emerge in the country and the model to be adopted for this prospective period was naturally the Renaissance Humanism. Moreover, it was also believed that something similar to the economic, social, political, educational, and cultural renovations of the Renaissance Period would be experienced in the country.

When the Italian, French, and German humanisms -the latter also known as *Neo-Humanismus*¹²- are examined, it becomes evident that one is different from the other. Nevertheless, the humanism, which was inspired by religion, and constituted the identity and history of Europe, and still exists there, can be defined as Western Humanism that emerged in the Renaissance Period. It was inspired by ancient Greek and Roman world and shaped by Christian principles and hence can be labelled as Christian humanism.¹³ The Renaissance Humanism fell into pieces and lost its origin

¹⁰ Macit Gökberk, *Felsefe Tarihi*, Remzi, İstanbul, 1996, p. 189.

¹¹ Lucien Febvre, *Rönesans İnsanı...*, p. 66.

¹² Paulsen from Germany used the concept of “Neo-Humanismus” in 1885. His aim was to propose a Greco-German alternative against the Latin-Italian based Renaissance humanism. F. Paulsen, *Geschichte des gelehrten Unterrichts auf den deutschen Schulen und Universitäten vom Ausgang des Mittelalters bis zur Gegenwart*, Leipzig, 1885. Cited in Boğos Zekiyan, *Humanizm...*, p. 30.

¹³ Bullock states the following regarding this topic: “As a rough generalization, Western thought has treated man and the cosmos in three distinct modes. The first, supernatural or the transcendental has focused on God, treating man as a part of Divine Creation. A second, the natural or scientific, has

in the course of time. Although different branches adopted different ideologies, all of them can be grouped under the “Western Humanism” since they had a secular attitude towards the problematic of “the human”. Some studies claim that there are also other humanisms such as Greek, Indian, Chinese, and Islamic apart from the Western humanism. Nevertheless, this thesis only dwells on the Western humanism which emerged during the Renaissance, and it excludes other types of possible humanisms related to different countries and religions.

Doğan Özlem (1944-) explains the Renaissance period as follows:

It transforms its people into individuals. For this reason, it does not ignore Christian dogmas and it can be deemed as the product of the desire to independently investigate the origins of human and to dwell on the human problematic under the pressure of the Christian dogmas.¹⁴

The aim of these investigations was to assign individuality to human beings. “More human, less God”¹⁵ because of the fact that human factor was an insignificant part of the “divine mechanic” in a world determined by divine will and foresight. However, there was no solution but to start with his/her own reality and “mind” for human beings in search for their individuality. Therefore, humanism can be seen as a current of gaining individuality at both personal and national levels.¹⁶

Man’s discovery of his own power, re-exploration of himself, and perception of his body and soul as a whole; his learning of nature, philosophy, arts, and science and his interest in them; his perception that man is the most precious creature in the cosmos; his domination over nature for his own benefit and also his belief that one conquered the nature, presented man and humanity an unimagined life and individuality. That situation which emerged with the current of humanism in the Renaissance period, was perceived as a “miraculous world” one by some in which a brand new human and cosmos was born out of the inspiration from the ancient Greek

focused on Nature and treats man as part of the natural order like other organisms. The third, the humanistic, has focused on Man, and on human experience as the starting point for man’s knowledge of himself, of God and of Nature.” Alan Bullock, *The Humanist Tradition in the West*, Thames and Hudson, Great Britain, 1985, p. 16.

¹⁴ Doğan Özlem, *Tarih Felsefesi, İnkılâp*, İstanbul, 2004, p. 45.

¹⁵ The original statement in Turkish is: “Daha çok insan, daha az tanrıydı.”

¹⁶ *Ibid.* p. 46.

and Roman civilizations. That brand new human profile was aware of the fact that his unhappiness was caused by the Church and hence he strived to change the hold of the Church over him. He became the master of his destiny with his mind and will. That situation was perceived as miraculous by some people because they believed that the humanity would never attain the spiritual level of the ancient Greek and Roman civilizations and it would never enjoy any enlightenment similar to that of the Renaissance.

Nevertheless, some critics argue that neither the ancient Greek and Roman civilizations nor the Renaissance period was miraculous in the above sense. On the other hand, as Romans acquired humanist thinking from the ancient Greeks, people who believe the ancient Greek civilization was a miracle are numerous.¹⁷ This debate was also widespread among Turkish humanists, and Hilmi Ziya Ülken, who was a prominent advocate of Turkish Humanism, criticized such claims. According to Ülken, Europeans always perceived the Renaissance as a miracle to the extent that they distinguished between the Renaissance and the Medieval Period as if they were day and night.¹⁸ Ülken argued that the Medieval Period was not a dark age. On the contrary, it was the process by which the foundations of the Renaissance were laid and developed. Therefore, according to Ülken, ancient civilizations were nothing but a necessary link in the chain of continuously developing thought, just like other civilizations.¹⁹

2.3. Ancient Greek Civilization: A Miracle?

Identification of a civilization as unique and “miraculous” draws on “single culture” and “single civilization” theory.²⁰ Nevertheless, this theory is rejected by modern sociology. This kind of theory misleads the modern man by preventing his attempt to understand his development and value, and his efforts to situate himself in

¹⁷ Heidegger does not take either of the two as a miracle. Besides, he traces “humanism” only back to Romans. Martin Heidegger, “Letter On Humanism”, William McNeill (ed.), Frank A. Capuzzi (trans.), *Pathmarks*, Cambridge University, Cambridge, 1998, p. 244.

¹⁸ Hilmi Ziya Ülken, *Uyanış...*, pp. 315-316.

¹⁹ Hilmi Ziya Ülken, *Uyanış...*, pp. 315-316.

²⁰ Yümni Sezen, *Hümanizm ve Atatürk Devrimleri...*, pp. 98-99.

time and history. Civilizations or cultures do not develop in a linear manner although one can identify their emergence, growth, and gradual development. Throughout human history various civilizations rose and fell and none of them happened simultaneously. There are three reasons why the ancient Greek civilization is perceived as the root of “humanism” and hence “miraculous”. These are its democratic and secular structure and the fact that the origins of everything about today’s art and science was laid down in this ancient civilization.

The democratic structure of the ancient Greek civilization in fact was not something similar to today’s understanding of democracy. Contrary to the general belief, the social structure of the time was based on strong hierarchies and great inequalities, and freedom and democracy in today’s terms was not the case. Only men could be the citizens and yet they had partial rights. On the other hand, women were in total isolation from the social life even if they constituted together with the male and female slaves, and the mercenaries, the majority of population in Athens and other city states. It was hard to speak of any solidarity or brotherhood in the ancient Greek society: “The life was about a brutal reality that was based on calculations for individual survival.”²¹ Yet, one should not judge the then democracy according to today’s standards, since such democracy, which some characterize as a “miracle”, was a military democracy as Marx and Engels argued, and not a contemporary social democracy.²²

The other reason, namely the fact that the origins of everything about today’s art and science was laid down in this ancient civilization, leads to an argument that there could be no progress in the world had the ancient Greeks not develop art, science, and philosophy. The counter argument, is endorsed by some of the Turkish humanists, is that all the progress registered during the ancient Greek civilization was possible due to the imitation and adoption of the previous Anatolian civilization. The

²¹ Hasan Ünal Nalbantoğlu, *Anadolu Uygarlıklarından 3.Binyıla Mesajlar – Geçmişten Geleceğe Arayışlar Buluşması*, İstanbul, 9-10 Mart 2002, TMMOB, İstanbul, 2004, pp. 177-178.

²² The original statement is: “[C]ouncil and assembly of the people function together with the basileus, the word basileia, which Greek writers employ to denote the so-called Homeric kinship (chief command in the army being the principal characteristics of the office), only means – military democracy (Marx).” Friedrich Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, Penguin, England, 1985 [1972], p. 139.

former had very strong ties with Ionia²³ in the west Anatolia. Therefore, it is argued that the roots of humanism and the inheritor of the ancient Greek civilization lie in today's Aegean region in Turkey. This argument, not to be developed in this thesis, is quite a respected one, and many European academics today discredit the argument that everything about the modern life comes from the ancient Greek civilization.

Another reason behind the perception of "Ancient Greek Miracle" is the belief that humanism first emerged in this civilization. In fact, many other civilizations, long before the Greeks, such as Egyptian and Hindu civilizations dwelled on the human problematic and tried to locate man and his function in the cosmos. Nevertheless, it should be stressed that philosophy proper first emerged in the ancient Greek civilization by the philosophers' *peri physeos*²⁴ studies.²⁵ With these studies, Greek philosophers could perceive nature, so to speak, scientifically, and separate it from religion. Bearing in mind that the most important factor behind humanism is secularism, and secularism first emerged in the ancient Greek civilization, the latter can be deemed "miraculous" as perhaps the earliest secular society.

"Secularism" is an unclear and hard to define concept as well. A concept known as separation of social life from religion, secularism, if that is an appropriate term, was regarded in ancient Greek civilization in similar terms and led to separation of man and nature from religion, paving the way to eventual elimination of religious lenses on these matters. The inquiry, into nature by faculties of reason and will, independent from god and religion, led to progress in sciences, and the consequent domination of nature by man resulted with comparison of man with the gods in the mythology. The idea that there was no difference between man and the gods/goddesses –namely, the latter were simple creatures like humans, constituted the main theme of the ancient Greek secularism. Among the works, which dwelled on deification of man or humanisation of god, Homer's works were the earliest and

²³ The regions around today's Aydın and İzmir.

²⁴ [Doğa üzerine] – "On nature"

²⁵ Macit Gökberk, *Felsefe Tarihi...*, p. 13.

they were labelled as Homer's miracle. His works have been very popular for thousands of years.

2.4. Homer's "Miracle"

Some of the Humanists and Turkish Humanists²⁶ admire Homer and label him as "the first humanist". The reason behind such a label is the deification of man and humanisation of gods (with all the weaknesses of man) in his two epic stories, *The Iliad*, and *The Odyssey*.

In these epic stories, man was a demigod fearless and with extraordinary powers. On the other hand, gods had weaknesses and feelings endemic to humans, such as jealousy, lying, and failing to achieve their goals. Homer's epics brought a new dimension to the relationship between men and gods, and they became a great inspiration for Homer's successors. They opened a "secular" way ahead for humanity. Consequently, human's self respect increased as he was deified. The reason of referral to the ancient Greek civilization during the Renaissance was a similar desire to deify human being.

At this point, another story that influenced later humanists is also worth mentioning. The story of Prometheus in which he stole the fire against the gods' will for the benefit of humanity and his consequent punishment was admired especially by the members of the Blue Anatolian Humanism in Turkey. Nevertheless, there is a difference between the myth of Prometheus and the epics of Homer with regard to the relationship between man and god. In the latter, Homer used men and gods interchangeably. In the former, man rises up against god. In the following section, the ambiguous relationship between humanism and religion/god is explored in detail.

2.5. Humanism and Religion: Some Definitions

As mentioned before, humanism as a concept has contradictory and vague meanings. For this reason it is more appropriate to employ "humanist approaches (or philosophies)" instead of the concept of "humanism" per se. Humanist approaches

²⁶ The admiration of Homer among the members of "Blue Anatolian Humanism" shall be examined in detail in the Chapter 5, Section 1.

can be classified under two broad groups, namely, approaches based on religious beliefs and approaches that totally reject religion.

The secular attitude which made the ancient Greece a “miracle” and constituted the core feature of humanism, was for the first time used in a manner that opposed Christianity with the concept of *saculum* in the Thirteenth Century. Priests who abstained from daily life and the mortal world were the *saeculum*, and constituted the clergy. On the other hand, priests who were involved in daily life and did not belong to a strict religious order could be seen as seculars. In English, the word “secular”, mostly in negative meaning, was used to distinguish among these two types of clergy and it was used to denote the members of the latter group.²⁷

In this thesis, humanism is taken on within the first approach, namely the idea that humanism does not exclude religion; rather it is nourished and developed by religion. Nevertheless, in the following paragraphs various definitions of humanism are examined in order to investigate further the relationship between humanism and religion in order to demonstrate how the concept have been perceived in different ways.²⁸

The current of humanism, which is about the search for the “the essence of human”, is defined by Macit Gökberk (1908-1993) as “establishment of a culture that is independent from religion”. On the other hand, Boğos Zekiyan (1943-), who studied theology, defines humanism as a current which opposes degradation of man and the world, standing against all kinds of bigotry. For this reason, humanism can be taken as worldview which respects religion.²⁹

Lee intimates that humanism does not mean sidelining God, as in the following quote: “Christian humanism was undoubtedly the mainstream of

²⁷ Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, “The Political Authority of Secularism in International Relations”, *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 10, No. 2, 2004, pp. 235, 236.

²⁸ Bullock states the following regarding this topic: “I found that humanism, humanist, humanistic and the humanities are words that no one has ever succeeded in defining to anyone else’s satisfaction, protean words which mean very different things to different people and leave lexicographers and encyclopaedists with a feeling of exasperation and frustration.”, *The Humanist Tradition in the West...*, p. 8.

²⁹ Boğos Zekiyan, *Humanizm...*, p. 26.

Renaissance thought, for the rediscovery of man did not necessarily mean the abandonment of God.”³⁰

Another proof of the fact that in the Renaissance, humanism progressed by leaning on religion instead of severing the ties with the latter is the works of art of the period. Almost all the stories in the Bible were portrayed in those works. Again Lee puts it:

The religious synthesis with humanism is apparent in the Creation of Adam on the roof of the Sistine Chapel where Adam is created God’s image, but God is an idealized version of man. Architecture also displayed for all to see the revised connection between God and man. Two views of the proportions of the Renaissance church illustrate the emphasis on the human and the divine.³¹

Ahmet Cevizci defines humanism as a philosophical current which understands human being as the sole and the highest source of value and in which freedom of man comes to the forefront.³² Cevizci traces the emergence of humanism back to Socrates who has put human in the centre of everything as well as to Protagoras, who stated that “man is the measure of all things”. According to Cevizci, humanism is based on atheism and agnosticism and it excludes religion and religious beliefs, and hence opposing any deterministic or reductionist approach to human beings. He adds that humanism in the Twentieth Century became synonyms to atheism or secularism. Cevizci explains the contemporary humanisms as follows: Existentialism which brings man and human consciousness to the forefront and advocates that there is no universe apart from the one that is man’s universe or created by the subjectivity of man; personalism which argues that man has transcendent powers; pragmatism which is anthropocentric and hence makes the man

³⁰ Stephen J. Lee, *Aspects of European...*, p. 3.

³¹ Ibid. p. 5.

³² Ahmet Cevizci, *Felsefe Sözlüğü*, “Althusser”, Paradigma, İstanbul, 2002, pp. 514-515. [The original statement in Turkish is: “Genel olarak, akıllı insan varlığını tek ve en yüksek değer kaynağı olarak gören, bireyin yaratıcı ve ahlâkî gelişiminin, rasyonel ve anlamlı bir biçimde, doğaüstü alana hiç başvurmadan, doğal yoldan gerçekleştirilebileceğini belirten, ve bu çerçeve içinde insanın doğallığını, özgürlüğünü ve etkinliğini ön plâna çıkartan felsefî akım.”]

measure of all things; and finally the Marxist humanism, which focuses on alienation.³³

As stated before, Yümni Sezen, who has exhibited a religious approach to humanism, defines the latter as a sanctified mind that pits man against God, deifies man and makes him worship himself, and replaces the sanctified nature, community, and the divine will.³⁴ Sezen argues that the reconciliation of humanism with reason during the Renaissance means creation of man by man and adds that humanism in that period was nurtured by the concept of anthropomorphism, which deviated to atheism, deification, and materialism. For Sezen, the competition between human and Gods led to hatred against God and hence the deification of man. Through the latter, Sezen argues, inquiry and understanding became irrelevant since God was in no need to investigate and understand himself and his creatures. Therefore, Sezen claims that it is a contradiction to posit that humanism is a gateway to nature and enlightenment because by humanism, man's existence and destiny was confined to himself and man became the measure of all things.³⁵

According to Sezen, Europe resurrected some tenets of the ancient Greek philosophy such as racism understood as physical and mental superiority. Thus, humanism in a way created a modern mythology. The religious rejection of humanism Hellenised Christianity and the mixing of Jewish and Greco-Roman mythology, philosophy, and religion established the culture and identity of the West. For Sezen, all these events prevented the establishment of a genuine humanity.³⁶

Edward Said (1935-2003) mentions a more general concept of humanism:

Humanism is not about withdrawal and exclusion. Quite the reverse: its purpose is to make more things available to critical scrutiny as the product of human labour, human energies for emancipation and enlightenment, and just as importantly, human misreadings and misinterpretations of the collective past and present.³⁷

³³ Ibid. pp. 514-515.

³⁴ Yümni Sezen, *Hümanizm ve Atatürk Devrimleri...*, p. 29.

³⁵ Ibid. p. 41.

³⁶ Ibid. p. 362.

³⁷ Edward Said, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, Columbia Press, New York, 2004, p. 22.

Said admits that he does not believe in the “miraculous” ancient Greco-Roman civilization, arguing that the meaning of humanism or humanism itself can be found elsewhere:

It is ridiculous for pompous American academics to say that this is all too much turbulence – and therefore we want to go back to the Greco-Roman past. Not to see that the essence of humanism is to understand human history as a continuous process of self-understanding and self-realization, not just for us, as white, male, European, and American, but for everyone, is to see nothing at all. There are other learned traditions in the world, there are other cultures, there are other geniuses.³⁸

As already mentioned, humanism in the Renaissance put man at the centre and took man as the measure of all things. According to Erdal Cengiz, being at the centre requires awareness not only about oneself but also about all the things around. Once man becomes the object and the subject of himself, he has to (re)create his environment continuously according to himself to continue to be at the centre. This kind of (re)creation from the centre, namely man, were to surface in every field, such as daily life, politics, law, philosophy, and literature. At this centre, standards of being human were discussed, and the questions of what was “good human” or “good life” arose.³⁹

With humanism, man looks at himself from outside and arrives at his distinctiveness. Before humanism, man used to understand himself through God and never attempted to look at himself from a strictly human perspective. This novelty of humanism is what transformed it into a philosophy. Humanism defined its true meaning as a philosophy once the awareness of oneself on one’s own became the essential, the consciousness, the centre, or the subject, and consequently the object became external.⁴⁰

³⁸ Ibid. p. 22.

³⁹ Erdal Cengiz, “İki Bin Beş Yüz Yıllık Düş: Hümanizm”, *Doğu Batı*, No. 10, 2000, p. 148.

⁴⁰ Ibid. p. 148.

2.6. The Meaning of “Humanist”

As stated in the preceding chapter, humanism first emerged in the field of education. The exploration and dissemination of the ancient Greek and Roman texts and the secular attitude of these ancient civilizations were ushered in by the Renaissance philologists. The word “Humanist” was first used in 1539 to denote the educator philologists who were competent in Latin and studied ancient Greco-Roman texts.⁴¹

The pioneering philologist behind the era of Humanism was Francesco Petrarca (1304-1374). Petrarca’s texts were influenced by Christianity as he lived in the late Medieval Period.⁴² Nevertheless, what made Petrarca the pioneer of the Renaissance Humanism was his referral back to the ancient literature in order to locate himself and discover his ego in the world.⁴³ Another leading humanist was Giovanni Boccaccio (1313-1365) who portrayed human life in his works in total separation from the Church’s sway over the former by drawing on the ancient Greco-Roman texts.⁴⁴ In sum, the pioneering humanists were the educator philologists, who pondered on and investigated the meaning and origins of human nature by exploring and disseminating ancient Greco-Roman texts in order to understand the meaning of human existence in the universe.

After the Eighteenth Century, the word “humanist” happened to be used to denote people who advocated humanism and strived to disseminate it. Like the concept of humanism, which changed its Renaissance meaning into a philosophy and ideology after the Eighteenth Century, the word “humanist” took another meaning. With those meaning changes, both concepts skinned off their dominant admiration for ancient Greece and Rome, and assumed a meaning that approached a more general human problematic. In this thesis, Turkish humanists are used to refer to

⁴¹ Yümni Sezen, *Hümanizm ve Atatürk Devrimleri...*, p. 21. Referring to: Paul Faure, *La Renaissance*, Paris, 1949, p. 124.

⁴² Macit Gökberk, *Felsefe Tarihi...*, p. 190.

⁴³ *Ibid.* p. 190.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* p. 190.

people who advocated humanism as a philosophy and ideology, and wanted humanist culture to be widespread in Turkey.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ When Edward Said defined the concept of “humanist,” he stuck to the same universal attitude observed in his definition of “humanism”. “A superb sentence by Leo Spitzer, as brilliant a reader of texts as this century has produced and who spent his last years as an American humanist of European origin and training, is singularly apt.” Said defined the humanist in Spitzer’s words: “ ‘The Humanist’, he says, ‘believes in the power of the human mind of investigating the human mind.’ ”, Leo Spitzer, *Linguistics and Literary History: Essays in Stylistics*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J., 1948, p. 24. Said added: “Note that Spitzer does not say the European mind, or only the Western canon. He talks about the human mind *tout court*.”, Edward Said, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism...*, p. 269. Said’s Spitzer was one time teacher of Azra Erhat at the Istanbul University.

CHAPTER 3

HUMANISM IN TURKEY

3.1. Building a “Turkish National Identity”: The Role of Humanism in the 1930s

Once the Republic was proclaimed in late October 1923, Turkey started to go through an extraordinary reform process that would modernize and westernize the country. This reform process was dazzling and extraordinary in the sense that the seven hundred years' legacy of the Ottoman Empire with its traditions, customs, and culture was to be left behind. Nevertheless, the decision of leaving the Ottoman legacy behind had its roots in the late Ottoman years. The reaction against the Tanzimat Period among Ottoman intellectuals led to a refusal of the past and a quest only for the “new”.¹ Nevertheless, this decision came with a cost that would be borne not only by the Ottoman but also by the Republican intellectuals of the nascent Republic. With the refusal of the past and the quest for the “new”, a great void emerged in the identity of the intellectuals. This was also a cultural and national identity crisis.

The national/cultural identity crisis the country felt during the early years of the Republic led obviously to attempts to overcome the crisis. It is in this light the attitude of the intellectuals and why they resorted to humanism as a solution to the crisis should be understood. The main argument of the thesis the possibility of a spontaneously emerging and developing humanism in the early Republican years was quite low when the challenge posed by that crisis and the positions taken by the intellectuals in the context of the crisis are taken into consideration, shall be discussed in detail.

¹ Although the Tanzimat Period is generally known as the first example of a serious attempt to modernize the country according to the Western standards, it was a problematic attempt from the very beginning, in the sense that only the administrative institutions of the western civilization were adopted. The cultural foundations of that civilization were ignored due to the fear that they would undermine the structure of Ottoman culture. The reaction among some intellectuals against the Tanzimat was concerned with such ignorance of the cultural foundations of the West.

“National identity”, a relatively new concept in the social science literature, is determined according to the geographical location, language, ethnic, religious, and demographic composition, history, and culture of a country. Bearing in mind the above-explanation, it can be argued that the Republican Turkey was in a “crisis” of national identity. However, the crisis had more to do with a “crisis” of cultural identity which led to the “crisis” of national identity since cultural identity is the foundation of a national identity to be built.

Azra Erhat, who is a member of the so-called Blue Anatolian Humanism, traces the origins of the word, “culture”, and demonstrates that it comes from the Latin verb *colere* (simple present forms *colo, colui, cultus, colere*) and *cultus* is both the verb and adjective forms of *colere*. *Cultura* is derived from the adjective *cultus*. The root *Col-* means *polis* (city, civilized, order) in ancient Greek. The meanings of *Colere* are as follows:

1. to cultivate, take care, or grow (a land or a tree),
2. to live, dwell, settle (in a city),
3. to decorate (to decorate the arms with golden bracelets),
4. to worship (gods).

The adjective form of the verb *colere*, namely *cultus*, means elegant, fancy, decorous, highbrow, and civilized. Thus two nouns were derived from the verb *colere*, namely *cultus* and *cultura*. They have similar meanings and are synonyms for the cultivation of land. Nevertheless, the first one was used to denote gods and religion, worshipping gods, or praying whereas the second one was used to denote people’s level of development, education, life, and civilization and it entered many other languages as “culture” with the second meaning.² Nevertheless, Azra Erhat blurs this distinction by using two sentences in Latin. The first one is *cultus humanus civilisque* (a humane and urban lifestyle) and the second one is *cultura est animi philosophia* (education and culture is the merit and philosophy of the soul).

From this definition, it can be understood that culture of a country/community develops over a long time-span by drawing on its cumulative past. Unfortunately, “the generations in Turkey are socialized within the total refusal of the past [*redd-i*

² Azra Erhat, *Sevgi Yönetimi*, Can, İstanbul, 2003 [1978], p. 77.

miras]. This is one of the reasons behind the discontinuity, infertility, and weakness in Turkish cultural life. Any thought must have a *history*, and *respect* that history. However, due to this [*redd-i miras*], they either lose their originality or just become repetitive [of others].”³

Murat Belge describes the early Republican years as years of an identity crisis the roots of which were not very clear he argues that this crisis still continues. According to Belge, the attempts to identify a national identity led to several problems. When Turks looked at their origins, they were faced with Central Asia, and that meant an *expansion* in time and space. Nevertheless, the *culture*, which would fill that time and space was not very impressive. It was only Islam which was dominant in the consciousness of the people of the country. Belge argues that the Turkish intellectual, who had to face the challenge of revising his identity in the Nineteenth Century, perceived the English, French, and German as the masters of a domain where he could not have access to. For this reason, according to Belge, the Turkish intellectuals appreciated the differences between their country’s history and that of the West and not the similarities between the two. Belge further argues that the main conclusion derived by intellectuals from such comparison was “which accomplishment he did not enjoy among the ones they attained that he was not at par with now!” According to Belge, it was in this context where the concepts of “past” and “future” mixed with each other. Nevertheless, the determining force was the future, namely the determination to be powerful again. On the other hand, that forceful idea of Ottoman restoration could not be materialized in a crumbling Ottoman Empire. According to Belge, the dominant ideology of the period then took on the form of nationalism. However, in the background of this ideology lay the concept of “root”. Almost in the whole of Western and Eastern Europe, in both sovereign countries and regions craving for sovereignty, there was a search for one’s own “roots”. Belge argues that the Turkish intellectuals were no exception to that trend and they investigated the past in order to find the core of the bright future they were dreaming of. The essential element on which the restoration could be built, namely the “root” or “core” Turks belonged to, could be one of the following: being

³ Ahmet Oktay, *Zamanı Sorgulamak...*, p. 175.

a Turk, being Muslim, or the so-called the synthesis between the two, i.e. the Ottomanism. Yet, it became evident in the early Twentieth Century that the latter was not feasible in the face of secessionist movements on Ottoman territories. In sum, throughout those decades intellectuals proposed solutions to the problems of the society and the empire by resorting to similar concepts but with differing stress on any one of them. On the other hand, the Western thought progressively abandoned the quest for “a pure core” starting with the early decades of the twentieth century.⁴

Among the Ottoman intellectuals, there was a tendency to reject the Ottoman legacy while trying to adopt the Western culture and civilization and a cultural identity that would overcome the East-West problem. For this reason, the eclectic lifestyle and mentality of the Republican intellectuals had its beginnings in the late Ottoman years: The Republican intellectuals thought that they could get rid of that eclecticism by rejecting the Ottoman legacy and hence solve the identity problem.⁵ In quest for an identity during the early Republican years, the different roots, such as “Western”, “Turkish”, or “Muslim” which such Ottoman intellectuals as Ziya Gökalp tried to reconcile, were alienated from each other and the gap between different ideologies that drew on one of those different roots steadily grew.⁶

It was in the above-mentioned context one of the biggest problems of the Turkish intellectuals surfaced, namely “the inability to conceptualize any phenomenon in question”. The Turkish intellectuals of the era conflated the concepts of westernization and modernization. The concept of modernization is concerned with the emergence and development of capitalism, indeed even partly a product of the latter.⁷ The concept of westernization, on the other hand, is narrower than that of modernization. Modernization can affect any country but not all the countries under the sway of modernization experience westernization. Modernization is a broad concept that comprises the material and intellectual worlds, whereas westernization

⁴ Murat Belge, “Mavi Anadolu Hümanizmi”...

⁵ Ahmet Oktay, “Halikarnassos’tan Bodrum’a...”, pp. 180-182.

⁶ Murat Belge, “Mavi Anadolu Hümanizmi”...

⁷ Metin Çulhaoğlu, “Modernleşme, Batılılaşma ve Türk Solu”, Uygur Kocabaşoğlu (ed.), *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce – Modernleşme ve Batıcılık, Vol.3*, İletişim, İstanbul, 2004 [2002], p. 170.

is predominantly concerned with the form with a narrower content.⁸ However, these concepts were widely used in the country without any clear definition or explanations and concepts such as westernization, modernization, and to become civilized were conflated with each other, often under the word, *muasırlaşma*.

The pioneer of the concept of “national culture” is Ziya Gökalp who defines nation with reference to culture. According to Gökalp, a nation is a cultural community of individuals sharing a common language and code of conduct. The national culture is the sum of a nation’s religious, moral, legal, mental, aesthetic, linguistic, economic, and scientific realms.⁹ What Gökalp tried to prove was the possibility of coexistence among seemingly two contradictory goals. The first one was protection and development of Turkish national culture and the second one was the adoption of Western civilization. With that aim in mind, Gökalp grouped all the values which were to be protected, under the umbrella word “culture”, and incorporated the rest into the group of “civilized values”.¹⁰ Although Gökalp’s idea received support from a section of intellectuals, the motto of “I am [both] Turkish and European!” was created by others as an alternative to his motto of “I am a member of Islamic community, I am Turkish, and I belong to the European civilization”.¹¹

Contrary to Gökalp, Ahmet Ağaoğlu was a pro-westerner and poses the following question: “What happens to our national identity when we adopt the civilization as a whole? Is there any eternal and fixed core in any nation? The ones, who believe in this core, argue that it is composed of morality, jurisprudence, language, and so forth. There is no single nation that did never convert into any other

⁸ Ibid. p. 171.

⁹ Ali Ata Yiğit, *İnönü Dönemi...*, p. 41. But see: Ziya Gökalp, Kemal Bek (ed.), *Türkçülüğün Esasları*, Bordo Siyah, İstanbul, 2004.

¹⁰ Ali Ata Yiğit, *İnönü Dönemi...*, p. 19.

¹¹ Sadri Ethem [Ertem], “Türk İnkılâbının Karakteri”, Mehmet Kaplan, İnci Enginün, Zeynep Kerman, Necat Birinci, Abdullah Uçman (ed.), *Atatürk Devri Fikir Hayatı I*, Kültür Bakanlığı, Ankara, 1992, p. 203.

religion in its history.”¹² Apart from these two approaches, there was a synthetic approach such as that of Peyami Safa: “We are all both Easterners and Westerners. The synthesis between the two forms the structure of the history and soul of humanity, and it is our destiny. Only in this synthesis, human beings can find his integrity.”¹³

The lack of a national/cultural identity in the early Republican years was felt in every realm of the social life, for instance, in the case of literature. There were attempts to create a national literature. Especially after 1930, such attempts focused on humanism to realize this goal. Nevertheless, the attempts in the 1920s did not satisfy certain critics. Köprülüzâde Mehmet Fuat complained about the situation in 1926: “It is very hard to find any period in our art and thought that is as horrendous and fake, and totally alien to our national soul and life, as that of the last or five ten years. There should be a new national literature and it should reflect on national culture and people.”¹⁴ Işın states that:

The question of “where did we come from, where are we heading to?” concerning the social roots, led to grotesque interpretations among not only Turkish but also other historians who searched for their national identities. A historian who searches for an answer to the question is not necessarily a romanticist. On the contrary, it is the question that makes the interpretation of history romanticist.¹⁵

Since the Republican intellectuals did not have sufficient knowledge about the concepts and they could not reach any consensus on them, they produced nothing

¹² Ahmet Oktay, “Halikarnassos’tan Bodrum’a...”, p. 181. Referring to: Hilmi Ziya Ülken, *Çağdaş Düşünce Tarihi*, Ülken, İstanbul, 1992. [The original statement in Turkish: “Medeniyeti bütün halinde alınca millî kişiliğimiz ne olacak? Acaba bir millette ebedî ve asla değişmez bir özlük var mıdır? Milletün özünden bahsedenler bunun ahlaktan, hukuktan, dilden vb.den ibaret olduğunu söylüyorlar. Tarihinde din değiştirmeyen hangi millet vardır.”]

¹³ Peyami Safa, *Doğu Batı Sentezi...*, p. 9. [The original statement in Turkish: “Hepimiz hem Doğulu hem Batılıyız. Doğu-Batı sentezi bütün insanların tarih ve ruh yapısı, kaderimizdir. İnsan, bütünlüğünü ancak bu sentezde bulabilir.”]

¹⁴ Köprülüzâde Mehmed Fuad, “İnkılâp ve Edebiyat”, Mehmet Kaplan, İnci Enginün, Zeynep Kerman, Necat Birinci, Abdullah Uçman (ed.), *Atatürk Devri Fikir Hayatı I*, Kültür Bakanlığı, Ankara, 1992, pp. 130-134. [First published in, *Hayat*, No. 5, 1926, pp. 82-83. The original statement in Turkish: “Fikir ve sanat hayatımızda, şu son beş on senelik edebiyatımız kadar berbat, sahte, millî ruha ve millî hayata yabancı bir edebiyat devresi nâdir bulunur. Yeni bir milli edebiyat gelmeli ve milli kültürü ve halkı yansıtmalıdır.”]

¹⁵ Ekrem Işın, “Cumhuriyet ve Hümanizm”...

but romanticist interpretations in both their quest for a solution to the identity crisis and for the consequent “Turkish Humanism Project”. The concept of nationalism, in particular, has the potential to turn into an irrational and dangerous romanticism. One of the most evident cases of such possibility turning into reality happened before 1938 as a result of the search for a national identity in very earlier times of history along with a total rejection of the Ottoman period and imposition of a manufactured identity on the society.

In order to disseminate this new nationalism as the building bloc of the new national identity, Atatürk ordered the establishment of the linguistic and history institutions, along side the “People’s Houses” [Halkevleri].¹⁶ The “Sun Language Theory” [Güneş Dil Teorisi] and the “Turkish History Thesis” [Türk Tarih Tezi] were developed to support the claim that “the origin of everything in the universe came from Turks and Turks were the most superior race in the world”. Such bold claims were designed to present a “European” identity with “strong roots” to not only Turks but also to the Europeans.

According to the Sun Language Theory, Turkish was superior to any other language in the world and the origin of Western languages was Turkish. The Turkish History Thesis was developed in 1931 by the committee established by “Turkish Hearths” [Türk Ocakları] for the investigation of Turkish history.¹⁷ “Turkish History Thesis” put forward several essential claims: Turks were the ancestors of the all *Brachycephalic* nations, including Indo-European ones, whose roots were in Central Asia. All the civilizations on the migration route of Turks were created by them. Therefore, today’s Turks were naturally the inheritors of the ancient Greek,

¹⁶ In this period, the Community Centres were used to disseminate the national and cultural identity and ensure the espousal of the theories by the people. According to Nafî Atuf Kansu the aim of the Community Centres was “Educating Republic’s citizens in line with the principles of the Republic, enlightening the people, developing their national character, supporting and empowering fine arts, national culture and scientific studies”. The Community Centres served to establish a common culture among all the segments of the society, tried to remove the dichotomies of countryside-urban and peasant-intellectual. Server Tanilli, *Nasıl Bir Eğitim İstiyoruz?...*, Adam, İstanbul, 2004, p. 194. As shall be seen in the following parts of the thesis, the foundation of the Village Institutes increased the tasks and efficiency of the Community Centres.

¹⁷ Soner Çağaptay, “Otuzlarda Türk Milliyetçiliğinde Irk, Dil ve Etnisite”, *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce – Milliyetçilik, Vol.4*”, Tanıl Bora (ed.), Defne Orhun (trans.), İletişim, İstanbul, 2003 [2002], p. 245.

Egyptian, Sumerian civilization as well as others. Besides, they were the founders of the first civilization in Anatolia via Hittites. As the genuine natives of Anatolia were Turks, it was the homeland of Turks as well.¹⁸

During The First Turkish History Congress, which was convened in 1932, there was a claim to receive the due respect for being the ancestors of the founders of the world civilizations since it was after the drought in Central Asia during the prehistoric times, which forced Turks to migrate, the world civilizations started to flourish. During the congress, this claim was endorsed by almost all participants. Regarding one of the most mentioned topics during the congress, namely Greeks, Halet Cemil Çambel argued in his statement, “General Survey of the Origins of the Aegean Civilization”, that “the ancient Greek civilization [was] not unique, its origins came directly from the Ionian civilization born by the Aegean civilization”.¹⁹

Some intellectuals adopted this *fabricated* historical thesis. One apparent example is Saffet Engin. His book, *Kemalizm İnkılabının Prensipleri – Büyük Türk Medeniyetinin Tarihî ve Sosyolojik Tetkikine Methal* (1938) (*The Principles of Kemalist Reforms: An introduction to sociological and historical Investigation of the Great Turkish Civilization*), had numerous claims made under the influence of the above mentioned thesis. For instance, according to Engin, the civilization represented by the Achilles and others in Homer’s epic stories was a Turkish civilization. They were Plask, Tor, and Aka Turks who created that civilization. Central Asia was the homeland of Turks whereas Anatolia their core-land.²⁰

Engin also made wild claims about the origins of the ancient Greek civilization as well as others. To name just a few: the Greek civilization adopted everything from Turks. The Greek belief system was based on Turkish belief system. Besides, the concept of religion reached Europe via Turks.²¹ For Engin, Turkish history formed the greatest civilization ever and that claim was based on scientific

¹⁸ Ibid. p. 246.

¹⁹ Tansu Açıık, “Türkiye’de Hümanizm Tartışmalarına Bir Bakış”, *Toplum ve Bilim*, No. 98, Güz 2003, p. 114.

²⁰ M. Saffet Engin, *Kemalizm İnkılabının...*, Cilt I, pp. 41-45.

²¹ Ibid. p. 47.

grounds.²² Engin continues by claiming that the Greek mythology was a Turkish invention for the spiritual life in the Mediterranean region. Since it was Turks who explored the fire, Prometheus, who gave the fire to man's disposal at the expense of clashing with Gods, was a genius from Turkmenistan.²³ Besides, Triptolemos and Poseidon and the likes who taught humanity civilized manners (marriage, agriculture, employment of iron tools, and so forth) were Turkish geniuses as these manners were first seen in various Turkish civilizations.²⁴

According to Engin the roots of the ancient Greco-Roman civilizations and the contemporary European political and cultural thought which originated from the former, came from Anatolia.²⁵ For him, reform does not only mean changing institutions but also giving them a new soul and code of conduct for their survival, and this code of conduct should be based on humanism. Because "We are both Turks and Europeans", Turks have to like and adopt the European code of conduct in order to be included in the European class.²⁶ Saffet Engin's belief in the Turkish origins of the ancient Greek civilization leads him to frequently use in his work the syntheses of "classical Turco-Greek civilization", "Turco-Greek anthropomorphism", and "Classical Turco-Greek society".

The "Turkish History Thesis" shifted the focus from the Ottoman-Islamic civilization to older Turkish communities and led to a racist claim that the origins of many communities were Turkish but interestingly developed also a strong interest in older civilizations in Anatolia. The latter both stimulated archeological studies and later gave birth to "Blue Anatolian Humanism" of the 1950s.

As expected, neither the "Turkish History Thesis" nor the "Sun Language Theory" received a warm welcome from the Islamists. For them, the claim put forward by these theories that all languages, nations, and civilizations originated

²² Ibid. p. 49.

²³ Ibid. p. 51.

²⁴ Ibid. p. 52.

²⁵ M. Saffet Engin, *Kemalizm İnkılâbının...*, Cilt II, p. 94.

²⁶ M. Saffet Engin, *Kemalizm İnkılâbının...*, Cilt III, p. 111.

from Turks, was appalling in the sense that it excluded Islamic and Arabic civilization. Among the intellectuals who opposed those theories, some developed an alternative interest in humanism while certain other Islamist and nationalist intellectuals opposed humanism on the above-mentioned ideological and political grounds.²⁷

The dominant paradigm of the Republic, especially during the Atatürk era, aimed at creating a national and secular culture at the expense of Ottoman-Islamic culture. Despite the efforts to create a national and cultural identity, one essential element of that identity was totally ignored, namely “the individual”. The cultural ethos in the 1930s did not give any great importance to the individual. It was thought that a new individual would naturally emerge once a new society was founded. Nevertheless, the cultural reforms of the Republic were not accompanied by structural changes and, consequently, a new type of individual did not emerge as easily as expected.²⁸

The intellectual foundations of the Atatürk’s reforms, namely nationalism and Westernism, transformed during the İnönü era (1938-1950).²⁹ The national identity-building process during the Atatürk era brought in a nationalist discourse, foremost component of which was inevitably being the dichotomy between “us” and “them”. While Atatürk’s quest for a national identity was along the lines of nationalism and Westernism, İnönü substituted “humanism” for nationalism in that quest. The reason behind such a policy change was the conviction that real Westernization was possible only by referring back to the origins of the Western civilization, namely the Greco-Roman civilization.³⁰

Ali Ata Yiğit describes the main course during the İnönü era of building a new cultural structure that was different than the national culture policy of Atatürk as follows:

²⁷ Ahmet Oktay, “Hümanizm Tartışmaları”, *Cogito*, No. 31, 2002, p. 228.

²⁸ Kurtuluş Kayalı, *Türk Düşünce...*, p. 70.

²⁹ Ali Ata Yiğit, *İnönü Dönemi...*, p. 12.

³⁰ *Ibid.* p. 12.

A new national identity is being built on the idea of being Western. Nationalism has already flourished and only the identity is absent, the country needs to develop and in order to do that one needs to westernize and realize that goal one needs to delve into the cultural origins of the West. Turkish society is no longer a religious community but a nation; it is not based on race or religion, it is secular and laic; in order to survive, this nation has to civilize and all roads to civilization lead to the West. What the West means is adopting the basis and foundations, which created the Western civilization. The country shall get rid of dogmatic Eastern culture as well as Arabic-Persian culture.³¹

In line with all the above-mentioned events and ideas, the tendency toward a humanist discourse increased during the early Republican years, and the humanist culture was slowly being adopted. Humanism was both perceived as a necessary condition for nationalism³², and developed to justify the Turkish existence on Anatolian land against the challenges coming from the West.³³ Nevertheless, it is hard to argue that the masterminds of the official history fully understood the humanist thought since they could only establish a relationship between humanism and ancient Greco-Roman civilization by placing more stress on the Greek one.³⁴

Regarding the focus on the Greek civilization, Tanıl Bora makes an interesting observation. According to Bora, in the first twenty years of the Republic, namely the nation-building years, it was hard to observe any anti-Greek feelings. Turkish people were surprisingly indifferent to the modern Greeks despite the fact that the latter formed the main front line during the War of Liberation.³⁵ The fact that the Republic was founded on the victory against Greeks seemed to lose significance. The reason behind it was the zealous movement of Westernization. Besides, Greece was considered part of the West anyway. Therefore, while Turks tried to adopt the

³¹ Ibid. p. 42.

³² Tansu Aık, ‘‘Trkiye’de Hmanizm...’, p. 112.

³³ Ekrem Iın, ‘‘Cumhuriyet ve Hmanizm’’...

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Tanıl Bora, ‘‘Milli KimliĐin KuruluŐ Dneminde Resmİ Metinlerde ‘Yunan DŐmanlıĐı’ Neden Eksikti, Nereye GitmiŐti?’’, *DeFTER*, No. 32, 1998, pp. 35-36.

West and the idea of being Western, they did not hesitate to adopt the Greek as well.³⁶

3.2. The Idea of “Humanism” Before 1938 and Neo-Hellenism

Although the idea of humanism became the currency in the 1940s, the debates about humanism already started before. In this thesis, both periods are analyzed to underline the differences between the two. In this section, the current of neo-Hellenism, the first debates about humanism which paved the way to the 1940s’ debates, and the initial activities within the project of humanism shall be analyzed.

While the current of humanism was flourishing in the Fourteenth Century Renaissance Period, Sultan Mehmet already conquered Istanbul and the Ottoman Empire ushered in an era of supremacy over Europe. After Sultan Mehmet was enthroned, a renewed interest in philosophy and scientific thought started to flourish among Ottoman Turks.³⁷ The Conqueror himself was among those people and he studied stoic and peripatetic schools of Greek philosophers that were translated into Arabic and Persian. He was quite inspired by Aristotle, often discussing Aristotle’s texts in detail with his advisors and mentors.³⁸ Because the Conqueror did not have

³⁶ Ibid. p. 36. As argued before, Yümnü Sezen exhibits a subjective attitude due to his theological background and on this matter misinforms the reader in his *Hümanizm ve Atatürk Devrimleri*. Contrary to the arguments of Turkish humanists, Sezen, drawing on Paul Gentizon’s book, *Mustafa Kemal ve Uyanan Doğu (Mustafa Kemal And The Awakening East)*, argues that in the early years of the Republic, during the nation-building process (or National Renaissance movement), the state ignored the influence of Greek and Latin culture in the country. One example he gives to support his claim that “The Republican Turkey wanted to get rid of the Greek-Latin legacy” is the policy of changing Greek and Latin names into Turkish ones. Protia was now made Kınalıada, Antigonii was Burgaz Adası, Halki and Prinkipo were Heybeli and Büyük Ada respectively. Besides, Smirne was made İzmir and Saint-Stepahono Yeşilköy (Yümnü Sezen, *Hümanizm ve Atatürk Devrimleri...*, p. 201.) Nevertheless, Gentizon, whom Sezer heavily draws on, states the following: (Unfortunately it was not possible to reach the original version of the book and following statement is translated from Turkish) “The officials in Ankara, in this general sense, were adopting the attempts to ‘Turkization’. Therefore, all the signs of the Greco-Roman period were conserved....But this was not the case for geographical terms with Byzantian origins.” [The statement in Turkish: “Ankara’nın yöneticileri, bu genel anlamda ‘Türkleştirme’ girişimini benimsemektedirler. Greko-Roma döneminin bütün belirtileri böylece korundu... Ama Bizans kökenli coğrafi terimler için böyle yapılmadı”.] The *Paul Gentizon, Mustafa Kemal ve Uyanan Doğu*, Fethi Ülkü (trans.), Bilgi, İstanbul, 1994 [1983], p. 72.

³⁷ Abdülhak Adnan-Adıvar, *Osmanlı Türklerinde İlim*, Remzi Kitabevi, İstanbul, 1982 [1939], p. 31.

³⁸ Ibid. p. 33.

much knowledge of Greek or Latin, he only had the books he was interested in translated into Turkish while the rest were kept in Topkapı Palace library.³⁹

The Conqueror's personal interest and the consequent activities regarding the Greco-Roman civilization did not survive his death. The interest started to revive only after the establishment of "Translation Office" in 1832. Before that date, there were only few such books translated.⁴⁰ The translations made after 1832 underpinned the Westernization movement in the Tanzimat Period, and especially after 1850, the translations made a significant impact on the movement.⁴¹

The translation activities meant the gradual introduction of humanism in the country mainly through literary works. Thus, a timeline of the development of humanism in the country can be put as follows: The Westernization in the Tanzimat Period, followed by the Westernization in literature and life of the mind, and consequent attempts to reach the origins of the West.

In the late Nineteenth Century, other popular literary currents in the country alongside Westernism were Islamism and Turkism. The last one was the basis of the national literature of the time. The members of the national literature such as Ziya Gökalp (1876-1924), Fuat Köprülü (1890-1966), and Mehmet Emin Yurdakul (1869-1944) tried to revive the Turkish mythology for that purpose in mind.⁴² The Turkish authors who got acquainted with the French literature through translations realized that the Ottoman-Turkish literature of the time was shallow and weak compared with the former. As the reasons, these authors believed that the French literature was rich because it drew on the classics and, consequently, they too gradually developed an interest in the latter.⁴³ The classics were then used in the creation of a national

³⁹ Ibid. p. 33.

⁴⁰ The "1897 Classical Debates" in the literature and the translation activities before 1938 are dwelled on in the Chapter 4, Section 3 "Translation Office".

⁴¹ Aydın Afacan, *Şiir ve Mitologya - Cumhuriyet Dönemi Şiirinde Yunan ve Latin Mitologyası*, Doruk, Ankara, 2003, p. 57.

⁴² Ibid. p. 60.

⁴³ Ruşen Eşref Ünaydın translated Vergilius, Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu translated Horatius', and Nüşet Haşim Sinanoğlu made translations from the Latin literature. Cited in Ali Ata Yiğit, *İnönü Dönemi Eğitim ve Kültür Politikası (1938-1950)*, Boğaziçi, İstanbul, 1992, p. 45.

literature. However, their interest did not lead to a particular interest in humanism. It was rather limited to the general aspects of the Greco-Roman world. The reconciliation of humanism with the Greco-Roman civilization was to happen for the first time with the current of neo-Hellenism.

Yahya Kemal [Beyatlı] (1884-1958), one of the two founding fathers of neo-Hellenism in Turkey, came back to Turkey in 1912 after his nine years stay in Paris. During that period he admired some of the examples of Western poetry, especially J.M. de Herédia, which in turn led to his admiration at the Greco-Roman art. The other founding father was Yakup Kadri [Karaosmanoğlu] (1889-1974) who felt great admiration for the French literature. Similar to Yahya Kemal's quest, Yakup Kadri ended up with an interest in the Greco-Roman literature.⁴⁴ These two literary figures, who were quite inspired by the Greco-Roman literature then created a current that they called "neo-Hellenism".⁴⁵ The founding fathers of the current stayed at arm's length to the populist tendencies of the time.⁴⁶ Rather, they advocated the values of Renaissance and humanism, stressing the importance of humanity and humanitarian values. Their aim was to create a revolutionary literature based on humanism with emphasis on the cultural richness of the Mediterranean basin.⁴⁷

According to Yakup Kadri, the rather scholastic mentality and outdated understanding of humanism in the art and literary world of his contemporaries was basically a replica of the Renaissance Humanism. For Yakup Kadri, a new revolutionary literature had to be created and substituted for the understanding of humanism in his era. The main reason for his proposal was his belief that man changed but the era's understanding of man was sadly lagging behind.

Therefore, for Yakup Kadri, revolutionary literature meant a new humanism and a new understanding of human being and his soul. Similar to the Renaissance

⁴⁴ Hasan Âli Yücel, *Edebiyat Tarihimizden*, İstanbul, İletişim, 1989 [1957], p. 251.

⁴⁵ Neo-Hellenism can be cautiously compared to the Blue Anatolian Humanism, which shall be analyzed in greater detail in the Chapter 5, Section 1 of the thesis, in terms of attributing the Greco-Roman miracles to the Mediterranean basin, and discrediting the idea of "Renaissance as a miracle".

⁴⁶ Ahmet Oktay, *Zamanı Sorgulamak*, Remzi, İstanbul, 1991, p. 169.

⁴⁷ The original word is: "Bahr-i Sefit Havzası."

artists' revival of the man which was one degraded and frozen by the scholasticism of the church, it was time for his contemporaries to revitalize the man that was once under the sway of the Renaissance scholasticism. Yet, that attempt would be made with a material different than the material of the Greco-Roman world.⁴⁸

Like Yahya Kemal, Saffet Engin and the members of the later Blue Anatolian Humanism, Yakup Kadri believed that humanism was existent among Turks since the very beginning and it was the Greeks who drew on Turks in developing it. Yakup Kadri believed that after Turks converted into Islam, humanism as a current of thought gradually disappeared among them. In accordance with his above-mentioned belief, Yakup Kadri claimed that Homer was Ionian and not Greek. His admiration for Homer and his interest in Greek and Latin languages were the main reasons behind his advocacy of the necessity of teaching Greek and Latin at high schools. For Yakup Kadri, culture was all about the socialization of soul, through transmission of a set of feelings from parents to children, from generation to generation. He gave Homer as an example for drawing on a rich culture since what Homer did was narrating the common songs and folk tales among the people. Yakup Kadri lamented the lack of such culture in his era. In his own words:

We do not have such culture now, we are stuck in the middle of two phases. Literature and arts draw on traditions; without culture, we used to draw on it; now there is nothing to build on. Even so, we made a revolution and we are very much excited about it.⁴⁹

Yakup Kadri posited that it was more appropriate to adopt the soul of Europe than to adopt Europe pro forma, meaning, it was necessary to understand culture and civilization as one entity rather than treating them as separate phenomena. For him, it was through humanism the then cultural identity crisis could be solved. Therefore, it is safe to claim that issues that were going to be debated along the same lines in the 1940s were first raised by Yakup Kadri and Yahya Kemal. According to Yakup Kadri, a European student who did not take Latin and Greek courses would not be

⁴⁸ Yakup Kadri [Karaosmanoğlu], "İnkılâp ve Edebiyat", *Kadro*, No. 25, 1934.

⁴⁹ Ibid. [The original in Turkish: "Bizde ise şimdi o kültür yok, iki devre arasındayız. Edebiyat ve sanat ananeye dayanır, ananesiz bu iş olmaz. Bizde eskiden hiç olmazsa Arap Acem kültürü vardı, ona dayanırdık, şimdi dayanacak şey yok; gerçi bir inkılap yaptık ve hepimiz o inkılapın kuvvetli heyecanını duyuyoruz."]

deemed as a high school graduate since the high school education meant more or less the humanities education and, without the latter, any high school based on the Western model would be useless. For Yakup Kadri, the only way to get rid of the scholastic mentality of the time was through studying humanism and doing that properly, the West should be adopted not pro forma but as whole.⁵⁰

Similar to Yakup Kadri, Yahya Kemal argued that the Greek civilization was the starting point in understanding the whole European civilization. He argued that Turks could have been deemed as heirs to the Greeks geographically and partially civilization-wise, had Islam not prevented that heirship. Yahya Kemal proposed to refer back to ancient Greek civilization as the source of the French and the European, and to abandon Persian for a strong and rich “pure” Turkish like Greek in order to have a truly revolutionary literature.⁵¹

The idea of neo-Hellenism developed by these two thinkers faced harsh criticism from their contemporaries; for instance, Ömer Seyfettin (1884-1920) compared them to men that collected money for the Greek navy and served the Hellenic cause.⁵² Nevertheless, there were still others who endorsed the core idea proposed by neo-Hellenism, most prominently, visionary Hasan Âli Yücel who stated that “The Western thought and art which was based on the Greek model, is closely linked to the former but not a slave to it. Therefore, any nation can benefit from that model without compromising its own ego, and thus become original and remain national.”⁵³

⁵⁰ Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu’s views about this matter surfaced most clearly in the following paragraph: “Eğer biz, Tanzimat’tan beri kafamızı Avrupa irfanına bir türlü teslim edemedikse, bunun yegâne sebebi Avrupa’yı Avrupa yapan hümanizm tehzibine zerre kadar kıymet ve ehemmiyet vermemiş olmamızdır. Daima kalıbı alıp ruhu bırakmak, iksiri ihmal edip kabı almak –hususiyile irfan sahasında- bizim en büyük gafletlerimizden biridir... Şeklen Avrupakâri değil, ruhen Avrupaî olmaya çalışalım.” Yakup Kadri [Karaosmanoğlu], “Hâkimiyet-i Milliye”, Mehmet Kaplan, İnci Enginün, Zeynep Kerman, Necat Birinci, Abdullah Uçman (ed.), *Atatürk Devri Fikir Hayatı I*, Kültür Bakanlığı, Ankara, 1992, pp. 535-538, but the essay was first published in 1320/1924.

⁵¹ Hasan Âli Yücel, *Edebiyat Tarihimizden...*, p. 255. [The original in Turkish: “Yunan modeline göre kurulmuş olan Batı fikir ve sanatı, ona bağlı olmakla beraber onun esiri değildir. Böyle olduğu için de her millet kendi benliğinden kaybetmeden o modelden yararlanır, hem orijinal olur, hem milli kalabilir.”]

⁵² Ibid. p. 256.

⁵³ Ibid. pp. 258-259.

Later on, Ömer Seyfettin happened to agree with Yahya Kemal and Yakup Kadri's core argument mentioned above, stating that the purity, sincerity and secret of art could be found in the classics, and the first classic to be read was Homer. He added that the only gateway to the Western civilization was the ancient Greece.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, the current of neo-Hellenism, which can be dated back to 1912 could not survive because of the World War I conditions, the reactions against it, and its failure to reach out to the common people.⁵⁵

Long before the concept of neo-Hellenism became the source of a heated-debate, Mehmet Emin [Erişirgil] (1891-1965), a lecturer of the history of philosophy at Darülfünun, explored not only the richness but also the secular outlook in the ancient Greek world in an essay he wrote in 1917. For him, all the civilizations took root from the ancient Greek civilization; but despite that fact, ancient Greeks were still superior to many other civilizations in terms of science, philosophy and art. Regarding the secularism in the ancient Greece, Mehmet Emin argued that it was Greeks' comparison of themselves with foreigners that led to their disbelief in dogmas as well as their suspicious and critical approach to everything. He added that the existence of immigrants in Athens and other city states were the true instigator of religious and other freedoms in the Greek society. He also mentioned the inductive methods and reasoning as the other essential tenets of the secular Greek society. Mehmet Emin argued that unlike their ancestors, the Greeks in the Fifth Century A.D. searched for happiness not in mythology or afterlife but in the present time and in infinite progress to come in the future, and because of this they deemed themselves superior to their ancestors and they were proud of that.⁵⁶

After that essay, Mehmet Emin did not dwell on ancient Greece or humanism. During the early years of the Republic, he invested his time and energy in the journal, *Hayat Mecmuası*. The journal was quite popular among young people and intellectuals, and renowned for its adherence to the Kemalist ideology. Inspired by

⁵⁴ Ibid. p. 288.

⁵⁵ Aydın Afacan, *Şiir ve Mitologya...*, p. 62.

⁵⁶ Mehmet Emin [Erişirgil], "Eflatun'dan Evvel Felsefe-i İctimaiye", *İctimaiyat Mecmuası*, No. 6, 1917, pp. 250-256.

the motto of Atatürk “The truest path in life is science”, *Hayat* attempted to dwell on economic and social issues from a scientific perspective.⁵⁷

Another person worth mentioning here is Fevzi Muhip who wrote the first pieces on humanism for the journal, *Yücel*. Fevzi Muhip claimed that the new regime born out of the Turkish Revolution was a universal “neo-humanism” in its own right. He also compared the old-humanism that emulated the Greco-Roman culture with the neo-humanism that emulated not only the latter but also the Turco-Sumerian-Hunnic culture. His main conclusion was that in both the interests of not only bourgeoisie, proletariat, and conservatives, but also the whole nation were protected. Moreover, he argued that neo-humanism, like the old-humanism, emerged because of not only economic hardships but also cultural needs, and that both humanisms stayed at arms length to demagogy. He added that the old-humanism emerged as a universal phenomenon whereas the neo-humanism emerged within the Turkish nation. Yet, in his view, neo-humanism would become international in the course of time. Lastly, he argued that the old-humanism’s methodological tool in finding the truth was skepticism whereas the neo-humanism’s was reason and belief in the path Atatürk pointed at. The reason behind Fevzi Muhip’s coining of the term “Neo-Humanism” was to demonstrate that Turkish revolution and its reforms were similar to the reforms during the Renaissance and yet that neo-humanism was superior to the old one. Nevertheless, Fevzi Muhip’s term did not take hold among the intellectuals of the time. Only in one other essay, the term was used, yet in a different meaning, namely to denote the first works translated from Greek into Turkish.⁵⁸ After coining the term, Fevzi Muhip did not publish anything on newspapers or journals.⁵⁹

Such journals and periodicals became the currency in the early years of the Republic. Among them, one would make the greatest impact despite its short life-span in the life of thought of the country as well as the debates about humanism and “Turkish Humanism”, was *Kadro*. *Kadro*, which was published between 1931 and

⁵⁷ Vedat Günyol, *Sanat ve Edebiyat Dergileri*, Alan, İstanbul, 1986, p. 27.

⁵⁸ This essay is: Füzûzan Husrev Tökin, “Bizde Hümanizma”, *Yücel*, New Series No. 6, 1950.

⁵⁹ Fevzi Muhip [Alperen], “Neo-Humanisme”, “Neo-Humanisme ve Akıl”, “İnandıran Akıl”, *Yücel*, No. 2,3,4, 1935.

1935, was one of the most ardent defenders of the Turkish revolution. One essay published in *Kadro* is quite important for the “Turkish Humanism”, namely Burhan Asaf Belge’s “Üniversitenin Manâsı” [The Meaning of University] (published in 1933).⁶⁰ In his essay, Belge criticized Istanbul University on the grounds that it did not appreciate the goals of the first History Congress in 1932. Belge supported the “Turkish History Thesis” and the “Sun-Language Theory” that were adopted during the congress. For him, one goal of the congress was to criticize and prove the pseudo-scientific aspects of the Eurocentric historical narrations. Another goal was to incorporate the prehistoric period of Europe into the history under the name of “Turkish Humanism”. After describing the goals of the Congress in question, Belge attempted a critique of liberalism on the grounds that the principle of non-intervention in science and “science for the sake of science” were the inventions of the Nineteenth Century liberalism.⁶¹ Belge’s role in “Turkish Humanism” stem from two factors. Firstly, it was in the above-mentioned essay that the term “Turkish Humanism” was first coined by Belge. Secondly, Belge wrote a series of essays in 1938 regarding humanism which ushered in “humanism debates” in the country that would last longer than a decade. His series of essays were quite sobering for the Republican intellectuals on the necessity to formulate a current of thought for the country, and for the state on the necessary measures to be taken to ward that end.

3.3. Debates on Humanism

There are two reasons behind the intensification of humanism debates after 1938. The first reason, as mentioned before, is Burhan Asaf Belge’s (1899-1967) series of comprehensive essays, which set the parameters of the ensuing debate. The second reason is the ushering in of a new cultural policy with İnönü’s presidency and transformation of that policy into the humanism “project”. In this part, the humanism debates until the early 1950s shall be taken on in order to demonstrate the intellectual map of the Republican intellectuals. The main argument of the present thesis, namely the rejection by the societal at large of the imposition of a phenomenon that is not

⁶⁰ Burhan Asaf Belge, “Üniversitenin Manâsı”, *Kadro*, No. 20, 1933, pp. 24-25.

⁶¹ Tansu Açıık, “Türkiye’de Hümanizm...”, p. 115.

immanent in the society, shall be more evident in the following analysis of those debates. In fact, the attitudes and approaches of Turkish intellectuals regarding humanism, is quite telling about why such an imposition failed even though the intellectuals constitute an integral part of the Turkish society.

The most important observation regarding both pre and post-1938 can be summarized as follows: It seems that even the intellectuals themselves had no clear idea about the origins of their thoughts and proposals.⁶² Their understanding of the concepts they debated such as humanism, individual, individuality, the meaning of being human and realizing oneself as a human being, and so forth, were usually shallow or even non-existent.⁶³ In general, the Turkish humanists traced the origins of the Western civilization to the humanism of the ancient Greco-Roman world, and they hardly acknowledged the influence of Christianity over the Western civilization.

One essential feature of a healthy and fruitful debate is to have a common understanding of what is to be debated. Nevertheless, that was persistently ignored, and it remained vague during the above-mentioned period. There were various understandings of humanism in those debates:

- Humanism focusing on Renaissance as the beginning of modern life.
- Humanism as a methodology to understand and engage in ancient Greek and Latin art.
- Humanism as affection for human beings, and quest for being humane.
- Humanism as a tool to catch up with the international culture and to be Western.
- Humanism as a prerequisite for nationalism, and a step towards Turkish national art.

Similar to these various understandings, the intellectuals could not even agree on how to spell humanism in Turkish. In journals and newspapers of the time, to denote humanism eight different words in Turkish, now in Latin script, were used: Hümerizm, Hümanizma, Humanisma, Humanizma, Humanism, Hümanism, Ümanizma, Humanisme.

⁶² Ahmet Oktay, “Halikarnassos’tan Bodrum’a –Türkiye’de Hümanist Söylem’in Tarihçesi ve Ütopist Bir Aydın Hareketi Üzerine Not”, *Entelektüel Tereddüt*, Everest, İstanbul, 2003, p. 183.

⁶³ Ibid. p. 182.

This part follows a historical sequence only where possible, due to the lack of a specific continuous sequence in the debates. As stated before, no categorization is employed in the analysis but the relevant essays in various publications are surveyed since intellectuals with similar opinions tended to group around a specific periodical.

3.3.1. The Pioneer of the Debates: Burhan Belge's "The Name of the Graft is Humanism" ["*Aşımın Adı Hürmanizm*"]

Burhan Belge (1899-1967) published in newspaper *Ulus* eighteen essays under the title "İnsan ve Kùltür" (Man and Culture) between the 5th-22nd of December, 1938. In general, Belge attempted to find a solution to the issue of cultural identity within the continuous dichotomy of East and West. He investigated the prerequisites for the ideology of the new regime, and proposed to follow the ancient Greco-Roman culture which he perceived as the origin of the humanist culture.⁶⁴ According to Ahmet Oktay (1933-), Belge's essays were "quasi-formalization of humanism as a cultural decision".⁶⁵ In his essays, Belge took on Renaissance, Humanism, and national culture in the same context, although he did not open a new aspect in the debates up to the current times⁶⁶, his holistic understanding of humanist culture, his analysis of the then situation of the country with a historical perspective, and his radical solutions to the problems of the time attracted the attention of his contemporaries, ushering in an intensive debate about humanism. The main points raised by Belge in his essays are explained in the following paragraphs.

According to Belge, the reason behind the cultural identity crisis in the period was the impossibility of a sudden shift from the Ottoman culture under the sway of Arab-Persian cultures to a new culture based on the ancient Greco-Roman culture. The theocratic rule of the Empire further worsened the situation, and a dichotomy of two cultures emerged, a dichotomy which could not be solved even by Kemalism. Similar to his contemporaries, Belge reckoned with the Tanzimat Period and its

⁶⁴ Ahmet Oktay, "Halikarnassos'tan Bodrum'a... p. 185.

⁶⁵ Tansu Açıık, "Türkiye'de Hürmanizm..., p. 116.

⁶⁶ Ibid. p. 117.

intellectuals. He criticized them because of their adoption of only the material civilization of the West in a culturally and materially Eastern social structure and their decision to culturally remain in the East. Belge blamed those intellectuals for not understanding the fact that the Western civilization could only be the product of the Western culture and humanism. For Belge, Tanzimat intellectuals also deserved the blame for their inability to prevent a reactionary, conservative, and Eastern ideology. Belge posited that the dichotomy survived since then could only be solved by a firm decision in favour of one or the other, not by a compromise.

Belge attempted to explain the dilemma the country was in by a culture-centred historical analysis. According to him, the crumbling Ottoman language could not absorb the inroads of the Western culture. In fact, for Belge, the crumbling language represented the hundred years of thought, culture, and civilization that were crumbling, and the Turkish language inherited that illness of the Ottoman language. Belge again blames the Tanzimat intellectuals, this time for not investigating the reasons behind the ailing Ottoman language. According to Belge, the culture which flowed into the country was a “grafted” one. The graft was the Renaissance. If the Tanzimat intellectuals had indeed looked for the truth, they would inevitably face the challenge of West and hence could have formed an Ottoman or even a Turkish Renaissance. It did not happen for two reasons. The first one was the Ottoman language which was attached to the Arab culture and Islam. The second was that the Ottoman intellectual, a relatively advanced figure in the society, was brought up as a cosmopolitan personality instead of being a humanist one. Since they were aware of the West, they thought that they shared the same ideas with the latter, and they were intellectually at a par with the West.

The main conclusion drawn by Burhan Belge was that the reason behind the collapse of the Ottoman Empire was not the supremacy of the Western civilization and technique but the Western culture that created them. For him, the Twentieth Century would not allow the survival of any nation that could not create its own humanism, and that should have been the main lesson to be drawn since the Tanzimat Period. Only with graft of a humanism the cultural path opened by Kemalism could be broadened. The creator of a victorious civilization was the victorious culture and the origin of that culture was only one: Renaissance-

Hellenism-Humanism expressed around a Greco-Latin axis. They were common goods for humanity not having any political agenda. They would transform any culture they were adopted in by grafting their essence onto the existing particular culture in question. According to Belge, the most dangerous thing was an Eastern culture cohabiting with a Western civilization. That was the reason behind the failure of the Tanzimat.

Burhan Belge proposed several policies to overcome the issue of cultural identity. Firstly, a new Turkish national culture would be created on the basis of humanism and Greco-Roman culture. For that aim, three high schools would be founded in three cities, namely İstanbul, Bursa, and Konya, which Belge considered as the focal points of the old Turkish culture. Secondly, some of the graduates of those high schools had to be endowed enough to teach at history, geography, and language faculties as well as at the high-schools they graduated from. Belge also proposed to make graduation from those high schools a condition to be high-school teachers in the mid-run. He made that proposal with the belief that the supremacy of the West lay in the prevalence of that kind of high-schools in Europe.⁶⁷

A comprehensive reaction to Belge's series of essays came from Hilmi Ziya Ülken (1901-1974).⁶⁸ For Ülken, Belge, who stated that Kemalism was against any tradition rooted in the East, was too short-sighted to see that there would be no East-West dichotomy with a broadest insight to the past.⁶⁹ Ülken criticized Belge and his likes for looking at the history to understand humanism from the viewpoint of the West that Ülken described as being alienated from religion and taking the science as the measure of anything. In fact, the West defined by Ülken was the very thing that was sought for. Like Belge, Ülken argued that man is the product of history. For humanism to flourish, Ülken posited that the roots should be investigated and a considerable amount of work had to be done first; namely, that there was no short-cut. Thus, Ülken criticized some of his contemporaries who rushed to adopt humanism for a limited-understanding of humanism from the then currents of

⁶⁷ Burhan Belge, "İnsan ve Kültür", *Ulus*, 5-22 Aralık 1938.

⁶⁸ Hilmi Ziya Ülken, "Tanzimat ve Humanizma", *İnsan*, No. 9, Şubat 1939, pp. 689-694.

⁶⁹ Tansu Açıık, "Türkiye'de Hümanizm...", p. 117.

thought and literature in Europe instead of investigating the roots of humanism. He therefore posited that their approach posed a very serious threat to the Turkish culture.

Like Belge, Ülken criticized the Tanzimat intellectuals for not analyzing the West thoroughly. However, Ülken gave some credit to those intellectuals on the grounds that the social life of the time was not suitable for such a thorough analysis of the West on their part. Ülken thought a comprehensive analysis of the West through systematic and ongoing translations, the lessons to be derived from the West's historical experience, publication of periodicals about humanism, and monographic surveys to be conducted in Turkey in order to better understand the social structure would all help to put the country on the correct humanism track.

Ülken did not believe in the Greek miracle on the grounds that there were different humanisms in different civilizations besides the Greek, namely Islamic, Hindu, and Chinese. By claiming that the world desired a single civilization and humanism, Ülken wanted to make it evident that he perceived a more universal problematic of humanism rather than the dubitable Greek miracle.

Ahmet Kutsi Tecer (1901-1967) on the other hand, agreed with Belge on the necessity of adopting the West as the best and only solution to the issue of culture. However, he disagreed with Belge on the Greek-Latin lessons in schools on the grounds that those were now dead languages. Tecer argued that what Belge meant to say was Turkish culture and nation was there before or without Islam. Therefore, Tecer stated that it would be more appropriate to say "I am a human being or a Turk than with God's blessing I am Muslim".⁷⁰ The journal, *Varlık* also supported Burhan Belge with an anonymous essay.⁷¹

Another intellectual, Kâzım Nami [Duru] (1867-1967), expressed his views in 1934, that can be considered as relevant to the above-mentioned debate even before that debate started. For Duru, science was not under the monopoly of any country for it was neutral. Any scholar would be deemed a man of both his country and the

⁷⁰ Ahmet Kutsi Tecer, "Türk Kültürü ve Hümanizma", *Varlık*, No. 134, 1939, p. 55. [The original statement in Turkish: "Elhamdülallah ben Müslümanım, yerine, ben insanım veya Türk'üm demeliyiz."]

⁷¹ "Hakikî Edebiyat", *Varlık*, 1939, No.133.

whole humanity. Duru took the Greek history as the starting point of the Western civilization since, according to him, thought, science, tolerance, philosophy, democracy, and literature first flourished in the ancient Greek civilization.⁷² Duru gave himself credit for proposing already in 1920 Greek history and literature courses at high schools. He stated that his proposal received a cold welcome since Turkey and Greece were at war by then. According to Duru, Greek history lessons would give Turkish students the chance to break free from traditional thought. Unlike Tecer, Duru found value in ancient Greek and Roman languages since they remained relatively undiluted due to their obsolescence. Every word had a clear meaning and there would not be any meaning shifts as they were not mundane languages, arguable claim. Duru thought that only through humanism Turkish folk culture and Turkish literature could be created, and would become an example of contemporary literature, adding that there was nothing against nationalism in such transition. Duru put learning Greek and Roman language as a prerequisite for humanism.⁷³ The reason why he proposed humanism as the foundation of a national literature was his perception that humanism was one single and international phenomenon, and there was no differentiation of humanism based on different nations. Duru used the words Humanism and Classicism as synonyms since humanism was thought at schools was also called classical education. Duru believed that with the help of humanism Turkish language and literature would develop and a Turkish classicism would emerge from them.⁷⁴

Another intellectual who dwelled on the above-mentioned issues at the same time with Belge was Saffet Engin. Engin rejected the thesis of Greco-Roman “miracle”, and argued that all the origins of the West lay in Anatolia. In his book, he analyzed the Kemalist revolutions according to its Western attributes, and he argued that it was a humanist revolution.⁷⁵ He defined humanism as follows: “The name of dynamism in the metaphysical world is Humanism, in the physical world it is called

⁷² Kâzım Nami [Duru], “Humanisma”, *Ülkü*, No. 36, 1934, pp. 332-335.

⁷³ Kâzım Nami Duru, “Edebiyat ve Hümanizma”, *Varlık*, No. 156, 1939.

⁷⁴ Kâzım Nami Duru, “Humanisma ve Klâsisma”, *Yeni Kültür*, No. 69, 1940.

⁷⁵ M. Saffet Engin, *Kemalizm İnkılâbının...*, Vol. 1, p. 24.

a positivist scientific spirit.”⁷⁶ For Engin, the spirit of humanism stipulated three different things, namely, revitalizing the ancient Greco-Roman literature, exploring and experiencing subjectively the beauties and pleasures of the world, and trying to reveal the mystery of nature through science.⁷⁷ In his book, Engin mentioned “the spirit of humanism” as something to be re-grafted, revitalized, and reincarnated since for him humanism was born among Turks and it had to be revitalized by the Turks.⁷⁸ He argued that the old Turkish civilizations’ influence in the Mediterranean basin led to the foundation of the ancient Greek and Roman civilizations.⁷⁹ Moreover, he posited that the Renaissance was simply nothing but “the reincarnation of the spirit of Athenian democracy which was imported there from the ancient Turks and lived its heyday around 400 B.C., and the grafting a brand-new life and youthfulness onto Europe.” In sum, Engin implied that the ancient Greek civilization owed its existence completely to the presence of ancient Turks in Anatolia.

The humanism debates which were ushered in by Burhan Belge’s series of essays, were initially continued at individual level as demonstrated above. Later on, the debate was conducted in various periodicals of the time. There were three journals supporting humanism and its dissemination in the country. They were *Yücel*, *İnsan*, and *Adımlar*. As shall be seen below, the debates could not survive very long after those journals lost interest in the issue.

3.3.2. Discovering Oneself Through Humanism: The Journal, *Yücel*

The first issue of *Yücel* appeared on the February 23rd, 1935 under the editorship Behçet Kemal Çağlar (1908-1969), Mustafa Ertem, Cemal Nadir Güler (1902-1974, Vedat Günyol (1911-2004), Yusuf Mardin (1916-1994), Osman Nebi (1912-), Saffettin Pınar, İsmet Rasin, Hâlûk Şehsuvaroğlu (1912-1963). The journal defined itself as the Republic’s Kemalist journal. It was shut down twice because of

⁷⁶ M. Saffet Engin, *Kemalizm İnkılâbının...*, Vol. 3, p. 101. [The original statement in Turkish: “Dinamizmin adına manevî âlemde Hümanizma, maddî âlemde müspet ilim ruhu denir.”]

⁷⁷ Ibid. p. 124.

⁷⁸ Ibid. p. 91.

⁷⁹ M. Saffet Engin, *Kemalizm İnkılâbının...*, Vol. 1, p. 40.

its criticism of the one-party rule. It was one of the most popular culture and art journals of the time with a circulation rate of three or four thousand.

Vedat Günyol later described the journal's publication line during the years until 1940 as "haphazard and incoherent". When Orhan Burian (1914-1953) came back to the country in 1940 after he finishing his studies at Cambridge, he joined the editorial board of the journal. According to Günyol, Burian tried to "give direction to the confused editorial board." That direction was the tendency and desire to approach the Turkish thought, art, literature, and history from the perspective of free thought rather than the existing traditional perspectives.⁸⁰ After Burian, *Yücel* strived to create a genuine culture by putting the Greco-Roman culture, the Renaissance, and humanism at the forefront, and by adopting ethical values. The journal led to debates among traditional vs. innovative; nationalist vs. westernist; and left-wing vs. right-wing discourses.

With the sway of Burhan Belge's ideas and Orhan Burian's new path, the journal defined its target on its 61st issue as the path of "humanism". In their own words, their target was "discovering [themselves] through humanism"⁸¹ and "dwelling on the nature and culture of [their] nation with the mindset that created the contemporary civilization, and hence putting new values onto the existing Turkish assets."⁸²

In the 61st issue, there were joint essays. In the first set of essays, the authors put their understanding of humanism as a methodological tool in the Turkish thought. In the second set of essays, they demonstrated how that tool would be employed in arts and literature. According to the *Yücel* circle, "nations that could establish a genuine art and system of thought in the world are those who discovered and regenerated themselves through humanism." They stated their understanding of humanism as delving into the origins, roots, and into the human by shaking the absolute judgments and dogmas of thousands of years, and without reducing any new

⁸⁰ Orhan Burian, *Denemeler Eleştiriler*, Türkiye Bilimler Akademisi, Ankara, 2004, preface by Vedat Günyol, p. 13.

⁸¹ [The original statement in Turkish: "Hümanizm aracılığı ile kendimizi bulmak".]

⁸² Yücel-Başyazı, "Yücel Altıncı Yılına Girerken", *Yücel*, No. 61, 1940, p. 5.

thoughts and intuitions to a single absolute old. The *Yücel* circle understanding of humanism emerged under the sway of three figures. The first one is Hatemi Senih Sarp, who will be analyzed in detail below. *Yücel* circle were quite influenced by Sarp's definition of humanism, which was "re-evaluation, subject to the social group's essential character, of all issues pertinent to the organization of the social group." They considered this to be the basis for the "Turkish Humanism" and applied the definition to the field of art, formulating it as: "re-evaluation, subject to the reflection of the Turkish assets on the essential artistic formulations, of all issues pertinent to the organization of the new Turkish art." A second figure was Peyami Safa (1899-1961). *Yücel* circle adopted Safa's statement that "the adoption, since the very beginning of Turkish revolution, not only the technical aspects of European civilization's but also its whole thinking methodology and lifestyle was nothing but an attempt to comprehend and accommodate the results of the Renaissance in the modern age."⁸³ The last figure who influenced *Yücel* circle was Burhan Belge who had already above-mentioned and his claim that "the humanist high schools and all the language, art, and thought movements around humanism did consolidate the nationness of individual national parts of Europe instead of alienating them from it."⁸⁴ *Yücel* circle blended all those essential ideas, and advocated the necessity of cleaning the society from dogmas. They thought that it was the "folk culture" which was the only pure and original art in Turkey then. Therefore, they believed that a part of the collective ego -which they would rediscover through humanism-, already existed in the folk culture.

Yücel also published minutes of a discussion concerning humanism among İsmet Rasin, Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın (1874-1957), Orhan Burian, Mustafa Şekip Tunç (1886-1958), Behçet Kemal Çağlar (1908-1969), Orhan Seyfi [Orhon] (1890-1972), Celâleddin Ezine (1901-1972), Midhad Cemal Kuntay (1885-1956) on the same issue.⁸⁵

The discussion started with *Yücel*'s understanding of humanism and continued from there. Nevertheless, a close observation of the first discussion

⁸³ Peyami Safa, *Türk İnkilâbına Bakışlar*, Kültür Bakanlığı, Ankara, 1981, p. 193.

⁸⁴ Burhan Belge, "İnsan ve Kültür", *Ulus*, 09.09.1938.

⁸⁵ Yücel, "Müşterek Yazımız", *Yücel*, No. 61, 1940.

demonstrates how much the discussants were short of a scientific approach and how the ensuing discussion was without a core theme.

In the proceedings, alternative words to humanism were brought up. İsmet Rasin proposed the “quest for the essence”, but his proposal was not approved because of Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın’s argument that humanism and the quest for essence were two divergent things. Yalçın stated that “Humanism is not the quest for essence and by the way Turks do not search for their essence, what does it mean to say ‘quest for the essence’ when they have never lost their essence?”

As a response to Yalçın, Orhan Burian argued that “in order to be considered as one of the world civilizations, we must have a peculiar civilization, and the road to that peculiar civilization goes through the humanist mentality.” According to Burian, “quest for oneself/comprehending oneself” was not a personal issue and humanist mentality meant to be aware of how one’s past and history, social structure, and literature emerged and developed. That humanist mentality disseminated in Europe through the Renaissance, and armed with that mentality, the Europeans rejected all the dogmas and rules, and they demonstrated the courage to make sense of everything around them by counting on the power of their own independent reason. For this reason, it can be argued that what Burian referred to by “humanist” is a person who counts on his reason, who has great interest in research, who quests for the social, political, and artistic things by rejecting all the dogmas.

Yalçın responded to Burian by arguing that what Burian proposed was not humanism but a desirable target to reach in order to elevate the quality of thought in the country. For Yalçın, humanism meant the analysis of the objective and the acceptance of the supremacy of reason, since the ancient Greeks analyzed literary, sociological, and moral issues, and more importantly they rationalized that analysis.

Orhan Burian responded back by arguing that he was saying the very same thing as Yalçın and the journal, *Yücel* employed that thought and reasoning system of the Renaissance as its methodology. He added that “only after we discover ourselves in the past via that mentality, we can provide the inputs to the construction of the Turkish civilization.”

On the other hand, Celâleddin Ezine argued that those ideas did not mean comprehending oneself but a flow into oneself. He argued that the word humanism did not represent his views.

Orhan Burian mentioned again that their understanding of humanism did not mean the quest for the past but an analysis by one of himself and his relationship with his peers. Nevertheless, he argued that a nation that was in quest for itself had to face its own past and define something that belonged to itself. Only after that the contemporary Turkish civilization could be established.

During the proceedings, Behçet Kemal Çağlar argued that they would employ the defining tenet of the ancient Greeks, namely “method of reasoning”, as the methodology in their quest. However, since such a methodology was not existent among the Turks, they always looked at the technical aspects of poems in any analysis of the Turkish folk culture. Çağlar seemed like he comprehended the anthropocentric understanding of humanism as he came to the following conclusion regarding the poems that “[t]here is no attempt to reach the poet, the time, and the setting through the work, there is no quest for finding the human in the work.”

With the above-mentioned debates, the discussion strayed from its initial aim, and got lost in debates about how “Divan” literature, the main high literature of the Ottoman Empire, was totally alienated from the “human being”, and consequently failed to progress

The discussion published on the 61st issue of *Yücel* received the attention of Yaşar Nabi Nayır (1908-1981), the owner of the journal, *Varlık*. Nayır supported the idea of dwelling on the folk culture and argued that the artist should establish a bridge to the people and to the folk literature otherwise the folk culture would not benefit the Turkish nation at all. Nayır posited that there was no need to learn Greek or Roman languages but the translations were crucial to get Turkish people acquainted with the focal point of the civilization, namely the ancient Greco-Roman culture.⁸⁶

The self assertive discussions of *Yücel* circle lost their momentum several issues after the 61st issue in question. There were only few poems translated from

⁸⁶ Yaşar Nabi [Nayır], “Hümanzima ve Millî Ruh”, *Varlık*, No. 163, 1940, pp. 473-474.

Greek or Roman languages, and several essays published on the folk literature in the name of the humanist cause. In that context, one interesting essay by Behice Boran was published in the journal. In her essay, Boran discussed the economic foundations of the Fifteenth Century in order to comprehend the dynamics behind humanism of the time.⁸⁷ According to Boran, the Greco-Roman worlds reached the phase of “village economy” while the Middle Ages were times when the state dissolved into feudal structures. There was no right to private property. Once the phase of “village economy” started to flourish again in the Fifteenth Century, a socio-economic structure similar to that of the Greco-Roman world emerged. In the realm of thought, “rational individualism” was on the rise. Therefore, Boran argued that humanism was more than learning Greek or Latin, or a literary activity. It was a new mentality and philosophical understanding born in the Medieval Europe. Tansu Aık criticized Boran’s analysis in the following quote: “[Boran] in this first attempt of a thorough analysis cannot go beyond a simple schema of [economic] structure. Bearing in mind the classical works of Henri Pirenne in 1925 and 1933, her analysis is quite pedestrian compared with the historical and sociological analyses of the time.”⁸⁸ Boran concluded her essay by her remarks in relation to the question whether humanism taking roots in social life was compatible with “Turkish social structure”. She stated that, “humanism is a mentality issue and it will not take root by classics or Greek-Latin languages, the fundamental importance of humanism is not about learning the origins of the Western culture that we are adopting.”⁸⁹

It is worth mentioning Şınasi Özdenođlu’s essay that was published five years after the discussion in the above-mentioned issue of *Yücel* although Özdenođlu’s essay can be argued to add nothing new to the existing debate. According to Özdenođlu, humanism did mean not only analyzing the ancient Greco-Roman culture in the texts but also bridging those analyses with the existing cultures, and giving direction to the current artistic creation. For that reason, an artist who dwelled on human being without any limits of time and space transcended the national and

⁸⁷ Behice Boran, “Sosyoloji Bakımından Humanisma”, *Yücel*, No.66, 1940, pp. 267-270.

⁸⁸ Tansu Aık, “Türkiye’de Hümanizm...”, p. 120.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.* p. 120.

became universal. Thus, Özdenoğlu concluded that humanism became obsolete in terms of its emergence but continued to exist in terms of its spirit and meaning.⁹⁰

Özdenoğlu who was one of the rare intellectuals that separated humanism from the Greco-Roman axis, wrote another essay two years later, which was more or less the repetition of the former. In this essay, Özdenoğlu argued that the reason behind the commonality in cultures of Western countries was the humanism being the sole source, adding if Turkey did not possess an advanced art it was because of its late interaction with the humanist sources. For Özdenoğlu, creation of humanism in the country was not a matter of time but that of comprehending, adopting, and working towards realizing the true humanism.⁹¹

As mentioned before, the zeal of humanism in *Yücel* was a short-lived one. The journal was shut down in 1948 and for two years no issue was published. In 1950, it was started publication again with an other eight-issue series. In the foreword to the first issue, the spirit of the journal, *Yücel* was described as “every person living a humanist life which will increase one’s attempts at thinking and feeling, is the only way for a decent life.”⁹²

Even in the new series, the journal could not really focus on humanism as aimed. The leading figure in the new issues was Füzûzan Hüsrev Tökin. Tökin wrote three consecutive essays, and her arguments in these can be likened to the arguments of the Blue Anatolian Humanism, which is to be analyzed in greater detail in the following section.

Taken as a whole, Tökin’s main points in her three essays can be summarized as follows: what the Westerners called the “Greek miracle” was Anatolia.⁹³ The culture in the Aegean flourished long before the Greeks. The Greeks were only the heir to that cultural heritage. The authors to who produced the works of the “Greek

⁹⁰ Şinasi Özdenoğlu, “Hümanizmanın Gerçek Mânası”, *Yücel*, No. 108, 1945, pp. 40-45.

⁹¹ Şinasi Özdenoğlu, “Hümanizmayı Yaratmak Meselesi”, *Yücel*, No. 134, 1947, pp. 413-416.

⁹² Vedat Günyol, *Sanat ve Edebiyat...*, p. 41. [The original statement in Turkish: “Her kişinin, düşünmek çabasını ve duymak niteliğini arttıracak yolda hümanistçe yaşaması, onurlu yaşamının tek yoludur”.]

⁹³ Füzûzan Hüsrev Tökin, “Yunan Kültürünün Kaynağı ANADOLU’dur”, *Yücel*, New Series No. 3, 1950, pp. 36-37; “Bizde Hümanizma”, *Yücel*, New Series No. 6, 1950, pp. 13-14; “Fatih Mehmet ve Rönesans”, *Yücel*, New Series No. 7, 1950, pp. 28-29.

miracle” were attributed by the West, such as Homer, Herodotus, Sappho, Anacreon, Thisbe, and Heraclitus were from Anatolia. Therefore, the thought that gave birth to the Renaissance was the complementary association between the Islamic culture that sought for the truth only in the abstract world and the Latin culture that sought for it only in the tangible one. According to Tökin, the Ottoman society was a closed one and hence did not have the social and moral conditions to join the Renaissance. On the other hand, Atatürk fulfilled the essential conditions for Neo-Hellenism to flourish thanks to his reforms. Tökin, who appears to be quite influenced by the ideas of Hilmi Ziya Ülken, and in line with the popular tendency of her time, criticized the Ottoman intellectuals as well as the Ottoman Sultans, starting with Mehmet the Conqueror for not appreciating the value of the Greco-Roman culture inherent on their lands.

The humanism debates in the journal, *Yücel* were not very fruitful. They were shallow and weak, and they could not go beyond the descriptive accounts of the situation then. Still, Orhan Burian deserves special attention since he was the one who set the journal, *Yücel* on the track of humanism, for he received a humanist education abroad.

In his three-part essay, “Humanism and Us” [Hümanizma ve Biz]⁹⁴ Burian explained the European Renaissance with humanism and conveyed the consequences of the analyses of the classics onto the understanding of human and nature in that period. He posited by employing Yahya Kemal’s conception of “the consciousness about history” that the humanism to flourish in Turkey could not do so by imitating the Greek and Roman languages or the European Renaissance, but through a deep analysis of the unknown past and other realms of the Turkish nation.⁹⁵

It can be observed that Burian, in a different vein than other intellectuals, focused on the secular structure of humanism. For him the reason why the East and Islamic world did not experience a renaissance was the dominance of a scholastic

⁹⁴ Orhan Burian, “Humanizma ve Biz I-II-III”, *Yücel*, No. 62-63-64, 1940.

⁹⁵ Tansu Açıık, “Türkiye’de Hümanizm...”, p. 120.

and dogmatic mentality. However, he still added that “Atatürk was the Renaissance of Asia.”⁹⁶

Burian argued that “nations that created a peculiar art and thought system were the ones that discovered and regenerated themselves through humanism.”⁹⁷ He made a comparison among one British and two Turkish poets to support his argument.⁹⁸

Burian found the award-winning poem of a female Oxford student who was British very impressive on the grounds that its main theme was “human” and in that vein it was in fact a product of both ancient Greece and Renaissance. After that, he levelled harsh criticisms against poems of Faruk Nafiz Çamlıbel and Hasan Âli Yücel, respectively. He described these poems as soulless, dull, and shallow since they were alien to the “real human” being in flesh of bone. According to Burian, “humanism” is a journey of discovering oneself. Although man is flawed, he has the capacity, reason, and determination to hone himself, and he continuously attempts to accomplish that. Therefore, he believed that a real Turkish art could only be created by humanism.

Suat Sinanoğlu, too, whose works are analyzed in detail in the following sections of the thesis, wrote an essay in which he argued for the necessity of a “humanist education” that was cleansed of the scholastic education and totally turned to the West.⁹⁹ Shortly, Burian wrote an essay that endorsed Sinanoğlu’s argument. According to Burian, the aim of the humanist education should be bringing up a man who was decent and totally aware of himself, and who focused on the relationship between man and the cosmos, and who took the measure of everything from “his reason” instead of “god”, which was the case in ancient Greece.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ Orhan Burian, *Denemeler Eleştiriler...*, p. 57.

⁹⁷ Orhan Burian, *Denemeler Eleştiriler...*, p. 14.

⁹⁸ Orhan Burian, “Humanisma Üç Şiir Münasibetiyle”, *Yücel*, No. 47, 1939.

⁹⁹ Suat Sinanoğlu, “Kültür Dâvâmız”, *İnkılâp Gençliği*, No. 1, 1952.

¹⁰⁰ Orhan Burian, “Medeniyet Ardındaki Ahlâk EĞİTİM”, *Yeni Ufuklar*, No. 7, 1952.

Soon after the publication of the abovementioned essay, the journal, *Yücel* was shut down due to its disagreement with the government of the time. In 1955, it started publication again with a different editorial board. On the first issue, the new board gave credit to their predecessors for pioneering the creation of Turkish humanism as the first step towards modernization of the Turkish nation. However, a pessimistic mood about the future of Turkish humanism was very much in the air.¹⁰¹

Cemal Süreya (1931-1990) summarized the phases the journal, *Yücel* went through as follows: “Idealist around a general humanist thinking up to 1946; critical towards the compromises [leading away] from Kemalism between 1946 and 1950; pessimistic during its short life span after 1950.”¹⁰²

Orhan Burian and Vedat Günyol started to issue a monthly known as *Ufuklar* [Horizons] in February, 1952. In the first issue, Burian stated the following in his essay “Dileğimiz” [Our Wish]: “It is written for the sake of the beautiful, good, and true. *Ufuklar* will write and speak for these as long as it has the strength to do so. We believe in the necessity to respect, with adherence to proportionality and tolerance, the common sense in all of our judgments.”¹⁰³

Orhan Burian’s unexpected death in 1953 had a very adverse effect on his colleague Vedat Günyol, whom Burian considered as his company on the road to humanism. His death added to the combined outcome of failure to disseminate humanism to the common people, the closure of the Village Institutes, and the problems experienced with the government during the multi-party system abating Günyol’s zeal for humanism. Günyol changed the name of the journal to *Yeni Ufuklar* [New Horizons] after Burian’s death. He joined the Blue Anatolian Humanism group later on.

¹⁰¹ Yücel, “Başlarken”, New Series No. 1, 1955, p. 1.

¹⁰² Vedat Günyol, *Sanat ve Edebiyat...*, pp. 38-39. Referring to: Cemal Süreya, *Papirüs*, No. 39, p. 64.

¹⁰³ Vedat Günyol, *Sanat ve Edebiyat...*, p. 58. [The original statement in Turkish: “Güzel uğruna yazı yazılır, iyi uğruna, doğru uğruna. *Ufuklar*, gücü yettiğinde bu üç uğurda yazıp konuşacak... Ölçülülük ve hoşgörüyü bağlı kalarak her yargımızda sağ duyuyu gözetmek gereğine inanıyoruz.”]

3.3.3. Turkish Renaissance Born: The Journal, *İnsan* [Human Being]

The *İnsan* was published between April, 1938 and August, 1943 with the participation of Nurullah Ataç (1898-1957), Sabahattin Eyuboğlu, Muzaffer Şerif [Başoğlu] and under the editorship of Hilmi Ziya Ülken.

On the first issue, the goal was put as follows: The Turkish nation was in a dilemma for a century between the two worlds. Eventually, it decided to be part of the Western world, and yet it still could realize the renaissance it had to realize with a century delay. In this context, the goals of the journal were:

1. To get rid of the dogmas that prevent Turkish nation from being part of the modern world.
2. To reveal the role of the Turkish nation in history, and hence broaden its horizons.
3. To investigate all the works of the Turkish civilization since the earliest times (i.e. from Sumerians to the current times)
4. To re-evaluate the social structure of Turkey that is now included in the international state system.

According to the *İnsan* circle, “The Turkish intellectual [was] born out of the Renaissance mentality” only after the Turkish revolution happened. Since the *Humanists* did not believe in the Greek miracle, they stated that “We (Turks) broadened the Greek science in the Islamic world and then conveyed it to the West.”¹⁰⁴

On the first issue, Hilmi Ziya Ülken set in his essay, “Tanzimata Karşı” [Against the Tanzimat] set the new task for Turkish intellectuals whom he has been continuously criticizing in the past. According to him, it was time for Turkish intellectuals to make systematically and uninterruptedly translations while at the same time, adopt the Western science, understanding the country in depth, and, more importantly, they must start criticizing themselves.¹⁰⁵

Ülken argued that the Tanzimat man lost his essence in the trap of the East-West dichotomy. According to Ülken such Tanzimat intellectuals, as Şinasi (1826-

¹⁰⁴ İnsan-Başyazı, “Maksad”, *İnsan*, 1938, No. 1.

¹⁰⁵ Hilmi Ziya Ülken, “Tanzimata KarşıYazar”, *İnsan*, 1938, No. 1.

1871) and Ziya Paşa (1825-1880), and the like could not understand the West at the human level, for always perceiving the solely West in its technical and civilizational aspects. Nevertheless, for Ülken, the matter of his times was discovering oneself and turning to oneself. Therefore, what needed to be done was not abandoning one civilization and adopting another but realizing a renaissance, by breaking free from a closed civilization and awakening a broad based humanism movement to delve into the earliest roots.

On the second issue of *İnsan* Nurullah Ataç supported Ülken's points. Like him, Ataç rejected the Greco-Roman miracle, by arguing that there had been no progress in the intelligence of man since the ancient Athens, and he added that the Renaissance Period was superior to the Greco-Roman civilization. As shall be demonstrated in the following sections of the thesis, Ataç was one of the most ardent supporters of Greek and Latin lessons at Turkey's high-schools. He demonstrated that attitude of him in his essay by arguing that the Turkish nation had to compensate for its lack of classics by another literature. Ataç further argued that this compensation must be made with literature of a dead civilization. Although Ataç claimed that the Greco-Roman literary works were weaker than the contemporary European works, he still insisted on the translation of the former since he firmly believed that understanding the Greco-Roman civilization was a prerequisite for understanding the history of civilization.¹⁰⁶ In his view, Turkish must change, and like the European languages it must draw on the richness of Greek and Latin languages.

Ülken dedicated his next essay to Ataç and his above-mentioned remarks. Ülken reiterated the falseness of the Greek miracle, and he argued that the Greek civilization was a natural consequence of the progress in the world, more accurately that of the progress in the Mediterranean world.¹⁰⁷ According to Ülken, the belief in the Greek miracle would prevent man from comprehending the technical, intellectual, and sentimental progress of the civilization, and worse it would let him forget that human thought was all about transcending oneself continuously. Besides,

¹⁰⁶ Nurullah Ataç, "Humanisma", *İnsan*, 1938, No. 2.

¹⁰⁷ Hilmi Ziya Ülken, "Yunan Mucizesi", *İnsan*, 1938, No. 3.

the modern thought, namely “relativism” transcended what the ancient Greeks thought the humanity, namely the concepts of dogmatism and sophism.

Ülken was the person who coined the concept of “Turkish Renaissance” in the literature. In fact, the same phrase was used on the first issue of the *Edebiyat-ı Umumiye* (Public Literature) journal in 1917 in a sentence: “With the war, a new renaissance period starts in the Turkish history. First World War is awakening for us.” However, the renaissance used there was quite different than the renaissance in the *İnsan* journal. The renaissance of the *Edebiyat-ı Umumiye* journal was an attempt to consolidate Turkey by adhering strictly to the principles of Islam, whereas the renaissance of the *İnsan* journal was an attempt to reveal the essence of human through the humanism methodology that was purified from dogmas and on the track of reason.¹⁰⁸

Although Ülken did not believe in the Greek miracle, he endorsed the idea that the Greco-Roman civilization was the starting point for the humanist culture. That is why, as explained in the “Translation Office” section of the thesis, Ülken wrote a few essays about, and supported the initiatives for the necessity to increase the number of translations from the Greco-Roman texts.

Ülken and the other contributors to the *İnsan* journal were more interested in a general human problematic that was changed with man’s progress in the Renaissance than a humanism focused on the Greco-Roman. For instance, Hatemi Senih Sarp who was one of the models of *Yücel* circle, dwelled on humanism sociologically, namely, in its most anthropocentric form. According to Sarp, humanism meant a domestic philosophy. That is to say, humanism was re-investigation, subject to the essential features of the social entity, all the matters pertinent to the organization of the social entity. Therefore, the starting point for humanism, according to Sarp, had to be that investigation. Whatever the matter was, be it family, politics, art, state and so forth, the starting point had to be the organization of social communities. For Sarp, society was a different matter; it could not be manufactured or established. At the end of his sociological analysis, Sarp reached a very important point that the others could not perceive: The origins of

¹⁰⁸ Vedat Günyol, *Sanat ve Edebiyat...*, pp. 32-33.

some of the doctrines with humanist tendencies came most of the time from nothing but an individualism that involved violence.¹⁰⁹

Similar to the fate of the journal, *Yücel*, the *İnsan* journal experience ended with disappointment. The journal progressively lost its interest in humanism and deviated from its goals.

3.3.4. Labour, the People, and Society: The Journal, *Adımlar* [Steps]

The *Adımlar* made its debut in 1942. It was published by some members of the academic staff of the Faculty of Language, History and Geography, such as Adnan Cemgil, Pertev Nail Boratav, and Behice Boran. The journal tried to overcome the dichotomies of East-West and past-future by employing the concepts of labour and the people.¹¹⁰ That approach would transform into the current of Blue Anatolian Humanism under the leadership of Sabahattin Eyuboğlu.

The *Adımlar* approached the concept of humanism from a more sociological and historical perspective than the journal, *Yücel*, which could be considered as the former's desire to demonstrate that they were more scientific and less romanticist.¹¹¹

On the first issue of *Adımlar*, they conducted a survey among intellectuals about humanism.¹¹² Above-mentioned two years before that survey, the journal, *Yücel* conveyed the ideas of many intellectuals on the same matter. Therefore, the survey would give an idea whether in two years the ideas of intellectuals about humanism changed, and whether the concept of humanism was disseminated swiftly. There were two questions posed in the survey. The first one was "What is humanism?" and the second one was "What can be the meaning and role of humanism in the current development of culture and ideas?" The respondents usually combined their individual answers in one short paragraph.

Yusuf Kâzım Köni from the Ministry of Education defined humanism as a current that used the works composed by humans in the realms of culture and

¹⁰⁹ Hatemi Senih Sarp, "İçtimai Ümanizma", *İnsan*, No. 6, 1938.

¹¹⁰ Ahmet Oktay, "Halikarnassos'tan Bodrum'a... p. 187.

¹¹¹ Tansu Açıık, "Türkiye'de Hümanizm...", p. 126.

¹¹² Adımlar, "Adımlar'ın Humanizma Anketi", *Adımlar*, No. 2, 3, 4, 1942.

civilization as an educational tool. He stated that there was nothing against the ideal of nationalism in humanism. Instead it was humanism that contributed to national consciousness the most, and it created the peculiar art of people from each country.

Prof. O. Lacombe from Ankara University stated that humanism could not be defined but it could be identified and described in historical contexts. He added that for an individual or community humanism to take root, the education was not enough alone, and in order to create a strong consciousness about history, it was necessary to learn ancient Greek and Roman languages and philosophies.

Orhan Burian in his response approached the concept from the perspectives of universalism and nationalism. He posited that each perspective was right in its own right but the concepts that made man happy were common, such as equality and freedom. Therefore, the aim should be science and the neutrality provided by it, and these two were possible only through reason. Humanism was the way towards the human reason.

According to Ataç, what was expected from humanism was getting man accustomed to thinking beyond his society and time. In fact, Nurullah Ataç implied that man could reach a humanist mentality only if he looked at himself as an object. Therefore, he advised the learning of dead languages. In Ataç's view, those languages became obsolete and totally alien to men and hence constituted a viable tool in thinking beyond one's society and time. Therefore, Ataç criticized others' expectation from humanism of getting man accustomed to thinking beyond his society, time, and himself, on the grounds that such an expectation reduced the "utility" of humanism. In Ataç's view, in order the humanism path to be successful, that limited "utility" should not be expected from humanism.

Prof. George Rohde, who was a lecturer of classical Greek and Latin at Ankara University, stated that it was hard for him to be objective in responding to the questions since he was involved in humanist education. He described his time as quite far away from humanism. Nevertheless, he stated his hopes for a humanism taking root in future, which would include a newly designed spiritual freedom for individuals, an education that would be seen as a precious thing in its own right instead of a tool, respect for moral traditions, and a real appreciation of one's own "language".

The above-mentioned survey of the *Adımlar* demonstrates the fact that the intellectuals continued to struggle in defining humanism. However, it can be observed that the earlier approach, which understood humanism as “affection for human” and focused totally on the ancient Greco-Roman culture, was replaced by a more general human conceptualization, and a more general mentality concerned with human happiness.

On the next issue, the *Adımlar* conveyed their remarks about humanism.¹¹³ They described a world where human beings could develop materially and morally, where they could be freer, and where they lived with dignity. They argued that such a world could not only belong to ancient Greco-Roman world or the Renaissance, it was a common value of humanity. They added that adhering to the past would prevent human progress.

After these vague remarks about their understanding of humanism, *Adımlar* criticized other approaches to humanism, especially that of *Yücel* circle.¹¹⁴ They analyzed the motto of the journal, *Yücel*, namely “discovering ourselves through humanism”. They argued that the methodology of such a quest should not be humanism since that methodology and mentality belonged to positivist science. For *Adımlar*, that mentality never existed in the works of ancient Greco-Roman philosophers, or those of the Renaissance humanists. It was something that could be found in the modern positivist science. This unfounded criticism of *Adımlar* totally ignored the fact that *Yücel* circle considered the ancient Greeks as the founders of today’s science.

The second criticism of *Adımlar* was concerned with *Yücel* circle aim, namely “discovering ourselves”. According to *Adımlar*, *Yücel* circle on the one hand advocated reason and objective method, and on the other they pursued a metaphysical thing, an undefined “core”, which was in total contradiction to their advocacy for reason and objective method.

Adımlar also criticized Yavuz Abadan (1905-1967), who often expressed his remarks on humanism in his column “Fikir Hareketleri” (Movements of Thought) in

¹¹³ Muzaffer Ş. Başoğlu, “Hümanizma Görüşümüz”, *Adımlar*, No. 8, 1943.

¹¹⁴ *Adımlar*, “Memleketimizde Hümanizma Yazıları”, *Adımlar*, No. 8, 1943.

Ulus newspaper.¹¹⁵ Abadan, who had sympathy for *Yücel* circle, stated in his essay “Millî Humanizma” (National Humanism) that “humanism means humanity’s re-discovery of itself and humanity’s referral back to the characteristic core in its substance”. *Adımlar* found that statement and Abadan irrational and mysticist on the grounds that “national humanism spares a place not only for reason but also for feelings.”

Fahri Findikoğlu (1902-1974) from the *Millet* journal was also criticized by *Adımlar*. The criticism was on Findikoğlu’s remark that, “The only way to reach political humanitarianism was a humanist culture that drew on the ancient Greco-Roman culture and adopted the modern philosophy and understanding.” *Adımlar* argued that Findikoğlu made that comment without considering the historical and social circumstances of the Turkish nation. According to *Adımlar*, humanism movement as a social movement emerged and developed under certain circumstances.

Adımlar was against the claim that the danger of “losing the national ego” would be imminent if an interest in other cultures and languages was developed. For *Adımlar*, Turkish national ego was strong and it was unfounded to argue that it lacked an essence. Therefore, contacts with other cultures would safely enrich the Turkish culture.

The above-mentioned advice of Nurullah Ataç, namely learning of dead languages to look at oneself as an object was not approved by *Adımlar* since in their view learning those languages would prove to be useless unless the social, technical, cultural progress of the West in the recent centuries was fully understood. In fact, Ataç did not mean to imply skipping the recent history. Nevertheless, *Adımlar* described the proponents of Greek and Latin languages as people who were afraid of facing the realities, and hence run away from modern languages and cultures, and who tried to comfort themselves by seeking refuge in the ancient civilizations, which were seemed like a golden age in those people’s eyes.

The goals of *Adımlar* were put by them as understanding the current world and its science, literature, and art. For them, it was wrong to assume that the cultural

¹¹⁵ Yavuz Abadan, “Fikir Hareketleri”, *Ulus*, 11 Haziran 1943.

progress and development would be realized and problems would be solved through humanism and ancient Greco-Roman culture.

One of the contributors to the *Adımlar*, Zeki Baştımar blamed *Yücel* circle for “racism” since, according to Baştımar, the current of humanism had nothing to do with “discovering oneself” and phrases such as “referring back to essence” were peculiar to racist theories. Baştımar argued that today’s humanism could only be a humanism that strived to introduce human dignity to the humanity and give it the awareness that the humanity was the organiser of the earth’s social and natural forces.¹¹⁶

The journal, *Adımlar* had different approach to humanism movement due their leftist world view. The reason of dwelling on the criticisms by the journal, *Adımlar* in detail is to demonstrate that each group understood humanism according to their understanding.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ Zeki Baştımar, “Büyük Türk Hümanisti Tevfik Fikret”, *Adımlar*, No. 8, 1943.

¹¹⁷ To reflect the general profile of the intellectuals of the time, a survey of 1943 is mentioned. The *Büyük Doğu* journal conducted a survey among sixty three prominent intellectuals of the time. The survey was comprised of nine questions. The first one was “Do you believe in God? – [Allah’a inanıyor musunuz?]”. Forty of them responded yes, two of them no, and seventeen of them gave vague responses. Four of them did not respond the question. The second question was “Do you believe in the attempt to discover oneself in the West and Westernization? – [Benliğimizi garpta ve garplılışmakta aramak gidişine inanıyor musunuz?]”. Twelve of them responded yes, thirty three of them no, eighteen of them gave vague responses and one of them did not respond. The third question was “Do you believe in the rightness of a trans-border tendency of racism and nationalism? – [Bizim için sınır dışı bir ırkçılık ve milliyetçilik temayülünün doğruluğuna inanıyor musunuz?]”. Eleven of them responded yes, forty seven no, four of them gave vague responses and one of them did not respond. The fourth question was “Do you believe that we are in a deep moral and psychological depression? – [Derin bir ruh ve ahlâk buhranı geçirdiğimize inanıyor musunuz?]”. Fifty seven of them responded yes, three no, and three gave vague responses. The following question was “Do you believe that the reforms made since the Tanzimat have managed to bring in a strong existence in the national ethos? – [Tanzimattan beri yaptığımız inkılapların bize ruh planında köklü bir tekevvün getirdiğine inanıyor musunuz?]”. Eleven of them responded yes, forty six no, and six gave vague answers. The sixth question was “Do you believe in the necessity of a great moral reform in the national ethos? – [Ruh planında büyük bir inkılap zorunda olduğumuza inanıyor musunuz?]”. Fifty three responded yes, three no and six of them gave vague responses. The seventh question was “Do you think that the Turkish society can find the cure for its ills in any of the ideologies, i.e. Liberalism, Communism, and Fascism? – [Türk cemiyetinin, devasını, liberalizm, komünizm ve faşizm örneklerinden birinde bulabileceğine inanıyor musunuz?]”. One of them did not respond, eight said yes, fifty one said no, and three of them gave vague responses. The eighth question was “Do you think that a new society’s architecture can be born only in democracies by evolution and change? – [Yeni cemiyet mimarisinin ancak Demokrasilerde bir tekamül ve değişimden doğabileceğine inanıyor musunuz?]”. Five of them did not respond, forty two said yes, and ten no, and the rest six gave vague responses. The last question was “Do you think that the best self-preservation consciousness for the Turkish society is to join the democracy camp? – [Türk cemiyeti hesabına, en mükemmel nefis muhafazası şuurunun, Demokrasiler yoluna katılmak olduğuna inanıyor musunuz?]”. Fifty three of the respondents said yes,

3.3.5. The Opposition to Humanism

Peyami Safa (1899-1961) realized the anti-humanist discourses flourishing in Europe before any of the above-mentioned intellectuals. For Safa, the destiny of the Turkish nation lay in a synthesis between the East and the West, and the humanist mentality almost completed its intellectual life-span.¹¹⁸ According to him, an idea of “mentality of the Renaissance man” rose with the Renaissance, which was based on the belief that there was no entity superior to human. That mentality already consumed itself and the Renaissance Period was virtually over. The Western man realized that he could not go further via counting only on himself, and he started to look for alternatives to that classical understanding.¹¹⁹

Peyami Safa did not base his opposition to humanism on any religious, nationalist, or racial grounds. The only reference point for him was the very starting point of the Renaissance, namely “human”. According to Safa, due to the Renaissance mentality mentioned above man became ever more selfish and passionate, and he desired to possess everything. The self-deified man fell into a great depression after the Renaissance.¹²⁰ For these reasons, Safa argued, the Western civilization started to reject the meaning attached to man by the Renaissance. For him, the solution for the crisis in the West was also the synthesis between the East and the West.¹²¹ Safa understood each civilization as a synthesis

four of them no, six of them gave vague responses, and two did not respond. When analyzed, the survey reflects the change in the optimism created by Atatürk’s reforms and principles. After 1938, that optimism turned into pessimism and hopelessness about the future. The intellectuals continued their criticisms about the Tanzimat, but they were not happy with their times unlike the pre-1938 period. One of the most significant results of the survey was that the majority of the intellectuals were in moral and psychological depression. Another one was their call for a reform in the great moral reform in the national ethos. Bearing in mind the results of the survey, the following can be said about the general profile of the intellectuals of the time. They believed that the number of moral issues increased. They thought the only way out for the Turkish nation was democracy. They believed in God. They criticized the Tanzimat Period. They had hesitations about the Westernization path. They did not believe that there was racism and nationalism in the country. Finally, they did not see any tendency among the Turkish nation to marginal currents. Aytaç Yıldız, “Dokuz Soruda Türk Aydını”, *Doğu Batı*, Mayıs, Haziran, Temmuz 2006, No. 37, pp. 181-189.

¹¹⁸ Peyami Safa, *Doğu – Batı Sentezi*, Yağmur, İstanbul, 1963, pp. 9-12.

¹¹⁹ Ibid. p. 22.

¹²⁰ Ibid. pp. 36-37.

¹²¹ Ibid. pp. 38-40.

and he posited unless that was acknowledged all the attempts to westernize Turkey according to old fashioned approaches were prone to fail. Safa gave credit to Atatürk for his acknowledgment of that fact, and his consequent attempts to find affinity between the Western civilization and the roots of the Central Asian-Turkish civilization. Safa described the pillars on which the Western mind flourished as the intelligence discipline of the Greeks, the state and society discipline of the Romans, and the moral discipline of Christianity. Among those three pillars, the distinguishing feature of Europe from Asia was defined by Safa as Christianity since for him it was sentiments rather than ideas that distinguished people from each other.¹²²

In a rather much less sophisticated and decent manner than that of Safa, the journal, *Türk Yurdu* levelled criticism against the humanist journals, especially the *Adımlar*. Referring to the *Adımlar*, they stated “Marxists are pretending to be nationalists in their journal.”¹²³ The journal, *Türk Yurdu* did not in fact criticize humanists because in their view, humanists were innocent intellectuals. However, the contributors to *Adımlar* were “communists”, “Marxists” and “a bunch of propagators under the guise of “humanism”, “a formal atheist society”.¹²⁴ Twelve years before those remarks, the intellectuals around *Türk Yurdu* made it explicit that they were against humanism and any attempts to flourish it in the country. In 1930, they stated the reason for their attitude: “The heir nations to the Greek and Roman civilizations have gradually realized that they are facing an unprecedented threat in all the history directed at them.”¹²⁵

Lastly, when the journal, *Yurt and Dünya* is analyzed, they also levelled shallow and unfounded criticisms against the humanist intellectuals.¹²⁶ There was

¹²² Peyami Sefa, *Türk İnkilâbına Bakışlar...*, pp. 117-119.

¹²³ [The original statement in Turkish: “Marxistler dergilerinde milliyetçiymiş numarası yapıyorlar.”]

¹²⁴ Hasan Ferit Cansever, “Ümanistler’in Camiamızı Zehirlemek Teşebbüsüne Karşı, *Türk Yurdu*, No. 8, 1942. [The original statement in Turkish: “Resmî bir allahsızlar cemiyeti”.]

¹²⁵ *Türk Yurdu*, “Türk Ocağının Tarihiçesi ve İftiralara Karşı Cevaplarımız”, *Türk Yurdu*, 1930, No. 36, p. 230. [The original statement in Turkish: “Yunan ve Roma medeniyetlerinin varisi olan milletler, kendileri için bütün tarihte misli olmayan bir tehlike karşısında bulduklarına derece derece kanaat getirmektedirler.”]

¹²⁶ *Yurt ve Dünya*, “Hümanizma Hakkında”, *Yurt ve Dünya*, No. 31, 1943.

only one essay published about humanism by Adnan Cemgil on the journal. Cemgil argued that humanism made the man the slave of machine, and transformed him into a bourgeois instead of the expectation that it would make him happy. He added that this problem could be overcome with a more general understanding of humanity.¹²⁷

3.3.6. The Conclusion Derived from the Debates

Ahmet Aydođan (1968-) in the foreword *Pater'in Rönesansı* to his translation of Walter Horatio Pater's *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, states the following:

After reading the whole book, the reader will probably ask the following question: While the attempt to refer back to the antiquity and appreciate the history, at least some aspects of it in the milieu of those times (the Renaissance Period) deserves to be named the Renaissance, a resurrection movement, why similar attempts on these lands (Turkey) remained at a simple *antiquarism* level and could not transcend it? Why did those attempts (in Turkey) deteriorated the existing circumstances, not to mention their aim of alleviating the latter?¹²⁸

Some answers to the above-questions emerge out of the debates mentioned in this section. The limited social structure of the times could not carry the failure to reach a common understanding on the concept of humanism, a failure that virtually led to arbitrary definitions and forced conceptualizations about humanism.¹²⁹ As a result, intellectuals could not have a free opinion about humanism, their opinions remained shallow and individual. Although it can be a certain good in man's questioning of his past, the total rejection of the past on the part of intellectuals did harm them culturally. Besides, the intellectual milieu of the 1940s did not give credit

¹²⁷ Adnan Cemgil, "Hümanizma", *Yurt ve Dünya*, No. 25, 1943.

¹²⁸ Walter H. Pater, *Rönesans*, Ahmet Aydođan (trans.), İz, İstanbul, 2002, p. 21, preface by Ahmet Aydođan. [The original statement in Turkish: "Kitabın tamamını okuduktan sonra okuyucu herhalde kendisine şu soruyu sormaya zorlanacaktır. O zamanın şartlarında antikiteye dönüş ve geçmişi, en azından bazı yönleriyle, ihya etme teşebbüsü, Rönesans adını almaya hak edecek bir diriliş hareketi oluyorken, bu topraklar üzerindeki benzer girişimler acaba neden basit birer *antiquarism* düzeyinde kalmakta ve daha ileriye gidememektedir? Neden bu topraklar üzerindeki benzer girişimler mevcut şartları, ıslah etmek bir tarafa, daha da fenalaştırmaktadır?"]

¹²⁹ Selim İleri, "Yetişme Yıllarım, Kafka'nın Böceği", *Gergedan*, 1987, No. 7.

to the Eastern cultural accumulation; the recent historical, political, and cultural accumulation was totally ignored by them. That forced intellectuals to turn to the West. Under the influence of the West and the trends by then, intellectuals focused on the tangible, the number of empirical studies increased, but studies on the abstract were hardly made.¹³⁰

Despite the entire drawbacks, the debates led to an understanding that the foundation of Europe rose on a humanist ideology. Nevertheless, it was uncertain for the intellectuals in what kind of historical circumstances that ideology developed, nor how the cultural accumulation exposed itself. Most of them did not believe that learning Greek and Latin languages was enough in creation of humanism. For them, it was rather a “mentality” issue than learning the ancient languages. Nevertheless, there were considerable number of intellectuals who advocated that the path towards humanism went through learning the ancient languages and reading the classics. The seemingly “utopian” proposals made during the initial debates on how to realize humanism in the country gradually turned into the state’s quasi-formal ideology and a humanism project that included learning Greek and Latin languages, translation of the classics, and dissemination of those activities to the people rather than making it a privilege of the intellectual milieu.

¹³⁰ Kurtuluş Kayalı, *Türk Düşünce...*, p. 104.

CHAPTER 4

THE “TURKISH HUMANISM PROJECT”

4.1. The Transformation of “Humanism” into a “Project”

See Tilly understands the formation of nations in the non-Western countries as follows:

Outside the West the formation of nations followed the diffusion of nationalism in the relevant area. In Western Europe nations were largely unplanned. Outside the West they were largely the result of the nationalist purposes and movements. The West acquired nations almost by accident; in other parts of the globe nations were created by design.¹

This argument is also valid for the emergence of the current of “humanism” in modern Turkey since the former did not emerge spontaneously in the country and there were various reasons behind the establishment and intellectual’s interest in humanism.² In this section of the thesis, these reasons shall be identified. Then, the selection and implementation of various initiatives towards the goal of creating “Turkish Humanism”, and how these initiatives turned this goal into the “Turkish Humanism Project” shall be explored.

The current of humanism was “put” in the agenda of the country with the belief that it was the solution to the various crises in the country. The reasons behind this belief can be summarized as follows:

Foremost among these reasons was the cultural-national identity crisis the country was in. As mentioned before, the Ottoman identity was rejected in the country and a new identity would be constructed without any reference to it. The new identity was to be a kind that would convince the whole world that Turkey was a European country. Therefore, the country turned to the West with the rejection of the Eastern culture alongside the Ottoman one. The desire was “absolute

¹ Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity*, Nevada, Reno, 1991, p. 100. Referring to: Tilly, Introduction and Conclusion, 1975 and Seton-Watson, Chs. 2-3, 1977.

² Anthony Smith states that: “It was the Turkic ideal, shorn of its extra-Anatolian irredentism, that Kemal Atatürk made the basis of his secular, westernizing nationalism.” Ibid. p. 101.

Westernization”. Despite the fact that the “necessary reforms” such as alphabet, dress code, secular civil code, and so forth were made for this aim, the identity issue was not resolved yet. The widely believed solution to that issue was the exploration of the origins of the West, and then adopting them to catch up with the contemporary West. Moreover, some intellectuals even claimed that the origins of the West belonged to Turks, and Turks should adopt those ones.

Atatürk managed to make radical changes in the country under the guidance of his ideologies of Westernism and Nationalism. His successor, İnönü, tried to add something new on Atatürk’s reforms by focusing on “cultural policy”. In fact, this policy was substituting humanism for the nationalism of the Atatürk era. The various ethnic and foreign challenges against the regime forced Atatürk to adopt a unifying ideology around nationalistic lines. By the time İnönü era started, the regime was in a relative order and stability. Therefore, it can be argued that the “conditions” were “mature” enough to put the “cultural policy” in practice.³

The radical secular arrangements in the Atatürk era relegated the religion to the individual level. The void emerged in the society due these arrangements were filled with the concept of nationalism.⁴ On the other hand, in the İnönü era, secular reforms and laicism itself was defended strictly and without compromise because of the idea that it was the foundation of humanism.⁵ Moreover, in order to prevent any obstacles that would be created by Islamic culture on the “chosen” path to the Westernization, laicism became an attitude against religion.⁶ The populist character of the early Republican era was a reaction to the Ottoman system of privileges and it expressed the desire to reach the ideal of freedom in the Western civilization.⁷

³ Turgay Kurultay, “Cumhuriyet Türkiyesi’nde Çevirinin Ağır Yüğü ve Türk Hümanizması”, *Alman Dili ve Edebiyatı Dergisi*, No.11, 1998, p. 25.

⁴ Ibid. p. 27. Referring to: Taceddin Kayaoğlu, *Türkiye’de Tercüme Müesseseleri*, Kitabevi, İstanbul, 1998, p.295.

⁵ İnönü’s insistence on imposing secularism with harsh measures would both become one of the reasons behind the decay of “Turkish Humanism Project” and lead to more serious problems in the country in the course of time.

⁶ Ali Ata Yiğit, *İnönü Dönemi...*, p. 43.

⁷ Ibid. p. 43.

Nevertheless, it was understood that the reforms and principles of the era had to be supported by several initiatives to make the people socialize accordingly.

The debates of the country's intellectuals regarding humanism mentioned in the previous chapter gained significance in this context. Although, many of the intellectuals did not totally comprehend the subject they were debating, the group of intellectuals, which proposed humanism as the cure to the ills of the society, were quite influential on the governments of the İnnönü era.

Another reason behind the sway of humanism in the country was the interest in the French literature, which started in the late Ottoman times. While some Ottoman intellectuals were imitating the French literature, they explored the Greco-Roman origins of that literature. Humanism came along to the country with the current of romanticism in the French literature, which was imitated by Ottoman intellectuals.

For all these reason, some initiatives were taken to realize the "Turkish Humanism Project", which was never identified as a project by the state but became something like a quasi-formal ideology of the İnnönü Era.

The project was based on three pillars. They were Greek and Latin courses in high school curriculum, translation of the works by pioneering humanist thinkers, foremost among them Greek and Roman ones, by the establishment of the Translation Office, and foundation of the Village Institutes to disseminate humanist culture all around the country. Besides, opening music academies, opera houses, and classic music programs on the state radio were policies that served the humanist culture. Dumping the book prices to promote the habit of reading, establishing polytechnics for male and female students, granting autonomy to universities, opening of the Technical University, Science Faculty, and the Medicine School⁸, and purifying the language of the constitution book⁹, each of which constituted a modernization attempt on its own, were other innovations of the İnnönü Era.

One person gains significance in this period as he contributed to the humanism project the most: Hasan Âli Yücel (1897-1961). Yücel, who was the

⁸ Mahmut Makal, "Çağcıl Eğitimden Çağdıışı Eğitime", *Hasan Âli Yücel Günleri 26-27 Aralık 1997...*, p. 29.

⁹ Vedat Günyol, *Sanat ve Edebiyat...*, p. 43.

Minister of Education between 1938 and 1945, is one of the most important figures in Turkish culture in the Republic's history. Yücel can be claimed to be a real humanist, if the meaning of humanism is understood in the Nineteenth Century terms since Yücel assumed a universal human problematic and did not exalt any race or civilization in his search for addressing this problematic. Besides, Yücel tried to disseminate humanism through "education".

In a foreword to a history journal, Yücel stated what he understood from Humanism:

What we understand from humanism is knowing, experiencing, and reproducing in our short life-time the meaning and experiences of the life the humanity has gone through from the very deep past to the current time. The Ministry of Education, with this perspective, assumes preparing the ground for the dissemination and growth of Turkish culture as its foremost mission.¹⁰

Hasan Âli Yücel understands the transition to the humanist policy as the natural course of Turkish nationalism and states that "Nationalism has taken us to a new humanism. We are in the process of establishing a humanism that embraces any product of human intelligence anywhere, which is broader than that of the westernists."¹¹ With this statement, he tries to present the humanism ideal as the consequence of the Turkish nationalism in the early Republican years. Yücel managed to transcend the obsession with the Greco-Roman by focusing on the universal humanism, and he thought that the latter was richer than the Western humanism.

In line with his understanding of humanism, he was critical of the "Turkish History Thesis", which exalted the Turkish society on the grounds that Turkish civilization was the source of every other civilization in the world, and he followed

¹⁰ Zeki Arıkan, "Hasan-Âli Yücel ve Tarih Bilinci", *Tarih ve Toplum*, No. 166, 1997, p. 202. Also see: *Tarih Vesikaları Dergisi*, Vol. 1, No. 1. [The original statement in Turkish: "Bizim anladığımız hümanizma, insanlığın, en derin mazisinden bugüne kadar geçirdiği hayatın mânâ ve tecrübelerini tanımak, bilmek ve onu kısa ömrümüzde tekrar yaşayıp yaşatmaktır. Cumhuriyet maarifi, bu anlayış ve görüşle Türk kültürünün yayılıp genişlemesine imkân hazırlamayı vazifelerinin ilki sayar."]

¹¹ Ali Ata Yiğit, *İnönü Dönemi...*, p. 49. Also see: *Cumhurbaşkanları, Başbakanlar ve Milli Eğitim Bakanlarının Milli Eğitim ile İlgili Söylev ve Demeçleri*, Vol. 3, p. 13. [The original statement is: "Milliyetçilik bizi yeni bir hümanizmaya getirdi. Garpçılardan daha geniş olarak, nerede insan zekâsının eseri varsa, içine alan bir hümanizmayı kurma yolundayız."]

the Atatürk's path of focusing on the Anatolian civilizations. Yücel also managed to reconcile humanism with the attempts to secularize the Turkish history and he adopted a westernization activity that investigated the origins and drew on the experiences of the West.¹²

The universal humanist discourse of Hasan Âli Yücel can be observed in his speech prepared for the graduation ceremony of the first graduates of the State Conservatory, in 1941: "The author may not be one of us, the composer may be from another nation. Nevertheless, we are the ones who understand these words and sounds, and bring them to life. For this reason, the plays staged by the State Conservatory are ours, they are Turkish and national."¹³

In the first issue of the journal "Tercüme Dergisi" on the 19th of May, 1940, Yücel states explicitly that "civilization is a whole" and "there should not be any prejudice in adoption of cultural values of other nations". Bearing in mind this statement, it can be argued that Yücel takes into account the whole experience of humanity, which he internalizes at the individual level, and he represents an approach that broadens the national framework to the universal level.¹⁴

Hasan Âli Yücel abstains from the dichotomy of "Turks" and "others", which is seen as a sign of nationalism by others, and he embraces the humanist cultural heritage as the heritage of all.¹⁵ The most effective way to disseminate this humanist cultural heritage is education. On the occasion of the opening of the Faculty of Language, History and Geography, both the Prime Minister and the Minister of Education Yücel mentioned the important role the faculty was to assume in "dissemination and taking root of the humanist culture in the country."¹⁶

¹² Aydın Afacan, *Şiir ve Mitologya...*, p. 79.

¹³ Turgay Kurultay, "Cumhuriyet Türkiye'sinde Çevirinin Ağır Yüğü...", p. 26, Referring to: Halide Edip Adivar, *Türkün Ateşle İmtihani*, Yenigün Haber Ajansı, 1998 [1962]. [The original statement in Turkish: "Müellif bizden olmayabilir, bestekar başka milletten olabilir. Fakat o sözleri ve sesleri anlıyan ve canlandıran biziz. Onun için Devlet Konservatuarının temsil ettiği piyesler, oynadığı oyunlar bizimdir, Türktür ve millidir."]

¹⁴ Tansu Açıık, "Türkiye'de Hümanizm...", pp. 121-122.

¹⁵ Turgay Kurultay, "Cumhuriyet Türkiye'sinde Çevirinin Ağır Yüğü...", pp. 26-27.

¹⁶ Tansu Açıık, "Türkiye'de Hümanizm...", p. 123.

Yücel states the following regarding the secondary school education during the First Congress of Education:

...when it comes to high school education, it is this institution that shall determine, within the framework positivist science manifested in our national culture, the state and future of the soul of humanism ... to increase the efficiency in these institutions, which are charged with bringing up the intellectual class and teaching the general knowledge as the basis of higher education, is one of our aims that we earnestly follow.¹⁷

Starting with 1938, all these events led to selection of “humanism” as the basis of the “cultural policy” of the state in form of a “Turkish Humanism Project” thanks to Hasan Âli Yücel’s determination. In the following section, the three pillars of this project shall be explained in detail.

4.2. Classical Languages and Literature in High Schools

The “Turkish Humanism Project”, which aimed at Westernization and creation of cultural/national identity, was put in practice by Greek and Roman language courses in high school curriculum. That initiative, which was floated before the Republican era, aimed at learning and adopting the origins of the Western civilization on the part of high-school students.

Ziya Gökalp was the first person to mention translation of the ancient Greco-Roman texts. Gökalp gave the Russian experience of Westernization as a model for Turkey, which started with translations from Greco-Roman literary and philosophical works and then continued with putting Greek and Roman language courses in high school curriculum. In this way, according to Gökalp, Russians managed to delve into these sources and found perfect examples there to be emulated. Consequently Russian literature laid the foundations for its unique character with the help of the classics in awakening Russians’ national and humanist sentiments. Gökalp argued

¹⁷ Mehmet Başaran, “1940 Aydınlanmacılığı ve Hasan-Âli Döneminde Lise”, *Hasan Âli Yücel Günleri 26-27 Aralık 1997...*, p. 44. [The original statement in Turkish: “Lise meselesine gelince: Müspet ilim zihniyetinin, milli kültürü tekevün içinde hümanizma ruhunun hal ve istikbalini bu müessese tayin edecektir... Yüksek tahsile temel olarak umumi kültürü vermek ve münevver sınıfı yetiştirmekle mükellef olan bu müesseselerimizde randımanı kıymetlendirmek, ısrarla takip edeceğimiz bir gayedir.”]

that that was the way the Turkish nation had to go through, and he added that humanism was the prerequisite for nationalism.¹⁸

Nevertheless, the most influential figure behind the state's decision of putting Greek and Roman language courses was Nurullah Ataç. He was an ardent supporter of those language courses and also the translation of the classics. The opinion axis of Ataç was "pure Westernism." According to him, the Westerner's (intellectual) getting rid of dogmas and having a respectful character towards human beings were the results of the humanist education he had received since the secondary school.¹⁹ He proposed that the Greco-Roman literature courses had to be substituted for the Turkish literature course in order to make the self-centred Turkish intellectual a true Western one. According to Ataç unless the Turkish society moulded itself with the ideas of the Greco-Roman intellectuals, and brought up the individuals with the ideas of those intellectuals, a positive linguistic revolution in Turkey could not take place. He argued that on the day this necessity was appreciated, the Greek and Latin courses would be put in secondary school curriculum.²⁰

For Ataç, to be like the Western man and to possess his mentality, one had to learn Greek and Latin, and to appreciate the importance of learning of those languages, one had to possess the Western mentality. The biggest difference between the Western and Turkish intellectual, according to him, was the lack of "a cultivated mind" on the part of the Turkish one. The Turkish intellectual lacked that mindset since he only wanted to understand the contemporary West and he ignored the foundations that made the Western the Western. For this reason, Ataç argued that the Turkish intellectual had to learn those foundations and Greek and Latin languages, which empowered the Western man.²¹

¹⁸ Aġaoġlu Ahmet, "Münevver Zümre Meselesi", Mehmet Kaplan, İnci Enginün, Zeynep Kerman, Necat Birinci, Abdullah Uçman (ed.), *Atatürk Devri Fikir Hayatı I*, Kültür Bakanlığı, Ankara, 1992, p. 494. But first published in *Cumhuriyet*, No. 3832, 15 Aralık 1935.

¹⁹ Nurullah Ataç, *Dergilerde*, YKY, İstanbul, 2000, pp. 28-29.

²⁰ *Ibid.* p. 42.

²¹ [The full text of these opinions is as follows: "Görüyorum ki anlamıyoruz Batı acununu, iyice, gerçekten içten anlamıyoruz. Bir yere değin gidebiliyoruz, geçemiyoruz ötesine. Öğreniyoruz Batı acununun bilgilerini, bilimlerini, gene de o bilgiler, bilimler sanki dışımızda kalıyor, sinmiyor içimize. O bilgileri, bilimleri ediniyoruz da onları bulan, geliştiren soluğu edinemiyoruz. Bir olayla karşılaştık

Hasan Âli Yücel, who turned humanism into a quasi-formal ideology of the state, stated in the opening speech of the first Ministry of Education Council (17-19 July, 1939) that the positivist science mentality of high schools was formed and developed by the humanism spirit within the formation of national culture, and in great many countries Greek and Latin were thought as the second language.²²

During the sessions of the council, the first person who proposed putting Greek and Latin course in high school curriculum was Cevat Dursunoğlu.²³ Saim Ali Dilemre opposed the proposal.²⁴ Halil Vedat Fıratlı stated that classical high schools were necessary to have a proper university. The then dean of the faculty of literature at Istanbul University, Hâmit Olgunsu, took on humanism in relation to a historical consciousness, and he stated that the courses must be put at least for the last year of the high school. On the other hand, İsmail Hakkı Baltacıoğlu stated that he saw humanism education more appropriate at the university level.²⁵

Eventually, starting with 1940-1941, it was decided to establish a “classics degree” program in Boy’s High School in Ankara, Galatasaray and Vefa High Schools in Istanbul. The program was comprised of Latin courses in the first year and ancient Greek courses in the subsequent years.

Although limited to three high-schools, this initiative found significant echo in the country. A representative of the current of Neo-Hellenism, Yakup Kadri

mı, ‘Şimdi bir Batılı olsa ne yapardı?’ diye düşünüyoruz, o olay karşısında Batılının yapacağını yapmak kendi kendine, bizi düşündürmeksizin, aratmaksızın gelmiyor içimizden. Ancak bugünkü Batı’yı öğrenmeye kalkıyoruz da onun için. Bizi Doğulu eden bir geçmiş, bir gelenek olduğu gibi Batılıyı Batılı eden bir geçmiş, gelenek olduğunu düşünmüyoruz. O geçmişi, geleneği öğrenmeye çalışmıyoruz... Biliyor muyuz bir Yunan uygarlığı, Latin uygarlığını?... Bugünkü Avrupa uygarlığında bütün o geçmiş, çok eski yüzyılların damgası, yankıları vardır... Bugünkü Batı’ya gitmekle iş bitmez, gerçekten şöyle içinden anlayıp benimsiyemeyiz bugünkü Batı uygarlığını, bütün geçmişini incelemek, öğrenmek, kavramak gerekir... İş Batı kafasını, Avrupalı kafasını edinmekte. Avrupalılar bugünkü kafaya, bugünkü medeniyete, bugünkü düşünceye yunancayı, latinceyi öğrenerek ermişler, eğitimlerinin temeli o diller olmuş. Demek büyük bir güç var o dillerde...’] Ibid. pp. 155-156,161.

²² Ali Ata Yiğit, *İnönü Dönemi...*, p. 62. Referring to: Hasan Cicioğlu, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti’nde İlk ve Orta Öğretim*, Ankara, Ankara Üniversitesi, 1985 [1982], p. 137.

²³ *Birinci Türk Neşriyat Kongresi*, Edebiyatçılar Derneği, Ankara, 1997 [1939], p. 394.

²⁴ Ibid. p. 404.

²⁵ Tansu Açıık, “Türkiye’de Hümanizm...”, pp. 460-462.

Karaosmanođlu stated that the decision of the Ministry of Education was a revolution in its own right and it was more important than other reforms such as abrogation of madrasahs, removal of scholastic knowledge from curriculum, and adoption of the Latin alphabet. For Karaosmanođlu, the Renaissance culture would have disseminated faster in Turkish nation than any nation in Europe since there was no hold of the Church on the society. It was free and secular. Everything was ready for the Mediterranean civilization to resurrect on the shores of its motherland. These could have happened only if the Turkish revolutionists had adopted the humanist ideas and the worldview that made Europe Europe, not Europea pro-forma. If they had managed to do that, the contemporary Turkish social structure would have been better and more original than that of Europe since the humanist culture gave not only humaneness to man, but also innovative power to the national genius in order to create the path for the discovery of national-self. Karaosmanođlu perceived Greek and Latin education the most important gateway to such a path.²⁶

Mehmet Süleymanpaşıç was another intellectual who was excited by the decision. He stated that the only condition for the Turkish nation to have an art like the art in the West was fulfilled with the decision. He also stated that the biggest mistakes made by Turks were “not including themselves in the Renaissance, and not benefiting from the artists and scientists in Istanbul after the conquests.”²⁷

Saffet Engin saw the translation of the classics and teaching them in Greek and Roman as a matter of national pride since they belonged to Turkish nation and they had to be brought in back to Turks.²⁸ He stated that the translation of Greek classics and teaching them at high schools would contribute to “our and our children’s development” with a contemporary spirit, and to minimize the Islamic revivalist traditions.²⁹

The Greek and Roman education, which was the first pillar of the Turkish Humanism Project, was hampered first by the abolishment of the “classic degree”

²⁶ Yakup Kadri Karaosmanođlu, “Humanizmaya Doğru İlk Adım”, *Varlık*, No. ?, 1947, pp. 325-329.

²⁷ Mehmet Süleymanpaşıç, “Türk Liselerinde Latin Dili”, *Varlık*, No. 185, 1941, p. 400.

²⁸ M. Saffet Engin, *Kemalizm İnkılâbının...*, Cilt III, p. 114.

²⁹ *Ibid.* p. 91.

program in 1949 and then by reduction of five hours per week Latin lessons to two hours, and making it elective. The pillar was demolished before it was disseminated and consolidated further in the country.³⁰

Several reasons can be identified behind the failure of the first pillar. First of all between 1942 and 1948, the country was in economic hardships due to World War II and its aftermath. During that period the rates of schooling in secondary education hit bottom levels as many families could not afford the costs of sending their children to school.³¹ It should also be added that it was utopian to expect that families would encourage their children to learn a second language when they were trying to get used to the changed official language. The disinterest in the initiative and in education on the whole due to economic hardships undermined the sustainability of the initiative. Other reasons behind the failure shall be demonstrated in detail when the reasons behind the failure of the Turkish Humanism Project are taken on in the following sections of the thesis.

4.3. The Translation Office

The Translation Office as a pillar of Turkish Humanism Project were more fruitful than the other pillars, and it can be argued that it was the only pillar that really contributed to the humanism culture in Turkey. The reason behind that relative success was the fact that although the office was run by the state, it was more or less an “autonomous” institution in which the translators chose what to translate. As the translators were humanist intellectuals striving to disseminate the humanist culture in the country, it was natural that the office bore more fruit and it had longer life-span than the other pillars.

The power of translation cannot be denied when it is born in mind that the translations of ancient Greek and Latin works by the Renaissance philologists, and their dissemination afterwards were the medium through which the Renaissance Period and the current of humanism emerged in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. By those translations, the mindset of a civilization that lived centuries

³⁰ Tansu Aık, “Türkiye’de Hümanizm...”, p. 121.

³¹ Ali Ata Yiğit, *İnönü Dönemi...*, p. 62.

before was revealed, and that mindset was disseminated around Europe, and consequently the Western civilization distinguished itself from other civilizations and consolidated itself in all aspects. In this section, the foremost condition of humanism, namely translation, shall be analyzed in terms of its role and development in the Project, the approach of the intellectuals to the translations, and the reasons behind the closure of the office respectively.

The first Republican intellectual to realize the power of translation was Hilmi Ziya Ülken. He also wrote a book about the matter, titled *Uyanış Devirlerinde Tercümenin Rolü* [The Role of Translation in Awakening Eras]. Ülken, who was distinguished from the intellectuals of his time by his more scientific and realistic approach, provided the most comprehensive reference book on translation, and his work was important in terms of articulating the need for translation by then in the country.

Ülken believed that the great “awakenings” that seemed like opening up individual civilizations were in reality connected to each other through steadily expanding continuous thoughts.³² What especially provided that continuous thought was “translation”. What the Turkish nation needed, according to Ülken, was vitalizing a very systematic and zealous translation effort similar to what happened during the awakenings of old Islam and new Europe.³³

As stated before Ülken did not believe in the Greek miracle or single civilization premise. He believed that every civilization emerged and developed under the influence of others and they were not *monogenése*, namely coming from only one root, but rather *polygenése*, namely coming from multiple roots. He also believed that human development was a continuous thing. For those reasons, Ülken argued that since the ancient Greece, the defining feature that formed the turning point in the awakening period was translations:³⁴ “In one word, what gives the power

³² Hilmi Ziya Ülken’s word “contemplation” original in Turkish is “*tefekür*”.

³³ Hilmi Ziya Ülken, *Uyanış...*, pp. 3-4.

³⁴ Ibid. p. 17.

of creativity to the awakening periods is translation ³⁵...all the awakening periods that provided the continuity in the civilization were opened up by it.” Therefore, the burden of translation on the Turkish nation was bigger than that of Renaissance Period since the Turkish nation had to know both the preceding and subsequent periods of the Renaissance.³⁶

Translation of the classics was not “a necessity” but “a must” for a nation that tried to create a strong literature. So Ülken argued that as the Turkish nation did not have any classics, it had to draw on the Greco-Roman tradition in creation of them.³⁷ Ülken put translation at the centre of the process of getting “civilized”. Thus, “civilization is a continuous humanism”³⁸ and the communality among all the emerged civilizations were translation. Hence, “translation is conveying a whole civilization”.³⁹ In all the awakening periods, translation provided the continuity of thought. According to Ülken in national awakenings, the most important point was the language issue, and it had to be made sure that all thoughts and opinions could be articulated in the mother tongue.⁴⁰ He argued that during the Ottoman times, the interest in the West was almost inexistent and consequently there was no translation from the Greco-Roman world. Nevertheless, there were many translations from Persian and Arab world regarding culture, religion, and logic.⁴¹ During the Tanzimat Period, translations from the West gained momentum but they were concerned only with the technical aspects of the West. On literature and philosophy, the source of translations was still the East. Moreover, it is argued that the biggest number of

³⁵ Ibid. p. 18. [The original statement in Turkish “Bir kelime ile, uyanış devirlerine yaradıcılık kudretini veren tercümedir... Medeni açılışın sürekliliğini temin eden bütün uyanış devirleri onunla açılmıştır.”]

³⁶ Ibid. p. 21-22.

³⁷ Hilmi Ziya Ülken, “Yeni Klâsik”, *İnsan*, No. 3, 1941.

³⁸ Hilmi Ziya Ülken, *Uyanış...*, p. 22.

³⁹ Ibid. p. 383. [The original statement in Turkish “Tercüme, bütün bir medeniyeti nakletmektir.”]

⁴⁰ Ibid. p. 324.

⁴¹ Ibid. p. 339.

translations from the East was made in this period when the interest in the West was steadily growing.⁴²

During the Sultan Ahmet the Third, (the twenty third Ottoman Sultan, born 1673 died 1736, reigned between 1703 and 1730), the introduction of the printing machine ushered in translations from the West, and a new era began in the Ottoman thought.⁴³ Nevertheless, Ülken argued that the translation activities were not very effective since in that era translations were made randomly and they did not constitute a systematic effort. According to Ülken, what should have been done was a certain amount of translations regarding every relative realm, and informing the people about those translations by distributing brochures about translations made to the people.⁴⁴

One of the first persons during the Ottoman times to get in direct contact with the ancient Greece was Yanyalı Esat Efendi who lived during the era of Sultan Ahmet the Third. Yanyalı Esat Efendi found the translations by Farabi and İbn-i Sina inadequate and sometimes inaccurate, and he decided to translate the works of Aristotle in Greek. Nevertheless, his untimely death did not allow him to complete his translations.⁴⁵ Esat Efendi is important in the sense that he attempted to translate the medieval works from the East and the West at the same time and hence he provided a comparison between them. Another pioneering person in translations from the Western languages was Kâtip Çelebi. The first book on the history of philosophy written through drawing on the Western sources was Sait Pasha's "Mir'at-ül-İ-ber".⁴⁶

During the Tanzimat Period, in which Westernization movements began to flourish, the translations of the ancient Greek texts were made from their French translations. The Tanzimat intellectuals, who were often criticized by the early

⁴² Ibid. p. 320.

⁴³ Ibid. p. 359.

⁴⁴ Ibid. p. 382.

⁴⁵ Füzûzan Hüsrev Tökin, "Bizde Hümanizma"...

⁴⁶ Ibid.

Republican intellectuals, made those translations with the Ottoman point of view, and consequently they failed to reflect the Greek world. The translations were usually about philosophical and social matters, and literary works were totally ignored. There was hardly any translation from the Latin works either.⁴⁷ As regards to philosophy and observation, a couple of books by Kiotios, Plutarch and Lukianos were translated. Besides, some quotes from other philosophers such as, Plato, Thales, Solon, Socrates, and Aristotle were translated. There was no special translation of a Greek historian's work, but stories on Greek and especially Roman history, with themes of merit, justice, heroism, and patriotism, were translated. The only work on the Greek history was *Tarih-i İskender bin Filipos* (1854), which was a collection of works by ancient Greek historians. However, the topic of the book was about Alexander the Great and his activities. Another work which dwelled on the ancient Greek history from its beginning was Şevval Kostantili's *Tarih-i Yunanistan-ı Kâdim* (1838). Nevertheless, the latter was not as objective and scientific as the former. The only book on Greek mythology was Şemsettin Sami's *Esatîr*. In *Esatîr*, the Greek mythology was conveyed with all its figures.⁴⁸

The first translated novel in the history of Turkish Literature, which was at the same time the first translated work on Greek mythology was Yusuf Kamil Pasha's *Tercüme-i Telemak* (1862), which was a collection of translations from Fenelon made by him. The uniqueness of his translation was totally a coincidence since the reason for him to translate the book was the latter's morally instructive content.⁴⁹

During the Tanzimat Period, the first translation of Homer's Iliad was made in 1887 by M. Naim Fraşeri. His translation was in prosaic form from the original Greek text. There was no other attempt to translate Homer's works after Fraşeri.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ This paragraph draws on Melin Has-Er, "Tanzimat Devrinde Lâtin ve Grek Antikitesi ile İlgili Neşriyat", unpublished M.A. thesis, İstanbul Üniversitesi, Edebiyat Fakültesi, Türkoloji Bölümü, İstanbul, 1959, pp. 322-325.

⁴⁸ Ibid.p. 324.

⁴⁹ Aydın Afacan, *Şiir ve Mitologya...*, p. 58.

⁵⁰ Ibid. p. 59.

The interest in ancient Greek texts continued within the Servet-i Fünun literary current after the Tanzimat Period, but there were only some minor translations.⁵¹

On the other hand, the Second Constitutional Monarchy was a period of intensive translation activities on the part of intellectuals and opinion holders, and hence a period of transmitting Western-origin works and thoughts to the society. Those translation activities comprised of several areas such as science, Western classics, and translations from many foreign languages, French foremost among them.⁵² Nevertheless, the translations were not orchestrated by an institution.

Ahmet Mithat Efendi tried to popularize *Les Humanites*, which was translated by Ziya Gökalp [*İnsaniyat*], to disseminate the current of humanism in the country. Moreover, he translated Xenophanes' *Cyropedia* [*Hüsrevname*]. Among the Turks, the first person to see humanism from a philosophical point of view was Ahmet Mithat, and he always insisted on the necessity of translations of the Western works into Turkish.⁵³ Ahmet Mithat argued that the culture of countries that did not depend on the classic culture were prone to be superficial, and he added that like Europeans, Turks, whilst investigating the ancient Greek history, had to be as comfortable as if they were investigating their own civilization.

After Ahmet Mithat, Halit Ziya Uşaklıgil started to teach “The History of Greek Literature” at İstanbul Darülfünûn. Nevertheless, humanism did not take root at the university, especially after them, due to the lack of continuous and systematic effort to establish the tradition of classical culture.⁵⁴

Excluding Ahmet Mithat and Halit Ziya Uşaklıgil, the translations up to the “The Classics Debate” did not aim to learn the ancient Greco-Roman world, or the West. Most of the translations tried to link the content with the Ottoman culture or Islam. Thus, the translators were selective about concepts such as morality, virtue, and humanity in the foreign texts, and they usually translated or conveyed the relative bits.

⁵¹ Ibid. p. 59.

⁵² Turgay Kurultay, “Cumhuriyet Türkiyesi’nde Çevirinin Ağır Yüğü...”, p. 21.

⁵³ Füzuzan Hüsrev Tökin, “Bizde Hümanizma”...

⁵⁴ Ibid.

Due to the little interest in the Western languages and few numbers of translations during the Ottoman times, there was hardly any debate about issues pertinent to translation. Nevertheless, the origins of the debate about the necessity of translating the classics into Turkish, which started in 1938, can be traced back to 1897. Interestingly, the former debate was also linked with the concept of “humanism”. Although the concept was not mentioned directly, since the translations had the goal of Westernization and gaining a new literary identity, it can be understood that the path followed by then was humanism as well.

The Classics Debate begun in September, 1897, and continued for three months. Ahmet Mithat’s “Müsâbaka-I Kalemîyye İkrâm-ı Aklâm”⁵⁵ started the debate. In that essay, Mithat basically argued the following: The classics, despite the time past since their composition, were still valuable. The Turkish nation had no classic period. As a result, there was no potential in the nation to create works such as, *Andromaque*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and so forth. So, at least such works had to be translated into Turkish to compensate for the lack of classics.⁵⁶

Later on, Ahmet Cevdet, Cenab Şehabettin, Necip Asım [Yazıksız], İsmail Avni, Hüseyin Daniş [Pedram], Ahmet Rasim, Hüseyin Sabri and Sait Bey joined the debate with their respective contributions. The common themes of the debate were the value of the classics, the necessity for translations, whether the Turkish nation had a classic period, the difficulties of translation and the solutions.⁵⁷ Like Mithat, Ahmet Cevdet lamented about the lack of translation of the classics in the country. He stated that even in nations smaller than the Turkish nation, there were at least two translations of those texts by different persons⁵⁸, and he argued that whoever read

⁵⁵ Ahmet Mithat, “Müsâbaka-I Kalemîyye İkrâm-ı Aklâm”, *Tercümân-i Hak’ikat*, 24 Ağustos 1313, (5 Eylül 1897).

⁵⁶ Ramazan Kaplan, *Klâsikler Tartışması – Başlangıç Dönemi*, Atatürk Kültür Merkezi Başkanlığı, Ankara, 1998, p. 11.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* p. 12.

⁵⁸ Ahmet Cevdet, “Mütalâaya Şayan Eserler”, Mehmet Kaplan, İnci Enginün, Zeynep Kerman, Necat Birinci, Abdullah Uçman (ed.), *Atatürk Devri Fikir Hayatı I*, Kültür Bakanlığı, Ankara, 1992, pp. 214-217. But first published in *İkdam*, No. 10738, 1927.

those translations could produce works at par with the original ones.⁵⁹ On the other hand, he claimed that Turkish language was not developed enough to accommodate translations into it, and that one needed to wait until the language was developed to that extent to make translation.⁶⁰ Necip Asım endorsed the ideas of both intellectuals and argued that people would not be dependent on other languages once the translations were made.⁶¹ Hüseyin Daniş was not very eager to endorse the necessity of translations on the grounds that “the East cannot imitate the West”, and that the classics could not be a guide to Turkish poetry and literature.⁶²

Similar to Hüseyin Daniş, Cenap Şahabettin argued that the Turkish nation did not need the European classics and that was why they did not develop an interest in the latter. He thought that there was no necessity of dwelling on the classics in Turkey because the Turkish literature did not have a classic period.⁶³ It should be noted that Cenap Şahabettin, and other members of the Servet-i Fünun, such as Şinasi, Namık Kemal ve Abdülhak Hamit, and as well as the literary men of the Tanzimat Period took the French literature as the model. Since it was impossible to gain essential knowledge without properly knowing what the latter took as model, Cenab Şahabettin contradicted himself by his argument above.⁶⁴

Several observations can be made about The Classics Debate of 1897: First of all, the aim of the translation of the classics was a new cultural exchange and to catch up with the West. However, problems arose because of imitating the classics and the ensuing cultural differences.⁶⁵ Although it was stated that the classics to be translated would be from different nations, they were usually the classics of the ancient Greco-Latin world. It can be said that the dominant tendency regarding the

⁵⁹ Ramazan Kaplan, *Klâsikler Tartışması...*, p. 49.

⁶⁰ Agâh Sırrı Levent, “Klâsiklerin Tercüme Meselesi”, *Ulus*, 14 Ağustos 1945.

⁶¹ Ramazan Kaplan, *Klâsikler Tartışması...*, p. 50.

⁶² Agâh Sırrı Levent, “Klâsiklerin Tercüme Meselesi”...

⁶³ Hasan Âli Yücel, *Edebiyat Tarihimizden...*, p. 252-253.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* p. 254.

⁶⁵ Ramazan Kaplan, *Klâsikler Tartışması...*, p. 61.

official translations during the early Republican years was the reflection of the Debate. During those years, like the aftermath of The Classics Debate, the prime connotation of the Western civilization was the ancient Greco-Roman civilization.⁶⁶ Whenever the classic works were mentioned, it was argued that they were the product of great authors, yet it was never discussed what made those authors great.⁶⁷

In all the debates before or after the foundation of the Republic, there is one interesting point. Like the debates about humanism, the debated concept was either ill-defined or not defined at all. For instance, it was as if every debater knew what a “classic” work was like, and none of them expressed their views on what a “classic” work looked like, or what kind of features it had.

Although the Classics Debate lost its momentum after 1897, it was more or less in the agenda in the following period. In 1919, the journal, *Nedim* argued that it was unthinkable of a nation that did not translate the works of Homer or Shakespeare into its language, and that those translations could be made only with state support.⁶⁸

Mustafa Şekip [Tunç] in an essay of his written in 1923 investigated how the West perceived the concept of intellectual. He concluded that the West considered someone as intellectual only if he knew the works of not only the ancient Greco-Roman civilization but also his own country. According to Tunç, who also stated that the humanist education of the West was based on that condition, there was a necessity of such education in Turkey to have a conscious nationalism in the Turkish nation. Nevertheless, the translation of the classics into Turkish ought not to be literal translations, and they had to be moulded according to the Turkish language and genius. Without getting in contact with those works, modernization was a void attempt. For Tunç, Turkish nation’s discovering itself would happen through

⁶⁶ Ibid. p. 62.

⁶⁷ Ibid. p. 63.

⁶⁸ Ramazan Kaplan, *Klâsikler Tartışması...*, p. 5. Referring to: “Klâsik Eserler Lisânımıza Tercüme Edilmeli”, *Nedim*, 1919.

understanding through what kind of thought or mentality it broke part with the ancient and contemporary civilizations, or even with its own classics.⁶⁹

In 1926, Balhasanoğlu Necip Asım argued that the next thing to do after the language reform was translation of the classics into Turkish, and training people to make those translations.⁷⁰

According to Köprülüzâde Fuad, a nation that entered into a new realm of civilization had to translate the works of that civilization into its own language first. When Turks became Buddhist and Maniheist, they translated the religious works of those religions into their language. Similarly, they translated the Arabic and Persian literary works into Turkish after they entered the realm of Islamic civilization. Some works had even five or six different translations. After the Tanzimat, the translation activities gained importance in order to westernize quickly. Many people learnt French but at the end the expected works could not be materialized in the field of art and science. Nevertheless, the translations in that period laid down the foundations of similar activities during the Republican years.⁷¹

The Ministry of Education of the Republic charged first Ziya Gökalp and then Mustafa Rahmi Bey with the translation activities. As only some selected parts of a book were translated and distributed in the form of brochure, the translations could not reflect the totality of any book translated. After those two, there were few translations made under the coordination of Abdülfeyyaz Tevfik Bey. For instance, Hüseyin Cahit and Haydar Rıfat translated some works that were more suitable to the Turkish nation's general education and thought level.

Hüseyin Cahit [Yalçın] put history and philosophy at the centre of his books. According to him, a new awakening could only be possible by looking at the Western thought and by enriching history and culture. Hüseyin Cahit prepared a

⁶⁹ Mustafa Şekip [Tunç], "Münevverlik Mefhumu", Mehmet Kaplan, İnci Enginün, Zeynep Kerman, Necat Birinci, Abdullah Uçman (ed.), *Atatürk Devri Fikir Hayatı I*, Kültür Bakanlığı, Ankara, 1992, p. 455-460. But first published in *Millî Mecmua*, No. 1, 1339/1923, pp. 5-6.

⁷⁰ Balhasanoğlu Necip Asım, "Dil Heyeti", Mehmet Kaplan, İnci Enginün, Zeynep Kerman, Necat Birinci, Abdullah Uçman (ed.), *Atatürk Devri Fikir Hayatı I*, Kültür Bakanlığı, Ankara, 1992, p. 27. But first published in *Türk Yurdu*, No. 22, 1926, pp. 296-301.

⁷¹ Köprülüzâde Mehmed Fuad, "Tercüme Meselesi", Mehmet Kaplan, İnci Enginün, Zeynep Kerman, Necat Birinci, Abdullah Uçman (ed.), *Atatürk Devri Fikir Hayatı I*, Kültür Bakanlığı, Ankara, 1992, pp. 218-221. But first published in *Hayat*, No. 75, 1928, pp. 445-446.

series named *Oğlumun Kütüphanesi*, [My Son's Library] and he also made a few translations on history, philosophy, sociology, and morality from French, English and Italian sources into Turkish.

Haydar Rıfat argued that to look at the West and to delve into the Western classics were necessary. In doing so, one had to look at the great works of the 2000 year history of thought that prepared the West. Those works included literary, scientific, and philosophical pieces⁷² and the translation of those classics had to start from the ancient Greece.⁷³ Similar to Rıfat, Bedrettin Tuncel argued that one needed to begin from the translations of the best examples of the Greco-Roman civilization to commence a strong humanism movement in Turkey.⁷⁴

Saffet Engin argued that without understanding the human life represented in the classics or experiencing it, it was impossible to be the part of the modern civilizations. For that reason, he advocated teaching of the classics, literary and philosophy schools, and translations of classics into Turkish.⁷⁵

The only person who opposed any translation from both the West and the East was Peyami Safa who was renowned for his right-wing stance. According to him, the Turks brought up great philosophers such as Farabi, and yet they ordinarily translated the works of the Arabs and the French. For Safa, translation meant conforming to the standards of thinking in an alien nation, and renouncing one's own nation. He argued that translation activity could only be justified and beneficial to the extent of help it provided to the Turkish thought in revealing its essence. Safa claimed that translation activities among the Turks for centuries could not go beyond being the source of temporary admiration first in the East, and then in the West.⁷⁶

⁷² Hilmi Ziya Ülken, *Uyanış...*, pp. 377-385.

⁷³ Ramazan Kaplan, *Klâsikler Tartışması...*, p. 6. Referring to: Baha Dürder, "Klâsikler Meselesi", *Kalem*, No. 7, 1938.

⁷⁴ Mehmet Rifat, *Çeviri Seçkisi I – Çeviriyi Düşünenler*, Dünya, İstanbul, 2003, p. 98. Referring to: Bedrettin Tuncel, "Tercüme Meselesi", *Tercüme*, No. 1, 1940, pp. 79-82.

⁷⁵ M. Saffet Engin, *Kemalizm İnkılâbının...*, Cilt III, p. 114.

⁷⁶ Peyami Safa, *Doğu – Batı Sentezi...* p. 25.

Nurullah Ataç was one of the biggest contributors to the Turkish language in the history of Republic by his translations into Turkish, new words he coined, and his attempts to purify the language from foreign words and roots. In that sense, Ataç's effort to purify and enrich the language constituted one important aspect of the humanism project. According Ataç, many European languages were the derivate of the Greek and Latin languages. If a good grammar could be established, both Turkish and the nation would progress. Ataç argued that unless Turkish correspondences for the concepts and words used in Western philosophy and classics were coined, the Turkish nation would never think like the Western people, nor fully understand their thoughts.⁷⁷

For those reasons, Ataç argued that the Europeans reached the civilization by learning the Greek and Latin languages, and he claimed that the Turks could acquire the "Western or European mentality" by learning those languages at schools.⁷⁸

Nurullah Ataç was the product of Kemalist Turkey, and the ideological content of his work could only be understood in that framework. Ataç, who was an intellectual of a transition period, opposed the populist tendencies and peasantry discourse emerged during the Atatürk era, and he did not feel affinity for socialism either. During the İnönü era, he underlined the humanist discourse but refrained from linking humanism with populism.⁷⁹ He understood that in a society that searched for identity, and hence continuously changed it was hard to have a stable literature and art, and consequently no room for classical works.⁸⁰ Despite that, Ataç was an intellectual who could not shed light even on the issues of his time, and who had non-systemic and limited thoughts.⁸¹

The Blue Anatolia Humanism and its members, which shall be analyzed in detail in the Chapter 5, Section 1 of the thesis, are worth mentioning here since some

⁷⁷ Nurullah Ataç, *Dergilerde...*, p. 104.

⁷⁸ Nurullan Ataç, *Batı Kafası*, Can, İstanbul, 1988, pp. 135-138.

⁷⁹ Ahmet Oktay, *Zamamı Sorgulamak...*, pp. 167-174.

⁸⁰ Ibid. p. 173.

⁸¹ Ibid. p. 174.

of the members such as Azra Erhat, Vedat Günyol, and Sabahattin Eyuboğlu were the translators in the Translation Office. Sabahattin Eyuboğlu and Vedat Günyol translated various humanist thinkers' works, and there is yet to be any better translation than theirs. Azra Erhat translated many pieces in Greek and Latin into Turkish. She co-translated Homer's Iliad and Odyssey with A. Kadir. In the foreword of the Homer, Erhat stated that anyone interested in epic stories and translation of them had to review the knowledge about his nation's epic stories first. She added that epic story, as a type of literary work, emerged in every nation in similar eras.⁸²

For that reason, in Erhat's view, Homer's epic stories, which in fact belonged to the Turkish nation and Anatolia, were translated into Turkish as a piece that the Turkish society could easily comprehend since Greek and Turkish were similar to each other and they had common characteristics.⁸³

For the Blue Anatolianists, translation of the Greek and Latin classics were necessary. In order to adopt the Western culture as a whole, and to ensure Turkish nation's creativity by drawing on the infinite sources of the West, one had to comprehend the West starting with its origins to the progress it had gone through in the course of time. Such comprehension was possible only through translation.⁸⁴ Although the Blue Anatolianists stipulated translation of the Greek and Latin classics, they defined the concept of classics more broadly as "the works that became the foundation of human understanding and thought in the Western and Eastern worlds."⁸⁵

In 1924, one of the prominent figures of the time in pedagogics, John Dewey was invited to Turkey to make some recommendations about the Turkish education system. According to his report, translation of essential pieces should be given weight over that of theoretical ones, and it should not be aimed to make perfect translations.⁸⁶

⁸² Homeros, *İlyada*, Azra Erhat, A.Kadir (trans.), preface by Azra Erhat, p. 29.

⁸³ Azra Erhat, *Sevgi Yönetimi*..., p. 87.

⁸⁴ Azra Erhat, "Yunan-Lâtin Klâsikleri", *Tercüme*, No. 28, 1944, pp. 317-319.

⁸⁵ Azra Erhat, *Mavi Anadolu*..., pp. 13-14.

⁸⁶ Turgay Kurultay, "Cumhuriyet Türkiyesi'nde Çevirinin Ağır Yüğü...", p. 23.

Before the Translation Office that was established in 1940, there were some attempts. In 1851, a kind of translation office *Encümen-i Daniş* was established. The aim of the office was to prepare text books to the *Darülfünun* that was in the process of establishment. The translations made were about several topics such as, linguistics, dictionary, history, geology, and politics. There were no translations about literature and philosophy. Another attempt was *Daire'i İlmiye* in 1870 that made translations from the Greek and Latin languages for existing schools.⁸⁷

The decision to establish the Translation Office was made during the First Turkish Publications Congress organized by the ministry of education between the first and fifth of May, 1939. During the proceedings, the translation committee stated that translations would be beneficial in not only “bringing the thoughts and sensitivity of the civilized world to the country” and but also “enriching the Turkish language.”⁸⁸ The minister of education, Hasan Âli Yücel, requested from the committee to put works related to humanist culture on the translation list, and if possible to translate those works completely from their original language.⁸⁹

The Translation Office was designed according to the aim of the Turkish Humanism Project. The primary sources, namely the Greek and Latin classics, of the Western culture that Turkey wanted to join, would be translated into Turkish, and those who read them would become humanists. Another aim behind the translations was to base the cultural life in Turkey on the essential artistic works of the Western civilization, which drew on the Greco-Roman literature. Nurullah Ataç explained the reason behind the translation of classics into Turkish as follows: “It was told to the citizens and children of this country ‘Here, humanity has thought and written about these so far, now you read them and learn those opinions, adopt the ones you like, establish your believes, thoughts on your own.’”⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Ibid. p. 20.

⁸⁸ “Birinci Türk Neşriyat Kongresi”..., pp. 125-127.

⁸⁹ Ibid. p. 126. [The original statement in Turkish “Listedeki eserler arasında, ümanist kültüre taallûku olanlara bilhassa ehemmiyet verilmesi, umumiyetle eserlerin tam olarak ve mümkün oldukça aslından tercüme ettirilmesi tavsiye olunur.”]

⁹⁰ Nurullah Ataç, *Dergilerde...*, p. 43.

Hasan Âli Yücel in his work titled “Türk Edebiyatına Toplu bir Bakış” [A General Overview of the Turkish Literature] considered the Greek classics as carrying the spirit of humanism, and the first building blocs of the national history and literature vision in Turkey. Besides, for him, those classics consolidated the unique structure of the Turkish folk culture.⁹¹

Under the humanization policies of the İnönü Era, the Translation Office was established in 1940 to systematically translate old and new literary works into Turkish, and to review other translation activities. The Office issued a bimonthly journal called *Tercüme* [Translation] to inform the public about its activities and to give information about translation occupation.

The first issue of the journal, *Tercüme* was published on the 19th of May, 1940. The last issue was the eighty sixth issue and it was published in 1966. In general, the journal’s content was formed of translation samples from the world classics, essays about translation, review essays about translation, reprinted essays from foreign journals, bibliographies about translation, comparative Turkish translations from Greek, German, French, English, and Russian languages⁹², and introductory essays to the literary currents in the West and their pioneers. The translation initiative of the Republic did not come out naturally. It was an assertive and comprehensive project. Like all other social, cultural projects in the country, it was incomplete, it was superficial, and it had internal contradictions. Nevertheless, despite some interruptions, one could talk about continuity in this pillar of the Turkish Humanism Project.⁹³

The book’s translations made were published by the Ministry of Education’s publishing house. In all the publications, there were two forewords, one by İsmet İnönü, and another by Hasan Âli Yücel. As stated in those forewords, the target of the translations was the “humanism” path and the translation was the most important

⁹¹ Yücel, “Edebiyatçılarımızla Konuşmalar - Hasan Âli Yücel İle”, *Yücel*, No. 70, 1941, pp. 4-7.

⁹² Orhan Burian, *Denemeler Eleştiriler...*, p. 209.

⁹³ Turgay Kurultay, “Cumhuriyet Türkiye’sinde Çevirinin Ağır Yüğü...”, p. 13.

factor in the civilization cause.⁹⁴ The Translation Office published 691 books between 1940 and 1950. In the following sixteen years, it published 556 books. Among the total 1247 books, the number of works from the East and Islamic world were only 39.⁹⁵ After the Office initiative of the Ministry of Education, number of private translation attempts increased. This meant that the translation initiative found support in the society. For instance, in 1946 the Office translated and Ministry of Education published 129 books whereas private publishing houses published 92 books. However, in 1958 the Ministry of Education published 14 translations whereas the private ones published more than 250 books.⁹⁶ The Ankara State Theatre, which was established in 1939 under Carl Ebert's supervision, put 19 plays on the stage between 1941 and 1947. Most of those plays were adapted from the translations made. There was only one Turkish play, and the rest were adaptations from Shakespeare, Goethe, and ancient Greek plays.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ [The full texts of the forewords in Turkish are as follows: "Eski Yunanlılardan beri milletlerin sanat ve fikir hayatında meydana getirdikleri şaheserleri dilimize çevirmek, Türk milletinin kültüründe yer tutmak ve hizmet etmek isteyenlere en kıymetli vasıtayı hazırlamaktır. Edebiyatımızda, sanatlarımızda ve fikirlerimizde istediğimiz yüksekliği ve genişliği bol yardımcı vasıtalar içinde yetişmiş olanlardan beklemek tabii yoldur. Bu sebeple tercüme külliyyatının kültürümüze büyük hizmetler yapacağına inanıyoruz. 01-08-1941." The Minister of Education Hasan Âli Yücel's foreword: "Hümanizma ruhunun ilk anlayış ve duyuş merhalesi, insan varlığının en müsahhas şekilde ifadesi olan sanat eserlerinin benimsenmesiyle başlar. Sanat şubeleri içinde edebiyat, bu ifadenin zihin unsurları en zengin olanıdır. Bunun içindir ki, bir milletin diğer milletler edebiyatını kendi dilinde, daha doğrusu kendi idrakinde tekrar etmesi; zekâ ve anlama kudretini o eserler nispetinde artırması, canlandırması ve yeniden yaratmasıdır. İşte tercüme faaliyetini, biz, bu bakımdan ehemmiyetli ve medeniyet dâvamız için müessir bellemekteyiz. Zekâsının her cephesini bu türlü eserlerin her türlüüne tevcih edebilmiş milletlerde düşüncenin en silinmez vasıtası olan yazı ve onun mimarisi demek olan edebiyat, bütün kütlenin ruhuna kadar işliyen ve sinen bir tesire sahiptir. Bu tesirdeki fert ve cemiyet ittisali, zamanda ve mekânda bütün hudutları delip aşacak bir sağlamlık ve yaygınlığı gösterir. Hangi milletin kütüphanesi bu yönden zenginse o millet, medeniyet âleminde daha yüksek bir idrak seviyesinde demektir. Bu itibarla tercüme hareketini sistemli ve dikkatli bir surette idare etmek, Türk irfanının en önemli bir cephesini kuvvetlendirmek, onun genişlemesine, ilerlemesine hizmet etmektir. Bu yolda bilgi ve emeklerini esirgemiyen Türk münevverlerine şükranla duyguluyum. Onların himmetleri ile beş sene içinde, hiç değilse, devlet eli ile yüz ciltlik, hususi teşebbüslerin gayreti ve gene devletin yardımı ile, onun dört beş misli fazla olmak üzere zengin bir tercüme kütüphanemiz olacaktır. Bilhassa Türk dilinin, bu emeklerden elde edeceği büyük faydayı düşünüp de şimdiden tercüme faaliyetine yakın ilgi ve sevgi duymamak, hiçbir Türk okuru için mümkün olmayacaktır. 23.06.1941."]

⁹⁵ Aydın Afacan, *Şiir ve Mitologya...*, p. 78. Referring to: Ahmet Oktay, *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Edebiyatı (1923-1950)*, Kültür Bakanlığı, Ankara, 1993, p. 26.

⁹⁶ Turgay Kurultay, "Cumhuriyet Türkiyesi'nde Çevirinin Ağır Yüğü...", p. 16.

⁹⁷ Özlem Berk, "Bir Türk Kimliği Yaratmada Tercüme Bürosu ve Kültür Politikası: Çevirilerin Yerleştirilmesi", *Toplum ve Bilim*, No. 85, Yaz 2000, p. 160.

Although it had stable and successful activities over the first decade of its life, the Translation Office gradually slowed down and it was eventually closed in 1966. In fact, the high pace of translations made in the 1940s was extraordinary for translation activity, and that pace was not sustainable in the long run.⁹⁸ Nevertheless, the unsustainable high pace was not the only problem the Office faced. There were other problems aroused like it happened in other two pillars of the Turkish Humanism Project.

First of all, almost all the translations were made from novels. Consequently, a great gap materialized in translation of scientific studies. The stress on the novels and past times in translation activities resulted in lack of translation of scientific studies that dwelled on the contemporary world. Hence a great void in Turkish thought life on that matter emerged.⁹⁹

The criticisms of Orhan Burian about the Translation Office started after Reşat Şemsettin Sıralı succeeded Hasan Âli Yücel as the Minister of Education in 1947. For that reason, Burian criticized mostly the policy, not the Office itself. According to him, there were three essential problems about the translations, namely the work selected, the translator, and the publishing house. Burian's criticisms can be summarized as follows: The selected works for translation did not serve any specific cause, they were usually recent works that did not find a place in the history of world literature, the translators did not know what they needed to know alongside the language, namely the literature of that language.¹⁰⁰ Burian also stressed the need for proportionate number of translations from the East and the West, and the need for translations on fields such as, sociology, philosophy, history, literature, and art.¹⁰¹ About the publishing houses, Burian argued that publishers intervened in selection procedure because of commercial concerns, and consequently works of no value

⁹⁸ Turgay Kurultay, "Cumhuriyet Türkiyesi'nde Çevirinin Ağır Yüğü...", p. 17.

⁹⁹ Kurtuluş Kayalı, *Türk Düşünce...*, p. 77. Referring to: "Tercüme Yarışı", *Yurt ve Dünya*, No. 31, 1943, p. 229.

¹⁰⁰ Orhan Burian, *Denemeler Eleştiriler...*, p. 208.

¹⁰¹ Orhan Burian, "Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı'nın Çeviri Yayınları Üzerine", *Denemeler Eleştiriler...*, pp. 283-284. But first published in *Yeni Ufuklar*, No. ?, 1943.

were translated for the sake of expected profits. Burian proposed coordination between publishers, translators, and the ministry in addressing those problems.¹⁰²

Orhan Burian also criticized the *Tercüme* journal on the grounds that it dwelled only on the European languages and there was no link between translations made. What needed to be done according to him was that on every issue a topic could be chosen and the influence of that topic on intellectuals from different nations could be demonstrated. Moreover, translations on the topic could be made, and review articles and essays by Turkish translators could be put on the issue. The translation critique methods had to be developed as well. For Burian, “the *Tercüme* journal in its current form is not lively and vibrant.”¹⁰³

After all these tangible reasons, the common reason behind the failure of all the pillars of the Turkish Humanism Project becomes evident, i.e., the “utopian romanticism”. The idea of adopting the Western culture with all its roots via translations, and the necessity or the idea of building the culture on those foundations, were all utopian ideas. Moreover, that the translation or printing activities fulfilled their initial goals does not mean that the Western culture was adopted in the Turkish society to the extent of the translated works. “The utopia is the expectation from a planned translation activity of recreating (simultaneously) the historical development of the West.”¹⁰⁴

The above quote belongs to Turgay Kurultay. He added that the translation activity was idealized to the extent that the co-bosses of the translation activities, Ataç and Eyuboğlu, criticized their own translations. Eyuboğlu considered himself insufficient to translate Montaigne’s works. On the other hand, Ataç regretted translating the works of poem Sophocles since Ataç was not a poem himself. Actually, leaving aside the common people, the readers of those translations, and even the intellectuals that translated those works were not in a cultural unification with the Western thought.¹⁰⁵ The same utopian romanticism, which expected

¹⁰² Orhan Burian, *Denemeler Eleştiriler...*, p. 209.

¹⁰³ Orhan Burian, *Denemeler Eleştiriler...*, pp. 217-213.

¹⁰⁴ Turgay Kurultay, “Cumhuriyet Türkiye’si’nde Çevirinin Ağır Yüğü...”, p. 28.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. p. 28. Referring to: Nurullah Ataç, “Samsat’lı Lukianos”, *Tercüme*, No. 63-64, 1958, p. 85.

students to delve into and read the origins of the West and hence become humanist after taking the Greek and Latin lessons at school, expected the society to become humanist by adopting the Western culture with all its roots via reading the translations made by the Office.

The tasks of enriching the Turkish language, educating the people by conveying the Western sources, and introducing them the Western mentality given to the Translation Office were too heavy for the Office to fulfill. About those tasks, Azra Erhat stated the following in 1981. According to her, the task of the Office was not limited to introducing the classics abroad to the country. She argued that the main task of the Office was to prevent the mistakes made during the Tanzimat Period regarding the translation activities. During that period, translations were made from the East or the West without any purpose. On the other hand, according to Erhat, the Office considered translation as a comparison tool among literary works of different civilizations, and as a method that would ensure the progress of the Turkish nation. For Erhat, the essential task of the Office was ensuring a high level of cultural interaction between Turkey and other nations and civilizations, and only by that interaction, a unique and national awakening was possible in Turkey.¹⁰⁶

The short and long term effects of the translation activities on the country's cultural and thought life cannot be wholly ascertained. Nevertheless, it can be argued that those activities opened up new horizons in the translation world of the Turkish

¹⁰⁶ [The full text of Azra Erhat's statements in Turkish: "Tercüme Bürosunun görevi yalnız dışarıda klasikleşmiş yapıtları Türkiye'ye tanıtmakla sınırlanmış sayılmaz. Çıkış noktası Tanzimat'tı elbette, ama asıl amaç Tanzimat'ın düştüğü yanılığlara düşmemektir. İster Batı'dan, ister Doğu'dan olsun, insanlığın yazın verilerini bilinçsizce bir alma, esinlenme, öykünme kaynağı olarak görmemek, göstermemek, tersine bir karşılaştırma aracı niteliğinde kendi ilerlememize yarayacak bir yöntemler toplamı olarak algılamak asıl amaç. Teokratik-dogmatik düşün biçiminden çoğulcu düşün özgürlüğüne geçen ilk toplum biz değildik. Bu geçişi başkaları nasıl başarmış, baskıları nasıl kırmışlar, özgür düşünceye nasıl kavuşmuşlardı: bu yolda Montaigne'yi kendi dilimizde okuyup ibret dersleri almaktan daha yararlı, daha verimli bir yol düşünülebilir miydi, Cumhuriyet'i henüz düşün ve eğitimini kuramamış olduğu bir dönemde?... [Ç]eviri olgusunun Batı'da Rönesans, Uyanış akımlarının temelinde yer aldığı açıkça belirir. Çeviri ulusal kültürü biçimleyip geliştiren, uluslararası bir düzeye varmasına yol açan bir etkidir; öykünmeyi değil, tersine özgünlüğü, ulusallığı doğuran bir yöntemdir... Tercüme bürosunun batı düşün ve yazın temelinde bulunan yunan-latın klasiklerine önem vermesinin nedeni: kökünü kökenini bilmeden fransız ya da ingiliz kültür verileri nasıl anlaşılır, asıl amaç çeviri aracılığıyla yüksek düzeydeki bir kültür iletişimini sağlamaktır. Cumhuriyet Türkiye'sinde özgün ve ulusal bir uyanışa ancak bu yolla varılabilirdi." Mehmet Rifat, *Çeviri Seçkisi I...*, pp. 62-64. Referring to: Ahmet Cemal, *Yazko*, No. 1, Ağustos-Temmuz 1981, pp. 174-179.]

nation, and enriched it.¹⁰⁷ The humanism movement in the West started with the philological activities during the Renaissance, and it aimed for man's holistic progress. However, activities such as, returning back to the ancient texts could not deliver the same results in the Twentieth Century. Yet, the main characteristic of the movement, namely the idea of "cultural alimention through the texts of distance sources" was a typical humanist approach.¹⁰⁸ According to Kurultay, the translation of the classics did not lead to a cultural awakening. They only consolidated the cultural reference points of the already started tendency. According to him, nothing more than that could be expected from translation, since it was not a historical actor in its own right. However, many attributed a magical power to translation, and they thought that if proper translations were made, the precondition for change could be provided. Kurultay claimed that the awakening did not start with the translations. Rather, it was the presence of the awakening that led to translation activities.¹⁰⁹

The translation activities as a part of the humanist culture policy were very important for the development of Turkish culture. Nevertheless, the expected results did not materialize since the aim of reaching the ancient Greco-Roman sources was directed at neither conveying the knowledge to the society, nor giving birth to and then developing the creative thinking in the country. It was rather directed at becoming European through following the so called stages the West passed through, which was an expectation that was "contrary to the scientific thought". That is to say, the policy makers and intellectuals of the time thought that the role of humanist understanding in European history, and the results of that role could be repeated after several centuries in Turkey that had a very different history and social structure compared with Europe.¹¹⁰

Turgay Kurultay quoted Shayegan's observation about the path translation activities followed in non-Western societies to shed light on Turkey's experience.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷ Turgay Kurultay, "Cumhuriyet Türkiye'si'nde Çevirinin Ağır Yüğü...", p. 30.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. p. 31.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. p. 33.

¹¹⁰ Ali Ata Yiğit, *İnönü Dönemi...*, p. 48.

¹¹¹ Turgay Kurultay, "Cumhuriyet Türkiye'si'nde Çevirinin Ağır Yüğü...", p. 34.

Shayegan's observation is particularly telling about the mistakes made and deceleration happened after Hasan Âli Yücel was removed from office.

...as the translations are made without a coherent policy, without an overview, they do not appear as harmonious blocs of knowledge more or less representative of some school of thought, but as scattered fragments of learning in no particular context; so that instead of orienting the reader in a specific area, they lose him in the labyrinth of the human sciences. A philosophical atlas, locating the areas and currents of thought in an appropriate overall framework, is sorely lacking.¹¹²

4.4. The Village Institutes

The third pillar of the "Turkish Humanism Project" was the Village Institutes. As educational and cultural policies could not be separated within the humanization policy, nation-building and modernization were reflected in the educational realm as "love of Turkishness and nationalism" and "secular attitude and positivist science".¹¹³ The Village Institutes is the broadest attempt ever made in the education field since the foundation of the Republic. For that reason, in the thesis, the institutions shall be analyzed only in relation to the Turkish Humanism Project, and it shall be demonstrated that the reasons behind the closure of the institutions are in line with the main argument of the thesis.

"Education as an essential form of activity stemming from human essence, and in extreme interaction with society that is a function of human essence, is a biological-psychological-sociological medium that satisfies the primary and secondary needs of man."¹¹⁴ For this reason, education is not only influenced by the changes within the structure of society where man lives, but also it influences that structure by paving way to reforms.¹¹⁵ Therefore, in a project like the Turkish Humanism Project, education gains prime importance, especially regarding the second observation. What was aimed through education in the project was

¹¹² Daryush Shayegan, *Cultural Schizophrenia*, John Howe (trans.), Syracuse, London, 1992, p. 122.

¹¹³ Ali Ata Yiğit, *İnönü Dönemi...*, p. 11.

¹¹⁴ Osman Kafadar, *Türk Eğitim Düşüncesinde Batılılaşma*, Vadi, Ankara, 1997, p. 17.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.* p. 17.

disseminating humanist culture beyond the intellectual world and bringing it to the furthest places in the country, and bringing up the Turkish youth as a Western humanist.

The developments, more accurately radical changes in the education field during the Renaissance Period were similar to what would happen in Turkey during the 1940s. The current of humanism, which was born in the Renaissance period, led to a common understanding of education -yet in different institutional forms- among various countries under the sway of the current, which put man and the tangible world at the centre as a reaction to the religion-centric education of the Medieval Christian schools, and shook the authority of the church.¹¹⁶ The humanism education in Italy was the product of aristocratic opinions and praxis of the Italian humanists regarding education, whereas it was the product of scientists, universities and schools in Germany. The latter phenomenon had to do with the establishment of *Volksschule* [The People Schools], which was the product of Luther's war against the church, which aimed at creating a new type of Christian man that was on the track of ensuring the future of the masses by realization of a new relationship between the church and the religion.¹¹⁷ That is the point where *Volksschule* and the Village Institutes can be compared to each other.

The ideas about initiation of societal development from the villages by bringing up teachers according to the needs of them could be traced back to the Second Constitutional Monarchy. Nevertheless, those ideas were never materialized. When Reşit Galip became the Minister of Education in 1932, he floated the same ideas again.¹¹⁸ Before the act of Village Tutors was passed in 1937, the "humanist culture" was already felt in the curriculum of 1936. For instance, the aim of the curriculum was defined bringing up children as strong republican, nationalist, secular, and reformist citizens who would love and respect the Turkish nation, the national assembly, and the Turkish state.

¹¹⁶ Ibid. p. 32.

¹¹⁷ Ibid. p. 32.

¹¹⁸ Osman Kafadar, "Cumhuriyet Dönemi Eğitim Tartışmaları", Uygur Kocabaşoğlu (ed.), *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasî Düşünce - Modernleşme ve Batıcılık, Cilt 3*, İletişim, İstanbul, 2004 [2002], pp. 369, 371.

İsmail Hakkı Tongu (1897-1960) was assigned to the General Manager of Primary Education post in 1935. Tongu finished the Teacher’s School in Kastamonu, and then was sent to Germany in 1918 by the state. During his stay in Germany, he researched on different aspects of education, and he was quite influenced by the *Volksschule* education, which led him to adapt it to Turkey under the name of “The Village Institutes Project.” One of Tongu’s observations during his research is worth mentioning here.

The starting point is love of man, humanitarianism, humanism... It was the year of 1931 and fascism was steadily getting stronger and broadening its intellectual realm in Europe, even it started to find growing number of sympathizers in Turkey. The stance (of Tongu) is totally against the thought system of the fascist philosophy that ignores and degrades man, and tries to enslave him to the state.¹¹⁹

The political aim of Tongu was to create a new society in which the exploited classes would gain their rights and class consciousness, participate in the administrative process, and in which the relations of production and private property would be rearranged so as to prevent any possibility of exploitation.¹²⁰ Tongu, whose ideas were parallel to some of the before-mentioned intellectuals, argued that it was impossible to save men from exploitation and prosper them by making some changes in the economy unless the West’s humanist worldview, its scientific approach based on observation, experiment, and reason and its living order that valued man, the world, and the nature were adopted.¹²¹ Nevertheless, what distinguished Tongu from the dominant Europeanization view of some intellectuals was his idea that “the revitalization of the village means peasantry and its

¹¹⁹ Engin Tongu, *Devrim Aısından Ky Enstitleri ve Tongu*, Ant, İstanbul, 1970, p. 141. [The original statement in Turkish “Bir insan sevgisinden, insancılıktan, hmanizmden yola ıkılacaktır... Yıl 1931’dir ve faizm Avrupa’da gitgide glenmekte, dşnel etki alanı genilemekte, hele Trkiye’de birok sempatzan bulmaya balamaktadır. Tongu’un ıkı noktası ise faist felsefenin, insanı yadsıyan, insanı kmseyen, devletin klesi yapmak isteyen dn sisteminin tam karısındadır.”]

¹²⁰ Ibid. pp. 183-184.

¹²¹ Ibid. p. 207.

dependants, in sum the people becoming ‘-before all else, people who can absorb the nature’ ”.¹²²

The regime Tonguç mentioned in his book *Canlandırılacak Köy* [The Village to be Enlivened] is republican regime.¹²³ In the foreword to the book, he stated that Europeanization was the necessary thing to enliven the village and by that a new and able people could be created on a strong basis.¹²⁴ What Tonguç meant by contemporary civilization was the Western civilization that took its roots from the humanism culture and directed to change and renovate the man and the world continuously.¹²⁵

Tonguç’s project, which aimed to disseminate a humanist culture and convey the reforms of the Republican years to the people, was a timely attempt. Most of the village dwellers were living in archaic conditions. It was evident that those people could benefit little from the republic, its reforms, laws, and deeds. Most of the villagers were not aware of what was going on in the country. In 1935, the population of the country was 16 million. Eighty five per cent of the population, 14 million people, were living in villages. The literacy rate among males in the villages was seventeen per cent, among females four point two per cent, and on average ten point five per cent. Among the school age children of 1.680.000, only 276.688 were schooled. On the other hand, the latter rate was around eighty five per cent in urban areas.¹²⁶

The preparations for the project lasted for four years and four institutes were opened in academic year of 1939-1940 with 20 instructors and 1181 students. In

¹²² Osman Kafadar, “Cumhuriyet Dönemi Eğitim...”, p. 376.

¹²³ Vedat Günyol, *Çalاکalem*, Türkiye İş Bankası, İstanbul, 1999, p. 78.

¹²⁴ Ibid. p. 79.

¹²⁵ Vedat Günyol, *Çalاکalem*, Türkiye İş Bankası, İstanbul, 1999, p. 79. [The original statement in Turkish: “Köyün canlandırılması demek, memleketin, bünye deęiřtirerek ve saęlam bir temele dayanarak canlanması demektir. Köyün canlanabilmesi, köylülerin ve bu temel üzerinde yařayan insanların, her řeyden evvel tabiatı emebilecek insanlar haline gelmeleri ile mümkündür. Avrupalılařmak bu demektir. Avrupa’nın felsefesi, ilmi, sanatı ve morali bu gayenin tahakkuku için çalıřır. Avrupalılařmıř insan demek, tabiatı ve mukadderatı yenebilen insan demektir. Tabiatı emebilmenin birinci řartı, yeni ve kadir insan tipleri yaratmaktır.”]

¹²⁶ Server Tanilli, *Nasıl Bir Eğitim İřtiyoruz?*, Cumhuriyet, İstanbul, 2003, p. 72.

academic year of 1949-1950, those numbers were raised to 21 institute, 572 instructors, and 13.972 students.¹²⁷

The first reason behind the establishment of the Village Institutes was dissemination of humanism, which was the cultural policy of the İnönü Era. The second reason was Atatürk's idea that the Turkish reforms had to be taught to the people. Namely, "It was attempted to articulate populism to humanism on the Anatolian soil, Homer was considered as the ancestor of Turks, [the popular folk culture characters, such as] Yunus Emre, Karacaoğlan, carpetbag-carpet, folksongs were made transcendent as components that would yeast a universal culture."¹²⁸ On the other hand, according to the son of İsmail Hakkı Tonguç, the aim was nothing of the above but "to make a revolution that would awaken the working class."¹²⁹

For Sabahattin Eyuboğlu, who participated in the project as instructor at the institutes, the aim was to create an Anatolian Enlightenment.¹³⁰ He stated that the idea that founded the institutes was based on a new notion of Turkey that came along with the War of Independence. The belief on which Atatürk's reforms counted was the belief that Turkish people who were predominantly peasants could establish an independent state.¹³¹

According to Eyuboğlu, the institutes were fully committed to the Atatürk's principles, and thus they were leftist to the extent of that commitment. He added that, the biggest aim of the institutes was to replace the religious moral with work and science ethics, and to realize a secular education. The leftism of the founders of the

¹²⁷ Ali Ata Yiğit, *İnönü Dönemi...*, p. 85.

¹²⁸ Ahmet Oktay, *Zamanı Sorgulamak...*, p. 118. [The original statement in Turkish: "Anadolu toprağında popülizm hümanizme eklenmeye çalışılmış, Homeros Türklerin atası sayılmış, Yunus Emre, Karacaoğlan, heybe-kilim, türkü evrensel kültürü mayalayacak öğeler olarak aşkınlaştırılmıştır."]

¹²⁹ [İsmail Hakkı Tonguç's son Engin Tonguç stated the real aim of the institutes in original as follows: "Köy enstitüleri sistemi başlıbaşına ne bir okuma-yazma kampanyası, ne bir köy kalkınması sorunu, ne bir öğretmen yetiştirme çabası, ne bir okul yapımı girişimi idi. Temel amacı bakımından, tarihsel koşulların hazırladığı bir olanaktan yararlanarak iktidara katılıp elde edilen yürütme gücü ile emekçi sınıfları bilinçlendirmek ve devrimsel süreci hızlandırmak için girişilmiş bir devrim stratejisi ve taktiği idi." Engin Tonguç, *Devrim Açısından...*, p. 270.]

¹³⁰ Sabahattin Eyuboğlu, *Mavi ve Kara...*, p. 47.

¹³¹ *Ibid.* p. 157.

institutes was criticized a lot by then. On that matter, Eyuboğlu argued that “a real Western leftist is not a revolutionist; he is just the one who wants to change the old order.” By the same token, Eyuboğlu considered Atatürk as leftist and posed the question “Is it possible for one to be on the side of Atatürk where he is rightist and hence against the revolutionists?”¹³²

The reasons behind the closure of the Village Institutes, which was seen as “one of the greatest catastrophes in Turkish national education”¹³³ outnumbered the reasons behind their establishment.

Between 1938 and 1950, significant developments happened in dissemination of the primary education. For instance, in the academic year of 1939-1940, there were 9.418 primary schools. That number rose to 17.106 in the year of 1949-1950.¹³⁴ Nevertheless, the financial burden of those rural developments was born in most instances by the peasants.¹³⁵

Orhan Burian, who found the opportunity to closely observe the institute environment, pointed to some technical mistakes such as, choosing the location for institutes without adequate analysis, or using student labour extensively in construction works in the initial years of the institutes. He also argued that several instilling towards the students such as “You are the saviour of the country!”, or belittling the teaching cadres of the early republican years, or allowing the students to look down on their teachers were important educational mistakes made.¹³⁶

After quitting the his post of school principal at Kızılçullu Village Institute, M. Emin Soysal wrote a book titled *İlköğretim Olayları ve Köy Enstitüleri* [The Events In The Primary Education And Village Institutes].¹³⁷ In his book, he levelled harsh criticisms against İsmail Hakkı Tonguç and the Village Institutes in an attempt

¹³² Ibid. p. 157.

¹³³ Server Tanilli, *Nasıl Bir Eğitim...*, p. 71.

¹³⁴ Ali Ata Yiğit, *İnönü Dönemi...*, p. 57. Also see: *Milli Eğitim Hareketleri 1927-1966*, Başbakanlık Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü, Ankara, 1967, p. 13.

¹³⁵ Ali Ata Yiğit, *İnönü Dönemi...*, p. 57.

¹³⁶ Orhan Burian, “Yıkıcı Zihniyet ve Köy Enstitüleri” (1947), *Denemeler Eleştiriler...*, p. 199.

¹³⁷ M. Emin Soysal, *İlköğretim Olayları Ve Köy Enstitüleri*, Bursa, 1945.

to define the reasons behind their closure. To name a few, the courses for instructors at the institutes turned into forced labour for construction works, the instructors could not guide the villagers due to lack of financial and technical support from the state, the head teachers, who were supposed to train the instructors turned into functionless primary education inspectors, the textbooks were designed without adequate preparation and hence could not support the instructors during teaching.¹³⁸

Regarding the Village Institutes in general, Soysal argued that they were established very fast without any proper analysis about suitable locations. He added that after 1940, the number of students admitted were well above the carrying capacity of the institutes, which was the result of not adhering to the pre-defined selection criteria. When twenty new institutes were opened in very short time, the lack of instructors and administrative staff became evident. As a result, several important courses such as, general knowledge, culture-art, farming could not be delivered and the quality of education in the institutes gradually deteriorated. Moreover, as the number of students was well over the carrying capacity, administrative and disciplinary problems arose. Instructors did not perform adequately. The depreciation of equipment increased and sanitary conditions worsened.¹³⁹

Besides, no curriculum for the institutes had been prepared until 1943. Once it was prepared in 1943, it reflected the changing environment in the institutes and consequently put too much stress on production. Nevertheless, the lack of books, laboratory equipment, and farming tools curtailed the expected production in farming and arts.¹⁴⁰ The stress on production in the curriculum had its roots in a 1940 directive from the General Directorate of the Primary Education. According to the directive, the institutes had to be self-sustainable, namely they would virtually turn into collective farms.¹⁴¹ As a result of those events, the institutes deviated from their initial goals and received irrecoverable damage.

¹³⁸ Osman Kafadar, *Türk Eğitim Düşüncesinde...*, p. 296.

¹³⁹ Ibid. pp. 296-297.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. p. 297.

¹⁴¹ Ibid. p. 297.

Ali Ata Yiğit described the non-technical reasons behind the closure of the institutes as follows. The students and instructor candidates received a secular education that did not allow any kind of religious sentiments.¹⁴² The humanization policies implemented at the institutes and the left culture developed alongside it were continuously criticized by conservative ranks. Students built their schools on their own; moreover they continued farming and stockbreeding. The heavy burden on the students led to criticism by some observers that they were exploited by the institutes. The cost of the construction of the facilities of the institutes was afforded by the villagers, which put a heavy burden on the already poor peasantry. Regarding the forced labour, Sabahattin Eyuboğlu stated that the institutes were producers not consumers.¹⁴³ Nevertheless, that statement did not change the fact that at the end of the day students were exhausted because of physical activity. As the burden was on the villagers, they stood against the initiative and did not support the institutes. After the transition to multi-party democracy and rise of populist policies aimed at alluring the electorate most of which were peasants, the institutes were put on the track of closure.¹⁴⁴

The debates regarding the Village Institutes demonstrate how “the aim of modernization of the country via developing the village/peasantry was closely linked to political and/or ideological standpoints and preferences.”¹⁴⁵

When the reason behind the failure of the other two pillars of the Turkish Humanism project, namely deviation of the initiative towards “utopian romanticism”, is considered, it is evident that this reason is also applicable to the closure of the Village Institutes. More accurately, the attempt to make people adopt humanist culture that was not immanent to the Turkish social structure backfired. Inasmuch as the Village Institutes aimed to disseminate the humanist culture, the lack of a proper definition of “humanism” led to some deviations from the aim. Mehmet Başaran, who was a student of Sabahattin Eyuboğlu and educated at Kepirtepe Village

¹⁴² Ali Ata Yiğit, *İnönü Dönemi...*, p. 88.

¹⁴³ Sabahattin Eyuboğlu, *Mavi ve Kara...*, p. 150.

¹⁴⁴ Ali Ata Yiğit, *İnönü Dönemi...*, pp. 90-91

¹⁴⁵ Osman Kafadar, “Cumhuriyet Dönemi Eğitim...”, p. 378.

Institute and Hasanođlan Higher Village Institute, described the aim of the institutes as follows: “The Western intellectual is the one who enjoys a life that comprises fighting against hardships and that type of man is exactly what the Village Institutes tried to create.”¹⁴⁶ It was aimed to create “Homers” with enlightened faces, and to reach the cultural foundations of the West, namely humanism, and the human resource of Turkey, namely the peasantry.¹⁴⁷ Bařaran, who thought he received such an education, came to the conclusion that;

Goethe, after analysing the Greek crop that provided the source of the contemporary crop and civilization, stated that ‘everyone be a Greek according to themselves, but just be so!’ He meant to say that everyone had to be a constructive and creative man who benefit and make others benefit from the civilization’s products, and who contribute to the latter- everyone be a member of the institute according to themselves, but just be so!¹⁴⁸

For all the reasons stated above, it was evident that the institutes could not survive. The foundations of the institutes were modified, and the idea of the institution was distorted in its core. The idea that students at the institutes were brought up as atheist prevailed, and villagers reacted against the coeducation. The government shut down the Hasanođlan Village Institute in the academic year of 1946 and 1947, three years after its establishment. The Village Institutes, which were

¹⁴⁶ Mehmet Bařaran, *Özgürleşme Eylemi: Köy Enstitüleri*, Adam, İstanbul, 2004, p. 12. [The original statement in Turkish “Batılı aydın, zorluklarla çarpışa çarpışa yaşamaktan zevk duyan kişidir ve Köy Enstitüleri, işte bu tip insanı yaratmak amacı güdüyordu.”]

¹⁴⁷ [The full text of these opinions in original: “Açık Hava Tiyatrosu bitmiş, kantinin yanındaki Milo Venüs’ü, Yüksek Bölüm Kapısı önünde temiz yüzlü Yunanlı çocuk, tiyatro yolunda kanatlı Samatrosos, onun çabalarıyla yadırgamadan yerlerini almışlardı. Derslikler, işlikler arı kovana gibiydi. Cumartesi geceleri Homeros yüzlü Veysellerin, Ege zeybeklerinin, çevik Karadeniz uşaklarının, Doğulu Dede Korkut torunlarının, Akdenizlilerin, Trakyalıların; Kurtuluş Savaşı’na sırtlarıyla mermi taşımış analara benzeyen kızların sazları, sözleri, türküleriyle halaylar horonlarla Anadolu çiçekleniyordu... Bir yandan Batı’nın kültür kaynaklarına, bir yandan Türkiye’nin insan kaynaklarına, kısacası bir yandan hümanizmaya, bir yandan köylüye gitmek. Karanlıklar içinde bir çoğunluk ve yarım yamalak bir Tanzimat aydınlığıyla Yeni Türkiye’nin kurulabileceğine inanmıyor, eğitim ve öğretim ilkelerinin bu acı gerçeğe çevrilmesini istiyordu. Köy Enstitüleri ve Dünya Klasikleri için yıllarca, geceli gündüzlü, cenkleşe tartışa, Büyük Millet Meclisi’nden köy kahvelerine kadar her yerde giriştiği savaşın özü buydu.” Ibid. pp. 20, 50.]

¹⁴⁸ [The original statement in Turkish: “Çağdaş ekine, uygarlığa kaynaklık eden Yunan ekinini, uygarlığını inceledikten sonra Goethe: ‘Herkes kendine göre bir Yunanlı olsun, yeter ki olsun’ demiş. Kendi çağının, toplumun koşulları içinde uygarlık ürünlerinden yararlanan, yararlandıran, onlara katkıda bulunan, yapıcı yaratıcı bir kişi olsun. – Herkes kendine göre bir enstitülü olsun, yeter ki olsun.” Ibid. p. 69.]

criticized of leftism during the CHP governments, were labelled as “nest of communism” and “leftist bedstead” during the Democrat Party era. After those accusations, the institutes were turned into teacher’s school one after another, and finally in 1954, they were shut down by the government. Regarding the populist ethos of the multi-party era, it should be stated that İnönü opened the Ankara Theology Faculty in the academic year of 1949-1950 to calm down the criticism inside and outside the party ranks that religion was gradually losing grounds in the society.

The last pillar of the Turkish Humanism Project ended with a more tragic way than the other two, and it left its marks on the history of Turkish education. The institutes, where the imposed humanism could not take hold, constitute one of the most debated issues in Turkish education. There are many books, analysis, critiques on them. Nevertheless, a multi-dimensional sociological analysis on the Village Institutes is yet to be made.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁹ [Although a very harsh criticism, it is worth mentioning the opinion of Ahmet Hakan regarding the issue since he articulated what many others could not dare to say: “Kemal Tahir’in bu yaklaşımından yola çıkarak benim ulaştığım sonuç şudur: Köy Enstitüleri, köy çocuklarının önünü kesiyordu. Bir biçimde şehre kapağı atıp Cumhuriyet’in eşitlik prensibinden yararlanarak yükselmek isteyen, yani mimar olmak, doktor olmak, avukat olmak isteyen köy çocuklarına, ‘Siz en iyisi burada kalın... Bakın işte sizin mektebiniz budur’ denilmek isteniyordu. Yani ‘Enstitü alternatifi’ köy çocuklarının yırtma çabasının önüne engel olarak çıkıyordu. Bu açıdan bakılırsa, Enstitüler için ‘Köylüsün köyde kal’ projesi diyebiliriz. Geçtiğimiz gün Demirel’in konuk olduğu ‘Genç Bakış’ programında gazeteci Musa Ağacık, son zamanlarda gericiliğin arttığından dem vurduktan sonra ‘Köy Enstitüleri neden kapatıldı?’ sorusunu sormuştu... Demirel bu soruya, ‘İşlevi sona erdi, köy kalmadı, enstitü yerine her yere üniversite açıldı, enstitüleri Demokrat Parti değil CHP kapattı vs’ tarzında bir yanıt geliştirmeye çalıştı. Oysa şöyle bir yanıt verseydi çok daha ikna edici olabilirdi: ‘Bak Musa kardeşim... Ben İslamköylü’yüm. Eğer Köy Enstitüsü’ne gitseydim şimdi emekli köy eğitmeni olacaktım. Ama İstanbul Teknik Üniversitesi’ne gittim. Mühendis oldum. Siyaset yaptım. Başbakan oldum, Cumhurbaşkanı oldum. Cumhuriyet’in getirdiği eşit birey olma hakkından sonuna kadar yararlandım.’ Şunu söylemek istiyorum: Demirel ve benzerlerinin ulaştıkları makamlar, Köy Enstitüsü işinin neden tutmadığının da bir göstergesidir.” Ahmet Hakan, “Köy Enstitüleri Putunu Yıkalım”, *Hürriyet*, 4 Ocak 2006.]

CHAPTER 5

THE IDEA OF “HUMANISM” AFTER 1950s

5.1. The “Blue Anatolia Humanism”

The Humanism Project, which became dominant paradigm in cultural milieu between 1938 and 1950, weakened the zeal of national culture and desire of nationalism with adverse consequences. That weakening can be argued to have adverse consequences in the society in the sense that the humanism movement could not manage to be substitute for the national culture¹ and that failure resulted with a gap in cultural life that would be filled up with ideological movements. Moreover, an identity for and understanding of man that relied on the *jus soli*, more specifically, on “man is where he is from, i.e., Turkey, the land home to ancient Anatolian civilizations” gradually developed and sidelined identity descriptions based on *jus sanguine* such as “man is what he is, i.e., Turk”.²

Yörük explains the conditions under which the current of Blue Anatolia Humanism emerged as follows: The pioneers of the Anatolia movement believed that becoming Anatolian with all its history and abandoning the Turkish roots based on Central Asia would solve the foremost component of the identity crisis, namely the quest for the roots and consequent traditions. Anatolianism and Turkish nationalism were born out of two opposite poles of the “Turkish History Thesis”. The first pole was the premise that all civilizations, especially Anatolian ones had Turkish roots. The second pole was the stress on the roots of Turkish history before the Islamic and Ottoman times. Interestingly, both currents deviated from not only the Turkish History Thesis, but also their respective starting points mentioned above. Due to changes in its discourse and the popular perceptions about it, the real aim of the pro-Anatolian argument, namely, to demonstrate the Turkish roots of all civilizations, turned into an attempt to create a Greco-Turkic identity based on exalting the state of

¹ Ali Ata Yiğit, *İnönü Dönemi...*, p. 49. Referring to: Mustafa E. Erkal, *İktisadi Kalkınmanın Kültür Temelleri*, Ankara, 1990, p. 170.

² Ali Ata Yiğit, *İnönü Dönemi...*, p. 49.

being Mediterranean. This was a “deviation” that took the current very close to the argument that although the Turks might not be the source of the civilizations, they could be civilized under the sway of the Anatolian and Mediterranean civilizations. For the Blue Anatolianist, Anatolia had to be learnt starting with delving into its roots, and the core culture had to be developed with that method.³

The core members of the group, who had the above-mentioned understanding and named themselves “Blue Anatolia Humanism”, were Sabahattin Eyuboğlu (1908-1973), Cevat Şakir Kabaağaçlı [Halikarnas Balıkcısı] (1890-1973), Azra Erhat, and Vedat Günyol. Azra Erhat was a student of Eyuboğlu when she was studying at the Faculty of Language, History, and Geography. Later on Erhat, Eyuboğlu and Günyol worked at the Translation Office for many years and translated many of the classics and humanist intellectuals. Günyol and Eyuboğlu also thought at Village Institutes and in the mean time remained in contact with Halikarnas Balıkcısı and drew on the latter’s ideas in their activities. They also attended his famous cultural excursions, namely, “Mavi Yolculuk”.

Blue Humanism was a current of thought that claimed in admiration and enthusiasm the cultural accumulation of Anatolia starting with ancient civilizations.⁴

³ Zafer Yörük, “Politik Psişe Olarak Türk Kimliği”, Tanıl Bora (ed.), *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce – Milliyetçilik, Vol.4*, İletişim, İstanbul, 2003 [2002], p. 319.

⁴ The claim that the foundations of the ancient Greece were laid down in Anatolia has been a debated issue until now. The most recent contribution to the debate came from Frank Kolb in 2003. Kolb stated that the archaeologist Korfmann, who claimed that the Trojans were Turk, was considered as a borderline historian- “group of scientists on the border between reality and imagination”- in Germany when he was very well respected and given awards in Turkey thanks to his claim about the Trojans. Kolb argued that Korfmann was distorting the reality about the Trojans like he did about the Greek philosophers before Socrates, such as Homer, historian Herodotus and others. These philosophers in Korfmann’s view, were from Anatolia and hence Korfmann presented the ancient Anatolia as the “cultural kernel of Europe” and Troy as an “early example of European culture”. Following that, Turkey would be the home to the whole cultural evolution, and Turks the most important people in the whole history of mankind. Later, Homer would become Ömer. Kolb described the Blue Anatolia Humanism as “wrecked romanticism”. Frank Kolb, “Homer Nasıl Ömer Olur – Troya, Korfmann ve Türkiye: Ulusal Kimlik Arayışı ve Bilimin Buna Alet Edilmesi”, Havva İşkan, Fahri Işık (trans.), *Arkeoloji ve Arkeologlar Derneği Dergisi*, 2003, No. 16. A response came to Kolb from another archaeologist Fahri Işık. According to him, the ancient philosophers might have written their works in Greek but their works were actually born in Anatolia. Like the seeds of European culture’s foundations sown in the Sixth Century B.C. in Anatolia, Christianity was born on the Anatolian lands. Kolb’s claim that Turks made false statements about the history in order to find a national identity was ungrounded since Turks could not be in such a quest as they had possessed a “privileged” homeland, Anatolia, since 1071. The ones who were actually in that quest were Germans. They admired at Romans and they linked their ancestry to Troy. Fahri Işık, “Prof Frank Kolb’un ‘Homer Nasıl Ömer Olur’ Yazısına Yanıtlar”, *Arkeoloji ve Arkeologlar Derneği Dergisi*, 2003, No. 16, pp. 9-13.

In fact the idea of claiming the history of Anatolia was one of the popular tendencies in the early Republic years. The premise that the origins of the Greek civilization were in Anatolia was first raised in 1927 by one of the members of İstanbul Darülfünûn [Istanbul University], Yusuf Ziya [Özer] (1870-1947). He confined his analysis to the cultural aspects and argued that not only Greeks but also Hammurabi was Turk.⁵ The current of neo-Hellenism, which is analysed in Chapter III, Section II, held similar ideas but they confined their analysis to the Mediterranean, and did not see Anatolia as a source of an identity that had to be adopted unlike the Blue Anatolianists. On the other hand, Hilmi Ziya Ülken did not dwell on the issue of origins and nor believed in the Greek miracle in a historical perspective.

The beliefs held by the Blue Anatolia Humanism are summarized by one of the followers of the current, Yaşar Aksoy (1947-). According to Aksoy, it was widely believed that the origins of the Western civilization lie in the ancient Greco-Roman civilization. However, the foundations of the latter were laid down in Anatolia, especially around the Aegean and Mediterranean regions. Humanism was existent from the very beginning in Anatolian culture but the advance of Islam in the region inhibited humanism there and led to its retreat. Now, it was time to claim all the components of the culture of humanism, which was once stolen by the West from Anatolia, and to learn the cultural heritage that actually belonged to Anatolia.

Aksoy substantiated the above-summary by giving several examples. For instance, İzmir, which was always claimed by Greeks, was actually one of the oldest urban areas of Anatolia.⁶ The old name of the city, Smyrna, was Hittitean or Luwian, not Greek. Greeks did not found the city but they invaded it many times.⁷ Greece, which is known as the focal point of the Western civilization, was in fact the imitator

⁵ Ahmet Oktay, *Zamanı Sorgulamak...*, p. 93.

⁶ Delanty, in a vein to support the Blue Anatolianists, stated the following on this issue: “The notion that Europe was of Greek origin was undoubtedly a later invention and, according to the famous thesis of Bernal (1987), can be traced to the attempts of counter-revolutionary intellectuals -particularly in the period of 1815 to 1830 when classics was founded as a conservative discipline- to fabricate a European cultural tradition whose roots lay in a purified ancient Greece that bore no recognition of its roots in the Orient.” Gerard Delanty, *Inventing Europe – Idea, Identity, Reality*, Macmillan, London, 1995, pp. 17-18. Also see: M. Bernal, “Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization”, Vol.1, *The Fabrication of Ancient Greece 1785-1985*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, 1987.

⁷ Yaşar Aksoy, *Halikarnas Kadırgası*, İnkılâp, İstanbul, 1997, p. 85.

and follower of Anatolia in the race to civilization. However, Greece claimed to be the owner of all the great names of the culture and civilization created in Anatolia. To name a few, the father of history, Herodotus was from Bodrum, the founder of geography Hekaitos from Milet, the first geometrician Pythagoras from Sisam, the famous mathematician Oenophiles from Sakız, the first medic Hippocrates from İstanköy, the first known painter Apelles from Değirmendere, the first great poet Homer from İzmir, the first female poet Sappho from Midilli, the great theoriser of philosophy Heraclitus from Efes, the great philosophers Thales, Anaximendros, and Anaximenes from Milet, the first advocate of the monotheist idea and the first philosopher and poet rebel against Greeks, Knesophanes was from Değirmendere. The great civilization rose from the West Anatolia influenced Greece for centuries. In reality, there is only one miracle, namely the Anatolian miracle. The heirs to this miracle are not Greeks but Turks.⁸

Another example that can help understand the mindset of Blue Anatolia intellectuals comes from Azra Erhat and Cevat Şakir. According to them, the epic stories of Homer were brought to Greece in the Seventh Century by a man called Peisistratus. It was thought that he made some modifications and even censored some parts of the stories.⁹ The language used in the texts was Ionian-Aioli dialect but Peisistratus adapted them to Attica language and adapted to the meter rules.¹⁰ Erhat in the preface to his co-translation of Iliad with A. Kadir stated that “Iliad is an epic story written by an Anatolian poet called Homer circa ninth century B.C.”¹¹

Like other names analyzed so far, these names, which will be taken on in greater detail below, did not wholly understand what the concept of humanism was about, and they perceived it something like an affection for human, enthusiasm for life, and joy of life. Nevertheless, in a different vein than other intellectuals, they put

⁸ Ibid. pp. 86-87.

⁹ Homeros, *İlyada*, Azra Erhat, A.Kadir (trans.), preface by Azra Erhat, Can, İstanbul, 1997 [1958-1962-İş Bankası], pp. 12-13.

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 14.

¹¹ Ibid. p. 17. [The original statement in Turkish: “İlyada, Homeros adında Anadolu bir ozanın İ.Ö. dokuzuncu yüzyıl sularında yarattığı bir destandır.”]

Anatolia and Ionia at the centre, and they claimed the cultural heritage of the Ottomans, which was a rare attitude among their contemporaries, and finally, they stayed at arms length with exorbitant westernist currents. Due to these attitudes, Blue Anatolianists fell into contradictions and resorted to eclecticism in their quest for a synthesis among their attitudes.¹² Since they glorified only one culture and one civilization, they could not avoid the consequent romantic nationalism and racist discourse. Blue Anatolianists always perceived the identity issues from a cultural point of view and they exhibited a hands-off attitude towards political and current issues.¹³

As the main argument of the group was developed by Cevat Şakir, the analysis starts with him. First of all, it should be stressed that Cevat Şakir dwelled on academic and non-academic books written abroad during his studies but he never gave reference to them. As he drew only on the ideas of intellectuals whom he felt affinity with, he thought he had enough evidence to support his case. Cevat Şakir had two important arguments. The first one was his belief in the Mediterranean miracle, which he called “The Sixth Continent”. The second one was his opposition to the Euro-centric approaches to the Greek culture that had influenced Turkish intellectuals since the Tanzimat Period.

Cevat Şakir came back to İstanbul after finishing his degree in the department of “History of Recent Ages” at Oxford University. Cevat Şakir was arrested with Zekariya Sertel because of Şakir’s essay “Hapishanede İdama Mahkum Olanlar Bile Bile Asılmaya Nasıl Giderler” [How do inmates on death row walk to the gallows in cold blood?] published on the 13th of April 1925, in Sertel’s *Resimli Hafta* newspaper. Şakir was sentenced to exile in Bodrum for three years. Contrary to the widely believed idea, Cevat Şakir did not explore the Anatolian lands due to his admiration for Bodrum’s history. In fact, it was his university education that influenced his subsequent studies and ideas. Oxford and Cambridge Universities by then had different viewpoints about the origins of the Western civilization. On that matter, Cambridge University was known as a “Hellenic” university whereas Oxford

¹² Aydın Afacan, *Şiir ve Mitologya...*, p. 83.

¹³ Ahmet Oktay, “Halikarnassos’tan Bodrum’a...”, p. 192.

as “Anatolianist” since it advocated the primacy of Mediterranean civilizations. Due to his studies at Oxford and the influence of Philip Ramsey, who was a leading protagonist of the Anatolian-based arguments, over him, Şakir became a supporter of those arguments and often referred to Ramsey’s book *The Historical Geography of Asia Minor* in his arguments.¹⁴ By the same token, it can be argued that Orhan Burian believed in the Greek miracle due to his studies at Cambridge University. Similarly, Azra Erhat initially believed in the Greek miracle thanks to her high school experience at a Belgium classics high school, namely *The Lycée de la ville de Bruxelles*. However, after she met with Cevat Şakir in Turkey, her ideas about the Greek miracle gradually changed and she became a member of Blue Anatolia.

According to Cevat Şakir the Western civilization did not emerge in Mesopotamia. It was born in Anatolia and moved to the south.¹⁵ Şakir argued that Homer of Smyrna was not aware of the word “Hellene” and its origins since Homer did not associate some clans and races in Greece with the Ionians in Anatolia. In sum, for Şakir, everything points at Ionians coming to Anatolia from the east alongside others, and then the rise of a special Anatolian Ionian civilization after Ionians mixed with Greeks. Therefore, he argued that everything about civilization was born in the Anatolian lands, not in Greece. To name a few of examples he gave to support his argument, the first Olympic Games were held in Ionia. Moreover, development of natural sciences, exploration of the solar eclipse, and urbanization first happened there. There was freedom of thought in Ionia, and no one was imprisoned for expressing their views. On the other hand, Anaxagoras, Protagoras, and Socrates were imprisoned in Athens because of their views. As body and soul was perceived different in the Hellenic philosophy, development of medicine was impeded there. On the other hand, the Anatolian civilization brought up medicine man like Hippocrates and Gallienus from İstankoy.

Cevat Şakir, like Azra Erhat, compared Ionia and hence Anatolian civilization with Athens and hence Greek civilization. He attributed all the negative things on

¹⁴ TMMOB, Ahmet Yürür, *Anadolu Uygarlıklarından...*, pp. 281-282.

¹⁵ All the arguments of Cevat Şakir in this paragraph are taken from the book *Anadolu'nun Sesi*, Bilgi, İstanbul, 1995 [1971], but page numbers are not given since arguments were scattered over the pages and most of the time repeated themselves.

earth to the Hellenes, and all the positive things to the Anatolian civilization. For him, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle represented mysticism and idealism, and they belonged to the Hellenic culture which was inferior to the Anatolian culture. On the other hand, Anatolia transcended mysticism and managed to be realist and hence gave birth to both science and great poets like Homer.

Şakir levelled harsh criticisms against the West. He argued that the West, which would have been very backward without Anatolia, was not able to see the real face of the Greek thanks to its false imagination about the Greek. For Şakir, it was ridiculous to talk about democracy in the ancient Greek society since more than half of the Athens' population was composed of slaves, not to mention the oppressive treatment women received. Şakir also argued that the traditions, epic stories, and memories of the Ionians had survived for thousands of years and they were observable in the folk culture of the modern Anatolian peoples. Nevertheless, such an observation could not be the case in Greece. For Şakir, the roots of the obsession with Hellenism in the West had to do with religious bigotry, and some Greek philosophers intentionally or unintentionally assisted the Western colonialism and status quo.

In sum, Şakir reached his main conclusion that if the Hellenic philosophers had never existed, Anatolia could have further developed natural and social sciences during those blank centuries, the world would not have come to a standstill, and the Hellenes could not have prevented the progress of the whole humanity:

It was Anatolia which gave the Hellenic consciousness to Greece; otherwise there would be no emergence of such consciousness in Greece. Nevertheless, when that consciousness was grafted onto an alien territory, it became degenerated and it turned into an outmoded mysticism. The culture from Anatolia could survive only a century in Greece.¹⁶

Cevat Şakir's exaltation of Anatolian civilization reached racist highs when he stated that "if the mankind lands on the moon today, it is possible thanks to Anatolia."¹⁷ When it comes to Azra Erhat, who was under the sway of Şakir, the

¹⁶ Halikarnas Balıkcısı, *Düşün Yazıları*, Azra Erhat (ed.), Bilgi, İstanbul, 1985 [1981], pp. 43-44.

¹⁷ Azra Erhat, *Mektuplarıyla Halikarnas Balıkcısı*, Can, İstanbul, 2002, letter dated 7 Ocak 1963, p. 181.

mindset is not so different. Erhat preferred to say “Happy is he who says ‘I am Anatolian’” than “Happy is he who says ‘I am Turk’”.¹⁸ According to Erhat, for a humanism to be established in Turkey, the humanist culture inherent to the Anatolian lands had to be adopted again. Although Erhat preferred to modify Atatürk’s above motto “Happy is he who says ‘I am Turk’”, she argued that Atatürk already ushered in such a humanism by her statement “all the past civilizations in Anatolia belong to us.”¹⁹ For Erhat, a humanism that could take root in Turkey could only be realized by believing that everything belonged to Turks.²⁰

Azra Erhat argued that the biggest harm inflicted on humanism was Plato and his philosophy that brought nothing but sorrow to man because Plato separated the soul (*psykhe*) from the body and destroyed the unity of man in Homer’s stories.²¹ Thus, Erhat argued that the Aegean antiquity before Plato was free and happy since people accepted the natural and societal order as it was without questioning. However, Plato put a goal before man that was incompatible with man, and he attempted to describe the society different than it was.²² It can be argued that Azra Erhat did not take into account the possibility that the society, which was not able to question, was happy in oblivion, or the fact that mankind became aware of reason and questioning after Plato. It is certainly a great contradiction that the principle condition for humanism, namely “reason” led to sorrow.

According to Erhat, Plato was both a humanist and not. He was not a humanist because he created the body and soul dichotomy, and he took away men’s freedom and turned it into a tool. Plato was a humanist because he had a great

¹⁸ Azra Erhat, *Mavi Anadolu*, İnkılâp, İstanbul, 1997, p. 11.

¹⁹ Ibid. pp. 12-13.

²⁰ Ibid. pp. 16-17.

²¹ Azra Erhat, *İşte İnsan (Ecco Homo)*, Can, İstanbul, 2003 [1969], p. 17. [Azra Erhat added that: “Platon, ünlü filozof, niye böldün beni ikiye, niçin kopardın beni doğadan, ne diye yıktın mutluluğumu? Ben bir bütündüm, çokluk içinde biriktim. Bedenim vardı, yeryüzünde gördüğüm biçimlerden biri, topraktan fişkıran ağaç gibi, çiçek gibi özlü, yüzeyi renk renk, yumuşak, sıcak, canlı canlı. Ona kendimden başka bir ad vermemiştim, ona BEN demiştim. Güzel bulmuştum onu, çünkü yaşıyor, yaşatıyordu beni doğanın içinde bitkiler, hayvanlar, akan sular, devinen yıldızlarla birlikte. Sen bu bedeni dışarıdan gelen bir efendinin emrine verdin, aldın özgürlüğünü benim elimden”. Ibid. p. 78.]

²² Ibid, p. 177.

affection for his mentor Socrates.²³ Azra Erhat with her understanding of humanism as human affection and her definition of humanist as such deviates from the definition of humanism made at the beginning of the thesis. Erhat's definition of humanism was "Humanism is about doing things that take mankind further on the humanity path by seeing, finding, and loving the whole humanity in a human that is taken as a role-model. To be a humanist, one has to have affection for someone, one cannot have affection for the whole mankind, that kind of affection is vague, messy, and elastic. Humanism is not only about having affection for mankind or striving for its well-being. Rather, it is an attitude, and it should not be confused with *philanthropy*, which is an effort to increase the well-being of humankind."²⁴ For Erhat, in the final analysis, man had fought for his freedom and happiness for many centuries but he could never attain the level of freedom and happiness in the ancient Greece.²⁵

Erhat's understanding of humanism was too contradictory, romantic, and sentimental that even she could realize that she was in contradiction with herself. Erhat once explained humanism as abandonment of the idea of god and its replacement by the principle of man and humanism. Nevertheless, she also perceived Yunus Emre, who was a totally devoted man to Allah and dervish order, as one of the greatest humanists. Erhat could not make an explanation as regards to Yunus Emre's humanism, and then she acknowledged that she contradicted herself on that matter.²⁶ Erhat associated Emre's humanism with the latter's love of god but on the other hand she argued that humanism had nothing to do with love of human.

The romantic believes of the Blue Anatolianist led them to rewrite the history according to their wishes. For instance, Azra Erhat said that Homer was from Ionia

²³ Ibid. p. 99.

²⁴ Ibid. pp. 227-228. [The original statement in Turkish: "Hümanizma, insanın kendine örnek seçtiği bir insanda bütün insanlığı görerek, bularak, severek insanlığı insanlık yolunda daha ileri götürecektir işler yapmasıdır. Hümanist olmak için illa bir insanı sevmek gerekir, bütün insanlığı sevmek olmaz, bulanık, dağınık, esnek bir sevgi olur bu. Hümanizma yalnız insanlığı sevmek, insanlığın iyiliğini gözetmek değildir. Hümanizma bir tutumdur ve onu *philanthropia* denilen insanseverlikle karıştırmamalı."]

²⁵ Ibid. p. 169.

²⁶ Ibid. p. 229.

(which can be the case) but he had sympathy for Troy. Thus, the masters of Homer were the Arhaians who won the Trojan War and destroyed the key point in Anatolia, namely Dardanos Castle. So Homer had to portray them as heroes despite the fact that the real human-hero in Iliad was Hector.²⁷ On rewriting the history, Erhat did not hesitate to say the following: “Whether Hittites were Turk or not, it does not matter, everyone will become a genuine Turk if we voice them in our beautiful Turkish and if we can ensure the survival of those pieces that we have taken into our language, and the creation of new pieces drawing on them.”²⁸

Similar to Cevat Şakir’s comparison between Ionia and Athens, Azra Erhat first made a comparison between Shakespeare’s protagonist Hamlet and Homer’s Hector. Her conclusion was that Homer’s protagonist Hector was a strong, determinant fighter but Shakespeare, who was brought up with the philosophy in Athens that laid the grounds for monotheist religion, created a protagonist, Hamlet who was indeterminate, shy, and willing to accept defeat.²⁹ Therefore, Erhat believed that the value of man degraded with monotheist religions.

Her second comparison was between Homer of Ionia and Hesiod of Athens. Hesiod was the greatest poet of the antiquity after Homer. According to estimates, he lived one or two hundred years after Homer. Nevertheless, for Erhat, Homer was superior to Hesiod since Anatolia was more developed in civilization, thought, and arts than Greece.³⁰ Erhat argued that Homer and Hesiod respectively represented two distinct eras, worlds, human views, and classes. For her, Hesiod represented an older worldview in relation to the one represented by Homer. Therefore, the difference

²⁷ Azra Erhat, *Mitoloji Sözlüğü*, Remzi, İstanbul, 2003 [1972], pp. 7-8.

²⁸ *Hesiodos Eseri ve Kaynakları*, Sabahattin Eyuboğlu, Azra Erhat (trans. and edi.), Türk Tarih Kurumu, Ankara, 1977, preface p. VII. [The original statement in Turkish: “Hititler Türk’müş ya da değilmiş, ne çıkar bundan, hepsi Türkoğlu Türk oluverir eğer güzelim Türkçemizle dile getirirsek onları ve hele kendi dilimize aldığımız bu yapıtların gelecekte yaşamasını, filiz üstüne filiz vermesini sağlarsak.”]

²⁹ Azra Erhat, *İşte İnsan...*, pp. 114-115.

³⁰ *Hesiodos Eseri ve...*, p. 1.

between the two led Erhat argue that Greece was like the Dark Ages compared to Ionia.³¹

Erhat's mindset can be said to be based on thoughts and opinions without any scientific base. Nevertheless, Erhat stated that she adopted Sartre's existential humanism and she agreed with Sartre's quote "Existence precedes and rules essence."³²

Sabahattin Eyuboğlu had a similar romanticism to Cevat Şakir and Azra Erhat's Anatolia romanticism but he had different views on several matters. While the intellectuals continued to reckon with the Tanzimat Period in the 1940s, Eyuboğlu found something in the pre-Tanzimat period and appreciated the Western mentality there. The intellectual axis of Sabahattin Eyuboğlu was composed of humanism, secularism and populism as the product of the Western mentality, and Kemalist populism and stress on Anatolia. Eyuboğlu defined humanism as "reconciling man with man, making him a man, being aware of oneself but not differentiating oneself from others, these form the essence of humanism. The desire of humanists is finding the humanity in oneself, and merging of one with others and with all humanity, isn't it?"³³

According to Sabahattin Eyuboğlu, the above-concept of humanism was actually born in Anatolia, and then it was adopted in Europe during the Renaissance Period, and consequently it led to a spectacular Western civilization, more accurately a "western mentality." The humanist lifestyle, which was born in Anatolia but forgotten due to the later sway of Islam there, had a secular essence and that humanist style was awakened thanks to the Atatürk's populism principle.

Sabahattin Eyuboğlu stated the aim of the Turkish History Thesis and its exaggerated depiction of history as adopting everything existed on the Turkish soil. Eyuboğlu defended Atatürk and the thesis in the following quote:

³¹ Ibid. p. 2.

³² Azra Erhat, *İşte İnsan...*, pp. 95-96, "*l'existence précède l'essence*".

³³ Sabahattin Eyuboğlu, *Yunus Emre'ye Selam*, Çan, İstanbul, 1966, p. 33. [The original statement in Turkish: "İnsanı insanla barıştırmak, insanı insan etmek gerçekten, kendini bilmek ve başkalarından ayırmamak. Hümanizmanın özü de budur işte; hümanistlerin özlemi de insanın bütün insanlığı kendinde bulması, bir insanın insanlarla, bütün insanlıkla kaynaşması, halleşmesi değil mi?"]

Does it really matter if some forced evidence was put forward? Who really knows who precedes whom or who existed before whom? What Atatürk sought for was not racial or religious links; it was rather cultural, linguistic, and geographical links because a real Turkishness was not conceivable out of Turkey.³⁴

According to Eyuboğlu, after the conversion into Islam, religious fanatics inhibited the Turkish nation's humanist culture, and that culture was forgotten in the course of time. He argued that anyone who knew a bit of Anatolian history would come to the conclusion that religious fundamentalism could not survive long on these lands.³⁵ Sabahattin Eyuboğlu's accusations against religious fanatics, especially in his book *Mavi Ve Kara* [Blue and Black] received the attention of Murat Belge. For Belge, it was true that there were religious fanatics, nationalism, and religious bigotry but those were not exceptions. Rather, they were the structural components of a system that encircled the individuals in the society, and their origins were existent in the system's relations of production and politics, and its ideological forms. Belge argued that Eyuboğlu tried to overcome the East-West problematic by employing the concepts of tolerance, people, and labour among other things in his incoherent and unsystematic thoughts. Eyuboğlu even portrayed Yunus Emre as a leftist person to find a solution to the problematic.³⁶

Vedat Günyol perceived humanism from Marx's perspective, but like others he could not conceive humanism as something different than mere love of mankind. According to Günyol, what made Marx's teaching still a valid one was "love of humanity, and respect for human"³⁷ since Marx was humanist and he dedicated himself to human happiness.³⁸ Vedat Günyol described humanism as an antidote to

³⁴ Sabahattin Eyuboğlu, *Mavi ve Kara*, İş Bankası, İstanbul, 2002 [1999], p. 196. [The original statement in Turkish: "Ne çıkar biraz zorlama kanıtlar ortaya atıldıysa? Kim biliyor kimin kimden eski olduğunu veya çıktığını? Atatürk'ün aradığı ırk ve din değil, kültür, yurt ve dil bağlarıydı. Çünkü gerçek Türklük Türkiye dışında düşünülemezdi."]

³⁵ Ibid. p. 100.

³⁶ Ahmet Oktay, "Halikarnassos'tan Bodrum'a...", p. 188.

³⁷ Vedat Günyol, "Hümanizma Açısından İnsan", Ali Ekber Ataş (ed.), *Vedat Günyol'a Armağan: 100'e 5 Vardı*, Cumhuriyet, İstanbul, 2004, p. 36.

³⁸ Ibid. p. 37.

religious fanaticism, which was formed in the Renaissance Period by components such as freedom, knowledge, tolerance, and more importantly scepticism as a natural consequence of the quest for the truth. He added that humanism was a thought that took man as measure of everything.³⁹ Günyol argued that humanism as an antidote had to be used against the reactionary movements and religious bigotry emerged in the aftermath of Atatürk's death.⁴⁰

One of the important tenets of the Blue Anatolia Humanists is their views about the West. The members of this group were not "Westernist", they did not like the West, and for them the West was colonialist.⁴¹ The only thing that the Turkish nation had to adopt from there was the "Western mentality". They understood the latter as a way of thought that was emerged among Turks, moulded and developed by the ancient Greek philosophy, and then adopted by the West with a false attribution of it to the ancient Greece. Man became secular and free, he believed in reason and science, and he respected others and cared for his own culture thanks to the invaluable works of the Ancient Greece (Ionia). That man possessed the "Western mentality". On this matter, Eyuboğlu stated that "Whatever mankind possesses as a value, I believe that it will surface thanks to Europe and it will be beneficial only with the European mindset. Even we accepted that the deepest sources of thoughts were in the East, without Europe those sources would be like fountain without water."⁴²

As dwelled on before in the thesis, Hilmi Ziya Ülken and Blue Anatolia Humanism held similar positions about various issues, namely the disbelief in the Greek Miracle, and proposing the Mediterranean and Anatolian miracle, yet believing in the necessity of learning ancient Greek and Roman and translation of

³⁹ Emin Özdemir, "Hasan-Âli Yücel ve Türk Hümanizması", *Hasan Âli Yücel Günleri 26-27 Aralık 1997...*, p. 75.

⁴⁰ Vedat Günyol, "Hümanist Kültür", *Ulusal Kültür*, No. 1, 1978, pp. 27-30.

⁴¹ Ekrem Işın, "Cumhuriyet ve Hümanizm", *Gergedan*, No. 7, 1987.

⁴² Sabahattin Eyuboğlu, *Mavi ve Kara...*, p. 129. [The original statement in Turkish: "İnsanlığın değer olarak nesi varsa bugün için ancak Avrupa sayesinde ortaya çıkabileceğine, ancak Avrupa kafasıyla faydalı olabileceğine inanıyorum. En derin düşünce kaynaklarının doğuda olduğunu kabul etmek bile Avrupasız bu kaynaklar kuru çeşmeden farksızdır."]

texts in these languages to Turkish. For Ülken, getting civilized meant Westernization but the latter referred to the “Western mentality” explained above.

It is not surprising to see that the group could not reach out to the people, and their romantic pro-Anatolian or “romantic nationalism”⁴³ ideas were confined to themselves. Their arguments were based on a shaky ground and the way they expressed their arguments was all about exalting something to the extremes. Therefore, their persuasiveness was quite low, and they were arbitrary arguments although there were many people involved in the group, the current became nothing but a network of close friends. It neither managed to reach out to the people, nor had a political standpoint.

Why did the Blue Humanism initiative despite its eclecticism of Greek, Hittite, Selchuk, and Ottoman, which offered something for everyone, fail? According to Oktay, in a period when all the layers of the society were swiftly radicalizing, there was a tripartite opposition composed of Leftists, nationalists, and Islamists to this initiative. Although Blue Anatolia put the concepts of labour and the people and hence received the attention of the Marxist left, their neutral stance towards political questions of the time, and their solutions based on cultural priorities did receive cold welcome, and were thought to be useless on the part of the Marxist left. On the other hand, nationalists and Islamists did not like the idea of polyphony and the humanistic point of view, and they found it inappropriate and dangerous to make Yunus Emre the spokesman of labour and a pantheist.⁴⁴

Murat Belge described Cevat Şakir as “Anatolian chauvinist” “since in this type of thought, there is no logical result of objective findings that are analyzed empirically and in a systemic way, it is about stretching the components of the desired identity to the past.” According to Belge, there would certainly be synchronic commonalities and diachronic continuities in the cultures of different communities that existed one after another and merged with each other, therefore there were continuities as the Blue Anatolia humanists claimed. Nevertheless, those continuities did not constitute “an ‘essence’ nor could they be reduced to an

⁴³ Tansu Açıık, “Türkiye’de Hümanizm..., p. 132.

⁴⁴ Ahmet Oktay, “Halikarnassos’tan Bodrum’a..., p. 193.

Anatolian root that spread like measles on anyone stepped on these lands starting with Hittites.”⁴⁵

For Enis Batur, the reason behind the relative failure of the Republican humanists compared with socialists, Turkish nationalists, and Islamists was their contradictory ideological fabric, which led to an overall “*artificial*” ideology. The share of unintentional mal-utilization and/or rakish usage on the part of the humanists of the inheritance they got from the past had a greater role than widely assumed in their limited creativeness and criticalness by taking no risks.⁴⁶

Blue Anatolia group was criticized because of being “romantic” more than anything. Nevertheless, their understanding of romanticism was quite different than widely believed. For instance, Cevat Şakir argued that “the romantic Europe always did injustice to Anatolia.” In fact, the West stole the Anatolian civilization by employing industry and capitalism, and whilst doing that, it concealed itself behind romanticism and distorted realities.⁴⁷ Another example was Azra Erhat who believed that “the ancient Greek culture existed and developed truly in Anatolia with its purification from the romantic and fake decorations of a century-long admiration for the West.”⁴⁸ Lastly, Eyuboğlu considered those who blamed him for being “romantic” as in total ignorance of Turkey and Turkish people. Eyuboğlu argued that in order to better understand them, one needed an approach like his.⁴⁹

Although some labelled them as the spineless leftists of Turkey⁵⁰, Blue Anatolia contributed to the culture debates in Turkey by opening up an alternative dimension in “cultural roots” issue against national and religious chauvinism, and by stressing the fact that there was more than Turks and Islam in Turkey’s cultural history. The issues they raised were important but their methods in that were not

⁴⁵ Murat Belge, “Mavi Anadolu Hümerizmi”...

⁴⁶ Enis Batur, “Cumhuriyet Hümerizti İçin Profilden Vesikalık Fotoğraf”, *Gergedan*, No. 7, 1987.

⁴⁷ “Mavi Sürgün Bitti”, *Milliyet Sanat Dergisi*, No. 50, Ekim 1973, p. 4.

⁴⁸ Azra Erhat, *Gülleyle’ya Anılar (En Hakiki Mürşit)*, Can, İstanbul, 2002, p. 34.

⁴⁹ Sabahattin Eyuboğlu, *Mavi ve Kara...*, pp. 18-19.

⁵⁰ Burhan Oğuz, *Yaşadıklarım, Dinlediklerim, Tarihî ve Toplumsal Anılar*, Simurg, İstanbul, 2000, p. 160.

solid since they were neither objective nor scientific. For these reasons, although the group dwelled on many critical questions of the time, ranging from the cultural roots of Turkey to education, they could not provide credible answers to them.⁵¹

Despite all these, Blue Anatolia Humanism left its mark on the intellectual debates of the time. On the lighter side, their blue cruises on the southwest waters of the country would make the region a famous holiday destination, and the blue cruise a popular way of holidaying. Moreover, the friendships built during those cruises were to be remembered.⁵²

5.2. Revisiting Suat Sinanoğlu's "Turkish Humanism"

Suat Sinanoğlu wrote a book about his own peculiar humanism project when the "Turkish Humanism Project" of the İnönü era was already out of agenda. The book was published in 1961 in French with the title *L'humanisme à Venir*. It was published in Turkish in 1980 (*Türk Humanizmi*). Although it had utopian proposals and harsh criticisms, the book was hardly noticed in the country and almost nobody spoke about it. Sinanoğlu's attempt to revitalize humanism happened when the debates about humanism almost stopped and the project already ended with frustration, and only the Blue Anatolianists kept their interest in the topic in isolation from others. Thus, analyzing his attempt is important for understanding the humanism adventure in the country as a whole.

The literature analyzing the Turkish Humanism or humanism debates in Turkey usually takes Sinanoğlu's book as the representative of the Turkish humanists. Hence false generalizations about all the intellectuals participated in the debate by drawing on the book abound. As argued in the introduction of the thesis, it is not easy to make categorization among the intellectuals with very diverse opinions.

⁵¹ Murat Belge, "Mavi Anadolu Hümerizmi"...

⁵² Ahmet Oktay argued that Cevat Şakir did not randomly use the Dionysian and Apollonius concepts that he took from Nietzsche, instead these concepts represented the god of both cultures, and Şakir selected them to denote a negative attitude of himself. Ahmet Oktay, "Halikarnassos'tan Bodrum'a"..., p. 191. [Oktay explains the legacy of the Blue Anatolia as follows: "Hümerizmadan günümüze kalan; pek çok güzel çeviri ve telif ürün. Ama asla kuramsal bir yapı değil. Bir de güzel arkadaşlıklar, kardeşlikler.. Mavi'ye gelince: Halikarnassos'un Bodrum'a dönüşümünden ve hümanizmin muhtemel başkentinin yıkımından söz edilebilir burada. Başka bir söyleyişle, Balıkçı'nın onca savunduğu yaratıcı dionisyak kültürden afrodizyak kültüre geçiş." Ibid, p. 193.]

Besides, Sinanoğlu should not be analyzed as the representative of the Turkish humanists, but in his own right. It should also be noted that since such generalizations have been made, Sinanoğlu's radical approach of putting the Greek at the centre and rejecting all the civilizations developed afterwards has been often attributed to the Turkish humanists.

The starting point of Sinanoğlu's main argument is the mental habitat⁵³ that shapes humans, societies, and everything. Hence that mentality determines the conditions, cultural and social structure, and the future of different societies. Nevertheless, mental habitat is the reflection of the social, cultural, and mental structures of the society in which it is born and developed. Thus, it is hard to change it since the only determinant factor behind the mental habitat is the society it is in.⁵⁴ Consequently, society and mental habitat is mutually constituted. Moral structure is the core of culture. Culture is the sum of the components that form the internal universe of man and society. Those components help better determine the mental habitat of man and society, and hence directly affect their lives. Therefore, accidentally formed traditional components such as, culture, religion, philosophy, literature, art, morality, language, customs and traditions, superstitions, and other primitive believes come together as a whole and determine the personality of an individual or a society.⁵⁵

According to Sinanoğlu, if one needs to reach a judgment about a moral and material universe that is reflection of a soul and mentality distinct from his soul and mental habits, he must diligently review his principles, he must base his evaluation and judgments on a new analysis, or even more he must review the whole universe of his moral values and thoughts. Sinanoğlu argues that this review is necessary since man adopts that universe of values and thoughts unconsciously as a member of that society and its moral entity.⁵⁶ Therefore, Sinanoğlu explains all advances and backwardness, all wisdom and ignorance, and the gap between the West and the East

⁵³ The original word in Turkish is "zihin habitusu".

⁵⁴ Suat Sinanoğlu, *Türk Humanizmi*, Türk Tarih Kurumu, Ankara, 1988 [1980], p. 2.

⁵⁵ Ibid. pp. 134-135.

⁵⁶ Ibid. p. 19.

as the exemplary of those dichotomies, only by the “unconsciously adopted” mental habitat.

In accordance with his arguments above, Sinanoğlu divides the world into two in terms of mentality. On the one side, there is the West which is real and positive. On the other side, there is the East which is a depressed and incompetent world. Sinanoğlu attributes many “negative” qualities to the East such as, belief in superstitious, fatalism, lack of freedom (of thought), aesthetics, morality, education, and real humanist interaction, possessing a life that is directed by traditional believes, dogmas, accidents, and customs, being irresolute, lazy, irrational, and unhappy, receiving education only about natural sciences and mathematics, and living only for the afterlife (*meditatio motris*).⁵⁷ On the other hand, for Sinanoğlu, the West represents “positive” qualities such as, having a free soul, receiving a humanist education based on philology, history and philosophy training that is directed at learning the moral, intellectual, and aesthetical aspects of the ancient Greece and Rome, leading a secular and rational life, making decisions according to reason and will, appreciating human value.

At this point, Suat Sinanoğlu links the main reason of division between the two worlds, namely the mental habitat not to the religion but to the “humanist spirit”, which he considers as the essential success of the ancient Greek civilization. To substantiate his claim, he argues that Christianity became westernized to the extent it adopted the humanist thought. Otherwise, he does not see Christianity as an essential and prerequisite condition in the historical formation of the Western civilization. For him, Christianity is only a medium, or at best a directing activity. The modern Western civilization has its roots not in religion but in the intellectual, moral, and aesthetic structure formed by moral freedom. Historically, the essence of the modern Western culture and morality is not Christianity. Instead it is the humanist spirit that is nourished by the classical thought.⁵⁸

For these reasons, Sinanoğlu posits that there cannot be a Christian Humanism. The first condition of the humanist spirit, namely the secularism was

⁵⁷ Ibid. pp. 23-26.

⁵⁸ Ibid. p. 131.

immanent to the West as the latter possessed the humanist spirit. Therefore, religion never came to the forefront in the West. As the West was humanist and secular before Christianity, once it was adopted, Christianity was overshadowed by the classical world.⁵⁹ The influence of the classical world was always felt in the West, and that influence was carried first by the church and then by the intellectuals.⁶⁰ The West within its continuity managed to form and defend a common mental habitat. Since the non-Western societies were not humanists and their respective mental habitats were not secular, the concept of Islamic Humanism could never materialize in those societies.

For Sinanoğlu, the starting point of the modern West, a civilization that is superior and unreachable to any other civilization in terms of political, economic, moral, social, and rational structure, is solely the ancient Greece. Similar to the admiration of Blue Anatolia Humanism in Anatolia, and their identification of the region as the starting point, Sinanoğlu admires in Greece and takes it as the starting point for the civilization. Nevertheless, Blue Anatolianists and Sinanoğlu admire in Homer. After Cevat Şakir gave credit to Homer for man landing on the moon, Sinanoğlu praised Homer for using mixture of food to treat sick people instead of using magic, and he argued that Homer in that sense started the positivist science.⁶¹

In fact, Sinanoğlu refrained from using the concept of “Greek miracle”. Instead, he coined the term “Homer miracle” as he believed that the moral evolution of man started with Homer.⁶² According to Sinanoğlu, in Homer’s epic stories, the moral faculties merged with physical ones, and that merger created the “ideal human.” For Sinanoğlu, the Greek civilization, once started to be aware of its structure, emerged before the humanity as a civilization distinct from all other civilizations in essence that stressed the sentiment of humanity and the freedom of mind -i.e., counting on reason- as the greatest ideal value in life.⁶³

⁵⁹ Ibid. p. 111.

⁶⁰ Ibid. pp. 80-105.

⁶¹ Ibid. p. 142.

⁶² Ibid. p. 140.

⁶³ Ibid. p. 142.

According to Sinanoğlu, the 3000 year history of the Western civilization, which gathered all beauties and wisdom in itself, has passed through the following stages: The Greek world, which was based on freedom of mind, and found the concept of morality, the Roman world, which adopted the Greek thought and incorporated it into the values born out of its national tenets, and then disseminated it through out the Mediterranean basin, the Italian humanism, which rediscovered those classical values and prepared the conditions for the Christian thought to join the humanity's evolution process, the Renaissance, which was the French-Italian awakening era that disseminated the classical values to the Latin world and England, which was under the influence of France, the Enlightenment, which further developed the thought by putting all the truths revealed so far by the Western thought in a systematic order, the German Neo-humanism, which historically re-evaluated the classical culture and expanded it to places that were not under the influence of Christian Europe by then. Finally, Sinanoğlu added Turkish Humanism as the last stage of the Western civilization, which would disseminate the Western thought to non-Christian areas.⁶⁴

The Turkish Humanism, which the book is named after, starts with the above-mentioned mission. According to Sinanoğlu, Atatürk laid down the foundations a "Turkish Humanism" but his untimely death prevented the continuation of his reforms. In the 1950s, religious issues came to forefront with the Democrat Party government. Besides, economic and political issues aroused during World War II, and they prevented secularism to take a firm hold in the society. Sinanoğlu argues that secularism remained nothing more than a principle and a secular ethos never materialized in the country.⁶⁵ He also argues that the reforms of Atatürk never institutionalized, and they could not be included in an ideological framework. In sum, although Atatürk made a revolution, he could not change the mental habitat of

⁶⁴ Ibid. pp. 108-109, 113.

⁶⁵ Ibid. p. 59.

the 700 years old non-Western Ottoman society, and he could not destroy the dogmas and the Eastern mentality in the society.⁶⁶

Sinanoğlu mentions four different interpretation of Turkish Humanism. The first one continued until 1945 and according to its advocates, the Atatürk revolution was a great movement of change that made the social and political identity of the country conform to the standards of European civilization. Sinanoğlu criticizes the first interpretation on the grounds that they could not identify what the revolution understood from the European civilization since they did not fully comprehend the concepts such as, civilization, culture, ethic values, and ideology. Hence, the advocates of the first interpretation employed a distinction of moral and material aspects of European civilization. For them, the moral aspect was formed by Christianity, and the material aspect was science and technology. Sinanoğlu argues that such a distinction is not warranted since what made Europe such a superior civilization were the social and moral values, as well as rationality of the Greco-Roman world, and in Sinanoğlu's view, the first interpretation totally ignored that.⁶⁷

The second interpretation, which emerged after the start of the multi-party era, was made by "modernist" persons according to Gibb's typology. According to this interpretation, Atatürk's reforms had to be considered within the confines of the traditional Islamic civilization, and those reforms constituted a modernization movement that aimed at developing the material conditions of the society. The advocates of the interpretation opposed the idea of secularism, and despite the obvious contradiction, they considered Atatürk as a genius who saved the Islamic universe from extinction.⁶⁸

The third interpretation understood Atatürk's reforms as an attempt to remove the Islamic principle that formed the foundation of the Ottoman society. The advocates of this interpretation can be considered as conservative bearing in mind

⁶⁶ Ibid. pp. 46-48.

⁶⁷ Ibid. pp. 60-61.

⁶⁸ Ibid. p. 61.

Gibbs' typology. They were anti-revolutionary, and they completely rejected the West.⁶⁹

As demonstrated above, Sinanoğlu criticizes those three insufficient interpretations. Moreover, he argues that they could not provide any adequate explanation about the content of the reforms, Atatürk's personality, and the things he wanted to do. In this context, Sinanoğlu proposes the fourth interpretation, which is in fact his own interpretation, and in his view it would be formed only after humanist culture was adopted in the country.

The fourth interpretation, which is named as Turkish Humanism cannot be considered as something different than a strong movement of thought... actually all aspects of a foreign civilization-educational and teaching institutions- can be imitated (but they are prone to be degraded in short time by the pressures of traditional mentality); but unless an enlightened humanist consciousness is possessed, it is never considered to adopt the moral and aesthetic structure of that civilization. That is so because the humanist consciousness gives a society the opportunity to go beyond its traditional universe. The humanist consciousness is either existent or not. Nevertheless, once a society gains the intellectual, moral, aesthetic structure peculiar to the Western world, nothing will be imitated and everything goes on the track of rational adoption.⁷⁰

In Sinanoğlu's view, the fourth interpretation shall turn into his dream of Universal Humanism in the following sequence: The non-Western societies shall emulate the Atatürk revolution, which started the Turkish humanist thought, and hence adopt freedom, secularism, democracy, principles of libertarian education, and finally humanist value system.

For Sinanoğlu, it comes as no surprise that until now in Turkey and other non-Western societies a secular consciousness did not emerge since to reach that

⁶⁹ Ibid. pp. 61-62.

⁷⁰ Ibid. p. 90. [The original statement in Turkish: “[D]ördüncü yorum güçlü bir fikir hareketinden ayrı tutulamaz... Gerçekten yabancı bir uygarlığın her yanı –eğitim ve öğretim kuruluşları bile- taklit edilebilir (ancak bunlar geleneksel zihniyetin baskısı altında kısa zamanda yozlaşmaya mahkûmdurlar); ama aydınlık bir hümanist bilince sahip olmadıkça- o uygarlığın düşünsel, moral ve estetik yapısını kabul etmek akla gelmez, çünkü bir topluma geleneksel evrenin sınırları dışına çıkma olanağını hümanist bilinç verir. Hümanist bilinç ya vardır ya da yoktur. Ancak bir toplum Batı dünyasına özgü düşünsel, ahlaki ve estetik yapıyı bir kez ele geçirdi mi, artık hiçbir şey taklit olmaz ve her şeyi bilinçli bir benimseme yoluna gider.]

consciousness, the society had to possess a specific mental and moral structure.⁷¹ The only way to change that mental habitat is education⁷² because the aim of education is to leave the fate of individual and society in the command of people's rational will. Therefore, there is only one applicable education form to all societies in the world, namely the humanist education, which teaches the ancient Greco-Roman world.⁷³

For this reason, Sinanoğlu proposes an education prescription that will graft the Turkish Humanism onto the non-Western societies. According to that prescription, the education shall re-evaluate the Turkish history and literature⁷⁴ (yet, he does not specify what kind of re-evaluation it will be, besides he reveals his critical stance towards the past by stating the following: "For the Turks the Ottoman literature and culture is like the Medieval Ages in Europe"⁷⁵). It shall teach philology, history, ancient Greek and Latin languages, and philosophy with regard to humanism (in his book, he explains how philology led to humanism and then disseminated it to people.⁷⁶) In addition to them, plays shall be staged about the ancient times to disseminate the moral, aesthetic, and libertarian values of the West. Finally, a humanist institute shall be established.

Despite his prescription, Sinanoğlu is hopeless about forming Universal Humanism on the grounds that the most superior stage of humanism was reached in the ancient Greek, and it is impossible to go beyond that.⁷⁷ He argues that mankind can never attain a humanism that is at par with the ancient Greek humanism. Moreover, he claims that the Turks can never adopt humanism since their mental

⁷¹ Ibid. p. 58.

⁷² Ibid. p. 101.

⁷³ Ibid. p. 15.

⁷⁴ Ibid. p. 84

⁷⁵ Ibid. p. 103.

⁷⁶ Ibid. p. 14.

⁷⁷ Ibid. pp. 149, 160.

habitat is different than the classical universe, and there is no traditional or historical link that connects them to that universe.⁷⁸

Nevertheless, Sinanoğlu cannot help but carry hope for Universal Humanism since the Turkish Humanism did not emerge out of a movement within the society. It was rather the instinct of survival as a humane person and society that made the Turkish society renovate itself.⁷⁹

In sum, Sinanoğlu's design of Universal Humanism shall emerge out of Turkish Humanism and then by spreading over all other non-Western societies in the world, it shall realize humanism all over the world. Besides, it shall benefit the West, which is too selfish and disinterested in other civilizations to lead the non-Western societies in building their own future⁸⁰, by helping the West to reach a new and multidimensional awareness about its own essence.⁸¹

One year after the book was published in French with the title *L'humanisme à Venir*, a group of intellectuals including Suat Sinanoğlu, Suut Kemal Yetkin, Nusret Hızır, Melâhat Özgü, Tevfik Bıyıklıoğlu, Âfet İnan, Mebrure Tosun, Ekrem Akurgal, Halil İnalçık, Cevat Dursunoğlu, Selâhattin Batu, Uluğ İğdemir, Bedrettin Tuncel, and Hilmi Ziya Ülken convened and held a panel meeting to discuss the book.⁸² It appears that some of the discussants came to the meeting without reading the book properly. They just had a look over the section titles of the book, and consequently the discussion was not very fruitful. Nevertheless, as the minutes of the meeting is the only piece of review about the book, it is worth dwelling on the meeting briefly.

Nusret Hızır argued that the whole book was based on a premise, which made it an example of cultural meta-physics (Sinanoğlu opposed Hızır's cultural meta-physics description by underlining the examples of mental habitat).⁸³ According to

⁷⁸ Ibid. pp. 106-107.

⁷⁹ Ibid. p. 106.

⁸⁰ Ibid. p. 12.

⁸¹ Ibid. p. 19.

⁸² Türk Dili, "Suat Sinanoğlu'nun Türk Humanizmi", *Türk Dili*, No. 124, 125, 126, 1962.

⁸³ Ibid. No. 124, p. 209.

Hızır, Sinanoğlu's premise was a humanist civilization that was the only valuable culture and civilization based on the Greco-Roman philology. Hızır criticized Sinanoğlu for ignoring the influence of Christianity in the development of European culture and civilization, and for linking everything to humanism. He also argued that there was a contradiction in the book as on the one hand, it implied that Europe gradually resumed its liberty by distancing itself from Christianity, but on the other hand, it implied that Christianity was dialectically influential in development of liberty in Europe.⁸⁴

After making some historical inferences, Halil İnalçık stated that he endorsed Sinanoğlu's views about Atatürk's reforms, and he would be happy to see a Turkish Humanism, as proposed by Sinanoğlu, that was on the track of revitalizing Atatürk's reforms and revealing Atatürk's real identity with a scientific mentality, against any dogmas in the society.⁸⁵

Cevat Dursunoğlu endorsed Sinanoğlu's single civilization premise about the emergence of humanism. Yet, he believed that the Turkish nation was not on the humanism track.⁸⁶ Selâhattin Batu expressed his admiration in the Western civilization, and his belief that a lot of work must be done to further humanism in Turkey. Nevertheless, he reminded that despite its supremacy, the Western civilization could not manage to establish a complete harmony and order in Western societies. For Batu, the thing that deserved criticism in the contemporary Western societies was burgeoning attitude of rejecting any value other than one's own, for instance the disbelief in any transcendent value, as a result of man's exploration of the world via reason and science, and the consequent strong self-confidence of him.⁸⁷

The ardent humanist of the early Republican years, Hilmi Ziya Ülken made interesting comments about humanism during the meeting, which was held in 1962. He argued that humanism depended on one's understanding, and hence the number of different humanisms was equal to the number of different understandings about it.

⁸⁴ Ibid. No. 124, p. 208.

⁸⁵ Ibid. No. 125, p. 276.

⁸⁶ Ibid. No. 125, p. 279.

⁸⁷ Ibid. No. 126, p. 363.

For him, each definition of humanism thus depended on a specific understanding, and hence constituted a limited definition.⁸⁸

Without doubt, there are many points in Sinanoğlu's book that deserve criticism. To name a few, Sinanoğlu's making the Western civilization, which was born out of the ancient Greek civilization, the greatest civilization ever, or more specifically his attribution of its superiority to the ancient Greek civilization is questionable. In this sense, Sinanoğlu's book cannot address the reality of Japanese or Chinese civilizations, which did not have any interaction with the ancient Greek world, and which have managed to be advanced and rich in many aspects of the contemporary world.

Sinanoğlu's book also ignored the fact that each non-Western society has acquired different things from the West during their respective Westernization periods. That is to say, the influence of the West over other societies was not identical. Sinanoğlu argues that universal humanism is possible only if all societies abandon their individual cultures and art, and adopt the ancient Greek humanism that was based on reason and will. Thus, it can be argued that in Sinanoğlu's view, humanism is possible only by abandoning one's freedom for the sake of freedom.

As Sinanoğlu's idea of Turkish Humanism was based on the single civilization premise, "he did not mention the eclectic intellectual structure within the modernization policies of the Republican years."⁸⁹ Sinanoğlu saw the sole salvation for the East in wholesale adoption of the West, under the rubric of humanism. He totally ignored the developing sentiment of rapprochement with the East in the country during the 1960s. He developed a theory of which humanist education was based on Atatürk's reforms and from which he set the goal of a Universal Humanism that he thought would rescue the whole world.

In sum, it can be argued that Sinanoğlu's book, which turned the whole Europe into Greek⁹⁰ and which criticized UNESCO because the latter strived the

⁸⁸ Ibid. No. 126, p. 365.

⁸⁹ Ekrem Işın, "Cumhuriyet ve Hümanizm"...

⁹⁰ Suat Sinanoğlu, *Türk Humanizmi...*, p. 133.

protect the peculiar cultures of each country⁹¹ and which was full of repetitions and contradictions, could not go beyond the “utopian romanticism”, perhaps a “necessary illusion” on the part of the early Republican intellectuals.

⁹¹ Ibid. p. 171.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

The End of Humanist Dream

The Turkish Humanism Project, the Turkish History Thesis, and the Sun Language Theory, all of which were designed side-products of Turkish nationalism being constructed did not survive. On the other hand, the Turkish Republic, the reforms, and attempts at modernization were also designed, and they were implemented with relative success. Therefore, it is hard to argue that the Turkish Humanism Project did not succeed because it was designed and imposed on the society.

The Turkish humanists tried to solve the East-West problematic by rejecting the Ottoman legacy. At one point, some resorted to absurd nationalist myths in the face of an emptied national and cultural identity that could not quickly be filled. They forced themselves to believe in a rewritten history and pretended as if they did not have a common past and a religion. As a result, a common humanism like the one in Europe, and a common philosophy could not be created as intended. An idea of humanism that all of them would endorse could not lead to a coherent discourse. As the intellectuals came with their individual ideas, as various social and political issues arose, it is impossible to talk about a “Turkish Humanism”. Yet, one can still speak of “Turkish Humanists” who believed in their respective “humanisms” and advocated them.

The humanist project implemented between 1938 and 1950 inflicted irrecoverable damage on the national culture and sentiments of nationalism formed before 1938.¹ Ali Ata Yiğit describes the departure of humanism from the cultural life as follows. With the secularization policy of the İnönü era (as mentioned before, the İnönü governments took a very harsh stance against religion to prevent it from impeding humanism), the lessons on religion were removed from the curriculum, and

¹ Ali Ata Yiğit, *İnönü Dönemi...*, p. 48.

it was stipulated that the call for prayer would be given in Turkish in 1932. Nevertheless, the democratization process in the aftermath of World War II led to several changes in those secular policies. Initially, essays were published in the press about religion. Then the debates about religion and secularism spread to the Grand Assembly. In 1946, majority of the deputies in the parliament called for lessons on religion in the curriculum. The now softened and tolerant stance towards religion which started with the democratization process gained a new dimension by the decision of putting lessons on religion back in the curriculum in 1949. In the same year, the Faculty of Theology was established in Ankara. Finally, with Democrat Party coming to power in 1950, the religious life and activities gained a new momentum, under the new government doing its best to facilitate them.²

The İnönü government could not deal with the accusations of restricting the right to religion and belief, and, consequently, they decided to relax the iron grip on religion when a possible defeat in the multi-party elections by Democrat Party was becoming a real threat. Therefore, it can be argued that humanism in Turkey became in a sense the victim of democracy. Whereas in Europe humanism and democracy were mutually constituted, in Turkey humanism was crushed under democracy and its type of populism. The political turmoil in the history of Republic, the rising conservative reaction during the multi-party era, and the willful support given by the majority of people to that reaction undermine the benign methods of the humanist thought.³

While the Turkish humanists were trying to disseminate the humanism they saw in the roots of the Western civilization, Europe was going through the brutality of World War II. At that point, humanism came to odds with nationalism. With World War II, the concept of nationalism consolidated itself and humanism project was discredited. Although the journal, *Tercüme* was aware of the threat posed by

² Ibid. pp. 51-52.

³ Ekrem Işın, “Cumhuriyet ve Hümanizm”...

World War II on humanism, it did not publish any essay on that matter “during that war which was nothing but the crisis of Western rationalism and culture”.⁴

In the aftermath of World War II, the Turkish humanist intellectuals were gradually isolating themselves from the surrounding world. During the 1950s, the concepts of “humanism” and “Turkish Renaissance” which were once charged with many tasks and employed for different aims by the intellectuals, were hardly used. The lack of systematic thought in Turkish humanism, too, forced the Turkish intellectual to dwell on mentality of either the Eastern or the Western civilizations instead of transcending them toward making global comments.⁵

By the 1960s, the Turkish intellectual finally and almost totally isolated himself from the scene. He was only interested in his own country according to his/her own agenda. The dynamism of the 1940s was replaced by a stagnation in the 1960s. The intellectual lost his interest in other countries. He judged his past with contemporary values when he bothered to look at the past. He believed in politics as the solution for everything and hence felt forced to join a political group. Finally, he could not think multi-dimensionally.⁶ In such intellectual ethos, humanism never came back to agenda again. The intellectual debates finally shifted to Existentialism and Marxism with the coming 1960s.⁷

The Turkish Humanism Project left three initiatives behind, all of which ended with disappointment. In general, the project was most of the time implemented by authorities without taking into account of the wishes of Turkish humanists. The Greek and Latin lessons were removed from the curriculum quickly, and most of the translations from these languages were left incomplete. The Village Institutes were shut down as well. It is hard to know whether the gap in the national and cultural identity could have been filled with a humanist culture, or whether the Turkish youth

⁴ On this matter, Kurultay argues the opposite. According to him, what was done was not influenced by the political preferences of the government, and the activities of the Translation Office were conducted in isolation from the times and the society. Thus, Kurultay argues that it was for this reason that its periodical did not dwell on this matter on any of its issues. Turgay Kurultay, “Cumhuriyet Türkiye’sinde Çevirinin Ağır Yüğü...”, p. 29.

⁵ Ekrem Işın, “Cumhuriyet ve Hümanizm”...

⁶ Kurtuluş Kayalı, *Türk Düşünce...*, pp. 23-28, 104.

⁷ Tansu Açıık, “Türkiye’de Hümanizm...”, p. 111.

could have been brought up as modern Western individuals, or whether it would have been possible to see people at every corner of Turkey reading Homer in translation if not in its Greek original. At this point, the improbability of above-mentioned possibilities explained in the following paragraphs recaps the main argument of the present thesis.

The concept of “humanism” is not immanent to the Turkish social structure. Moreover, within an understanding that identified the roots of everything in Anatolia, the incompatible cultural factors to that understanding such as, Turkish nationalism or Islam, cannot be dissociated from the social structure via forced educational methods and institutions such as the Village Institutes.⁸ When something not inherent in the social being of the Turkish nation was brought from abroad and imposed on it, the social structure quickly rejected that thing alien to itself. At this point, Sinanoğlu’s concept of mental habitat is quite telling about the situation. Because of the mental habitat, there was little interest in classical language lessons at high schools, the activities of the Translation Office could not lead to the desired awakening in society, and the Village institutes were shut down in the face of a growing discontent on the part of the political parties and the very people it tried to “humanize”.

The intellectual masterminds of the project, excluding a select few, were not systematic, explorative, and forward-looking. Many of the intellectuals, especially the members of the Blue Anatolia, fell into a disturbing romanticism. The majority of intellectuals unconsciously distorted the history, according to their brand of romanticism, and their anger with the Ottoman and the Tanzimat periods also impeded their intellectual effort. Maybe what they should have done was to “make use of the legacy inherited by taking into account the social conflicts instead of seeking for a humanist, i.e., essentialist-harmony in Anatolia.”⁹

Leaving aside the failure of the project, the reasons behind the issues of the period can be related to a general method of conduct. Broadly speaking, the main aim during the period was to create a strong Turkish nationalism. Within that nation-

⁸ Murat Belge, “Mavi Anadolu Hümerizmi”...

⁹TMMOB, Hasan Ünal Nalbantoğlu, *Anadolu Uygarlıklarından...*, p. 177.

building attempt, the roots of the Turkish culture and social life were tried to be re-constructed. Nevertheless, in that process the dominant reference point was the West and hence those re-constructed roots did not take hold extensively in the society. As humanism was just another tool in re-construction of the roots, it could not take hold in the society.

The main conclusion of this study is that the humanism thought in Turkey, which did not spontaneously emerge in the country unlike it did in Europe, could not survive. The reason behind that failure is that humanism, which rose within the changed social circumstances after the collapse of the medieval system in Europe, could not find a similar environment in Turkey. Hence it was prone to fail as a “Western” thought in the country. Concepts emerged during the Enlightenment Period in Europe, such as nation-state (and private property which spread alongside the former) did not develop in Turkey simultaneously and the Ottoman social structure managed to preserve itself for a long time. Under such circumstances, many imported “Western” concepts, if not all, were destined to fail in the society.

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