

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCIENCE AND RELIGION IN
THE LATE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

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ABSTRACT

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCIENCE AND RELIGION IN THE LATE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

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This study aims to examine the relationship between science and religion in the Late Ottoman Empire through the works of Münif Pasha, Ahmed Midhat, Beşir Fuad, Abdullah Cevdet, and Baha Tevfik. The thesis will explore how popular science writing entered the Ottoman intellectual sphere with Münif Pasha and Mecmua-i Fünun, and how, beginning in the 1880s, the rise of vulgar materialism, positivism, and evolutionary thought shaped the intellectual sphere. It will analyse how these intellectuals, influenced by these intellectual currents and driven by a claim to scientific legitimacy, engaged with religion in their writings. The study also seeks to investigate how these figures interpreted Islam within a scientific and philosophical framework, employing their understanding of Islam and science both to modernise the Ottoman worldview and to counter Western, especially Orientalist, narratives. Furthermore, by examining the extent and nature of the reception of these ideas between the 1860s and the 1910s, the thesis aims to illuminate the intellectual mindset of the period and the evolving perspectives of these intellectuals.

Keywords: Science and religion, Vulgar materialsim, Positivism, Evolutionism, Late Ottoman Empire

ÖZ

GEÇ OSMANLI DÖNEMİNDE DİN VE BİLİM İLİŞKİSİ

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Bu çalışma, Geç Osmanlı'daki din ve bilim ilişkisini Münif Paşa, Ahmed Midhat, Beşir Fuad, Abdullah Cevdet ve Baha Tevfik'in eserleri üzerinden incelemektedir. Tez, Münif Paşa ve Mecmua-i Fünun ile birlikte Osmanlı'ya popüler bilim yazımının girmesi ve 1880'ler ile birlikte vulgar materyalizm, positivism ve evrimcilik düşüncelerinin önem kazanması ile başlayan süreçle birlikte ortaya çıkan eserleri inceleyecektir. Adı geçen entelektüellerin, bu fikir akımları etkisinde ve bilimsellik iddiasıyla yazdıkları eserlerinde bu düşüncelere dinle ilişkilendirmelerine değinilecektir. Bu tez, bu 5 entelektüelin İslam'ı bilimsel ve felsefî bir çervede okurken kendi İslam ve bilim anlayışlarını hem Osmanlı'yı daha modern bir zihin dünyasına yönlendirme hem de Batı'ya ve özellikle Oryantalistlere karşı bir araç olarak kullanmalarını incelemeyi hedeflemektedir. Ayrıca 1860'lı yıllardan 1910'lu yıllara kadar geçen süreçte bu fikirlerin ne yoğunlukta ve hangi açılardan değerlendirildiği de bu entelektüellerin ve sürecin zihin yapısını anlamaya yardımcı olacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Din ve Bilim, vulgar materyalizm, pozitivism, evrimcilik, Geç Dönem Osmanlı İmparatorluğu



To my Family,

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In this dissertation, I will analyse the relationship between science and religion in the late Ottoman Empire. I will analyse this topic by using the works of five intellectuals: Münif Paşa, Ahmed Midhat, Beşir Fuad, Abdullah Cevdet, and Baha Tevfik. By doing so, I aim to draw the portrait of Ottoman intellectuals on this topic between the 1860s and 1910s. My main aim in this dissertation is to show that the topic is social and political in the Ottoman Empire rather than mainly scientific, religious, or intellectual. In my view, this topic pertains to the challenges of modernisation within the Ottoman Empire. To limit the content of this thesis and make it more consistent, I choose only vulgar, positivist, and evolutionist intellectuals, except for Münif Paşa. This limitation enables me to clearly and easily define the boundaries of the thesis. I will portray the Ottoman intellectuals' perspective on science from a philosophical and intellectual standpoint, rather than a strictly scientific one. This broad perspective, as opposed to focussing on a single point, enhances the sophistication of my thesis. With this approach, I will mention scientific, philosophical, political, and social topics. In addition, I showed that discussions of science and religion are not limited only to science and religion; they had many other topics to mention, like culture, philosophy, and literature. I also chose these intellectuals from the Muslim community to support my thesis and draw a boundary for it.

1.1. Framework of the Study

The relationship between science and religion has always been an important topic. Bertrand Russell thought that religion and science are two facets of social life. Religion has a long history dating back to the early stages of human civilisation,

while science gained prominence in the Western world and began to surpass the influence and dominance of religion from the 16th century onwards.¹ The discussion of the 'conflict between science and religion' was a prevalent subject during the 19th century in the Western world. The origins of this discussion can be traced back to the 16th century, with the publication of Copernicus' *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium* (On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres) in 1543. Following the Scientific Revolution and the Age of Enlightenment, science and reason became increasingly significant and surpassed religion. Thus, a philosophical understanding based on reason secured a foundation in Western thought. From this point on, the focus of the discussion shifted towards science and philosophy, which gained more prominence compared to religion. This marked the beginning of a new epoch, in which religion emerged as a competitor to science in the realm of intellectual discourse.

It is important to highlight Immanuel Kant in the topic of conflict between science and religion. In his work, *Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?* (Answering the Question: What is Enlightenment?), Kant argues that people should prioritise their own reason over alternative sources of guidance, particularly religion and the clergy. Kant argued that people need to rely solely on their own reason and rationality, free from any other sources of guidance. This helps people from relinquishing religious beliefs and other forms of authority as barriers to acquiring knowledge, hence emphasising reason as the sole means of attaining knowledge.²

Religion became an important topic from the 16th century onward. Before this, religion was studied primarily within the field of theology. Science also began to develop as an intellectual discipline around the same time. Additionally, by the end of the 18th century, science, like religion, became a subject of philosophical inquiry.³ Both of these concepts evolved within philosophical frameworks, and it can be

¹ Bertrand Russell, *Religion & Science* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 7.

² Immanuel Kant, 'Beantwortung Der Frage: Was Ist Aufklärung?', *Berlinische Monatsschrift*, December 1784, 481–94.

³ Monica M Ringer and Etienne E. Charriée, 'Introduction', in *Ottoman Culture and the Project of Modernity Reform and Translation in the Tanzimat Novel* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2020), 11, 15.

argued that their boundaries became more clearly defined during this period in the West. One possible reason for the perceived conflict between science and religion is the ambiguity of these boundaries during the transition period. Furthermore, with the rise of science in the West, the relationship between science and religion developed in a more adversarial manner.⁴ There are three primary causes of secularisation that have contributed to the perception of a negative relationship between science and religion. These are the decline in religious beliefs and practices, the increasing differentiation between religion and other spheres, particularly science, and the marginalization of religion from other domains, especially science.⁵

Michel Foucault emphasised that the end of metaphysics is related with the emergence of 'human'⁶ in his work *Les mots et les choses: Une archéologie des sciences humaines* (The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences). The concept of "human" is closely linked to the ideals of the Enlightenment and the exercise of independent and critical thought. The advent of modern science further reinforced the prominence of this concept, leading religion to relinquish its dominant position in the modern world to science and human intellect. Consequently, it may be argued that the concept of "human" evolved by shifting its guiding principles from religion to science and philosophy. It is important to note that the notion of science originated from Naturphilosophie (natural philosophy) and gradually attained a more esteemed and dominant status over time. "The secularisation of science is not a matter of its moving from supernaturalistic to naturalistic explanations; before the 20th century, religious references largely pertained to the presuppositions of science and its motivation. The secularisation of science consists not in theistic explanation but in the disappearance of the religious framing of scientific activities."⁷

⁴ Peter Harrison, *The Territories of Science and Religion* (Chicago: The University of Chicago press, 2015), 23.

⁵ Peter Harrison, 'Conflict, Complexity, and Secularization In The History Of Science And Religion', in *Rethinking History, Science, Dnd Religion Dn Exploration Of Conflict and The Complexity Principle*, ed. Bernard Lightman (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2019), 226–27.

⁶ Michel Foucault, *Les Mots et Les Choses: Une Archéologie Des Sciences Humaines* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), 328–29.

⁷ Harrison, 'Conflict, Complexity, and Secularization In The History Of Science And Religion', 229.

Science does not wield the same power or influence across all segments of the world. Its application is characterised by both asymmetry and hierarchy, varying according to different purposes and methods. Similar to other domains, such as the economic sphere, scientific knowledge tends to diffuse from developed regions to less developed areas. This concept is also prevalent in modernisation theory and has become a key subject in discourses on modernity. Certain perspectives argue that the West disseminated scientific knowledge globally during the modern era. While it would be inaccurate to claim that all knowledge originated in the West, it is undeniable that the West played a significant role in spreading scientific knowledge and intellectualism. Some attribute the advancement of modernisation to figures such as Hegel, asserting that progress was driven by scientists and philosophers who transcended the religious superstitions of their time and sought to create a rational world.⁸

However, we cannot solely view science as a collection of scientific facts and principles. It is also shaped by and impacts the cultural and social context in which it originates. Therefore, cultural context is important for the spread of science. As Peter Harrison emphasises that religion “transformed from a human virtue into a generic something typically constituted by sets of beliefs and practices”, science followed a similar way.⁹

While it cannot be definitively stated that this development initiated a direct conflict between science and religion, it contributed to the emergence of distinct boundaries between these two. Science and religion were limited to their own sectors. Religion surrendered its authority and influence to discuss nature and the natural sciences from a metaphysical standpoint.¹⁰ After the Enlightenment, religion has started to lose its importance and position and gave its supreme position to science. During the late 18th and 19th centuries, “modern science and philosophy undermined morality,

⁸ Michael Allen Gillespie, *The Theological Origins of Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 10–11.

⁹ Harrison, *The Territories of Science and Religion*, 16.

¹⁰ Frederick Gregory, ‘Continental Europe’, in *The War Fare between Science and Religion: The Idea That Wouldn't Die*, ed. Jeff Hardin (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2018), 85.

religion, and the state... The more science advanced, the less room there seemed to be for freedom and God in the universe..." in Europe.¹¹

As John Hedley Brooke mentions, when speaking of science and religion, of overlap, of fusion, of confusion, of separation, of complementarity, or of conflict, history has established the relationship in various ways, depending on the time and place. Therefore, it is important to avoid accepting the simplistic statements. Different religions maintain distinct traditions and priorities in their guidelines for leading a holy life.¹²

Before the second half of the 19th century, specifically, before the emergence of the discussion on 'science and religion', these two concepts were not regarded as inherently conflicting. At times, science was viewed as the "philosophy of nature," which was concerned with analysing God's creations. Religion or religious beliefs did not play a direct role in this intellectual endeavour, even if those studying these subjects personally adhered to non-scientific beliefs. For instance, Newton was interested in alchemy, and Copernicus studied astrology. It is likely that the discussion of 'science' and 'religion' arose with the recognition of 'science' as an independent concept. Moreover, the positivist perspective contributed to this 'conflict narrative' by advocating a uniform scientific framework.¹³ Therefore, this discussion appears to be relatively new, despite its recent creation. It primarily asserts that positivism is the belief that science should explain all concepts in the universe. In addition, in my view, this topic can be regarded as a philosophical or paradigmatic concept in the West, especially in Europe.

A conflict narrative between science and religion emerged and reached its peak in the Western intellectual world during the 19th century due to the rise of materialism,

¹¹ Frederick C. Beiser, *The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1987), 1–2.

¹² John Hedley Brooke and Ronald L. Numbers, 'Introduction: Contextualizing Science and Religion', in *Science and Religion around the World*, ed. John Hedley Brooke and Ronald L. Numbers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 2.

¹³ M. Alper Yalçinkaya, 'Din, Bilim, "Din ve Bilim": Araştırma Hatları ve Vaat Ettikleri Üzerine Bir Değerlendirme', in *Geç Osmanlı'dan Günümüze Modern Doğa Bilimciliği* (Ankara: Doğu Batı Yayınları, 2019), 280–81.

positivism, evolutionism, and significant developments in science. In addition, the Age of Enlightenment and the French Revolution played a crucial role in the advancement of this discourse throughout the Western world. The publications of *History of the Conflict Between Religion and Science* by John William Draper in 1874 and *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom* by Andrew Dickson White in 1896 were important for the declaration of that conflict. With these works, discussions regarding the 'conflict between science and religion' spread throughout Europe and the US within intellectual circles, providing an opportunity for the public to engage in this discourse as well. These works can be regarded as the origin of the conflict between science and religion in the contemporary era. The most notable mistake of these books, especially White's book and this perspective, especially in the late 19th century, is that their positivistic approach, like the society, had evolved from a religious to a scientific society, and for this reason, religion should give its position to science.¹⁴

Alper Yalçinkaya asserts that as science became a global topic of debate in the nineteenth century, "the construction of religion as a coherent system of beliefs and practices....became a component of European intellectual discourse in the same period." There is not a monolithic scientific understanding such as 'science', 'Islamic science', or 'European science'.¹⁵ Therefore, he emphasises that one cannot argue for one single conflict narrative. One should question whether Draper's and White's works defined or changed the way of this discussion or whether they created it this way. There is no single approach for this discussion in different countries, and multiple perspectives exist.

One of the reasons why this 'conflict' was very strong and harsh was because there were no exact borders for both 'science' and 'religion'.¹⁶ Religion was underestimated and harshly criticised during this time, maybe to draw a strong and

¹⁴ Harrison, 'Conflict, Complexity, and Secularization In The History Of Science And Religion', 227.

¹⁵ M. Alper Yalçinkaya, 'Globalizing "Science and Religion": Examples from the Late Ottoman Empire', *The British Journal for the History of Science*, 2 August 2022, 2–3. Because of the limitations of the dissertation, I will not mention global discussions on science and religion.

¹⁶ Yalçinkaya, 'Din, Bilim, "Din ve Bilim": Araştırma Hatları ve Vaat Ettikleri Üzerine Bir Değerlendirme', 282.

strict border to science and give it legitimacy. After all, ‘science’ and ‘religion’ are relatively recent concepts invented in the 19th century and became part of Western consciousness. ‘Science’ and ‘religion’ in modern Western culture reflect political power dynamics and historical events rather than natural borders. They also mostly relate to cultural backgrounds and experiences in societies.¹⁷

1.2. The Case of the Ottoman Empire

The first concept that the Ottoman Empire borrowed from the West was science. That science is not the ‘science’ that is technic rather than scientific understanding. That is, military techniques and science were used in the military. The first Western military schools, ‘Mühendishane-i Bahr-i Hümayun’ (Imperial School of Naval Engineering) and ‘Mühendishane-i Berri Hümayun’ (Imperial School of Land Engineering), were founded to educate Western-style military personnel. Although education was in Western style and taught Western science, there is no aim to teach scientific and intellectual thought of the West. Ottoman bureaucrats thought that borrowing scientific and intellectual thought would also bring mental change, and that would cause a conflict with the Islamic ways of the Ottoman Empire. Intellectual and mental change began with the Tanzimat Era. The Tanzimat Reforms introduced the Ottoman intellectuals and society to the mentality and intellectuality of the West, aiming to establish a foundation for the Empire's continued existence. Like Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu’s definition, I also call the way of adoption ‘selective transfer’.¹⁸ That also can be correlated with Berrak Burçak’s and Alper Yalçınkaya’s argument, ‘useful knowledge’, and that idea refers to using scientific and intellectual knowledge of the West rather than adapting their culture.

The introduction of modern Western science and scientific thought into the Ottoman Empire occurred through three distinct channels. The first way is translations. French served as the lingua franca of the day, leading to most translations from this language. Additionally, a significant portion of the official writings of the Ottoman

¹⁷ Harrison, *The Territories of Science and Religion*, 3–4.

¹⁸ Francis Zimmermann, ‘Round Table: Integration Problems: Introductory Report’, in *Science and Empires: Historical Studies about Scientific Development and European Expansion*, ed. Patrick Petitjean, Catherine Jami, and Anne Marie Moulin (Dordrecht: Springer Science, 1992), 33.

Empire utilised this language for most of their official communications. Besides, Ottoman intelligentsia had a significant fascination with France, especially following the French Revolution, because of the impact of French Enlightenment philosophers. The second method involves envoys and students who travelled to Europe. This is the most straightforward method of acquiring knowledge in Western cultures and sciences. Officials, students, and the bureaucratic cadre encountered Western culture and science and became part of the Ottoman Empire. Furthermore, many students subsequently assumed positions of authority inside the Ottoman Empire and initiated a profound cultural and scientific metamorphosis. The final method involves establishing contemporary educational institutions such as Tıbbiye (Imperial Medical School), Mülkiye, and Askeriye (Royal Military School). As a result of the establishment of these Western-style institutions, pupils were promptly exposed to and acquired knowledge of Western culture, science, and language. The Ottoman Empire also benefited from the gradual spread of modernity and scientific knowledge. In addition to science, cultural and non-material values also entered the Ottoman Empire, especially intellectual knowledge, translations, science, and scientific information.

As Berrak Burçak emphasises, science was a useful tool. After the Tanzimat Era, Ottoman society needed science to have a position in the modern world. In this perception, science became an important power in the Ottoman social engineering project. By doing so, Ottoman intellectuals and scientists wanted to integrate the Ottoman Empire and society into a ‘civilised’ world.¹⁹ From this perspective, Ottoman intellectuals used Western concepts to put their arguments on a valid ground.

Religion inevitably became also a topic of discussion for these intellectuals, especially those analysed in this thesis, as they regarded it as a tool for communicating their arguments and ‘scientific thought’ to the Muslim Ottoman society. Rather than a matter of faith, they interpreted Islam as a social construction that regulates people's relations with each other, the state, and other spheres.

¹⁹ Berrak Burçak, ‘Science, a Remedy for All Ills Healing “The Sick Man of Europe”: A Case for Ottoman Scientism’ (Doktora Tezi, Princeton, Princeton University, 2005), 5.

Therefore, they tried to concentrate on social and adaptable aspects of religion and aimed to avoid referring to controversial topics. Hence, they mostly wrote on the social dimension of Islam and its relationship with ‘science’ and philosophy.

In both Europe and the non-European world, particularly in the Muslim world and the Ottoman Empire, intellectual and scientific thought emerged as subjects of discourse and as instruments in social, religious, and political domains. Muslim and Ottoman civilisations, along with their intellectuals, adopted and integrated intellectualism, science, and scientific thinking. However, they also critically examined and debated these concepts, both within scholarly discourse and in the context of ideological disagreements. The Ottoman Empire, alongside other peripheral nations such as Persia and Japan, incorporated scientific ideas and intellectual discourses into their own frameworks, including political, cultural, ideological, and intellectual spheres.²⁰

This question also became a topic of discussion among intellectuals, academicians, and even the public. I will attempt to analyse the debate on ‘science’ and ‘religion’ by considering the perception of harmonising these concepts with local traditions. While acquiring this new form of knowledge, these intellectuals became part of a new ‘habitus’ and adopted ‘European’ ways of thinking. However, they primarily utilised this discussion to safeguard the Empire and the nation while simultaneously embracing modern concepts in response to the West. Like Namık Kemal and other²¹ intellectuals, this thesis also regarded and accepted Islam as a useful tool against the dominance and humiliation of the West.

Şükrü Hanioglu claims that Ottoman intellectuals had no strong ideology like Marxism; they had only one choice about using Islam as a tool.²² For this reason,

²⁰ Kostas Gavroglu, ‘Some Methodological Issues Concerning the Sciences at the European Periphery’, in *Perilous Modernity. History of Medicine in the Ottoman Empire and the Middle East from the 19th Century Onwards*, ed. Anne Marie Moulin and Yeşim Işıl Ülman (İstanbul: The Isis Press, 2010), 25.

²¹ M. Alper Yalçınkaya, ‘Muslims’, in *The Warfare between Science and Religion The Idea That Wouldn’t Die* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2018), 212.

²² M. Şükrü Hanioglu, ‘Garbcılar: Their Attitudes toward Religion and Their Impact on the Official Ideology of the Turkish Republic’, *Studia Islamica*, no. 86 (1997): 143.

Ottoman intellectuals virtually eliminated intellectual boundaries and effectively employed some of these concepts for practical purposes. From that standpoint, it may be argued that several Ottoman intellectuals felt compelled to use Islam as a means due to the absence of a unified ideology. Islam was one of the most important bases of social life in that era and still today. This highlights the pivotal significance of Islam in the Ottoman Empire, as well as in other Muslim states. Islam serves as a useful instrument for these intellectuals, rather than being considered merely an ideology. Hanioglu also says that the Ottoman intellectual class and imagined elite class thought modernisation was the product of their own 'religion'. Thus, it may be argued that the notion of religion is a product of imagination not only for the intellectual and aristocratic classes but also for the understanding of society as a whole. Consequently, they desired to adopt these thoughts as their guiding principles and influence society based on these hypothetical ideas.²³ This led to the proliferation of intellectual debates, broadened the scope of discussions on 'science' and 'religion', and brought them into the public sphere. Nevertheless, it would be inaccurate to claim that these intellectuals used Islam solely as an instrument. They also expressed their interpretations of Islam through their written works. The conceptions of 'science' and 'religion' in the Ottoman context differed significantly from those in Europe, as Ottoman intellectuals primarily employed these concepts as tools for modernisation. For this reason, rather than science itself, scientism is crucial to understanding the mentality of Ottoman intellectuals in this thesis.

Science and scientism are different concepts. While science is a method for investigating the truth, "scientism is the belief that science, especially natural science, is much the most valuable part of human learning...."²⁴ The distinction between science and scientism lies in the fact that scientism refers to the specific mindset adopted by intellectuals in the late Ottoman era towards science. Intellectual and philosophical contexts more commonly use the term scientism than scientific ones. Its usage in late Ottoman intellectual history is mainly focused on epistemology

²³ M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *Osmanlı'dan Cumhuriyet'e Zihniyet, Siyaset ve Tarih* (İstanbul: Bağlam, 2006), 46–47.

²⁴ Tom Sorell, *Scientism: Philosophy and the Infatuation with Science*, International Library of Philosophy (London ; New York: Routledge, 1991), 1.

rather than ontology. Moreover, during that period, people employed scientism to foster patriotism.

Science and scientism were used as ideological instruments by certain intellectuals in the late Ottoman era, particularly among the Jön Türkler (Young Turks), to construct a novel and conceptual society based on scientific principles. Another crucial aspect to consider in this topic is the significance of Islam.²⁵ During these transformation debates, the concept of religion emerged as a topic and occasionally faced accusations of lagging behind the West. These intellectuals easily flexed these concepts out of shape thanks to “Ottoman pragmatism,”²⁶ which was also used in many areas by the Ottoman Empire for a long time.

During this era, Ottoman scholars and intellectuals acknowledged that their encounters with the West presented them with distinct cultures and systems. Following this discussion, several Ottoman intellectuals realised their inadequacy in comprehending the universe in which they resided. Some people acknowledged the Western dominance over the Ottoman Empire. People primarily employ the term 'ulüm ve fünün' (science) when discussing this superiority. These principles assume significance during the transformation and modernisation processes. They frequently employed these phrases in lieu of religion in the majority of their texts. Science not only provided solutions to the issues of that era but also achieved a transcendental status. Subsequently, certain Ottoman intellectuals disregarded religion and morals as the main factors when discussing and justifying actions. This might also be interpreted as an event that initiated the debates on the conflict between science and religion in the Ottoman Empire.²⁷ The public and many intellectuals believed science

²⁵ Cemil Aydın, ‘Beyond Culturalism ? An Overview of the Historiography on Ottoman Science in Turkey’, in *Multicultural Science in the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, Kostas Chatzis, and Efthymios Nicolaidis (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), 201.

²⁶ Murat Dağlı, ‘The Limits of Ottoman Pragmatism’, *History and Theory* 52, no. 2 (2013): 194–213. Murat Dağlı uses this term in the concepts of political and politics to examine the actions of the Ottoman Empire. I adopt this term for Ottoman intellectual history and use it to explain the reasons and motives behind the actions of these intellectuals.

²⁷ M. Şükrü Hanioglu, ‘Osmanlı Aydınındaki Değişme ve “Bilim”’, *Toplum ve Bilim*, no. 27 (Fall 1983): 183–87.

and religion were compatible. These intellectuals were considered pioneers in the Ottoman Empire for their approach. In this thesis, while analysing their works, I will try to show their effort of hesitance and eschewal from this topic.

From the 1850s onwards, Ottoman intellectuals began to become familiar with concepts from Europe. Following the Tanzimat Edict, Ottoman intellectuals began to borrow political and social discussions, reforms, and applications from the West. In addition to integrating into the European political system, European and Western intellectual, philosophical, and scientific discussions became a topic in the Ottoman Empire with the help of intellectuals.²⁸

During a public lecture at Darülfünun in 1863, Grand Vizier Fuad Paşa asserted that physics and other contemporary sciences not only reveal and explain natural events but also demonstrate the omnipotence of God. Fuad Paşa focused on the field of modern physics, highlighting the omnipotence of God and exploring the intricate connection between these two fundamental principles. He perceived modern sciences as a means to elucidate the omnipotence of God. This explanation represents an authoritative effort to establish harmony between science and religion in the Ottoman Empire.²⁹ Although his argument differs from the intellectuals in this thesis, it is important to understand society and the ruling elite's sensitivity. That also shows the vulgarisation of modern Western science and its meetings with the public. That can be a starting point for the penetration of Western science and its relationship and narrative harmony with Islam in the Late Ottoman Empire.

The Royal Medicine School students sent a letter to *Tercüman-ı Hakikat* (Interpreter of the Truth) that men of science not only implicitly represented themselves but also men of religion. The letter further asserted that Islam was indispensable for Ottoman civilisation and the sole foundation of moral values. Moreover, the students assert in their correspondence that adhering to the principles of Islam entails a genuine

²⁸ Daniel Kolland, 'A Strategic Eurocentrism: The Construction of Ottoman Evolutionism in an Uneven World (1870–1900)', *Modern Intellectual History*, 15 April 2024, 6.

²⁹ 'Dârülfünun Dersleri', *Mecmua-i Fünun* 1, no. 8 (January 1863): 331; İsmail Kara, *Din ile Modernleşme Arasında: Çağdaş Türk Düşüncesinin Meseleleri* (İstanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 2020), 140–41.

interest in disciplines such as science, art, and other similar virtues. This method is the only way to protect and showcase the magnificence of the Ottoman Empire and Islam.³⁰

Berrak Burçak claims that in her PhD thesis, "the idea of science" was prevalent among the late Ottoman intellectuals in an instrumental rather than a positivistic sense before the Young Turks. Berrak Burçak further asserts that Ottoman intellectuals integrated science into their patriotic concern, not only to prevent the Ottoman Empire from disintegrating but also to establish a modern state. They also wanted to participate in the Ottoman Empire in the 'new world order' they called 'civilisation'.³¹

Şerif Mardin states that "In the nineteenth century, there began to appear with increasing frequency in Turkish literary circles a type of intellectual already well known in Europe." This class came from humble backgrounds but possessed boundless ambition. The intellectual climate that this group fostered can be described as a "rise in the level of expectations"³² The intellectuals examined in this thesis can be included in this group. They all came from middle or even lower social classes and were highly ambitious. Their primary goal was to address the problems of the Empire and society while also striving to transform society into a more modern and advanced state. Some, such as Abdullah Cevdet, also pursued social and political objectives. In this sense, they were evolving into Western-style intellectuals who played significant roles in their society.

Discussions on borrowing both material and non-material concepts from the West largely centred around modernisation and westernisation. Moreover, the utilisation of scientific knowledge was a crucial subject for intellectuals in the Ottoman Empire. During this period, science adopted a philosophical perspective that was both

³⁰ Anonymus, 'Mekteb-i Tıbbiye-i Şahane Talebesinden Birkaç Zat İmzalarıyla Matbaamıza Tebliğ Olunan Varakanın Aynıdır', *Tercüman-ı Hakikat*, 8 August 1881, 2.

³¹ Burçak, 'Science, a Remedy for All Ills Healing "The Sick Man of Europe": A Case for Ottoman Scientism', 3.

³² Şerif Mardin, *Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), 124.

materialistic and positivist, with a strong emphasis on evolution. This posed a challenge in reconciling scientific understanding with the cultural and religious beliefs of Ottoman civilisation. Discussions on science and religion, as well as the modernisation and westernisation of the late Ottoman Empire, are all considered conceptual topics. Therefore, the discourse extended beyond the realms of science and religion, delving into philosophy and contemporary adaptation. This issue was primarily social, political, and cultural rather than strictly scientific or religious.

Like other areas such as science, art, and literature, Ottoman intellectuals were also influenced by the topic of 'religion' in this 'discussion' in that era. Ottoman intellectuals did not aim to abolish Islam; they wanted to use the concept of religion to gain this new scientific knowledge and European positive values. Differently, the concept of science is not the same as hard science; it is a philosophical and vulgar understanding of science. Muslim and Ottoman debates were influenced by discussions in the West, and they are the products of local values, international and local politics, and intellectual atmospheres.³³

Translations became one of the most important actors in this knowledge transfer, changing the mentality and mindset of first intellectuals and then their target society. The Ottoman Empire developed a perspective against the West due to what could be interpreted as Western cultural dominance. Therefore, the correlation between translations or cultural capital and the political, cultural, and economic differences between the West and the Ottoman Empire should be examined. This way, the reciprocity of negative thoughts between these two entities becomes apparent. This discussion could be a contributing factor to the prevalence of Orientalism and Occidentalism in these societies. I will also illustrate the contradiction between Orientalism and Occidentalism by discussing the topic and providing examples of translations.

Additionally, it is worth noting that Ernest Renan's publication, *L'Islam et la Science* (Islam and Science)³⁴, faced a severe negative reaction from Muslim and Ottoman

³³ Yalçınkaya, 'Muslims', 203.

³⁴ Namık Kemal wrote a refutation to Renan called *Renan Müdaafanemesi*. In this work Kemal's remarks were not directed against Christianity but against materialistic atheism. See: Mardin, *Genesis*

intellectuals due to its assertion regarding the unscientific nature of Islam. This work may not be directly accepted as a work on the ‘conflict between science and religion’ as it mainly criticised Islam as non-scientific. Yet, ‘science’ and ‘religion’ discussions in Ottoman and Turkish intellectual history mainly began with this work and devoted effort for refutations of this work. From my perspective, this discussion was not an inborn discussion in the Ottoman Empire. Ottoman intellectuals were pulled into this discussion. They were obliged to use imported concepts to refute the arguments because this conflict was born in Europe and Renan blamed Islam with the Western understanding of science.

For instance, Young Ottomans employed political Islamic concepts in their works such as *adalet* (justice), *biat* (contract of investiture), *icma-i ümmet* (consensus of the community), *meşveret* (consultation) to present their Islamic backgrounds to the society and harmonise Western political thought with Islamic arguments. Because both Islam and Ottomans were accused of being savage and not suitable for a democratic context. Young Ottomans used ‘Islam’ as a tool against the West. While doing this, the Young Ottomans also aimed to bring the roots of Islam.³⁵ The intellectuals addressed in this thesis sometimes used a similar method, but they did not use as many concepts as the young Ottomans; they only emphasised the harmony between science and Islam.

Moreover, Ottoman intellectuals started discussions on this subject in response to Christianity, the Western influence in the East, and the perspective of Orientalist intellectuals against the Ottoman Empire. This methodology transformed the conversation into a political topic, serving as a tool for both intellectuals and rulers. By adopting this stance, their goal was to safeguard the Ottoman Empire and its integral connection to Islam against Western influence. In addition to this, their objective was to demonstrate the pivotal role of the Ottoman Empire within the Muslim nations and to establish that the Empire served as the guardian of the Muslim World, encompassing not only political but also intellectual domains.

of *Young Ottoman Thought*, 70. There is no strong opposition to Christianity but with the rise of Orientalism and power of Christian Missionaries in the Ottoman Empire, Ottoman intellectuals, as this thesis reveals, stood against Christianity and promoted Islam while mentioning the position of science.

³⁵ Mardin, 81–82.

The initial translations were selected from prominent leaders of the French Revolution and Enlightenment, such as Voltaire and Rousseau, due to their significant influence on Ottoman ideology and their perspectives on religion, particularly Christianity. Ottoman intellectuals chose these intellectuals mostly because of their attitudes towards Christianity.³⁶ The main reason Ottoman intellectuals were against Christianity was its relationship with Western culture. Ottoman intellectuals correlated Christianity and Western hegemony in the East, so they were against Christianity and considered it non-scientific. The other reason is the influence of Christian missionaries in the Ottoman Empire, and these intellectuals tried to prevent this influence and warn the Ottoman society.

Ottoman intellectuals used the new epistemology of the West, including scientific and philosophical concepts, by harmonising them with old epistemology, like cultural and religious concepts, to create a new form of epistemology. In addition, they also aimed to achieve an ontological change. In the end, thanks to these epistemological and ontological transformations, Ottoman society would join the League of the West and achieve important success in terms of modernisation. They aimed to achieve two important things. The first is modernising the mindset, and the second is protecting the locality, especially Islam and Ottoman identity. ‘Europeanness’ and ‘Easternness’ became a subject of discussion for the Ottoman Empire and Ottoman intellectuals. Ottoman intellectuals wanted to apply the term ‘Being European as a Muslim’.³⁷ The Ottoman Empire had been trying to achieve this form of modernisation since the Tanzimat era.³⁸

While Ottoman bureaucracy and intellectuals were trying to achieve modernisation and Westernisation, they also resisted the Orientalist view of Western intellectuals and complete transformation by losing localness. They integrated modern and Western ideals with local conceptions to demonstrate that local concepts are not

³⁶ Remzi Demir, *Philosophia Ottomanica* (İstanbul: Lotus Yayınevi, 2018), 413–14.

³⁷ İsmail Kara used this term in his work. I prefer to use this term and apply it for the Ottoman Empire, society and intellectuals. İsmail Kara, *Müslüman Kalarak Avrupalı Olmak: Çağdaş Türk Düşüncesinde Din Siyaset Tarih Medeniyet* (İstanbul: Dergah Yayınları, 2017).

³⁸ Nilüfer Göle, *The Forbidden Modern: Civilization and Veiling* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004), 12.

outdated and can seamlessly align with modern ideas. In addition, Ottoman intellectuals made efforts to reconcile these contemporary and Western notions with Islamic and Ottoman essence.

Moreover, modernisation and westernisation are often considered nearly identical concepts. The Ottoman Empire endeavoured to adopt Western practices and modernise; however, many viewpoints argue that it also attempted to preserve its cultural and social values. The distinction between Ottoman modernisation and Western modernisation lies in their divergent approaches. We can refer to Ottoman modernisation as 'non-Western' modernisation, and this modernisation concept is known as 'alternative' modernisation.³⁹ While Şinasi is accepted as the pioneer of Westernisation and Europeanisation in concert⁴⁰ these intellectuals became the pioneers of Europeanisation for scientific understanding.

It is important to consider the Ottoman context. Ottoman intellectuals occasionally viewed this subject as essential for the advancement of modernity, with their primary focus on science and religion. Beyond modernisation, the Ottoman approach also encompassed political strategies, both domestic and international. When Ottoman intellectuals engaged in discussions on 'science' and 'religion' their primary objective was often to use these concepts as instruments for promoting modernisation and achieving their social and political goals. They sought to demonstrate that, according to Orientalist intellectuals, Christian missionaries, and at times even Muslim Ottomans and Islamic scholars, science, particularly in its simplistic materialistic interpretation, was compatible with Islam. Furthermore, when I refer to Islam and Islamic thought in this thesis, I will specifically be referring to Islam as it was predominantly shaped by Sufism and classical Islamic thought.

Ottoman intellectuals primarily used pseudoscientific literature to attract public attention. As a result, they largely drew upon the works of German vulgar materialists. Both Ottoman and German vulgar materialist intellectuals presented

³⁹ Nilüfer Göle, 'Batı Dışı Modernlik Kavramı Üzerine', in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce: Modernleşme ve Batıcılık*, vol. 3 (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2007), 58–59.

⁴⁰ Mardin, *Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, 256.

their works and approaches as scientific, yet the two groups differed in their perspectives on religion. While German vulgar materialist intellectuals employed their arguments and ‘scientific’ views to challenge religion or the ‘existence of God’, the Ottoman vulgar materialist intellectuals examined in this thesis had no such objective. On occasion, they even asserted that scientific reasoning and realities affirmed the ‘existence of God’, the magnificence of Islam, and its compatibility with science and scientific truth. Similar to German vulgar materialists, Ottoman vulgar materialists were also opposed to the clergy. They used these arguments to expose Islamic ulema's falsehoods and abuses of Islam. For Ottoman intellectuals, science, and particularly a vulgar materialist interpretation of science, became an almost dogmatic ‘Weltanschauung’ (worldview).⁴¹

My reason for referring to these intellectuals as ‘vulgar materialists’ differs from Engels’ argument. Their primary aim was to make their ideas, arguments, and understanding of science and materialism more accessible to the public—essentially, to ‘popularise’ them. Thus, their approach could also be described as ‘popular materialism.’ However, I will refer to them as ‘vulgar materialists.’ The Ottoman intellectuals examined in this thesis shared the same objective: to popularise their ideas and ‘scientific understanding.’ For this reason, with the exception of Münif Paşa, I also classify them as ‘vulgar materialists.’

Ottoman vulgar materialists approached scientific topics and the discussion of ‘science’ and ‘religion’ within a philosophical framework. In contrast, German vulgar materialists largely rejected a philosophical approach. Therefore, we can argue that Ottoman vulgar materialists distinguished themselves from their German counterparts in certain ways. While Ottoman intellectuals praised Islam as pro-science, Islamic countries lag behind the West. They also claimed that existing Muslim societies could not truly represent Islam.⁴² While these intellectuals accused Christianity of being non-scientific, they also blamed some Muslims, especially men of religion, for the same reason. They wanted to show the ‘real’ or ‘original’ face of

⁴¹ Şeyma Afacan, ‘Of the Soul and Emotions: Conceptualizing “the Ottoman Individual” through Psychology’ (Phd Dissertation, Oxford, University of Oxford, 2016), 166.

⁴² Yalçınkaya, ‘Globalizing “Science and Religion”: Examples from the Late Ottoman Empire’, 4–5.

Islam. Sometimes they used hadiths and ayets to prove their arguments. ‘Science’ and ‘religion’ discussions are also a topic of reforming the understanding of Islam and reducing the power and effect of men of religion in the Ottoman Empire. Maybe they don’t want to share the same destiny with some Young Ottomans because some Young Ottomans hit the wall of Islam⁴³, in fact Islamic scholars and ulema.

In this thesis, I will use Daniel Kolland's perspective on evolutionism in the Ottoman Empire. He claims that Ottoman intellectuals used these tools for strategic reasons rather than “neither was there an instance of ‘subaltern fulfilment’ nor should it be understood as proof of Islam’s innate incompatibility with this paradigm”.⁴⁴ I will use this approach for not only evolutionism but also for vulgar materialism and positivism. These concepts were useful tools for Islam to share their ideas and approaches to Ottoman society.

As Quentin Skinner emphasises, the “autonomy of the text itself as the sole necessary key to its own meaning” is wrong.⁴⁵ Texts may be influenced by several contextual circumstances during their development. Despite potential methodological challenges such as contextual limitations and potential oversight of textual content, as Skinner suggests, it is imperative to consider the context. The materials analysed in this thesis mostly consist of scientific and philosophical works, however their primary intent was political and social in nature. These works and their writers can be regarded as social literature having a pragmatic agenda.

There was undoubtedly a legitimisation problem for the Ottoman Empire in that era with Jürgen Habermas’ concept.⁴⁶ I think this legitimisation problem causes problems in administrative areas. There was a legitimisation problem that also

⁴³ Mardin, *Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, 58.

⁴⁴ Kolland, ‘A Strategic Eurocentrism: The Construction of Ottoman Evolutionism in an Uneven World (1870–1900)’, 5.

⁴⁵ Quentin Skinner, ‘Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas’, *History and Theory* 8, no. 1 (1969): 3, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2504188>.

⁴⁶ Jürgen Habermas, *Legitimationsprobleme Im Spätkapitalismus* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1973).

occurred in intellectual areas. Selim Deringil analysed the legitimacy structures of the Ottoman Empire in administrative and social areas in some of his works.⁴⁷ Ottoman intellectuals aimed to solve this legitimisation problem from the perspective of the ‘modern’ West.

They often attempted reconciling science and Islam while regarding Christianity as incompatible with science. When examining this subject, it is important to note that it was introduced to the intellectual sphere of the Ottoman Empire from Western countries, particularly Europe. Therefore, it is evident that Ottoman intellectuals occasionally responded to the ideas brought out by Western intellectuals and philosophers such as Ernest Renan and William Draper. Ottoman intellectuals mostly regarded this topic as a ‘civilisation’ and ‘modernisation’ problem while analysing it. ‘Science’ and ‘religion’ became important tools while searching for answers for these problems. To solve these Western-style problems, Ottoman intellectuals also used these ‘Western style invented concepts’. Lastly, if there was a conflict, I think it was between materialism and spiritualism, as Şeyma Afacan proposed for psychology in the Ottoman intellectual world in her PhD thesis.⁴⁸

1.3. Concepts and Terms

Since most Ottoman intellectuals in this thesis wrote about and analysed the subject of science and religion within the framework of materialism, particularly vulgar materialism, positivism, evolutionism, and occasionally Social Darwinism, I will discuss these concepts to provide an overview. Moreover, I shall explain the method and reasoning behind my use of these concepts in this way. In addition, this subject emerged as a significant political and social issue within the Ottoman atmosphere. I will not provide a distinct explanation of these circumstances inside the thesis but

⁴⁷ Selim Deringil, ‘Legitimacy Structures in the Ottoman State: The Reign of Abdulhamid II (1876-1909)’, *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 23, no. 3 (1991): 345–59; Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire 1876-1909* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1999).

⁴⁸ Afacan, ‘Of the Soul and Emotions: Conceptualizing “the Ottoman Individual” through Psychology’, 14. In her PhD dissertation, Şeyma Afacan, mentions the terms man as machine and man as animal and adds that some intellectuals intend to “analyse intellectual discourses on soul and emotions at the intersection of modern psychology and the debate between materialism and spiritualism.” This era witnessed some discussions on the topics of materialism and spiritualism.

rather incorporate them into the primary section of the thesis while examining the concepts and works of the intellectuals.

1.3.1. Materialism

Beginning with the works of Gassendi and Hobbes, written against the dualistic view of Descartes, reborn materialism in the modern context.⁴⁹ Jean Meslier was an important figure for atheist-materialism, and his influence was increased with the publication of his work *Extraits des sentiments de Jean Meslier* by Voltaire.⁵⁰ La Mettrie's thoughts about man-machine and the impossibility of the spirit without the body were very influential in French materialism in the 18th Century. The magnum opus of Baron d'Holbach, *Système de la Nature ou Des Loix du Monde Physique et du Monde Moral (The System of Nature or the Laws of the Moral and Physical World)* is one of the influential works of atheist-materialism, and thanks to this work materialism increased its importance while exploring and explaining the system of nature and add a scientific vision to its philosophical way.⁵¹

Ludwig Feuerbach's works had a significant impact on German philosophy, contributing to the widespread influence of materialism. His perspectives influenced both the dialectical materialism of Marx and Engels and scientific/vulgar materialism, though these schools of thought differ in certain aspects. Dialectical materialists were primarily influenced by Feuerbach's philosophical writings, particularly *Philosophie der Zukunft* (Philosophy of the Future) and *Die Vorläufige Thesen über die Reform* (The Preliminary Theses on Reform). These works were published after Feuerbach's magnum opus, *Das Wesen des Christentums* (The Essence of Christianity), a groundbreaking work on religion released in 1841. On the other hand, Feuerbach's writings on religion influenced vulgar materialists, who

⁴⁹ Friedrich Albert Lange, *Geschichte Des Materialismus Und Kritik Seiner Bedeutung in Der Gegenwart: Erstes Buch: Geschichte Des Materialismus Bis Auf Kant* (Iserlohn: Verlag Von J. Baedeker, 1873), 223, 234.

⁵⁰ This work influenced Ottoman/Turkish materialists. Abdullah Cevdet translated this book by the order of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in 1928 in Arabic letters and in 1929 with Latin letters.

⁵¹For Further information about 18th French Materialism look at: Lange, *Geschichte Des Materialismus Und Kritik Seiner Bedeutung in Der Gegenwart: Erstes Buch: Geschichte Des Materialismus Bis Auf Kant*, 326–88.

referred to themselves as 'scientific materialists', while they deliberately ignored his philosophical works. They did not hold a clear or consistent position on the relationship between science and philosophy⁵² according to their claims. However, this is not entirely accurate. While they were generally opposed to philosophy, particularly metaphysical philosophy, they sometimes combined science and philosophy, forming a semi-positivist understanding.⁵³ Since there were many vulgar materialist intellectuals with diverse perspectives and a wide range of topics they analysed and wrote about, there is no strict definition of vulgar materialism, although they shared certain common principles.

During the 1850s, there is a boom in German vulgar materialism. The popularity of Büchner and vulgar materialism stems from their simplicity, superficiality, and reliance on Naturphilosophie.⁵⁴ Two of the most important German vulgar materialist works were published in 1855. These works are *Köhlerglaube und Wissenschaft* (Kohler Faith and Science) by Karl Vogt and *Kraft und Stoff* (Force and Matter) by Ludwig Büchner.⁵⁵ Büchner also, in a chapter, *Der Gottesbegriff und seine Bedeutung für die Gegenwart* (The concept of God and meaning for the present), in his work *Aus Natur und Wissenschaft* (From Nature and Science), says that because everything in the universe has existed from force and matter, there should be no concept of God except these material notions.⁵⁶ From this perspective, although there is a God, this should be a materialistic God rather than a spiritualistic God. It can be considered that force and matter are God in itself for the universe. Because of bringing materialism and vulgar materialism, a scientific base of vulgar materialism is also called scientific materialism among its followers and some scholars.

⁵² Frederick Gregory, 'Scientific versus Dialectical Materialism: A Clash of Ideologies in Nineteenth-Century German Radicalism', *Isis* 68, no. 2 (June 1977): 209–10.

⁵³ Maurice Mandelbaum, *History, Man & Reason: A Study in Nineteenth Century Thought* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1971), 8.

⁵⁴ Owen Chadwick, *The Secularization of the European Mind in the Nineteenth Century: The Gifford Lectures in the University of Edinburgh for 1973-4*, Gifford Lectures (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 172.

⁵⁵ Frederick Gregory, *Scientific Materialism in Nineteenth Century Germany*, 1977, 29.

⁵⁶ Ludwig Büchner, *Aus Natur Und Wissenschaft: : Studien, Kritiken Und Abhandlungen* (Leipzig: Verlag von Theodor Thomas, 1874), 7–14.

Dialectical materialists, especially Engels, criticised Büchner in his works *Anti Dühring* and *Dialektik der Natur*⁵⁷ and, to humiliate Büchner's materialism, called it 'vulgar materialism'. In this way, he aimed to demote Büchner's materialism. The term "vulgar materialism" gained popularity, referring to the materialism of Büchner and his followers. Vulgar materialism is mostly synonymous with physicalism. Although there are different names, like physicalism' and scientific materialism, I will use vulgar materialism for this kind of materialism because their aim is vulgarising materialism and science for penetrating into society's mind.

Like other vulgar materialists, Vogt was not interested in philosophy so much. He did not read the works of Feuerbach. He learnt about it from a mutual friend of Vogt and Feuerbach, Georg Herwegh. Feuerbach's works on religion greatly influenced Moleschott. His idea of humanitarian religion can be regarded as the scientific materialistic version of Feuerbach's philosophical materialistic one. Ludwig Büchner appreciated the criticisms of Feuerbach's religion. He also criticised idealistic philosophy, like Feuerbach criticised Hegel's philosophy.⁵⁸ Vogt also said that in one of his first publications, natural sciences stood against the idea of a Creator.⁵⁹ In addition, vulgar materialist intellectuals, especially Karl Vogt, emphasised the importance of using empirical methods and developing a new understanding of science. They aimed to transform their understanding into a holistic concept that answered all of the questions about the universe. This can even be viewed as a form of religion. While rejecting the concept of philosophy, vulgar materialists aimed to transform science into the religion and philosophy of the future.

English philosopher and historian J. Frederick Collingwood wrote a critique in his translation of this book. Collingwood says in the preface section of the translation of this book: "Its subject matter may not be new to well-informed people, as it does not aim at original scientific investigation; but the manner of treatment adopted by its

⁵⁷ Friedrich Engels, 'Herrn Eugen Dührings Umwälzung Der Wissenschaft ("Anti-Dühring")', in *Werke*, vol. 20 (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1975), 1–303; Friedrich Engels, 'Dialektik Der Natur', in *Werke*, vol. 20 (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1975), 305–568.

⁵⁸ Gregory, 'Scientific versus Dialectical Materialism: A Clash of Ideologies in Nineteenth-Century German Radicalism', 210.

⁵⁹ Gregory, 'Continental Europe', 90.

accomplished author will be highly appreciated by those who wish for the advancement of humankind through the free exercise of thought.”⁶⁰ Collingwood's preface claims that Büchner aims to create a famous work affecting society rather than a scientific work only for the upper classes.

Büchner and Vogt supported the theory of evolution, believing that it would invalidate the idea of God. In fact, they chose Lamarck's mechanisms for adaptation over Darwin's natural selection, finding them to be more accurate. When Vogt translated a work named *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation*, he defended the theory of evolution, even though it is not certain that he did believe in it, thinking that it could be used for materialism. Ludwig Büchner and Karl Vogt were sceptical of evolution because natural selection does not fully support the ideas of progress they believed in. However, Lamarckian evolution fits this idea perfectly.⁶¹

Even though Ludwig Büchner did not say anything that could change scientific facts, thanks to his discourse and the pragmatic way, his and other vulgar materialist intellectuals' works were accepted, as scientific facts are unquestionable. This demonstrates the emergence of an entirely new attitude throughout that time period, which elevates science and scientific knowledge as a dominant notion that should be adhered to by everything.

1.3.2. Positivism

August Comte developed the philosophy of Positivism by drawing upon the ideas of David Hume and Immanuel Kant. John Stuart Mill and Herbert Spencer made significant contributions to the advancement of positivism. Comte perceives the term 'positive' as the antithesis of 'negative', which he links to outdated philosophy. Consequently, he considers his own philosophy as the novel alternative. According to Comte, in this old philosophy, philosophers deal with metaphysics without experimenting. Comte argued that metaphysics should be discarded from philosophy

⁶⁰ Ludwig Büchner, *Force and Matter: Empirico-Philosophical Studies, Intelligibly Rendered*, trans. J. Frederick Collingwood (London: Trübner & Co., 1864), VII.

⁶¹ Alper Bilgili, *Darwin ve Osmanlılar: Bilim Tarihi Yazıları*, Vadi Yayınları; Toplum Dizisi (İstanbul: Vadi Kültür Sanat ve Yayıncılık A.Ş., 2018), 22.

and replaced by science. Therefore, we can assert that positivism serves as the philosophical framework that underpins the scientific method. When discussing positivism, it is important to highlight the role of senses and perceptions. Comte's assertion that research should just examine the outcomes of human perceptions establishes a boundary for science, in addition to his preexisting limitation on philosophy.⁶²

Positivist philosophers base their theory of knowledge solely on perception. According to this reasoning, they regard their philosophy as scientific while categorising other philosophies and ideas as speculative. However, empirical data is derived from individuals' perceptions of material objects in the external material world.⁶³ Positivism also claims that philosophy aims to analyse scientific knowledge. This method sorts out reliable information from metaphysical, ethical, aesthetical, religious, and social parameters. Historical and scientific knowledge sources are not necessary for considering the validity and philosophical analysis⁶⁴

From the mid-19th century forward, science began to require a strong adherence to senses, perceptions, and empirical data while also condemning the worst aspects of other philosophies. The proponents of vulgar materialism adopted positivism as their preferred approach and embraced positivistic science as the exclusive means of obtaining scientific information. Especially after the second half of the 19th century, positivism became a *Weltanschauung* and was used as a political and social tool in Europe. With this idea, positivity became a tool for not only political but also social, political, cultural, and economic development.

1.3.3. Evolutionism

In the 18th century, Carl Linnaeus recognised the hierarchical system among living creatures; yet he still accepted a divine system as the organiser of this plan. Johann

⁶² Orhan Hançerlioğlu, *Düşünce Tarihi* (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 2020), 376–77.

⁶³ Maurice Cornforth, *In Defence of Philosophy against Positivism and Pragmatism* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1950), 2–3.

⁶⁴ Kostas Gavroğlu, *Bilimlerin geçmişinden tarih üretmek* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2006), 35.

Wolfgang von Goethe published *Versuch, die Metamorphose der Pflanzen zu Erklären* (The Metamorphosis of Plants), a book on plant evolution. According to this work, all plants share a common ancestor. Jean-Baptiste Lamarck was the first scientist and intellectual to systematise the theory of evolution with his work *Philosophie zoologique ou exposition des considérations relatives à l'histoire naturelle des animaux* (Zoological Philosophy, or Exposition with Regard to the Natural History of Animals). In this work, Lamarck argues that organs that are used more develop further and that these traits are passed on to successive generations, a concept known as 'the inheritance of acquired characteristics'. The main difference between Lamarck's and Darwin's theories is that Lamarck's theory does not propose the existence of a common ancestor. Charles Darwin became the father of the 'Theory of Evolution' with his works *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* in 1859 and *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex* in 1871. With the first one, Darwin explains his thesis on natural selection. In the second work, Darwin explains his ideas that humans are also animals. Darwin is also important for his thesis about a common ancestor. Darwin applied his theory to life, explaining how life evolves. Herbert Spencer wanted to apply this in every sphere of life.⁶⁵ This thought opened the way for Social Darwinism.

Additionally, Herbert Spencer holds significant prominence in the field of evolutionary theory and the concept of evolutionism. Spencer asserted that humanity, like humans and other organisms, follows an evolutionary path. Similar to living organisms, humans and cultures progress or regress based on this concept. Herbert Spencer also transformed Charles Darwin's natural selection to the survival of the fittest in his work *Principles of Biology* in 1864. It is false that Darwin is the inventor of the term social Darwinism. Later intellectuals like Spencer used this term for the other spheres of life, especially human relations, and invented social Darwinism. Darwin and his thoughts cannot be associated with social Darwinism completely.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Elliott Sober, *Philosophy of Biology*, 2nd ed, Dimensions of Philosophy Series (Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 2000), 1.

⁶⁶ Gregory Claeys, 'The Survival of the Fittest; and the Origins of Social Darwinism', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 61, no. 2 (2000): 228,

Later, Charles Darwin used the term survival of the fittest instead of natural selection in his work *The Variation of Animals and Plants under Domestication* in 1868. Herbert Spencer's idea is as follows: "Evolution is an integration of matter and concomitant dissipation of motion, during which the matter passes from an indefinite, incoherent homogeneity to a definite, coherent heterogeneity, and during which the retained motion undergoes a parallel transformation."⁶⁷

Ernst Haeckel is widely regarded as the equivalent of Charles Darwin in Germany. He propagated Darwinism throughout the German Empire. From this standpoint, he may be called a pragmatic intellectual. He authored numerous publications on the subject of evolution, identified thousands of species, and constructed a comprehensive genealogical tree encompassing all extant life forms. He actively advocated for scientific racism and played a pivotal role in establishing Social Darwinism in Germany. He was a significant figure in Germany's monism movement. "Haeckel argues for a unity of the world.... From the inorganic, through the simplest organisms, right up to man, no unbridgeable barriers arose; rather, a continuous, law-governed unity ran through the whole."⁶⁸ Ernst Haeckel's monism is not a scientific theory but *Weltanschauung*.⁶⁹ During the unification of the German Empire in 1871, Ernest Haeckel supported the idea of Social Darwinism. During that time, Haeckel supported the idea of survival of the fittest. According to that idea, 'lower races' should be supported by 'higher races'.⁷⁰ This method might be considered as a means of modernisation.

1.4. Outline of the Thesis

Each intellectual in this thesis evaluated the topic from their own viewpoint, and this study aims to reveal these perspectives by analysing their interpretations of science

⁶⁷ Alberto Mingardi and John Meadowcroft, *Herbert Spencer*, Major Conservative and Libertarian Intellectuals 18 (London: Continuum International Pub. Group, 2011), 29–30.

⁶⁸ Robert J Richards, 'Ernst Haeckel and the Struggles over Evolution and Religion', *Annals of the History and Philosophy of Biology*, no. 10 (2005): 89.

⁶⁹ Ruth Anne Glenapp, 'The Monism of Ernst Haeckel' (Cornell, Cornell University, 1968), 196.

⁷⁰ James Nicholson and Daniel Margetts, 'Who Was... Ernst Haeckel', *Biologist* 54, no. 1 (February 2007): 33.

and religion. Their understanding of science, materialism, evolutionism, positivism, and religion will contribute to the reconstruction of their viewpoints and methods on the subject. The primary objective was to depict a representation of vulgar materialistic perspectives on science and religion. While these intellectuals may not always discuss religion, some of their writings show their views. In addition, these publications present varying perspectives on religion while including scientific elements. Intellectuals position religion in accordance with the role of science. I will try to uncover hints and concealed insights within the writings of these intellectuals, employing religious knowledge and context to formulate interpretations. My ultimate goal is to create a portrait of Ottoman intellectuals who lived between the 1860s and the 1910s. This image will focus on their contributions to scientific, religious, and philosophical subjects and will include references to their written works. I also aim to demonstrate the shift in mindset among these intellectuals of the era.

In examining this topic, I will adopt this perspective and aim to demonstrate that while most Ottoman intellectuals were Western-oriented, they also sought to incorporate local values, such as Islam and other social tendencies, to reconcile them with Western ideas. For this reason, they aspired to create an alternative to Western modernism that would better serve the needs of Ottoman society. This thesis seeks to highlight the deliberate efforts of these intellectuals to integrate Islam with scientific and, at times, non-Islamic philosophical principles, as well as their attempts to disseminate this synthesis to the public. Ottoman intellectuals introduced a distinct form of modernisation and an alternative Islamic worldview, both of which had a significant impact on debates surrounding 'science' and 'religion'. These discussions were not limited to Muslim intellectuals; non-Muslim Ottoman intellectuals also engaged in them. For instance, Armenian intellectuals emphasised evolution in the 1870s and 1880s while discussing the creation of an 'Armenian Nation'.⁷¹

While Western intellectuals were engaged in discussing this topic, Ottoman intellectuals also showed interest, particularly through translations and their own works. According to my thesis, the discussion on this topic originated in the 1860s

⁷¹ Aret Karademir, 'The Introduction of Modern Western Philosophy in the Ottoman Empire: Armenian Intellectuals', *Modern Intellectual History*, 3 August 2023, 1–28.

with Münif Paşa and his periodical, *Mecmua-i Fünun*. I shall conclude the discussion on the matter in the 1910s, as there was no further substantial debate following the death of Baha Tevfik, in my opinion. Despite living until 1932, Abdullah Cevdet's exploration of this topic waned after the 1910s. Instead, he focused on producing social literature in his quest to establish a new society grounded in a fresh interpretation of Islam. However, I shall use certain excerpts from Abdullah Cevdet's writings from the 1920s in specific sections. During the analysis of this subject, my intention was to demonstrate the perspectives of these intellectuals towards science and occasionally religion, as well as their attitudes towards these notions, focusing on their socio-political aim of modernisation. Due to the absence of a definitive and stringent agreement among these intellectuals. Apart from its intellectual significance, this discourse held political implications within the Ottoman Empire. Occasionally, Ahmed Midhat employed it to counter the West and Orientalists. Although certain aspects of their writings may have contained critiques of Islam, even if only indirectly, most of their work mostly demonstrated their comprehension of Islam. Münif Paşa, Ahmed Midhat, and Abdullah Cevdet contemplated their understanding of Islam, even though most of their beliefs contradicted Classical Islamic doctrine.

In the analysis of Münif Paşa, I will demonstrate the introduction of contemporary scientific and intellectual ideas into the Ottoman Empire, as well as the embracing of the importance of science and philosophy. I will also demonstrate Münif Paşa's endeavours to separate the domains of science and religion. In doing so, I will also attempt to highlight how the press has contributed to the popularisation of science and intellectual knowledge. For this reason, Münif Paşa will become a pioneer figure in my thesis and his pioneering role in Ottoman modern scientific and intellectual history.

The second figure will be Ahmed Midhat, and I will mention the two opposite sides of Ahmed Midhat. In the first half of the chapter, I discuss Ahmed Midhat's perspective as an evolutionist and materialist. However, in the second part, I will highlight his anti-materialist stance. I will also emphasise the significance of Islam for Ahmed Midhat on both sides. When discussing the shift in Ahmed Midhat's

intellectual perspective, it is crucial to also examine his political stance and his attempts to align himself with the ideals of the Ottoman Empire.

Beşir Fuad is the third figure. When discussing Beşir Fuad, it is important to highlight the significance of science, particularly in the fields of physiology and psychology. Another aspect I address when examining Beşir Fuad is the inquiry into the presence of spirit. Additionally, I shall address the topics of literature and the analysis of Romanticism and Realism/Naturalism. From a literary standpoint, I will also discuss the ideas pertaining to cognition, perception, and their correlation with the brain and heart. Beşir Fuad is essential for discussing the problem of extreme scientism. However, he occasionally favours Islam above Christianity due to its association with science. I will establish a correlation between the patriotism of Beşir Fuad and the thesis.

Abdullah Cevdet will be the fourth figure. The main focus is Abdullah Cevdet's incorporation of scientific ideas and his attempt to reconcile materialist, evolutionist, and scientific concepts with Islam, aiming to establish a materialist Islamic viewpoint. Undoubtedly, his effort is directly linked to his political stance. I will discuss Abdullah Cevdet, examining his contributions and impact from scientific, intellectual, social, political, and religious standpoints. Abdullah Cevdet emphasises his influential position as a guide in his political, social, religious, and scientific writings, distinguishing himself from other intellectuals.

The last figure in this thesis will be Baha Tevfik. Baha Tevfik represents scientism to the highest degree among that particular group. From certain viewpoints, he can be regarded as a fusion of Beşir Fuad and Abdullah Cevdet. Baha Tevfik is the only figure with almost no aim to attach to the position of being a political, social or religious leader. In addition, he had no intention of responding to Orientalist intellectuals or Christian missionaries. While praising Islam, he was only careful with the reactions among the Islamic scholars of the society. Consequently, he experienced a greater sense of liberation compared to other people. Another factor contributing to his unrestricted approach is connected to the permissive ambiance of the Second Constitutional Era.

Through the examination of these five figures, I aim to construct a comprehensive portrait of Ottoman intellectuals. Despite their differing perspectives and debates on 'science' and 'religion', they shared common objectives in their exploration of these topics. I will also seek to illustrate their stance on the notions of 'science' and 'religion' and their role in shaping society while protecting it from the encroaching influence of the Western world and Orientalists. Additionally, I challenge the prevailing perspective in Turkish historiography that Ottoman materialism positioned itself in opposition to religion and tradition in the context of modernisation. As Şeyma Afacan argues, this perception is largely rooted in the early writings of Abdullah Cevdet from the 1890s.⁷² From my point of view, Abdullah Cevdet followed this way because of his estrangement from using Islam as a tool in these years.

Münif Paşa and Ahmed Midhat attempted to promote the dissemination of scientific knowledge through the use of newspapers and journals. Münif Paşa made significant contributions to the establishment of open lectures, which paved the path for the education of society. Ahmed Midhat emerged as a leading figure in Occidentalism, particularly in the 1880s. His objective was to harness Western science and intellectualism as a source of practical knowledge for the Ottoman Empire and its society. Beşir Fuad aspired to elevate science above all other notions, including religion, and to criticise Christianity. He aimed to interpret every concept, including literature, through the lens of scientific understanding. Abdullah Cevdet aimed to establish an innovative form of Islam and Ottoman Society that incorporated vulgar materialism and Social Darwinism principles. Finally, Baha Tevfik reconciled modern philosophy with scientism and attempted to establish a scientific comprehension of philosophy, paving the path for scientific inquiry and advancement. From this viewpoint, it may be argued that despite their divergent paths, these intellectuals shared a common objective: to establish science, particularly a popularised materialistic scientific understanding, as a prominent force in Ottoman society.

⁷² Afacan, 'Of the Soul and Emotions: Conceptualizing "the Ottoman Individual" through Psychology', 95.

Besides, the intellectuals I will examine rarely compared their comprehension of science with religion; instead, they primarily did so indirectly. Instead of perceiving it, it will be examined as differing interpretations of these ideas and occasionally finding ways to reconcile them in order to captivate the public's interest. Due to the pragmatic strategies employed by these intellectuals, it is challenging to discern a direct assault on Islam. This perspective is important for offering an alternative viewpoint on the subject. Additionally, their objective was to use scientific and intellectual understanding as a safeguard against Western influence and colonial expansion in the Ottoman Empire and its civilisation. Therefore, I shall examine the subject matter through the lens of social and political viewpoints. Ottoman intellectuals did embrace the idea of aligning themselves with a 'higher' civilisation. Their goal was to separate themselves from the influence of other 'higher' civilisations and their Orientalist attitude. Ottoman intellectuals' perspective bears a resemblance to the anti-colonial nationalistic outlook. In Ottoman society, Islam is considered a fundamental and highly valued aspect.

Almost all these figures considered Islam and the Ottoman Empire as inseparable parts of a whole. For this reason, they aimed to protect Islam even though most were atheists and regarded Islam as suitable and in harmony with science while criticising Christianity and Orientalist intellectuals on this topic. While criticising Christianity, these intellectuals also criticised the West and Orientalist intellectuals. During this effort, their objective was twofold: to safeguard the Ottoman Empire and to counter the growing influence of Christian missionaries who had gained significant traction within the Ottoman Empire during the 19th century. However, it is important to note that not all of them were devout Muslims. It is believed that people such as Abdullah Cevdet, Beşir Fuad, and Baha Tevfik identified as atheists. Primarily, they expressed disapproval towards the idea of religion. However, it is noteworthy that in subsequent chapters, I will elaborate on the specific reasons why they defended and commended Islam over Christianity. Additionally, they occasionally employed Islamic arguments to extol science and its connection to Islam. These people also aimed to challenge the divide between traditional Turkish culture and Western influence. Their intention was to incorporate Western material and non-material

values into Ottoman culture. Their objective was to maintain a contemporary, Westernised Ottoman and Islamic culture.

In the modern ages, nationalism took the position⁷³, especially after the Age of Enlightenment. In the Ottoman Empire, that fact is a little bit different. Ottoman intellectuals considered Islam as a part of the Ottoman nation and used it as a core for their intellectual worldview. For this reason, they wanted to make Islam as modern as nationalism. They combined it with modern thought and used it as a protection from the attacks of Orientalist intellectuals with nationalist impetus.

When examining the works and arguments of Ottoman intellectuals, it is important to remember that this subject pertains to the debates on modernisation in opposition to Western ideals and the perspectives of Orientalist intellectuals about the Ottoman Empire and Islam. Ottoman intellectuals attempted to incorporate and safeguard the fundamental principles of Islam while embracing scientific and philosophical pursuits, thereby adopting a mindset like that of the Western world. It can be stated that certain Ottoman intellectuals aspired to secure posts in the bureaucracy or other influential roles, such as leading the Ottoman opposition.

At the conclusion of this thesis, I aim to demonstrate that these intellectuals utilised Islam, science, vulgar materialism, positivism, and evolutionism as tools for the modernisation of the Ottoman Empire and society. As Şeyma Afacan emphasises, “materialism enabled these intellectuals to negotiate the definition of science and its boundaries in understanding and shaping society.”⁷⁴ My main argument is that, although they employed different approaches and perspectives in their works, and despite the similarities in their use of vulgar materialism, positivism, and evolutionism, their primary objective was to harmonise Islam and science in the pursuit of modernising Muslim Ottoman society and protecting it from the influence of Orientalist perspectives and Christian missionaries.

⁷³ Benedict R. O’G Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006).

⁷⁴ Afacan, ‘Of the Soul and Emotions: Conceptualizing “the Ottoman Individual” through Psychology’, 242.

Selecting five different intellectuals, analysing numerous works, and comparing them with the original sources that influenced Ottoman intellectuals, and their translations has made this thesis particularly challenging. This is because I have not only discussed the debate between science and religion but also examined the popularisation of science and scientific writings in the Ottoman Empire during that period. Additionally, I have sought to correlate scientific, philosophical, and intellectual topics with social, political, and religious themes, even though these intellectuals did not always explicitly make such connections. This approach has resulted in a broader scope than I initially anticipated when beginning this research.

Another challenge in this thesis has been the analysis of translations produced by these intellectuals. While examining these translations, I questioned whether they had intervened in or altered the texts. To address this, I consistently conducted pairwise comparisons when analysing their works. This significantly increased the workload of the thesis. Moreover, due to the lack of a well-established citation culture, I often struggled to determine whether certain ideas were original to these intellectuals or whether they had borrowed them from other intellectuals, scientists, or philosophers. This is a broader issue in the study of Ottoman intellectual history, which is borrowed, and how these intellectuals adapted them within their own works.

Another difficulty I encountered was the scarcity of secondary sources. Many of the available secondary sources are overtly partisan, which undermines academic objectivity. As a result, I primarily relied on primary sources. With some notable exceptions, most academicians have followed in the footsteps of figures such as Şükrü Hanioglu and other canonical figures, often replicating their arguments and works. This made it particularly difficult to find diverse perspectives and new arguments on this topic. At times, I found myself unintentionally following similar lines of thought as these figures, struggling to break away from the dominant narratives established by canonical academicians and intellectuals.

1.5. Literature Review

Adnan Advar wrote the first academic work about the relationship between science and religion in Turkish intellectual history. He initially released his work in French

in 1939 under the title *La Science chez les Turcs Ottomans* (Science in the Ottoman Turks) and subsequently published it in Turkish as *Osmanlı Türklerinde İlim* in 1943. This work embodies the authorised perspective and language of the recently established republic, as well as the impact of radical French styles and secularism. This impression persisted into the 1980s. As the Turkish-Islam synthesis gained prominence, the official perspective underwent a transformation. Adnan Adıvar perceives religion as the underlying cause of the Ottoman Empire's lack of progress. He asserted that science and religion are antithetical notions. The perceived conflict between science and religion is a prominent concept that arose during the process of modernisation in the Western world. In addition, it can be asserted that this work encompasses not only intellectual and historical aspects but also serves as a manifestation of the intellectual and political standpoint of the recently established Turkish Republic.

Several academic publications on this subject were authored by Divinity School academicians who are devout Muslims or have similar political, religious, and philosophical perspectives. Some examples of works by Mehmet Akgün, *Materyalizmin Türkiye'ye Girişi* and *Türkiye'de Klasik Materyalizmin Eleştirileri*; Süleyman Hayri Bolay, *Türkiye'de Ruhçu ve Maddeci Görüşün Mücadelesi*; and Murtaza Korlaelçi, *Pozitivizmin Türkiye'ye Girişi*, are mentioned. Murtaza Korlaelçi authored a book on positivism in Turkey, in which he included numerous extraneous details pertaining to positivism. The length and level of detail in the body section should have been greater. This book does not possess the necessary attributes to be categorised as a work on intellectual history. However, it is important to note that the arguments presented in this book are feeble and do not demonstrate a scholarly perspective. Mehmet Akgün authored two books pertaining to materialism in Turkey, one focusing on materialism itself and the other exploring anti-materialism. Both of these books have simple information to introduce readers to the subject matter. He clarifies the concepts associated with these philosophical trends and refrains from excessive interpretation. While the book of Korlaelçi has several great aspects, it is lacking from an intellectual standpoint. Due to their limited scope, the works of Korlaelçi and Akgün are inadequate for doing in-depth research. However, they can serve as a useful resource for people who are new to the subject. They play a crucial

role in leading the way in the fields of materialism and positivism. In addition, they perceive materialist and positive intellectuals as lacking originality and merely imitating Western materialist and positive intellectuals. The book authored by Süleyman Hayri Bolay originated as his undergraduate thesis, which was overseen by the renowned intellectual historian Hilmi Ziya Ülken. He exerts considerable effort in his work, yet the biased undertone is readily discernible. His determination to proclaim the triumph of spiritualism is evident. This factor casts doubt on its academic credibility, yet its references remain valid.

Rıza Bağcı, in his work *Baha Tevfik'in Hayatı, Edebî ve Felsefî Eserleri Üzerinde Bir Araştırma*, gives almost no information about Baha Tevfik's philosophical thinking and provides scanty insight into his literary identity. Mehmet Ö. Alkan wrote his master's thesis on Baha Tevfik under the name of *Siyasal düşüncenin dünyevileşmesi: 'ilim'den 'bilim'e geçişin kritik evreleri Osmanlı materyalizmi ve Baha Tevfik*. This thesis is one of the first works in Turkey written on Baha Tevfik and draws a general portrait of Baha Tevfik.

Neşet Toku authored a book titled *Türkiye'de Anti-Materyalist Felsefe (Spritüalizm) -İlk Temsilciler* where he discusses anti-materialism and spiritualism in his own words. He thoroughly examines the subject matter and approaches the issue in a methodical manner by addressing the specific subtopics of each intellectual when analysing their beliefs.

As Ercüment Asil says, Korlaelçi's and Bolay's work reduces philosophy to materialism, as Şehbenderzade Ahmed Hilmi did in his works. From their point of view, philosophy, in a much more general sense, would naturally include religion as a part of it. For that reason, they criticise philosophy.⁷⁵ Their unanalytical attitude can be related to philosophy and science. In addition, they misconstrued scientific concepts in the field of philosophy, specifically vulgar materialism, positivism, and evolutionism. Due to this rationale, they expressed criticism and adopted a

⁷⁵ Ercüment Asil, 'The Pursuit of the Modern Mind: Popularization of Science, the Development of the Middle Classes, and Religious Transformation in the Ottoman Empire, 1860-1880' (Chicago, The University of Chicago, 2017), 9–10.

pessimistic stance towards philosophy and science due to their association with science.

Şerif Mardin has authored multiple works on the intellectual history of the Late Ottoman Empire and Early Republican era. While his works may not be explicitly focused on the 'the relationship between science and religion,' I have a similar viewpoint to his. In his books *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought* and *Jön Türklerin Siyasî Fikirleri 1895-1908*, he argues that despite their varying perspectives and approaches, Late Ottoman intellectuals shared a common goal: to safeguard the Empire. In this thesis, I will use the same perspective as Şerif Mardin and approach the problem utilising identical methodologies.

Orhan Okay's work, *Beşir Fuad: İlk Türk Pozitivisti ve Naturalisti*, can be regarded as the first book on Beşir Fuad written in Turkey. While being the first is significant, it does not adequately provide details about his ideas, chronicle his life, or comprehensively cover his works. Orhan Okay has a negative approach to naturalism and positivism. Another important intellectual historian, Hilmi Ziya Ülken, in his work *Türkiye'de Çağdaş Düşünce Tarihi*, does not give much importance to the materialist and positivist intellectuals of the Ottoman Empire. He specifically references Beşir Fuad, Abdullah Cevdet, and Baha Tevfik while neglecting to name other significant positivist and materialist philosophers. Moreover, the sections dedicated to Beşir Fuad, Abdullah Cevdet, and Baha Tevfik lacking significant detail. He just offers a broad overview of these people and their intellectual contributions and concepts. In addition, it is worth noting that He does not employ an analytical approach while providing knowledge, instead focusing solely on presenting encyclopaedic facts. The example provided and the arguments presented regarding the intersection of science and religion undermine impartiality and diminish the scholarly merit of the author's work.

M. Şükrü Hanioglu analyses the ideas of this period, particularly those of Abdullah Cevdet, whom he considers to be a passionate materialist and opponent of religion. Instead of discussing Abdullah Cevdet's views on positivism, materialism, and evolutionism, he focused on analysing his political ideology and writings. Hanioglu

authored the piece titled ‘Blueprints for a future society: Late Ottoman Materialists on science, religion, and art’ in Elisabeth Özdalga's edited book, *Late Ottoman Society: The Intellectual Legacy*. In this work, he clarifies the position of materialist intellectuals in their endeavour to scientifically mould society. Hanioglu highlights the concept of Weltanschauung and the use of scientific reasoning, replacing religious and outdated philosophical beliefs with scientism.

Hanioglu highlights the impact of vulgar materialism under the Ottoman Empire. Hanioglu cites Beşir Fuad, Abdullah Cevdet, and Baha Tevfik as examples to clarify this alteration. He strongly attacks the dominant opinion that Beşir Fuad was the first Ottoman Positivist, due to Beşir Fuad's acceptance of August Comte as a model. He regards Beşir Fuad as an innovator in the spread of scientific knowledge. He refers to Abdullah Cevdet as the second figure. He considers Cevdet as a kind of mujtahid, an interpreter of Islamic law; Abdullah Cevdet tries to harmonise Islamic values with science to address public opinion and society's needs and create a new form of Islam as an alternative to Orthodox Islam. His final reference is of Baha Tevfik. Baha Tevfik was a member of the last generation of Ottoman materialists. He perceives him as a secular materialist, as opposed to Abdullah Cevdet. His objective was to develop a materialistic and scientific philosophy that would deeply influence people's thoughts and beliefs. In short, Hanioglu clarifies the three significant proponents of Ottoman materialism and their endeavours to guide the populace towards scientific methods, utilising various instruments under diverse political circumstances and attempts. This work is crucial in demonstrating the Weltanschauung of the vulgar materialist Ottoman intellectuals during the Late Ottoman Empire.

Since the 2000s, there has been a shift in the approach to works in this field, moving away from a purely intellectual and analytical standpoint. Intellectuals have begun to acknowledge the evolving understanding and awareness of knowledge, science, and concepts. This shift has resulted in new works characterised by a greater emphasis on analysis and academic discipline. Additionally, as part of this transformation, academicians have expanded their focus, exploring various intellectuals, academic disciplines, and subjects.

Firstly, I will discuss the contributions of Berrak Burçak. In 2005, she successfully presented her thesis, *Science, a Remedy for All Ills: Healing "The Sick Man of Europe"—A Case for Ottoman Scientism*, at Princeton University. This thesis examines the introduction and influence of modern science in the Ottoman Empire from the late 18th century to the reign of Abdülhamid II. Burçak discusses the perspectives of Turkish intellectuals on the relationship between science and religion, categorising them into three distinct groups. The first group follows the progressivist approach, which emerged during the establishment of the Turkish Republic and the rise of Kemalism. These intellectuals assert that Islam hinders scientific progress. As previously mentioned, Adnan Adıvar holds significant influence within this group. However, this perspective evolved in the progressive climate of the 1980s, leading to the emergence of two new approaches. The first is the revisionist approach, which seeks to reconcile science and Islam by refuting the claims made by the progressivists. The second is a reactionary approach, primarily originating from Divinity Schools and Islamist scholars, which aimed to discredit Ottoman intellectuals who adhered to materialist and positivist ideologies.

Burçak's thesis also explores two key phases following the introduction of modern science into the Ottoman Empire, which in turn gave rise to two distinct groups of intellectuals. The first phase was driven by military reforms, which led to the establishment of new schools and, consequently, the emergence of a new intellectual class. She elaborates on these stages and intellectual classes in the second and third chapters of her thesis. Burçak further examines the transformation in the understanding of science and intellect, arguing that intellectuals believed that the mere acquisition of knowledge, termed useful knowledge, was insufficient. Instead, science had to permeate everyday life. As society transitioned from subjects to citizens, public education and journalism became tools for disseminating this new scientific outlook. From this perspective, the hypothesis of an inherent conflict between science and religion emerged. Burçak also discusses how the ruling elite used scientific knowledge as a tool of governance. In summary, her work effectively elucidates how science transitioned from being a specialised, practical field to a means of exercising authority over society in the Ottoman Empire. Since Burçak discusses the transformation of science into practical application, I will address the

epistemological shift and the usage of the term science. I also employ the term useful knowledge in my thesis.

The second recent thesis is Alper Yalçınkaya's *Their Science, Our Values*, defended in 2010 and later revised and published as *Learned Patriots* in 2015. His work explores the debate surrounding science and its relationship with morality, religion, and societal values. He examines how men of science attempted to disseminate their ideas while feeling a sense of responsibility toward the sultan, the state, or Islam as an authority. Rather than focusing on an epistemological debate between science and religion, Yalçınkaya investigates the political relationship and distinctions between them. In his work, there is no direct comparison of science versus religion; instead, he analyses how scientific knowledge was understood and utilised.

Yalçınkaya adopts the term useful knowledge, referring to the cautious approach of late Ottoman intellectuals and intellectuals toward modernisation and Westernisation. He uses Mehmed Akif as an example when explaining this concept. His research is primarily based on primary sources, particularly newspapers and journals. He also addresses the 19th-century Ottoman scientific literature's distinction between 'ilm' and 'fen'. Furthermore, he highlights how scientific knowledge was associated with virtue and morality, framing useful knowledge as a pathway to becoming a good citizen. His work also examines the debates between materialist intellectuals and religious/moral intellectuals regarding scientific knowledge and the role of Islam. Overall, Yalçınkaya provides a concise overview of how modern scientific knowledge entered the Ottoman Empire, how it was perceived, and how it was transformed into useful knowledge. He frequently discusses efforts to harmonise this knowledge with morality and religion, effectively presenting the 19th-century Ottoman conception of scientific knowledge.

Serdar Poyraz is another contemporary historian whose work closely relates to my topic. His thesis, *Science versus Religion: The Influence of European Materialism on Turkish Thought, 1860–1960*, compares materialist and anti-materialist thought in the late Ottoman Empire and early Turkish Republic by analysing the theoretical discussions of various intellectuals. He categorises Münif Paşa, Beşir Fuad, and Baha

Tevfik as materialists, while Şehbenderzade Ahmed Hilmi, Said Nursi, and Ahmed Hamdi Tanpınar are classified as anti-materialists. Poyraz argues that the conventional binary distinctions, such as science versus religion or modern versus traditional, are unhelpful. From my perspective, this argument is valid, as such rigid classifications often lead to oversimplifications in the study of social sciences. However, while Poyraz criticises strict distinctions, he also makes a similar categorical mistake by grouping intellectuals into Westernists, who seek to adopt Western ideas entirely, and non-Westernists, who only wish to adopt material aspects of Western civilisation. In my view, this distinction is problematic, as even within the Westernist group, there are subcategories regarding the adoption of non-material Western values. Despite this, I commend Poyraz for his selection of figures in the second part of his thesis. His inclusion of a philosopher (Şehbenderzade), a religious scholar (Said Nursi), and a literary figure (Ahmed Hamdi Tanpınar) presents a nuanced portrayal of intellectual diversity. However, while his thesis is broad in scope, this breadth sometimes leads to a lack of cohesion in his arguments.

One of the most recent studies in this field is Ercüment Asil's 2017 thesis, *The Pursuit of the Modern Mind: Popularisation of Science, the Development of the Middle Classes, and Religious Transformation in the Ottoman Empire, 1860–1880*. Asil examines the spread of natural sciences in the Ottoman Empire between 1860 and the 1880s, linking this phenomenon to the publication of popular modern science journals. He considers this popularisation to be a direct consequence of the socio-political transformations brought about by the Tanzimat reforms. Additionally, he associates it with the rise of a new educated middle class and an intellectual transformation. Asil argues that this newly emerging intellectual/middle class was not a uniform bloc. While its members generally sought to prevent colonial influence on Ottoman science, they were divided on how to integrate this new knowledge with history and religion. His thesis, particularly its discussion of bureaucratic tensions between conservative and Westernist factions, is significant for understanding the Tanzimat period's modernisation efforts. In my thesis, I will build upon Asil's analysis of the educated middle class and further examine the use of natural sciences as a tool.

Kenan Tekin's thesis, *Reforming Categories of Science and Religion in the Late Ottoman Empire*, analyses the evolution of scientific and religious concepts in the early modern and modern Ottoman periods. He examines the works of Yahya Nevi and Saçaklızade Muhammed el-Maraşı to illustrate early modern Ottoman conceptions of science. He then explores how these ideas evolved in the mid-19th century, particularly through Ahmed Cevdet Paşa's translation of Ibn Haldun's *Muqaddimah*. His work is significant in tracing the conceptual shift in scientific thought and its relationship with religion.

Şeyma Afacan's PhD thesis *Of the Soul and Emotions: Conceptualizing 'the Ottoman individual' through psychology*, deals with the newborn science of psychology in the Late Ottoman Empire. She focuses on the rhetoric about the 'new man' in the Ottoman Empire. Relations of this thesis with my thesis are emphasis of vulgar materialism for its relationship with psychology from the perspective of Ottoman intellectuals. The other point is that Şeyma Afacan also chooses Abdullah Cevdet and Baha Tevfik as I do for my thesis. She also mentions that during the birth of psychology there was a distinction between materialism and spiritualism. This distinction between materialism and spiritualism was also an important notion for Ottoman and Turkish modernisation. Her usage of vulgar materialism and rhetoric of new man contributed my thesis.

Lastly, to understand the political atmosphere of the era works of Feroz Ahmad, Niyazi Berkes, Bernard Lewis, Tarık Zafer Tunaya, Erik Jan Zürcher are important. Especially Tarık Zafer Tunaya's *Türkiye'de Siyasal Partiler I: İkinci Meşrutiyet Dönemi* and *Türkiye'de Siyasal Partiler III: İttihat ve Terakki*. Although these books are important to understand political atmosphere of the era.⁷⁶ Although these works are important to understand political atmosphere, I will not use these works because I will not mention political atmosphere while mentioning the topic. Also, Şerif

⁷⁶ Feroz Ahmad, *The Young Turks: The Committee of Union and Progress in Turkish Politics, 1908-1914* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010); Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (London: Hurst, 1998); Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey / Bernard Lewis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); Tarık Zafer Tunaya, *Türkiye'de Siyasal Partiler Cilt 1 İkinci Meşrutiyet Dönemi* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2015); Tarık Zafer Tunaya, *Türkiye'de Siyasal Partiler Cilt 3 İttihat ve Terakki, Bir Çağın, Bir Kuşağın, Bir Partinin Tarihi* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2015); Erik Jan Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (London ; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2004).

Mardin's works are important both for understanding the mentality and atmosphere of the era.⁷⁷ Sabri Ülgener's works are also important to consider the economical mentality change from the early times of Islamic Turkish history and he also used Weberian perspective.⁷⁸ That makes his works important to regard the change in mentality of socio-economical structure. Both these works are important for history of political thought of Post Tanzimat Period of the Ottoman Empire.



⁷⁷ Mardin, *Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*; Şerif Mardin, *Jön Türklerin Siyasî Fikirleri: 1895 - 1908* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2008).

⁷⁸ Sabri F. Ülgener, *İktisadî Çözülmenin Ahlâk ve Zihniyet Dünyası: Fikir ve Sanat Tarihi Boyu Akisleri ile Bir Portre Denemesi* (İstanbul: Derin Yayınları, 2006); Sabri F. Ülgener, *Dünü ve Bugünü ile, Zihniyet ve Din: İslâm, Tasavvuf ve Çözülme Devri İktisat Ahlâkı* (İstanbul: Derin Yayınları, 2015).

CHAPTER 2

MÜNİF PAŞA AND THE ENTRANCE OF MODERN SCIENCE AND INTELLECTUALITY TO THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE: MECMUA-I FÜNUN

2.1. Importance of Münif Paşa for the Thesis

Münif Paşa was one of the pioneers of the idea of ‘enlightenment’ in the Ottoman Empire.⁷⁹ Additionally, he made significant contributions to the independence of science from religious and governmental control. Nevertheless, it would be inaccurate to assert that he aligned himself with either science or religion; instead, he underscored the distinctions between these concepts. He acknowledged and emphasised the significance and status of science without reconciling it with religion or Islam. This perspective also positions him as a pioneer of modern and Western scientific thought within the Ottoman Empire. During this process, he mainly used his arguments in his publication called Mecmua-i Fünun. Mecmua-i Fünun was the first scientific publication in the Ottoman Empire that followed Western principles.

Tanpınar regarded Münif Paşa as a mentor to younger generations, including Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, and believed that both men were naturally inclined toward teaching. His deliberate avoidance of politics relegated him to obscurity as an intellectual figure for future generations. Only Ebuzziya Tevfik mentioned him in his books. As a result, his name is not included alongside his contemporaries, Şinasi and Namık Kemal. Nevertheless, his literary technique surpassed that of these intellectuals, particularly in his work *Muhaverat-ı Hikemiye*.⁸⁰ In my opinion, this demonstrates

⁷⁹ Hilmi Ziya Ülken, *Türkiye’de çağdaş düşünce tarihi* (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2013), 71.

⁸⁰ Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, *On dokuzuncu asır Türk edebiyatı tarihi* (İstanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 2016), 185–86.

that the generations of the 1880s and beyond prioritized political positions over intellectual writings due to their opposition to Abdülhamid II and their embrace of liberal ideologies. For this reason, they sometimes intertwined their political views with discussions on materialism, science, scientific thought, and religion. Münif Paşa's apolitical stance proved insufficient in the face of their fervent political approach. As Hilmi Ziya emphasizes, Münif Paşa was a more reserved, conservative intellectual of the Enlightenment and remained deeply committed to the state system.⁸¹ Moreover, many intellectual topics in the Ottoman Empire were inherently political in nature.

Münif Paşa was one of the most significant figures of the period when modern Western education and science began to enter the Ottoman Empire. He was a founding member of the first scientific association, Cemiyet-i İlmiye-i Osmaniye,⁸² and established the first Ottoman scientific journal,⁸³ Following the abolition of Encümen-i Daniş (the Privy Council), Cemiyet-i İlmiye-i Osmaniye and Münif Paşa gained increasing prominence. This shift also reflects the transformation in intellectual thought and mindset from traditional understanding to a more modern approach. Ahmed Cevdet Paşa and his intellectual perspective began to lose ground in this transition, while Münif Paşa and his ideas gained traction. This change

⁸¹ Ülken, *Türkiye'de çağdaş düşünce tarihi*, 75.

⁸² Prior to the establishment of Cemiyet-i İlmiye-i Osmaniye, Encümen-i Daniş (the Privy Council) was founded in 1851, along with Beşiktaş Cemiyet-i İlmiyesi (the Beşiktaş Science Society), as early attempts to create scientific and intellectual societies in the Ottoman Empire. Encümen-i Daniş was established by official authorities to write and publish textbooks for Darülfünun (House of Sciences, later transformed into Istanbul University). Beşiktaş Cemiyet-i İlmiyesi was not a structured society like Cemiyet-i İlmiye-i Osmaniye; rather, it occupied an intermediary position between Eastern and Western influences. Both Encümen-i Daniş and Beşiktaş Cemiyet-i İlmiyesi can be considered as the initial steps in the formation of intellectual and scientific societies in the Ottoman Empire. However, since Encümen-i Daniş was founded for official purposes and Beşiktaş Cemiyet-i İlmiyesi lacked a fully institutional base, Cemiyet-i İlmiye-i Osmaniye can be regarded as the first true scientific and intellectual society. Moreover, Encümen-i Daniş aspired to become an Ottoman counterpart to the Académie Française but ultimately failed to achieve this objective.

⁸³ *Mecmua-i Fünun* also represents a significant milestone in the transformation of the press during the era of print capitalism in the Ottoman Empire. It was one of the earliest examples of private publishing and marked the beginning of scientific and intellectual publications in the empire. Thus, *Mecmua-i Fünun* is not only important for the advancement of scientific and intellectual writing but also for the broader history of Ottoman press and publishing. Although *Mecmua-i Fünun* and much of Münif Paşa's writings are not directly related to the central topic of my thesis, their role in introducing a new approach to scientific and intellectual writing, as well as pioneering the publication of Western scientific works, makes them highly relevant to this study..

symbolises the decline of ilm (Islamic scholarly tradition) and the rise of Western science, reinforced by Münif Paşa's interest in modern Western scientific thought and French materialism. The powerful bureaucrats of the Tanzimat Era, Fuad and Ali Paşas, supported Münif Paşa in this endeavour. This demonstrates that the transformation was not confined to the intellectual sphere; rather, the state itself was evolving, increasingly embracing and endorsing this new Western scientific perspective.⁸⁴ Münif Paşa opened the way of modern science to the press and intellectual sphere, and thanks to this, he aimed to penetrate the public's mind.

German vulgar materialism did not influence Münif Paşa during his writing career. In the 1860s, vulgar materialism was not a significant philosophical or scientific movement in the Ottoman Empire or Europe, except in Germany. Münif Paşa cannot be classified as a materialist or a vulgar materialist, though he shared some common ideas with these intellectual currents. His interest in materialist philosophy stemmed from the philosophy series on Ancient Greek philosophers in *Mecmua-i Fünun*, titled 'Tarih-i Hükema-yı Yunan' (History of Greek Philosophers). Münif Paşa firmly believed in the power of science and embraced it wholeheartedly. This makes him a scientist, and he can also be regarded as the first scientist of the Ottoman Empire. Additionally, he was one of the pioneers of the linear view of history, challenging the cyclical interpretations dominant in Ottoman historiography, which had been shaped by the influence of Ibn Khaldun. He placed great importance on science, considering it the driving force behind historical progress.⁸⁵ For Münif Paşa, science was essential for achieving progress and modernisation. He also argued that scientific methods had followed traditional approaches for too long and that this was no longer sufficient.⁸⁶ The transformation in his scientific thought brought about a corresponding shift in mentality. Moreover, discussions about science in the Ottoman Empire were closely linked to broader debates between old and new ways of thinking.

⁸⁴ Ali Budak, *Mecmûa-i Fünûn: Osmanlı'nın İlk Bilim Dergisi: İnceleme ve Seçilmiş Makaleler* (İstanbul: Bilge Kültür Sanat, 2011), 30.

⁸⁵ Serdar Poyraz, 'Science versus Religion: The Influence of European Materialism on Turkish Thought, 1860-1960' (PhD Dissertation, The Ohio State University, 2010), 28.

⁸⁶ Kolland, 'A Strategic Eurocentrism: The Construction of Ottoman Evolutionism in an Uneven World (1870–1900)', 6.

Münif Paşa understood science in a manner that aligned with the dictionary's definition, viewing it as a means of modernisation that was essential for the development of the Ottoman Empire. His main focus is the abuse of religion by Islamic clergy. He opposed that abuse and also challenged it with religious ignorance. He did not fit Islam with his arguments, like Abdullah Cevdet did; he did not criticise the concept of religion, like Baha Tevfik did, and he did not criticise Christianity to strengthen their arguments and take a position against the West, like Ahmed Midhat and Beşir Fuad did. His main aim was bringing the Western way of science to the Ottoman Empire and creating a separate area for it by freeing it from the boundary and burden of religion. The distinction between science and religion began with Münif Paşa in the Late Ottoman Empire.

In his publications, particularly *Mecmua-i Fünun*, Münif Paşa embraced a Western approach and categorisation of the sciences. Occasionally, his categorisation of sciences bore a resemblance to August Comte's categorisation. Therefore, we can conclude that Münif Paşa maintained a positivist perspective on the classification and understanding of science and scientific knowledge. In addition, he made no attempt to reconcile Islam with Western scientific knowledge when discussing sciences and scientific information. Contrary to popular belief, Münif Paşa did not reject Islam or the Islamic way of thinking. Instead, he recognised and highlighted the significance of science and religion in their respective domains. Münif Paşa's significance in Ottoman/Turkish intellectual history is noteworthy. The argument demonstrates that the majority of Ottoman intellectuals endeavoured to reconcile Islam with science and attempted to establish a common foundation for both concepts. In contemporary literature, certain intellectuals, historians, and scientists have attempted to reconcile religion and science by integrating these concepts and domains. This complicates the task of studying religion objectively and establishing a connection between scientific and intellectual ideas in the field of religious studies. Münif Paşa, from this vantage point, is significantly more advanced than most intellectuals in the Ottoman Empire and even Turkey.

According to Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, the writings of Münif Paşa in *Mecmua-i Fünun* have a greater number of texts discussing Western culture, philosophy, and science

compared to those discussing Islam and Ottoman/Turkish culture. He asserted that *Mecmua-i Fünun* lacked a systematic approach or agenda when it came to translating works from European books or magazines. He argues that *Mecmua-i Fünun* neglected in addressing the requirements and sensibilities of the Muslim Ottoman society in his essays.⁸⁷ Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu regards this condition as a detrimental aspect for *Mecmua-i Fünun* and Münif Paşa. Through this argument, he aims to categorise *Mecmua-i Fünun* and Münif Paşa as lacking originality and lacking a local identity. In my perspective, he failed to grasp the objective of *Mecmua-i Fünun*, which was to introduce Ottoman society to Western science, intellectuality, philosophy, and mentality. Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu's implication might be attributed to his viewpoint. I have a similar thought process to Ali Budak. According to him, the titles of the articles in *Mecmua-i Fünun* were groundbreaking, and readers were thrilled by the content of *Mecmua-i Fünun*.⁸⁸ Although *Mecmua-i Fünun* did not have a direct impact on people, it played a significant role in shaping the intellectual history of Turkey and influencing popular philosophical and scientific literature. Therefore, I have chosen *Mecmua-i Fünun* and its main writer, Münif Paşa, as the focus of my thesis. Although Münif Paşa was not a vulgar materialist, his efforts in vulgarising and popularising science make him the first figure for this thesis. Because he draws the boundaries between science and religion and separates these concepts, he is an important figure for this thesis. His approach to science and religion without a challenge between these concepts also was used by other intellectuals in this thesis. Lastly, I may say that Münif Paşa opened the way for using these concepts as a tool both politically and socially for the sake of the Ottoman Empire and Ottoman society.

2.2. Brief Biography

Mehmed Tahir Münif Paşa was born in 1828 as the son of a member of the ulema from Antep. He received his early education in a madrasah, following the classical Islamic curriculum. He also studied in Egypt, where he observed the modernisation

⁸⁷ Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, 'Cemiyet-i İlmiye-i Osmaniye'nin Kuruluşu ve Faaliyetleri', in *X. Türk Tarih Kongresi*, vol. 5 (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1994), 2188–89.

⁸⁸ Budak, *Mecmûa-i Fünûn*, 113.

movement taking place even before similar efforts in the Ottoman Empire. His first exposure to modernisation and development occurred during his time in Egypt. I believe that his emphasis on "useful knowledge" stemmed from his experiences there, as Egypt served as a model for Ottoman modernisation. In 1851, he became an officer in Damascus, where he learned French. That same year, he also became a writer for the *Ceride-i Havadis* newspaper and later published a weekly supplement called 'Ruzname-i Ceride-i Havadis'. In 1855, he moved to Berlin as the second *serkâtip* (first secretary), where he learned German. In 1857, he returned to Istanbul and began studying English. In 1859, he undertook translation work and joined the *Tercüme Odası* (Translation Office). In 1860, he became one of the founders of *Cemiyet-i İlmiyye-i Osmaniye* (the Ottoman Science Society), and in 1862, he played a key role in establishing *Mecmua-i Fünun*. Through these achievements, Münif Paşa became one of the most influential figures in Ottoman and Turkish intellectual history. *Mecmua-i Fünun* was forcibly closed three times because of political reasons. The actual closing occurred in 1867 after the publication of the 47th issue because of the members' business. Münif Paşa began to publish *Mecmua-i Fünun* again in 1883, but Abdülhamid II closed it because of a story that Abdülhamid thought that story is about him. *Mecmua-i Fünun* was published only for one issue in 1883. Münif Paşa became Minister of Education three times in the 1870s and 1880s in 9 years. He died in 1910.⁸⁹

Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar named Münif Paşa an eclectic intellectual. He was interested in journalism, law, economy, literature, economics, and philosophy. That shows Münif Paşa's importance for both Ottoman intellectual history and this thesis. Because he lived in Berlin and Egypt, he knew both the East and the West and their culture. His proficiency in Western and Eastern languages also contributed to his sophistication. The modernisation movement in Egypt influenced him so much. He also aimed to show the ways of development without losing cultural and religious values based on his observations in Egypt. Like many Ottoman intellectuals, he wanted to protect the balance between the material values of the West and the culture

⁸⁹ İbnülemin Mahmut Kemal İnal, *Son Asır Türk Şairleri*, vol. 2 (İstanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 1988), 995–1000.

and religion of the Ottoman Empire. Münif Paşa's importance for that perspective is his pioneer position and effort to popularise that thought.

2.3. Cemiyet-i İlmiye-i Osmaniye and Mecmua-i Fünun

Both Cemiyet-i İlmiye-i Osmaniye and *Mecmua-i Fünun* were founded with the support of Âli and Fuad Paşas, the two most critical Tanzimat statesmen. Cemiyet-i İlmiye-i Osmaniye is the first civil science organisation in the Ottoman Empire. It may be accepted as one of the first non-governmental organisations in the Ottoman Empire. Münif Paşa, in one of his articles, said that they published this journal in plain language and another writing before the publication of *Mecmua-i Fünun*; he mentioned the importance and necessity of scientific publications by considering that *Mecmua-i Fünun* aimed to become explicit rather than intellectual density.⁹⁰ *Mecmua-i Fünun* and Münif Paşa aimed to become a guide for society while informing them. This shows the change in the intellectual class and their role in society. Cemiyet-i İlmiye-i Osmaniye and *Mecmua-i Fünun* were the beginning of popularisation and pragmatic intellectual and scientific publishing in the Ottoman Empire and opened the way for the next generation; the members considered themselves the guides of society.

Mecmua-i Fünun also opened the way for the next generations' works, like Ahmed Midhat and his journal *Dağarcık* and Abdullah Cevdet and his journal *İctihad*⁹¹. While published in the 1860s, *Mecmua-i Fünun* was the only scientific journal in the Ottoman Empire. Still, when Münif Paşa started to republish it in the 1880s, there were more than 20 science journals in the Ottoman Empire. This shows the increase in scientific publication in the Ottoman Empire. The success of *Mecmua-i Fünun* in opening a scientific and intellectual way for later generations. Münif Paşa and his friends did not make any financial contributions from the sultan or ruling class. They tried to educate people with their own financial efforts. Ebüzziya Tevfik adds that Münif Paşa, with *Mecmua-i Fünun*, contributed to the education of especially young

⁹⁰ M. Kayahan Özgöl, *XIX. asrın benzersiz bir politeknigi: Münif Paşa* (İstanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 2014), 66–67.

⁹¹ The name 'İctihad' has an Islamic meaning. It means independent reasoning in Islamic thought.

people and provided them the opportunity to learn this new science and scientific thought. With this effort, he contributed to the young, which the Ottoman Empire could not do.⁹² hat also contributes to their freedom in their publication because they have no debt of gratitude to anybody, or they have no patron to oversee their activities. In addition, as Alper Yalçınkaya says, publications became a tool for educated Ottoman intellectuals and elites from the 1860s onwards. In addition, publications contributed to the birth of a new elite class.⁹³ *Mecmua-i Fünun* is one of the first examples of this new way.

Cemiyet-i İlmiye-i Osmaniye was far from being the ‘Royal Society of Britain’ and ‘Académie des Sciences’ of France because the members of Cemiyet-i İlmiye were not scientists like the others. Members of Cemiyet-i İlmiye were mostly bureaucrats who faced Western science and culture; some of the members of the group who went to Europe for education and bureaucratic reasons found this society. The critical point about this society and its media organisation, *Mecmua-i Fünun*, is that it was far from original in its writings and popularised European science, thought, and publications by transferring and interpreting these materials. This method became a target for opposition groups in the discussions.⁹⁴ Their aim was bringing science to the public. They aimed to make ‘science for everybody’. With this approach, they wanted to position science in the life of Ottoman society. That is one of the most important steps in popularising science in the Ottoman Empire.

This shows that *Mecmua-i Fünun* is far from creating a new way. Still, it is a step towards a change of mind and a sign of giving up the concept of religion and religious explanations and adopting Western science as an intellectual area. From the library of Cemiyet-i İlmiye-i Osmaniye, they were highly influenced by Western philosophy, science, and literature. They read works by philosophers such as Alphonso de Lamartine, Helvetius, Shakespeare, Adam Smith, Francis Bacon, François-René de Chateaubriand, and Montesquieu, among others. The authors of

⁹² Ebuzziya Tevfik, ‘Münif Paşa’, *Yeni Tasvir-i Efkar*, 12 February 1910, 2.

⁹³ M. Alper Yalçınkaya, *Learned Patriots: Debating Science, State, and Society in the Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Empire* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015), 124–25.

⁹⁴ Budak, *Mecmûa-i Fünûn*, 49–50.

Mecmua-i Fünun were highly influenced by these philosophers while writing articles. The other important point is that members of Cemiyet-i İlmiye-i Osmaniye and authors of *Mecmua-i Fünun* read and were influenced by materialist philosophers of 18th-century France.⁹⁵ That also shows the influence of French philosophers and thought on Ottoman intellectuals.

One of the essential things that place a unique position on Cemiyet-i İlmiye-i Osmaniye is their free courses for the public. During these seminars, the society's members provided voluntary instruction to the public on subjects such as positive science, literature, history, and more. This indicates that Cemiyet-i İlmiye-i Osmaniye can be regarded as the pioneer of the concept of 'towards the public'. This distinction also sets apart Cemiyet-i İlmiye-i Osmaniye and Münif Paşa from other people, who will be discussed in this thesis. In their efforts to enhance public awareness, they employed many methods beyond relying solely on publications. What set Münif Paşa and his associates apart from other Tanzimat intellectuals was their desire to expand their influence beyond the realm of intellectual discourse and engage with the public at large.

As a result, they were able to infiltrate various segments of Ottoman society. Cemiyet-i İlmiye-i Osmaniye functions as an educational institution that aims to influence the public and transform intellectual and scientific ideas within the empire. Münif Paşa and his society, Cemiyet-i İlmiye-i Osmaniye, attempted to achieve multiple goals efficiently. This is an example of an educational programme in Istanbul that attempted to involve the public.

Cemiyet-i İlmiye-i Osmaniye and *Mecmua-i Fünun* followed a policy of refraining from involvement in current political matters. There are several factors contributing to the sense of detachment. Münif Paşa and his comrades attempted to attain scientific independence and steer clear of political matters and authority, while also avoiding discussions related to religion. Their objective was to achieve institutional autonomy and prevent experiencing the same outcome as *Encümen-i Daniş*. By

⁹⁵ Füzûzan Hüsrev Tökin, *Osmanlı Türklerinde Fikir Hareketleri* (Ankara: Buket Basımevi, 1951), 32–33.

refraining from discussing political and religious subjects and instead embracing science and scientific reasoning, *Mecmua-i Fünun* and Cemiyet-i İlmiye-i Osmaniye were able to establish scientific independence.⁹⁶ For this reason, Cemiyet-i İlmiye-i Osmaniye is essential not only from a scientific and intellectual point of view but also as the first secular and autonomous society and scientific journal in the Ottoman Empire.

For this reason, they are likely to be close to inferences from bureaucracy and ulema. When *Mecmua-i Fünun* is compared to its contemporaries, there are some important differences. For instance, Ali Suavi, while mentioning positive sciences and liberal ideas in his journal *Ulum* (Universes), he also touched on religious and recent political topics because of his political leadership in the Young Ottomans. Münif Paşa did not want to be a political leader for society; he wanted to raise public awareness about intellectual and scientific topics and avoid political topics.

There is an essential point for their aim; although the members of society wanted to stay away from politics because of being bureaucrats and patriots, they were bonded strictly with the empire.⁹⁷ Patriotism was also the general tendency of the Ottoman intellectual. Although they cut their bonds with religion, they were strictly bound by the empire and patriots. For this reason, all the intellectuals I will mention in this thesis primarily emphasise their patriotic thoughts and clarify their aims to serve the public and enlighten them by presenting the new science.

As Alper Yalçinkaya says, according to Münif Paşa and his friends in *Mecmua-i Fünun* and Cemiyet-i İlmiye-i Osmani: “Religion could motivate the search for knowledge, guide it, provide hints for it, but could not be identified with it.”⁹⁸ Thanks to that distinction from religion, Ottoman understanding of science in the late 19th century followed the way of European science and started cutting its compulsory connection with religion. That shows that it was proper to start Ottoman popular

⁹⁶ Budak, *Mecmûa-i Fünûn*, 60.

⁹⁷ Budak, 60.

⁹⁸ Yalçinkaya, *Learned Patriots*, 2015, 82–83.

science in the late 19th Century with Münif Paşa and *Mecmua-i Fünun*. That also is a step towards the secularisation of science and scientific thought. Also, this idea became a motivation for the distinction between science and religion. In addition, religion became a tool for spreading science for some intellectuals after that era.

Münif Paşa understood that imitation is insufficient for development. To develop like Europe, science was a must for the Ottoman Empire. Münif Paşa and other authors of *Mecmua-i Fünun* try to achieve this aim in *Mecmua-i Fünun*. Their understanding of science is not only technical knowledge; they aimed to transform science into lifestyle and understanding for society. They aim to avoid religious and political discussions, although they show that *Mecmua-i Fünun* only aims to inform the public. Avoiding religious discussions and topics gave them a secular look. Their effort to avoid political and religious topics made them out of the group that Şerif Mardin named ‘Kritik Söylemciler’ (Critical Declaimers).⁹⁹ In this context, the importance of *Mecmua-i Fünun* is not only the popularisation and gaining the literary status of the science but also serving this new famous work to the public without getting involved with other things that may vilify their efforts.

Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar argues that *Mecmua-i Fünun* played a similar role to that of the French *Encyclopédie* in the 18th century. It not only disseminated knowledge but also introduced positive and modern perspectives, as well as the language of science and philosophy, into the intellectual discourse.¹⁰⁰ Tanpınar’s argument highlights that *Mecmua-i Fünun* was a milestone in Turkish intellectual history, particularly in shaping the language of philosophy and science. It also contributed to the simplification of language in the Ottoman Empire, an essential step in popularising scientific and intellectual writing and making it more accessible to other intellectuals. This was a significant development in breaking the monopoly of scientific discourse, bringing it to a broader audience, and allowing Ottoman intellectuals to bridge the gap between themselves and the public. As a result, this approach later became a general tendency among vulgar materialist Ottoman intellectuals, who utilised it as a

⁹⁹ Budak, *Mecmûa-i Fünûn*, 59–61.

¹⁰⁰ Tanpınar, *On dokuzuncu asır Türk edebiyatı tarihi*, 186.

rhetoical tool against religious discourse, often with a more grandiloquent tone. *Mecmua-i Fünun* also reflected the broader aims and tendencies of Tanzimat era intellectuals regarding the concept of civilisation. The "civilisation question" was a central issue of the Tanzimat period, with intellectuals striving to determine the path forward for the Ottoman Empire. They sought solutions to corruption and backwardness, debating whether civilisation should be aligned with the East, the West, or a synthesis of both. *Mecmua-i Fünun* played a vital role in this debate, advocating for Western civilisation in a scientific and intellectual manner while avoiding discussions on politics and religion, unlike contemporaries such as Namık Kemal, Ziya Paşa, and Ali Suavi, who approached the issue through political and religious arguments. Münif Paşa, along with other contributors to *Mecmua-i Fünun*, aimed to incorporate material concepts into the notion of civilisation, focusing on its material consequences.¹⁰¹ That also placed Münif Paşa in a different position and separated him from his time's other intellectuals. Münif Paşa had a unique position among the other intellectuals of his time.

An analysis of the articles in *Mecmua-i Fünun* and the structure of Cemiyet-i İlmiye-i Osmaniye reveals that *Mecmua-i Fünun* played a crucial role in introducing modern science to the Ottoman Empire, establishing itself as the first scientific journal in the empire. This development paved the way for Ottoman intellectuals to adopt a scientific and intellectual perspective, influencing later figures such as Beşir Fuad, Abdullah Cevdet, and Baha Tevfik. *Mecmua-i Fünun* primarily focused on scientific exploration and did not aim to reconcile science with religion. Its primary objective was not merely the dissemination of Western scientific knowledge in the Ottoman Empire but rather the intellectual introduction of Western science, as there was a lack of qualified scientists within its ranks. Due to the contributions of Münif Paşa and *Mecmua-i Fünun*, both authorities and intellectuals came to regard science as the sole means of addressing the challenges faced by the Ottoman Empire.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ Budak, *Mecmûa-i Fünûn*, 115.

¹⁰² M. Sait Özervarh, 'Positivism in the Late Ottoman Empire: The "Young Turks" as Mediators and Multipliers', in *The Worlds of Positivism: A Global Intellectual History, 1770-1930*, ed. Feichtinger Feichtinger, Franz L. Fillafer, and Jan Surman (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 83.

For this reason, Cemiyet-i İlmiye-i Osmaniye cannot be directly compared with European scientific societies. Mecmua-i Fünun did not extensively address social issues or tailor its articles to specific local contexts. Instead, it can be understood as an effort to present science to Ottoman culture in an engaging and somewhat romanticised manner, offering it as a solution to all intellectual inquiries and imbuing it with a quasi-metaphysical significance. It would not be inaccurate to state that *Mecmua-i Fünun* and Cemiyet-i İlmiye-i Osmaniye were forerunners of scientism, treating science almost as a belief system. These two institutions are crucial to my research due to their role in initiating a shift in intellectual mindset.¹⁰³ Thanks to *Mecmua-i Fünun*, Ottoman intellectuals began to move beyond Islamic and Eastern sources, turning their attention towards Western science and philosophy.¹⁰⁴

2.4. Münif Paşa and the Birth of Popular Scientific Thought

The publications of Münif Paşa played a significant role in shaping the worldview of the Ottoman Empire and Turkey. He spearheaded the reassessment of European culture and science, examining their connection to cultural advancement and their integration into the Ottoman Empire. Münif Paşa's contributions to *Mecmua-i Fünun* are crucial for the Turkish language in two distinct manners. In his first work, he presented a substitute for the cyclical perspective of history, prevalent in Ottoman history writing and advocated by Arab historian Ibn Khaldun. Instead, he promoted a linear approach to history, a common practice in European historical writing. One of his good contributions is his perspective on linear history writing. He emphasised the significance of progress and viewed science as the driving force behind history. In his articles, he also established connections between history, progress, growth, and science, all while acknowledging these elements. Furthermore, his correlation among history, science, and development exemplifies a methodology employed in Western historical writing. He possessed a pivotal concept that diverged from the viewpoints of his era. He believed that Europe exemplified both its scientific and moral progress.

¹⁰³ Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, *Osmanlı İlmî ve Mesleki Cemiyetleri* (İstanbul: Edebiyat Fakültesi Basımevi, 1987), 218–20.

¹⁰⁴ Zafer Toprak, 'Fikir Dergiciliğinin Yüz Yılı', in *Türkiye'de Dergiler Ansiklopediler (1849-1984)* (İstanbul: Gelişim Yayınları, 1984), 14.

Imitating European science without moral principles would lead to issues for the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, it is important that morals and science remain intertwined during the process of development. His idea qualified him to be recognised as the successor of Ottoman intellectuals Beşir Fuad, Abdullah Cevdet, and Baha Tevfik, who were known for their radical Western-leaning views.¹⁰⁵ Münif Paşa's thoughts were slighter compared to theirs, and he had fewer philosophical and intellectual justifications than them, relying more on technical, educational, and societal approaches and backgrounds.

In the introductory section, titled 'Mukaddime', of *Mecmua-i Fünun*, Münif Paşa discussed the rules and regulations of Cemiyet-i İlmiye-i Osmaniye and its publication *Mecmua-i Fünun*. In accordance with this regulation, society and the journal were to publish and translate books and promote science in the Ottoman Empire. He stated that *Mecmua-i Fünun* served as the official publication of society. An essential aspect of society, as highlighted by the publication Münif Paşa, is the importance of maintaining distance from ongoing political and religious debates. Cemiyet-i İlmiye-i Osmaniye is an apolitical and secular society, although several officials provided support to this group and *Mecmua-i Fünun*.¹⁰⁶ That shows the social way of *Mecmua-i Fünun* without intervening political atmosphere of the era. The main reason was that almost all of the members of the society were Ottoman bureaucrats. That shows the approach of some of the Ottoman bureaucrats towards touching society and vulgarising their policies about the public.

In many of his publications, Münif Paşa claimed the concept of human composition, asserting that humans are comprised of both a physical body and an immaterial soul. In order to nourish the soul, it is imperative to have a foundation of science and knowledge. Science and knowledge are essential for the spiritual development of humans; they are also crucial milestones in the progress of civilisation. He also perceived science as a differentiating factor between humans and animals. He viewed science and knowledge as 'practical knowledge' that could contribute to advancement

¹⁰⁵ Poyraz, 'Science versus Religion: The Influence of European Materialism on Turkish Thought, 1860-1960', 25, 28–29.

¹⁰⁶ Münif Paşa, 'Mukaddime', *Mecmua-i Fünun* 1, no. 1 (June 1862): 18–20.

and civilisation. He underscored the significance of this crucial subject for both Islamic and Western civilisations. In his articles, he expresses disapproval of knowledge riddled with errors and superstition. Regarding this matter, he censured the educated elite for disseminating inaccurate information. Münif Paşa regarded science and knowledge as an illuminating force amongst ignorance and a compass for society.¹⁰⁷ That shows the enlightening way of Münif Paşa. Although he separated soul and body, he drew a portrait of humans who were only rational animals.

Münif Paşa also made a differentiation between the concepts of ‘insan-ı hakiki’ (Real Human) and ‘insan-ı hayali’ (Imaginary human) and claims that humans should pass from insan-ı hayali to insan-ı hakiki. That is also a reflection of Münif Paşa’s progressive approach, like his understanding of history. The key to that pass is freedom, according to Münif Paşa. While proposing that idea, Münif Paşa was probably influenced by Kant and his article *Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?*.¹⁰⁸ This freedom is not only political freedom but also religious freedom. Münif Paşa suggests evading the pressures exerted by religious and political authorities. Münif Paşa can be considered an Enlightenment intellectual from a certain perspective, and he may be recognised as one of the earliest ‘enlightened’ intellectuals in the Ottoman Empire. Based on his argument, I contend that Münif Paşa aimed to emancipate Ottoman society, like European societies, by liberating them from the oppressive control of religious authorities. Additionally, I believe that Münif Paşa aimed to accomplish this objective using scientific knowledge and rational thinking. From Münif Paşa’s viewpoint, science is undoubtedly crucial for attaining freedom. He aimed to demonstrate a ‘modern’ path for Ottoman society without eliminating Islam, but rather freeing it from its oppressive influence.

In his article ‘Muvazene-i İlm ü Cehl’ (Comparison between Science and Ignorance), published in *Mecmua-i Fünun*, Münif Paşa criticised many Muslims, particularly

¹⁰⁷ Ali Budak, *Batılılaşma sürecinde çok yönlü bir Osmanlı aydını: Münif Paşa* (İstanbul: Bilge Kültür Sanat, 2012), 535–38.

¹⁰⁸ Demir, *Philosophia Ottomanica*, 430.

Islamic scholars, referring to them as bazı cühela (some ignorant people) and dinin akılsız dostları (foolish friends of religion). He argued that treating science and Islam as mutually exclusive would deprive Islam of scientific principles. Münif Paşa presented a counterargument to religious figures who disregarded scientific perspectives. His argument also marks the beginning of debates on the ‘conflict between science and religion’ in the intellectual history of the Ottoman Empire. Münif Paşa's thesis suggested that he attributed the primary cause of backwardness in scientific and philosophical thought to internal forces. He emphasised the importance of science, scientific reasoning, and knowledge, drawing attention to what he referred to as the ‘non-civilised’ tribes in Asia, Africa, and America. He linked their lack of progress to the British Empire’s utilisation of science and knowledge, which, in turn, enhanced its economy, industry, and overall development. He also established a connection between a lack of knowledge and a nomadic lifestyle, while associating science and education with civilisation. Münif Paşa regarded science as an essential requirement for civilisation. He incorporated Ibn Khaldun’s ideas into his own work, adapting and modernising them to align with his views on the contrast between nomadic and civilised societies. According to him, science and knowledge are fundamental prerequisites for achieving a civilised status. Another significant aspect of his article is that, in addition to providing scientific explanations for lunar and solar eclipses, he also emphasises that these natural phenomena serve as evidence of God's omnipotence. He asserted that science and the arts are two crucial domains that distinguish humans from animals and argued that studying them is a necessity in Islam.¹⁰⁹ This perspective reflects a modern approach while maintaining an Islamic framework. His work also contains a protective stance against Orientalist arguments that portrayed the Ottoman Empire as backward. From today’s perspective, his arguments on scientific development and civilisation may be interpreted as having Social Darwinist elements.

Münif Paşa regarded the positive sciences as practical knowledge and believed they were essential for living in the modern age. In this essay, he highlighted the dedication of scientists and those passionate about science to their respective nations. This attitude also exemplifies the patriotism of Ottoman intellectuals. Another crucial

¹⁰⁹ Münif Paşa, ‘Muvazene-i İlm ü Cehl’, *Mecmua-i Fünun* 1, no. 1 (June 1862): 21–34.

aspect of this discussion is the claim that Westernist intellectuals were not religious and actively opposed groups that were against the empire. His works in *Mecmua-i Fünun* reveal his arrogant and harsh stance towards religious figures, emphasising the central issue of the conflict between science and religion in the Ottoman Empire. This conflict is thought to have emerged with the publication of *Mecmua-i Fünun* and Münif Paşa's contributions to the journal, although this connection was not explicitly stated. Despite Münif Paşa and other writers in the journal expressing a strong desire for intellectual independence, they nonetheless maintained a close association with the institutions and religious principles of the empire, particularly Islam. This situation became one of the earliest examples of how Ottoman intellectuals writing on this topic positioned themselves in relation to the clergy. While they generally respected religion and emphasised the significance of Islam for the Ottoman Empire and its society, they also harshly criticised the clergy.

Münif Paşa provided this argument to illustrate the scientific and philosophical dimensions of Islam and its harmony with current scientific and philosophical comprehension. The paradox highlighted is not limited to him alone. Muslim Ottoman intellectuals and scientists engaged with this subject matter and endeavoured to modernise, intellectualise, and incorporate scientific progress while maintaining their adherence to Islamic values. This thesis will explore the central problem that arose during the modernising era of the Ottoman Empire. It will focus on the perspectives of intellectuals in different portions of the thesis.

Münif Paşa and the authors of *Mecmua-i Fünun* aimed to familiarise Ottoman society with the material values of the West by employing the terminology of current Western science. While bureaucrats, ruling elites, the military class, and higher classes have already engaged with the West, Münif Paşa's initiative is significant in enabling the public to witness and comprehend the West and its principles. This emphasises the importance of both advocating for science and promoting scientific reasoning, as well as modernising society's perspective. Therefore, this stage is linked not only to society's connection with science but also to the integration of modernisation and contemporary ideas within Ottoman society.

In the article titled ‘Mahiyet-i Aksam-ı Ulüm’ (Nature and Part of Sciences), Münif Paşa categorised sciences into two distinct groups: ulum-i akliye (rational sciences) and ulum-i nakliye (religious sciences). The main point of this article is that he did not discuss religious sciences and instead relies on rational sciences in the argumentation presented. He employed the Islamic classification system when discussing rational sciences. The four sciences mentioned are mantık (logic), ulum-ı tabiiye (natural sciences), ilm-i ilahi (metaphysics), and riyaziyat (mathematics). He thought that the existing traditional classification of sciences should be revised. In the new modern classification of the sciences as: lisan ve edebiyat (language and literature), ulum-ı riyažiye ve tıbbiye (Mathematical and Medical Sciences), Ulum-ı tabiiye ve tıbbiye (Natural and Medical Sciences), Ulum-ı tarihiye ve coğrafiye (History and Geography), Edyan ve ulum-ı felsefiye (Philosophical sciences and religions), Ulum-ı siyasiye (Political sciences) and Ulum-ı Nefise (Fine Arts). Münif Paşa further classified these primary categories into subcategories. According to Münif Paşa, in order to avoid a situation similar to China, Ottoman society should acquire knowledge in these new scientific fields. In addition, he cites a saying of Caliph Ali: "Science was a point; the ignorant multiplied it." He emphasised that *Mecmua-i Fünun* embraced and adhered to that doctrine.¹¹⁰

An important aspect highlighted in the text is that Münif Paşa employed a taxonomy of sciences similar to that of August Comte, as opposed to Aristotle. Within this classification, he further divided astronomy, biology, geology, and sociology into subcategories within the realm of natural sciences, similar to Comte's approach. Islamic thought adopted Aristotle's classification, and Ottoman scholars also used it. Münif Paşa also commented on the divergence of scientific philosophy from classical Islamic thought, following the reclassification of sciences. An intriguing aspect is that subcategorisation involves classifying sociology within the realm of the scientific sciences. Therefore, it can be confidently stated that Münif Paşa employed a positivistic approach to classifying sciences and may be characterised as having a positivist epistemological viewpoint. One could also interpret this as a shift in Ottoman intellectuals' scientific perspective. Münif Paşa aimed to revolutionise scientific thinking by abandoning traditional scientific methods and embracing

¹¹⁰ Münif Paşa, ‘Mahiyet-i Aksam-ı Ulum’, *Mecmua-i Fünun* 2, no. 13 (June 1863): 2–10.

contemporary scientific philosophy. He perceived this emerging field of knowledge as an unavoidable necessity for the continuation of the Ottoman Empire. Despite refraining from engaging in political discourse and confrontations, he aspired to rescue the Empire with his intellectual and scientific ideas.

The omission of any reference to Islamic sciences in Münif Paşa's work can be attributed to the interrelation between Islamic sciences and the Islamic categorisation of natural sciences. To legitimise the introduction of Western scientific concepts, it appears that he deliberately chose not to provide explanations for Islamic sciences. Additionally, when discussing religious studies, he classified it as a subcategory of the social sciences alongside philosophy. This move may also indicate a decline in the prominence of religion and the field of religious studies. Classifying religious studies alongside philosophy results in marginalisation, as neither field is traditionally considered a scientific discipline. A particularly contentious aspect of this paper is that while Münif Paşa acknowledged science as a domain with defined boundaries and norms, he paradoxically included religious and philosophical studies within the realm of science. His uncertainty regarding novel concepts and fundamental notions of the dichotomy between science and religion is evident.

In that article, Münif Paşa exhibited a Eurocentric perspective, occasionally even displaying racist tendencies towards science and scientific comprehension. He asserted that the Caucasian race, which includes Turks, exhibits a greater inclination towards scientific pursuits. This perspective aligns with the prevailing ideology of Western intellectuals at that time and is closely linked to the field of anthropology. The prevailing beliefs of that time, particularly among the Westernist elites, included a non-scientific and European perspective on the perceived superiority of the Caucasian race and the Western culture and nations. Therefore, certain intellectuals believed that cultural westernisation is essential to advance science and that scientific and cultural westernisation should be closely intertwined for optimal compatibility. This sarcastic viewpoint also served as a focal point for addressing science and religion. From this viewpoint, several factions opposed science and instead advocated for religion or culture as a foundation. This approach gave rise to a new discourse and perspective in the intellectual debates of the late Ottoman Empire.

Alternatively, it can be asserted that Münif Paşa's assertions bear resemblance to the assertions made by Ernest Renan. In his conference, *L'Islamisme et la Science*, he claimed that Eastern nations, like Turks, Arabs, Iranians, and others, are unsuitable for scientific development.

While Münif Paşa's perspective may align with European intellectual views to some extent, he asserted that Turks belong to the Caucasian race, despite differences in their respective historical timelines. This issue also relates to the tendency to condescend towards science and scientific perspectives. Hence, it would be erroneous to examine this subject solely from a single standpoint. Münif Paşa's intention may have been to assert that Turks belong to the Caucasian race and are closely associated with Western civilisation, encompassing notions such as science and progress. This perspective is also evident in the Early Republican Period, particularly in relation to the 'Türk Tarih Tezi' (Turkish History Thesis). In the first volume of *Mecmua-i Fünun*, Münif Paşa differentiated between humans and animals, attributing this distinction to science and art, and established a connection between these attributes in humans and the divine power of God. Although this distinction is sometimes found in Islamic literature, in my opinion, his argument may contain hints of evolutionary thought, suggesting that humans are animals with the capacity for thought and cognition.¹¹¹ This concept bears resemblance to Aristotle's characterisation of humans as rational beings. It also parallels Descartes' notion of differentiating between humans and animals based on the presence of the human spirit.

Münif Paşa authored a highly significant piece titled 'Mukaddime-i İlm-i Jeoloji' (Introduction to Geology) in *Mecmua-i Fünun*. Münif Paşa stated that whereas history can provide insights into a span of 2-3 millennia, geology has the capacity to unveil the earth's history spanning hundreds of thousands of years. In addition, while history may be subject to guesses, geology is devoid of such conjectures due to its rigorous scientific and empirical approach. Geology enables us to study the presence and evolution of plants, animals, and humans across different time periods, tracing their development from simple organisms like moss to more complex eukaryotic

¹¹¹ Münif Paşa, 'Muvazene-i İlm ü Cehl', 22.

beings. Münif Paşa argued that prokaryotic organisms lack the necessary sophistication and complexity. The article discusses the evolution of species in relation to fossils. In addition, he emphasised that it is crucial for humans to recognise that this article is vital for discussing evolution.¹¹² This article is possibly the earliest known mention of evolution during that period. This essay further emphasises the significance of *Mecmua-i Fünun* and Münif Paşa. Additionally, it is worth noting that the library of Cemiyet-i İlmiye-i Osmaniye houses a collection of books pertaining to materialism and evolutionists. Therefore, the prevailing societal disposition may involve engaging in conversations on these contentious subjects, with certain people expressing dissent towards evolution and materialism. Therefore, Cemiyet-i İlmiye-i Osmaniye becomes a significant society and *Mecmua-i Fünun* becomes a significant publication for the promotion of freedom of speech.

Münif Paşa, *Mecmua-i Fünun*, and Cemiyet-i İlmiye-i Osmaniyye placed significance on public lectures. In his article series 'Darülfünun'da Ders-i Amm Küşadı' (Opening of Public Lessons in Darülfünun), Münif Paşa refers to these free public lessons. In this writing series, Münif Paşa expounded upon the subject matter covered in the sessions and expressed his contentment with the lessons as well as the level of engagement from the public.¹¹³ Münif Paşa stated that current science and scientific thought are a manifestation of the omnipotence of God.¹¹⁴ Münif Paşa established a connection between contemporary scientific knowledge and religious beliefs in order to enhance its acceptance among the general population. That step is crucial for that particular moment. Given that modernisation was a recent development for the general public at that time, intellectuals felt a sense of responsibility to ensure its acceptance among the public. That demonstrated the public's interest in contemporary scientific advancements. According to Münif Paşa's statement *Mecmua-i Fünun* can be considered a successful endeavour in the modernisation and dissemination of scientific thought.

¹¹² Münif Paşa, 'Mukaddime-i İlmi-i Jeoloji', *Mecmua-i Fünun* 1, no. 2 (July 1862): 65–68.

¹¹³ Münif Paşa, 'Darülfünun'da Ders-i Amm Küşadı', *Mecmua-i Fünun* 1, no. 6 (November 1862): 258–60; Münif Paşa, 'Darülfünun'da Ders-i Amm Vuku-ı Küşadı', *Mecmua-i Fünun* 1, no. 7 (December 1862): 301–4.

¹¹⁴ Münif Paşa, 'Darülfünun Dersleri', *Mecmua-i Fünun* 1, no. 8 (January 1863): 330–32.

Münif Paşa also contributed to discussions surrounding the alphabet. The proposal for reforming the Arabic alphabet was first put forward by Münif Paşa during a meeting organised by the Cemiyet-i İlmiye-i Osmaniye. Undoubtedly, advocating for alphabet reform in the 1860s was a bold stance, as altering the alphabet at that time would have been a transformation of immense significance, comparable to a shift in the religious beliefs of the Ottoman Empire. Münif Paşa argued that the scientific and intellectual underdevelopment of the Ottoman Empire was closely linked to the challenges posed by the Arabic script. Consequently, he proposed a reform to improve its legibility. His arguments and efforts reflect his dedication to enhancing the intellectual and scientific landscape of the Ottoman Empire and society. He actively sought methodologies and approaches to introduce a new paradigm of science and intellectualism.¹¹⁵ *Mecmua-i Fünun* marks the beginning of the transition from a religious to a secular perspective in Ottoman/Turkish intellectual history.¹¹⁶ The debate over the alphabet became a crucial step in this shift in mentality.

While approaching the public and simplifying the language, *Mecmua-i Fünun* came in for criticism about their writings and publications. One of these criticisms came from Ahmed Midhat Efendi. In his memoirs, *Menfa* (Exile), which he wrote in exile, he compared his journal *Dağarcık* with *Mecmua-i Fünun*. In this memoir, Ahmed Midhat claimed that although *Mecmua-i Fünun* had been published before his journal *Dağarcık* and can be accepted as the pioneer of scientific publications in the Ottoman Empire, it is only the collection of the chapters of scientific Ahmed Midhat claimed that even while there were no science classes in Mülkiye, publishing such a scientific book to educate the public with such a high-class writing style should not be the method of *Mecmua-i Fünun*. Ahmed Midhat says simple and enjoyable language and wording should be used while educating the public. That makes *Dağarcık* a general knowledge magazine rather than a complete scientific journal. That also reflected the materialist and evolutionist articles in the journal. All these articles were written for

¹¹⁵ Budak, *Batılılaşma sürecinde çok yönlü bir Osmanlı aydını: Münif Paşa*, 586–92; Özgül, XIX. asrın benzersiz bir politekniki: *Münif Paşa*, 97–109.

¹¹⁶ Zafer Toprak, *Cumhuriyet ve Antropoloji* (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2021), 50–51.

the public in plain language.¹¹⁷ This additionally shows the significance of using simple language and subjects when educating the general people. This demonstrates the pragmatic approach of Ahmed Midhat and other Ottoman intellectuals towards scientific and intellectual writing. Despite receiving criticism from intellectuals such as Ahmed Midhat for its lack of straightforwardness and failure to achieve its intended goal, Münif Paşa's endeavour is commendable. It should be acknowledged as the pioneer of this approach. Subsequently, certain intellectuals and academicians voiced their criticism of Ahmed Midhat for his role as a mere conduit of Western ideas and materials. He expresses criticism against Münif Paşa and *Mecmua-i Fünun*.

2.5. Articles by Other Authors

The authors of *Mecmua-i Fünun* highlight the advancement of philosophy, intelligence, science, and scientific thinking following the Mediaeval Era, facilitated by the utilisation of sources from Ancient Greece, Ancient Rome, and Islam. The writers of *Mecmua-i Fünun* argue that Ottoman scholars and society should acknowledge Andalus as a significant influence on the development of Europe. Therefore, it is not considered shameful or sinful for Ottoman society, scientists, and intellectuals to adopt concepts from other cultures, as Islam is one of the foundations of European culture and science.¹¹⁸ That is a pragmatic approach to drive society in a scientific way. By doing so, the authors of *Mecmua-i Fünun* use the argument like 'bringing the science back in'. This argument is not unique to the authors of *Mecmua-i Fünun*. This is the general mindset of Ottoman intellectuals in that era.

The article by Edhem Pertev is titled 'Bekâ-i Şahsî ve Nev'îye Hizmetin Azam-ı Vezaif-i İnsaniyet Olduğuna Dair' (On the Continuity of the Person and the Greatness of Human Duty in Serving Humanity) an excerpt which was taken from Rousseau's Julie *La Nouvelle Héloïse* (Julie or The New Heloise). Edhem Pertev divided this selection into two sections and published it in *Mecmua-i Fünun*. The initial chapter was titled 'Mektub-i Evvel Jean Jacques Rousseau Tarafından Milord

¹¹⁷ Ahmed Midhat, *Menfâ* (İstanbul: Kırkanbar Matbaası, 1876), 61–62.

¹¹⁸ Cemil Aydın, 'Mecmua-i Fünun ve Mecmua-i Ulum Dergilerinin Medeniyet ve Bilim Anlayışı' (Master Thesis, İstanbul, İstanbul University, 1995), 101–3.

Edouard'a' (First Letter: From Jean Jacques Rousseau to Milord Edouard), while the subsequent chapter was named 'Milord Edouard'ın Jean Jacques Rousseau'ya Cevabı' (Reply of Milord Edouard to Jean Jacques Rousseau). The inclusion of discussions around suicide is crucial in this letter. Edhem Pertev chose this issue with the intention of intellectually cautioning Ottoman culture about suicide, which is prohibited by Islam. The significance of the reference lies in its association with a Western philosopher who espouses faith in people rather than the authority of religion or God. In addition, the figure Milord Edouard underscored the correlation between the physical and spiritual aspects of human beings and asserted that people are responsible for their actions through their own volition. I believe this reasoning also presents a contradiction with Islamic ideology. While humans possess volition in Islam, the translation in question was undertaken by a Western intellectual who identifies as an atheist and thus did not accurately convey the principles of Islamic ideology. In this essay, the concept of will disregards the volition that religions provide. This translation also demonstrates a proclivity to allude to Western intellectuals and discuss matters pertaining to humanity in order to increase societal consciousness, rather than relying on religious justifications. Western science and intellectuality gradually replaced religion, especially in social issues, as evidenced by the writings of intellectuals.¹¹⁹

Mehmed Emin's work, 'Lüzum-ı İlm-i Tıp' (Necessity of Medical Science), examined the significance and role of medicine. In that writing, Mehmed Emin discussed the necessity and the importance of medicine and medical sciences. Mehmed Emin distinguished medicine from alchemy, incantation, and spelling in this article. Mehmed Emin's essay acknowledges that medicine followed a scientific approach and adheres to a deterministic and methodical technique. In addition, Mehmed Emin expressed his opposition to the prevalent superstitions in society in his work. That article also shows that *Mecmua-i Fünun* is crucial in the intellectual and scientific fight against social and religious dogmas. In addition, he asserted that

¹¹⁹ Budak, *Mecmûa-i Fünûn*, 83–84; Ali Budak, *Batılılaşma ve Türk Edebiyatı: Lale Devri'nden Tanzimat'a Yenileşme* (İstanbul: Bilge Kültür Sanat, 2008), 472–77; Edhem Pertev, 'Bekâ-i Şahsi ve Nev'îye Hizmetin Azam-ı Vezâif-i İnsaniyet Olduğuna Dair (Mektub-i Evvel Jean Jacques Rousseau Tarafından Milord Edouard'a)', *Mecmua-i Fünun* 3, no. 33 (February 1865): 329–46; Edhem Pertev, 'Bekâ-i Şahsi ve Nev'îye Hizmetin Azam-ı Vezâif-i İnsaniyet Olduğuna Dair (Milord Edouard'ın Jean Jacques Rousseau'ya Cevabı)', *Mecmua-i Fünun* 4, no. 34 (May 1866): 8–18.

medicine is an empirical discipline that ought to be employed for the purpose of treating illnesses. Science and medicine play a vital part in meeting human needs, and as a result, people must make their own choices. The important point in this article is that Mehmed Emin used a religious reference to support his idea from İmam Şafî (an Islamic scholar and leader of one of the sects in Islam): “There are two sciences; the first one is medicine for the bodies, and the second one is fiqh for religions.”¹²⁰ With that reference, Mehmed Emin also drew the boundaries between science and religion in that article and tried to prevent religion's inferences to the boundary of science by referencing an Islamic scholar. In this way, Münif Paşa and Edhem Pertev reflected on the writing policy of *Mecmua-i Fünun* and showed the position of science among them. With these efforts, they wanted to show the autonomous place of science and intellectuality separate from religion. These arguments make *Mecmua-i Fünun* important for intellectual history and the history of science of the Ottoman Empire and Turkey. Also, distinction between science and religion became clear in the writings of *Mecmua-i Fünun*.

Although not entirely connected to the thesis topic, Kadri Bey's article series ‘Hikmet-i Tabiiyeden Alaim-i Semaviyyeye Dair Bir Hoca ile Bir Şakird Beyninde Muhaveredir’ (A Discourse between a Teacher and a Pupil on one of the Natural Phenomena, the Rainbow) reflects the evolving understanding of natural sciences, such as physics and chemistry, through a conversation between a teacher and his pupil. In this article, they discuss the transition from classical elements to modern chemical thought. The teacher explains that the traditional four elements are not the fundamental components of the universe but rather consist of other elements. He also introduces the concept of atomic forces, as defined by modern chemistry, arguing that this new understanding has effectively superseded ancient natural science theories.

This article series is significant in situating the natural sciences within Ottoman scientific literature. Although it provides information on modern science, Kadri Bey,

¹²⁰ Budak, *Mecmûa-i Fünûn*, 91; Yeşim Işıl Ülman, ‘Mecmua-i Fünun’da Tıp Konulu Yazılar’, *Bilim Tarihi*, 17-30, no. 22 (August 1993): 25; For detailed information have a look at: Mehmed Emin, ‘Lüzum-i İlm-i Tıb’, *Mecmua-i Fünun*, no. 38 (September 1866): 161–71; Mehmed Emin, ‘Lüzum-i İlm-i Tıb’, *Mecmua-i Fünun*, no. 40 (November 1866): 245–50; Mehmed Emin, ‘Lüzum-i İlm-i Tıb’, *Mecmua-i Fünun*, no. 46 (June 1867): 88–89.

at the beginning of the series, presents natural phenomena and sciences as God's eternal verities and acts.¹²¹ This demonstrates the persistence of a religious mindset, not only within Islam but also among scientists and intellectuals more broadly. Religious scientists and intellectuals at times utilised scientific data to support their religious beliefs and ideas. This phenomenon was not unique to *Mecmua-i Fünun* or the Ottoman Empire.

Kadri Bey is also against people who see customs as religious things. He criticised this understanding in some of his writings. For instance, he criticised the custom of building wooden buildings and understood that building wooden buildings was a religious custom. He also adds that protecting past things as a custom or religious value prevents material progression.¹²² That shows the effort of the authors of *Mecmua-i Fünun* in the separation of science and religion/customs. In addition to science and scientific understanding, *Mecmua-i Fünun* also aimed to change the mentality and worldview of Ottoman society. Because of their effort to give particular room to science and scientific thought, Münif Paşa and his friends in *Mecmua-i Fünun* have an important point in Ottoman/Turkish intellectual history and this thesis.

2.6. Other Works of Münif Paşa

In his work *Hikmet-i Hukuk* (Philosophy of Law), Münif Paşa briefly expressed his views on science and the philosophy of science. Münif Paşa argued that the philosophy of the sciences, such as history, geography, and arithmetic, clarifies the

¹²¹ Kadri, 'Hikmet-i Tabiiyeden Alaim-i Semaviyyeye Dair Bir Hoca Ile Bir Şakird Beyninde Muhaveredir', *Mecmua-i Fünun* 1, no. 1 (June 1862): 37–43; Kadri, 'Hikmet-i Tabiiyeden Alaim-i Semaviyyeye Dair Bir Hoca Ile Bir Şakird Beyninde Muhaveredir', *Mecmua-i Fünun* 1, no. 2 (July 1862): 79–86; Kadri, 'Hikmet-i Tabiiyeden Alaim-i Semaviyyeye Dair Bir Hoca Ile Bir Şakird Beyninde Muhaveredir', *Mecmua-i Fünun* 1, no. 6 (November 1862): 249–58; Kadri, 'Hikmet-i Tabiiyeden Alaim-i Semaviyyeye Dair Bir Hoca Ile Bir Şakird Beyninde Muhaveredir', *Mecmua-i Fünun* 1, no. 11 (April 1863): 470–76; Kadri, 'Hikmet-i Tabiiyeden Alaim-i Semaviyyeye Dair Bir Hoca Ile Bir Şakird Beyninde Muhaveredir', *Mecmua-i Fünun* 2, no. 15 (August 1863): 106–14; Kadri, 'Hikmet-i Tabiiyeden Alaim-i Semaviyyeye Dair Bir Hoca Ile Bir Şakird Beyninde Muhaveredir', *Mecmua-i Fünun* 2, no. 20 (January 1864): 230–38; Kadri, 'Hikmet-i Tabiiyeden Alaim-i Semaviyyeye Dair Bir Hoca Ile Bir Şakird Beyninde Muhaveredir', *Mecmua-i Fünun* 2, no. 24 (May 1864): 487–92.

¹²² Kadri, 'Sergi-i Umum-i Osmani', *Mecmua-i Fünun* 1, no. 10 (March 1863): 431–32.

underlying reasons for these phenomena. For instance, when we mention the existence of a lake at a specific location, we also consider its geographical aspect. On the other hand, the philosophy of geography seeks to elucidate the mechanisms and reasons behind the formation of this lake. Although history elucidates the occurrences of wars and peace and the establishment and fall of governments, the philosophy of history provides an explanation for the underlying causes of these phenomena. Münif Paşa correlated philosophy with human rationality. While nature may experience unforeseen occurrences, these events are not random but rather have an underlying cause; these deviations from the norm are actually organised. Münif Paşa provided an explanation for this order and its underlying grounds in the field of philosophy.¹²³ Münif Paşa employed a scientific approach in his contextualisation of science and nature, consistently linking everything to scientific principles and related fields. Indeed, Münif Paşa adopted a positivistic approach when discussing philosophy. This approach holds significance for the development of scientific thinking in the Ottoman Empire. Despite being a Muslim and conservative, Münif Paşa approached things from a scientific standpoint, emphasising positivism and disregarding the influence of God and the mysteries of nature. Münif Paşa was a crucial person for the conservative intellectuals of the Ottoman Empire in that era.

Another significant contribution of Münif Paşa is his translation of *Muhaverat-ı Hikemiye* (Philosophical Dialogues), which includes translations from Fénelon, Voltaire, and Fontenelle. For a long time, this work was believed to be the first translation and the first philosophical work written in Turkish in the Ottoman Empire. However, with the publication of Mehmet Ö. Alkan's article *İlk Matbu Felsefe Kitabı ve Krikor Kumaryan*, this misconception was corrected. It is now understood that the first philosophical book published in the Ottoman Empire was Krikor Kumaryan's *Evvel Zamanda Eazîm-üş-şân Olan Feylesofların İmrar Etmiş Oldukları Ömürlerinin İcmalidir* (Summary of the Lives of the Most Illustrious Philosophers of Antiquity), rather than Münif Paşa's *Muhaverat-ı Hikemiye*.¹²⁴ Although it was not the first philosophical book or translation from the Ottoman

¹²³ Münif Paşa, *Hikmet-i Hukuk* (İstanbul: Mürettibiyye Şikreti İdaresi, 1884), 4–5, 10.

¹²⁴ Mehmet Ö. Alkan, 'İlk Matbu Felsefe Kitabı ve Krikor Kumaryan', *Toplumsal Tarih*, no. 180 (December 2008): 48–53.

Empire into Turkish, it remains the first significant translation from the West. Münif Paşa sought to introduce Enlightenment ideas to the Ottoman Empire a century later than their emergence in Europe. Many of the translated passages in this work reflect Enlightenment ideals, particularly opposition to oppression, especially from religious authorities. However, Münif Paşa stated that his primary aim was to educate people while also providing them with literary enjoyment.¹²⁵ In this work, he employed an engaging and accessible style to capture the reader's interest. He avoided the mistake that Ahmed Midhat had previously criticised him for in *Mecmua-i Fünun*, using excessively grandiloquent language, as mentioned earlier in this thesis.

Muhaverat-ı Hikemiye can be accepted as a starting point of transformation in the mentality of the Ottoman intellectuals. This work influenced later generations, and its thoughts come from the French Enlightenment, which fought against oppression and praised patriotism. Ahmed Hamdi Tanpınar called *Muhaverat-ı Hikemiye* an unsung hero.¹²⁶ The *Muhaverat-ı Hikemiye* plays a crucial role in shaping the new society and mindset. Therefore, although *Muhaverat-ı Hikemiye* may not be directly related to the thesis topic, its significance in Ottoman intellectual history and its ability to pave a new path with a fresh mindset make it noteworthy to discuss. Münif Paşa translated a portion of Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* into Turkish, titling it *Mağdurin Hikayesi* (The Story of Victim). This also demonstrates Münif Paşa's refined approach and deep fascination with the French Enlightenment and Western philosophy. Thanks to the translations from Voltaire, Münif Paşa became an important figure against fatalism, which was dominant in the Ottoman Empire during the 18th century.¹²⁷

2.7. Conclusion of the Chapter

Münif Paşa is the founding father of the modern scientific journal in the Ottoman Empire. Additionally, he held a prominent position as one of the most influential

¹²⁵ Münif Paşa, *Muhaverat-ı Hikemiye* (İstanbul: Ceride-i Havadis Matbaası, 1860), 2–3.

¹²⁶ Tanpınar, *On dokuzuncu asır Türk edebiyatı tarihi*, 185.

¹²⁷ Mardin, *Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*.

people in spreading scientific knowledge and literature in the Ottoman Empire. During this effort, he aimed to delineate science from religion and grant science a distinct status while acknowledging the significance of religion to the Ottoman Empire. He desired to separate science and scientific knowledge from the influence of religion and political power. However, he never claimed that Islam is a non-scientific religion. He occasionally harmonised Islamic comprehension with contemporary scientific knowledge. From his standpoint, there is no conflict between Islam and science, and Islam may be interpreted using contemporary scientific ideas and understanding. He refrained from engaging in political and theological discourse while publishing *Mecmua-i Fünun*. As a result of this, he safeguarded *Mecmua-i Fünun* and its status.

Furthermore, it is important to note that Münif Paşa did not align with the vulgar materialist intellectuals mentioned in this thesis. His perspective on the relationship between science and religion holds significant value in the context of Ottoman intellectual history. Therefore, he might be acknowledged as the foundational figure of scientific thought and the preeminence of science and scientific thought in the Ottoman Empire. Although Münif Paşa distinguished between science and religion as distinct domains, he did not perceive them as adversaries or foes. In this thesis, I have positioned Münif Paşa in a distinctive role. His objective was not to challenge the ideas of Orientalist intellectuals or the West, nor to counteract the influence of missionary activities in the Ottoman Empire. Rather, his sole intention was to disseminate modern scientific knowledge within the empire. He aimed to demonstrate to Islamic scholars, in particular, that science and scientific knowledge are not in conflict with Islam. Moreover, Islam mandates the acquisition of scientific knowledge. Münif Paşa had a pioneering role in disseminating contemporary scientific information to society in the late 19th century Ottoman Empire. He aimed to alter the prevailing views on science and religion held by intellectuals, Islamic scholars, and society during that time. Münif Paşa viewed science as encompassing both intellectual and philosophical knowledge, as well as being applicable to everyday life, as he articulated in his writings. Therefore, science is essential for regular people to maintain their livelihoods.

When discussing modern science, Münif Paşa and his colleagues also played a role in establishing this paradigm in the Ottoman Empire. They are affiliated with the modernist and reformist factions of scientific thinking in the Ottoman Empire. They adopted notions such as 'ulüm', 'fünun', and 'terakki' from the Western world, becoming pioneers in doing so. In addition, they imparted these principles to Ottoman culture, incorporating them within the realm of science and scientific reasoning. Therefore, these beliefs were also widely disseminated throughout that time period. In scientific reasoning, these concepts were deliberately dissociated from religion. During this process, they exhibited a significant distinction compared to the Yong Ottomans. Münif Paşa and his friends did not have any specific ideological objective. Their writings were free of any political agenda or effort; their sole objective was to delve into society and engage with it through the lens of contemporary science. Münif Paşa distinguished himself from other Ottoman intellectuals in his thesis by adopting an apolitical stance in *Mecmua-i Fünun*.¹²⁸

Although there are some differences between the understanding of scientific knowledge of Münif Paşa and other intellectuals in this thesis, I can say that he had an influence on almost all other Ottoman intellectuals after him because he is a starting point for the modern scientific publication and popularisation of science in the Ottoman Empire. He introduced science to the public and common people and opened a way for later intellectuals to make themselves heard by society. He also made science a separate branch of knowledge. In addition, it is more accurate to liken Münif Paşa to the deists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries than to the later European materialists of the nineteenth century¹²⁹ in his perception of science and religion.

He played an important part in initiating talks on the topics of 'science' and 'religion' in the late 19th century Ottoman Empire. Nevertheless, he avoided from participating in the discussions, unlike subsequent intellectuals. Neither the writings of William

¹²⁸ M. Şükrü Hanioğlu, *Bir Siyasal Örgüt Olarak Osmanlı İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti ve Jön Türklük (1889-1902)* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1986), 19–21.

¹²⁹ Poyraz, 'Science versus Religion: The Influence of European Materialism on Turkish Thought, 1860-1960', 42.

Draper nor Andrew Dickson White were published during the publication of *Mecmua-i Fünun*. Also, Ernest Renan had not delivered his lecture titled *L'islamisme et la Science* and had not criticised Islam as an unscientific concept. While the modern perspective in both the Ottoman Empire and the West did not explicitly address the 'conflict between science and religion', the author of the writings made a distinction between the two and aimed to avoid any conflict and negative reactions from society and ruling elites.

As Ekrem Işın said, Münif Paşa and *Mecmua-i Fünun* laid the foundations of positivist scientific thought in the Late Ottoman Empire. Thanks to this position, *Mecmua-i Fünun* and Münif Paşa became an influence for positivist intellectuals such as Beşir Fuad Abdullah Cevdet¹³⁰ and Baha Tevfik. Münif Paşa is not the founder of positivism in the Ottoman Empire; positivism became popular among the students of Tıbbiye before the publication of *Mecmua-i Fünun*. There is a mutual interaction between positivism and publication and the influence of *Mecmua-i Fünun* on later generations. The importance of *Mecmua-i Fünun* for positivism and scientific thought is the popularisation of these concepts among the public. All of his efforts make him an important figure for this thesis.

Lastly, Münif Paşa became the first point in this thesis and one of the first points in Ottoman and Turkish intellectual history for vulgarising science, giving it a point as important as religion, and giving a political and social position to science for the sake of the Ottoman Empire and Ottoman society. Although his perspective was not a vulgar materialistic perspective, his positivistic world and scientific view make him an important actor for the discussions of science and religion.

¹³⁰ Ekrem Işın, 'Osmanlı Bilim Tarihi; Münif Paşa ve Mecmua-i Fünun', *Tarih ve Toplum*, no. 11 (November 1984): 351.

CHAPTER 3

VULGAR MATERIALISM IN THE LATE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

3.1. Birth of Vulgar Materialism in the Ottoman Empire

German vulgar materialism from the mid-19th century heavily influenced Ottoman materialism, primarily drawing on its ideas and blueprints. As Carlton J . H. Hayes mentions, the members of this era can be called ‘The Generation of Materialism’, and the Ottoman vulgar materialists were the localisation of that generation.¹³¹ Nevertheless, the Ottoman intellectuals adapted vulgar materialism in accordance with local values such as religion and cultural characteristics. Their objective was to utilise it in the establishment of an entirely new scientific society. Ottoman vulgar materialism possesses a certain degree of uniqueness compared to German vulgar materialism, rather than being a mere imitation of it. Their intention was to establish an Islamic perspective that embraced materialism but with a focus on vulgar materialism rather than the radical atheistic materialism prevalent in the Western world. The concept of Islamic vulgar materialism held by Ottoman intellectuals is a distinct and localised kind of vulgar materialism. The Ottoman intellectuals endeavoured to demonstrate the advanced and progressive stance of Islamic and Ottoman philosophy. With this comprehension, their objective was to challenge the notions put out by Western and Orientalist intellectuals regarding the perceived 'underdevelopment' of the Ottoman Empire and Islam.

Alternatively, the intellectual history of the Tanzimat Era can be divided into two distinct phases. During the early stages of modernisation in the Ottoman Empire, there was a proposal for political reform, with a focus on safeguarding Islam and

¹³¹ Hanioglu, *Osmanlı'dan Cumhuriyet'e Zihniyet, Siyaset ve Tarih*, 15.

cultural values, which emerged as a significant concern. However, an intellectual group was born with Beşir Fuad and scientific intellectuals and a new approach. This emerging faction advocated for intellectual, cultural, and philosophical transformation, while simultaneously scrutinising religion and striving to establish a more scientific society. Following the 1880s, these two factions engaged in deliberations with the aim of preserving the Empire from imminent collapse. Therefore, it may be argued that the debate between science and religion also pertains to the process of modernisation, as previously noted, and the search for remedies to prevent the Ottoman Empire from collapsing. Thus, it offers an alternative viewpoint to the discourse surrounding the topics of 'science' and 'faith'. Previously said, the issue shifted from modernisation to safeguarding the Ottoman Empire from collapse and embracing a new scientific path. Beşir Fuad opposed the creation of non-realistic and utopian characters by Tanzimat intellectuals. Instead, he aimed to popularise scientific knowledge among the public. I used the term of vulgar materialism to show that these intellectuals used materialism as a tool to popularise and vulgarise among Ottoman society. Even they used science and religion to popularise their ideas.

From this perspective, the issue becomes evident when the writings of Ottoman intellectuals are examined. Later generations, primarily conservative and religious intellectuals, regarded themselves as the protectors of their texts and religious sources, while scientific intellectuals adopted different perspectives. They initiated ontological and epistemological debates. Furthermore, certain scientific intellectuals expressed a similar viewpoint in their publications, aiming to safeguard their texts while simultaneously reinforcing their philosophical and scientific arguments. Beşir Fuad revolutionised the thinking of Ottoman intellectuals by introducing ontological and epistemological debates into intellectual discourse. Nevertheless, the objective of safeguarding the text persisted. The primary reason for this among scientific intellectuals was their inclination to embrace scientific truths and a framework of vulgar materialism as a matter of faith. Undoubtedly, embracing science and its empirical realities in a manner akin to religious faith aligns with the rigid positivistic principles of the 19th century. However, this argument occasionally contradicts the inherently sceptical nature of science. From this standpoint, science, scientism, and

vulgar materialism were indisputable concepts for these young intellectuals during that period. This perspective also reflects German vulgar materialism. This line of thought found expression in the argument of Abdullah Cevdet: "...science is the religion of the elites, and religion is the science of the masses."¹³² Science or scientism gained an unquestionable foundation and was almost transformed into a 'religion' for Ottoman intellectuals. However, they did not seek to replace religion with science. Their intention was to use both religion and science as tools to transform society. I contend that these intellectuals regarded science as essential and as significant as religion. From their perspective, science was a crucial concept for the survival of Ottoman society and for protecting it from Western influence. In doing so, Ottoman intellectuals also aimed to demonstrate that Islam and science were compatible. For this reason, this topic is primarily political and socio-political rather than purely scientific in the Ottoman context. For this reason, this topic is mostly political and socio-political rather than scientific for the Ottoman example.

3.2. Political and Intellectual Way of Vulgar Materialism

As a positivist intellectual, Ahmed Rıza, one of the leaders of Young Turks, was against the West's political approach to the East. He emphasised his views in his work *La Faillite morale de la politique occidentale en Orient* (The Moral Bankruptcy of Western Policy in the East). He said that he is astonished by how influential intellectuals such as Kant, Comte, Hume, and Leibniz Newton were; they were members of the inferior West. He said that as a Muslim positivist, he wants the benefit of humanity.¹³³ Ahmed Rıza's perspective reflected the idea of most Ottoman intellectuals in that era. While Ottoman intellectuals harshly criticised their policies, especially their Eastern policies, they used science, philosophy and intellectuality. I argue that they wanted to show that these concepts are not unique to the West; humanity can use them. Non-western countries are not inferior; the whole of humanity can understand each other and benefit from differences from each other.

¹³² Abdullah Cevdet, 'Şehzâde Mecid Efendi Hazretleri'yle Mülâkat', *İctihad*, no. 57 (20 March 1913): 1257.

¹³³ Ahmed Rıza, *La Faillite Morale de La Politique Occidentale En Orient* (Paris: Librairie Picart, 1922), 14–15.

Ahmed Rıza can be regarded as an occidental, employing the intellectual framework of the Western world, like other intellectuals in this thesis. Ahmed Rıza commended positivism and intellectuals who adhere to positivism because of their concern for the welfare of humanity. One of the reasons Ottoman intellectuals embraced positivism is due to its stance on humanity.¹³⁴ They attempted to integrate a positivistic viewpoint with Islamic ideology to establish a humanistic interpretation of Islam. As a result, they aimed to modernise the image of Islam and counter the unfavourable opinion held by the Western world. Ahmed Rıza held certain comparable perspectives to Abdullah Cevdet. He asserted that in *Meşveret* (Consultation), the media organ and the voice of the Young Turks, it is crucial to utilise the constructive aspects of Islam to uphold the existence of the Ottoman Empire and society. He further argues that Islam should not be equated with blindly accepting everything without understanding its significance.¹³⁵

Ahmed Rıza claimed that the perspective on Orientalists and the West was negative. He emphasised that Ottomans and Muslims should speak out against the West, which regarded them as savage and low races and nations. He also told the bad memories of the West while accepting the bad memories of Ottomans and Turks. He emphasised that the West used values like free thinking and social peace; they humiliated the East, like Arabs and Indians.¹³⁶ Ahmed Rıza's main point is about the two-faced approach of the West and giving the credit to the East, especially the Ottoman Empire. This political approach largely informs his praise of Islam. He sometimes criticised Islam and its worship. Because Islam had an organic relationship with the Ottoman Empire and Ottoman society, Ahmed Rıza praised and defended it against the West, Orientalist intellectuals, and Christianity. Ahmed Rıza's attitude towards Islam is mostly political, as he was one of the most important political actors in the Ottoman Empire in that era.

¹³⁴ Ahmed Rıza, 'Les Positivistes & La Politique Internationale', *Mechveret Supplement Français*, 15 September 1896, 6.

¹³⁵ M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *Bir Siyasal Düşünür Olarak Abdullah Cevdet ve Dönemi* (İstanbul: Üçdal Neşriyat, 1981), 132.

¹³⁶ Ahmed Rıza, *La Faillite Morale de La Politique Occidentale En Orient*, 32–34.

Vulgar materialism is based on the superiority of scientific truth and the empirical method of investigation. Vulgar materialism and a positivistic understanding of knowledge are against the transformation of positivism into religion. Especially after the 1860s, vulgar materialism had a strong relationship with evolutionism under the influence of Darwin and his masterpiece, *On the Origin of Species*. For that reason, Ottoman intellectuals often adopted evolutionism with vulgar materialism. They also used Social Darwinism for the progress of Ottoman society. Because the Ottoman Empire and Ottoman society were in the supreme league according to these intellectuals. Positivism also was an important tool for these intellectuals. They used positivism as an umbrella concept and a cement for their arguments. Because they aimed to make every concept, even Islam, positive, so they showed every concept as positive and these concepts as scientific.

In addition, vulgar materialism replaced ‘Naturphilosophie’, the philosophy of nature espoused by German Idealists, which was shaped by the writings of Friedrich Schelling and also referred to as ‘Romantische Naturphilosophie’. This shift saw the replacement of philosophical speculation with natural sciences and medical experiments founded on non-philosophical scientific truth. At the same time, while adopting German vulgar materialism, Ottoman intellectuals encountered significant challenges. The most critical issue was explaining this strictly empirical worldview to Muslim society. Since all religions, including Islam, encompass metaphysical and spiritual beliefs that conflict with the rigid empiricism of this perspective, some Ottoman intellectuals, such as Abdullah Cevdet, attempted to reconcile it with Islam. He sought to materialise Islam by utilising its social dimensions, recognising that scientism could not survive in the Ottoman Empire unless Islam was adapted to align with a scientific outlook. He and other like-minded intellectuals took this approach to avoid accusations from the clergy. Conversely, another group of Ottoman intellectuals, including Baha Tevfik and his associates, openly criticised all religions. They endorsed science unquestioningly, almost treating it as a religion, although they occasionally praised Islam in their writings.¹³⁷ This contributed to the development

¹³⁷ M. Şükrü Hanoğlu, ‘Blueprints for a Future Society: Late Ottoman Materialists on Science, Religion and Art’, in *Late Ottoman Society: The Intellectual Legacy*, ed. Elisabeth Özdalga (London ; New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005), 27.

of debates concerning the relationship between science and religion. In addition to discussions about these concepts, defining their boundaries became a crucial issue during this period.

Ottoman intellectuals, in this thesis, had ambivalent thoughts on the topics of this thesis, especially 'science' and 'religion'. This was due to their unfamiliarity with a vulgar materialistic understanding of science, which set them apart from the European discourse on 'science' and 'religion'. Due to their patriotic motivations, they maintained a connection with Islam; even though some of them identified as atheists, they nonetheless expressed admiration for the religion. In addition to that admiration, they also criticised the understanding of Islam. It can be said that they aimed to make Islam scientific with some religious citations especially from ayets and hadiths rather than protecting all values of Islam.

Since many of these intellectuals' works are either translations or influenced by vulgar materialist and predominantly atheist intellectuals, it is evident that their writings and views may contain arguments that potentially contradict religion and Islam. Due to the sorrow and confusion caused by shifts in their mindset, as well as their role as the intellectual guardians of the Ottoman Empire and Islam against Orientalist intellectuals and Christian missionaries, they occasionally exhibit inconsistencies in their writings. Occasionally, they integrated Islam with these novel ideas and creations to surpass this requirement, effortlessly influencing society and substantiating their arguments to Orientalist intellectuals.

Despite being significantly influenced by Ludwig Büchner, vulgar materialists were not the first intellectuals to acknowledge him in their writings. The first intellectual to do so was not a materialist. Ali Suavi was the first intellectual to reference Büchner and his book *Kraft und Stoff*. He expressed disapproval of Büchner's perspective on matter and Büchner's belief that matter is the fundamental essence of the universe. Ali Suavi contended that Büchner's concept of the subject matter in his book is merely an assumption. He asserted that anyone who has read Gazali would be able to refute the concepts of Büchner. In addition, he harshly criticised followers of Büchner and said, "Foolish people who do not know anything about evidence

claim that the doctor [Büchner] proved that [with his works], and they became infidels.” In another of his articles, Ali Suavi claimed that Büchner is the prophet of French materialists. It can be considered that the criticism of Ali Suavi on Büchner and his ideas about materialism started the discussions of materialism and vulgar materialism in the Ottoman Empire.¹³⁸ From the critique of Ali Suavi, discussions on Büchner and his groundbreaking work *Kraft und Stoff* continued until the Early Republican Period, Emin Feyzi and his work *İlim ve İrade: Mâddiyyûn Mezhebinin Reddini Muhtevidir* (Science and Will: Includes the Refutation of Materialistic Thought) in 1926. In addition, Rıza Tevfik claimed that Hüseyin Nazım Paşa, who blamed Rıza Tevfik for Darwinism and materialism, even read *Kraft und Stoff* and was influenced by this work.¹³⁹ That shows the influence of that work. Ludwig Büchner and his work *Kraft und Stoff* occupied the agenda of Turkish intellectuals for more than half a century.

Kraft und Stoff aimed to popularise science rather than create a new religion or philosophy. It also aims to be a ‘faith destroyer’. For this reason, Ludwig Büchner mentioned the similarities between animals and humans. By doing so, he wanted to annihilate the ‘difference’ between humans and animals, which religions claim.¹⁴⁰ On some points, Ottoman intellectuals had similar aims to Ludwig Büchner and other vulgar materialists. For instance, they wanted to annihilate the differences between humans and animals. Still, the difference between the Ottoman vulgar materialists and Europeans is that the Ottoman ones wanted to create a new concept of religion, philosophy and society. They wanted to make this for the transformation and modernisation of the Ottoman Empire and Ottoman society against the dominance of the West.

Vulgar materialism became highly practical in the Ottoman Empire, particularly after the 1880s, beginning with the writings of Beşir Fuad. Some academicians argue that materialism had a greater impact in the political sphere than in the philosophical one.

¹³⁸ Ali Suavi, ‘Hulâsati Muhâkemetin - Beynel Gazali ve’l-Felâsife’, *Ulûm*, no. 6 (1869): 352–53; Ali Suavi, ‘Materyalist Ehl-i Madde, Ehl-i Nefs’, *Ulûm*, no. 17 (1869): 1008–9.

¹³⁹ Rıza Tevfik, ‘Habishane Hatıraları’, *Bağçe*, no. 10 (23 September 1908): 4.

¹⁴⁰ Hanioglu, *Osmanlı’dan Cumhuriyet’e Zihniyet, Siyaset ve Tarih*, 37.

They claim that Ottoman materialists lacked originality in their arguments and merely replicated existing views on vulgar materialism. According to this perspective, Ottoman materialists simply adopted these ideas without significant innovation. These academicians further contend that the Ottoman materialists' endorsement of this form of materialism, despite its waning influence in European philosophical discourse, demonstrates their limited philosophical understanding. They point to the omission of dialectical materialism and figures such as Ludwig Feuerbach, one of Büchner's influences, as evidence of this intellectual deficiency.¹⁴¹ While these arguments hold some validity, they are not entirely accurate. Ottoman materialists indeed focused on vulgar materialism rather than dialectical materialism but attributing this solely to a lack of philosophical understanding is misleading. Rather, they deliberately chose this approach to articulate their ideas and guide public opinion. By merging scientific knowledge with vulgar materialism and simplifying religious concepts, they aimed to make their ideas more accessible and impactful within society.

Moreover, the impact of vulgar materialism on politics in Europe surpasses that of the philosophical approach. European and Ottoman materialists composed their writings with the intention of influencing the general audience rather than adopting a purely intellectual approach. However, it would be incorrect to claim that Ottoman vulgar-scientific materialists did not produce any original work and merely imitated European works. Their commendable endeavour involves interpreting and adapting these ideas to the public, while also striving to harmonise these philosophical concepts with the social and religious sensibilities of the audience. This effort also exemplifies their pragmatic philosophical perspective. Another crucial aspect of the intellectuals during that time was their attempt to gradually alter people's perspectives in an evolutionary manner, as opposed to an immediate and revolutionary transformation. Their writings concerning Islam demonstrate their diligent endeavour. Instead of fiercely criticising Islam, they directed their critique onto other religions, particularly Christianity.

¹⁴¹ Mehmet Akgün, *Materyalizmin Türkiye'ye girişi* (Ankara: Elis Yayınları, 2005), 400–404; Can Karaböcek, 'Türk Düşüncesinde Büchner Etkisi Ya Da "Felsefenin Sefaleti"', *Kutadgubilig Felsefe-Bilim Araştırmaları Dergisi*, no. 22 (October 2012): 170–71.

Şükrü Hanioğlu observed that during this time, there is a clear trend among the intellectual and educated class to strongly adhere to vulgar materialism, as evidenced by the content of the letters they send to newspapers and journals. Intellectuals and scholars, in their correspondence, deliberated on the significance of science, the objective of science, and the existence of anything beyond science. Despite their criticism of the sultan, these scholars and intellectuals firmly opposed philosophy and actively advocated for science. These professors strongly opposed the philosophies of ancient philosophers such as Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle as a way of endorsing vulgar materialism. Moreover, the ideologies of these philosophers were regarded as a vacuous and superfluous realm of imagination that made no meaningful contributions to the advancement of science and humanity. He further asserts that the Ottoman intellectuals with materialistic tendencies drew inspiration from the ideas of August Comte, Claude Bernard, George Henry Lewes, Émile Littré, Herbert Spencer, and German materialism (post-Feuerbachian) to develop a framework for society.¹⁴² I think they used vulgar materialism and these concepts because of its simplicity and arguments. They found it suitable for reaching Ottoman society easily. The Ottoman intellectuals had the burden of reconciling various conflicting concepts: Islam with materialism, and positivism with evolutionism. They also wanted to free science from the dominance of Islam. For this reason, they tried to find ways of harmonising these concepts. They even faced criticism from their intellectual peers while doing this.

Vulgar materialism was a popular ideology in that era of the Ottoman Empire and shared the same foundations as European vulgar materialism in its opposition to philosophy. What distinguished Ottoman vulgar materialists, however, was their use of science as a tool against authority, particularly Sultan Abdülhamid II, in their writings. They positioned their ideas as scientific and even linked their political beliefs to scientific values, thereby forging a connection between their materialist and political ideologies. The popularisation of vulgar materialism reached its peak with the second generation of Young Turks, who would later form the İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti (Committee of Union and Progress) in the 1890s. This movement

¹⁴² Hanioğlu, 'Blueprints for a Future Society: Late Ottoman Materialists on Science, Religion and Art', 37–38.

retained its political and intellectual influence until the early Republican period in the late 1920s. However, this does not mean that Ottoman materialist intellectuals merely sought to adopt these ideas; rather, they aimed to harmonise them with the Islamic foundations of Ottoman society, creating a distinctive ideological structure.

The political influence of vulgar materialism, positivism, evolutionism, and social Darwinism had a significant impact on the Young Turks after the 1890s, particularly with the establishment of the İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti. The leaders and significant people of this group embraced vulgar materialism to some extent and attempted to utilise these ideas to benefit society. The society's name was derived from Comte's motto: 'order and progress'. Ahmet Rıza, the leader of the Committee of Union and Progress, modified its name to Union and Progress. Moreover, Abdullah Cevdet, a notable member of the committee, endeavoured to reconcile Islam with vulgar materialism and was influenced by French social Darwinism, particularly Gustave Le Bon's ideas. Some Ottoman intellectuals used social Darwinism as a tool to show the high virtue of Ottoman society ¹⁴³ and to show that the Ottoman Empire is a Western power.

As Atila Doğan claims, some of the Ottoman intellectuals, especially the Young Turks, not only created an intellectual but also used this 'Weltanschauung' as a political tool against the Hamidian Regime.¹⁴⁴ The Ottoman intellectuals aimed to associate their writings and ideas with scientific, intellectual, and sociopolitical ways. In some of their writings, Islam was seen as a social notion. I will use some writings of these intellectuals that correlate with social and political issues.

It is essential that such a thought as vulgar materialism, which considers the notion of religion as an obstacle in the way of science and progress, finds a base in the Ottoman Empire and is supported widely by some intellectuals in their books and other writings. Despite being an Islamic empire, the Ottoman Empire, particularly

¹⁴³ Kolland, 'A Strategic Eurocentrism: The Construction of Ottoman Evolutionism in an Uneven World (1870–1900)', 1–2.

¹⁴⁴ Atila Doğan, *Osmanlı Aydınları ve Sosyal Darwinizm* (İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2006), 237–38.

under the rule of Abdülhamid II, implemented laws influenced by Islam. However, it is worth noting that there was a degree of intellectual independence throughout this period. While delivering lectures on the theory of evolution in the United States, Ottoman intellectuals also engaged in discussions on this subject around the same time period. It can be asserted that there existed a limited degree of intellectual independence within the Ottoman Empire, especially during the period known as the ‘İstibdat Dönemi’ (Period of Autocracy).

Hilmi Ziya Ülken describes the Second Constitutional Era (1908) as a time when writers and intellectuals frequently employed and manipulated the terms ‘evolution’ and ‘development’ in their literary works and newspaper articles as an umbrella term for clarifying societal transformations. It is widely acknowledged as a fundamental principle that everything is determined by these rules of evolution and advancement without being open to philosophical debate or discussion. He asserted that during that period, Darwin primarily influenced Spencer's evolutionism, which dominated the prevailing belief in evolution. According to Spencer, all beings experience a significant transformation, or evolution, as they gather a certain quantity of elements from the basic to the complex, from the uniform to the heterogeneous. Spencer's evolution was mechanistic. Spencerian evolution confines human impact to the exploration and identification of natural laws. Willpower can only lead to this outcome. Therefore, it could potentially lead to indifference.¹⁴⁵ It can be considered a kind of predestinarianism because it ignores the human effect on actions.

Ottoman intellectuals prefer to utilise Lamarckian evolution over Darwinian evolution due to its emphasis on the concept of ‘adaptability to environment’ rather than Darwin's ‘natural selection’. In my opinion, the Ottoman Empire's embrace of Western ideals and modernity during that period is the primary reason for this preference. Thus, Ottoman intellectuals can serve as evidence of the significance of embracing the new system. Another possible explanation could be attributed to the process of natural selection. Discussing evolution in Ottoman civilisation is challenging due to religious constraints, but introducing a notion like natural selection would be even more difficult. This rationale is also applicable to French

¹⁴⁵ Ülken, *Türkiye’de çağdaş düşünce tarihi*, 439.

intellectuals during the period of the Revolution. Ottoman intellectuals used evolutionism not only as a sole scientific thought or the only way to become European. Ottoman intellectuals not only used it as an alternative to the Hamidian regime or the policies of Abdülhamid II but also as a strategic response to the Ottoman 'problem space'.¹⁴⁶

There was a turning point in the utilisation of Darwinism and Social Darwinism throughout the Ottoman Empire, particularly among the intellectuals of the Young Turks movement, notably Abdullah Cevdet. The Young Turks utilised Darwinism and Social Darwinism as foundations to establish a novel society centred around competitiveness and the cultivation of robust traits. Despite the opposition to Islam, the Young Turks, particularly Abdullah Cevdet, made an effort to reconcile this ideology with Islam and sought to establish a modern society founded on these principles. Although this endeavour was entrusted to the ruling elites and intellectuals of the Early Republican era, they did not have the intention of utilising it.¹⁴⁷

Ottoman vulgar materialists also fit Bertrand Russell's description in his essay 'The Free Man's Worship'. In this article, Russell considered science as the solution to the confusion that religion and philosophy bring.¹⁴⁸ Ottoman vulgar materialists took this 'Weltanschauung' from German vulgar materialists, specifically Büchner. Although they did not wholly deny religion and philosophy, they wanted to transform both notions into a scientific base. This idea would become their motto during their writing life, and they aimed to create a scientific and materialist society by transforming all concepts in the scientific base. Ottoman intellectuality transitioned from an intuitive, belief-based approach to an empirical, science-based one. This

¹⁴⁶ Kolland, 'A Strategic Eurocentrism: The Construction of Ottoman Evolutionism in an Uneven World (1870–1900)', 4–5.

¹⁴⁷ Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 6–7.; I used the term of 'imagined society' with the influence of Benedict Anderson. As he correlates the emergence of 'imagined community', I also correlate the emergence of 'imagined society' with print capitalism. I also add the influence of intellectuals and their motivation to drive the society to the way that these intellectuals imagined.

¹⁴⁸ Bertrand Russell, 'The Free Man's Worship', in *Philosophical Essays* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co, 1910), 60–61.

change can also be considered a shift from religion to science. For instance, Ottoman vulgar materialist intellectuals correlated thought with the material process. Moleschott's contention that "Thought is a motion of matter" served as an inspiration.¹⁴⁹

With this perspective, both German and Ottoman vulgar materialist intellectuals regarded thought as a material and empirical action. By moving beyond the influence of religion and religious ideology, they created greater space for science and scientism to shape human behaviour. From my point of view, Ottoman intellectuals prioritised vulgar materialism primarily for its practical benefits. By associating it with science, they sought to depict Ottoman civilisation in material terms rather than through spiritual concepts such as religion, the soul, and God. They viewed material possessions and scientific advancements as the sole means of achieving modernisation. Most Ottoman intellectuals, particularly those inclined towards materialism, regarded materialist philosophy and scientism as a form of 'useful knowledge' and the only viable path to modernisation. For pragmatic reasons, they attempted to reconcile this intellectual and philosophical ideology with Islam, seeking to establish a scientific and materialistic foundation for the religion. In doing so, they aimed to prepare society for modernisation while countering the colonial influence of the West and the activities of Christian missionaries within the Ottoman Empire.

Presumably, Ottoman intellectuals employed this idea in order to establish a new society founded on scientific knowledge and ration. That demonstrates that while materialist Ottoman intellectuals employed religious arguments for practical and pragmatic motives, they also employed certain arguments that directly contradicted religious beliefs. This is indicative of the intricate nature of the ideas held by Ottoman intellectuals. Due to the adoption of these ideas from Western sources, Ottoman intellectuals occasionally had challenges in effectively communicating

¹⁴⁹ Ludwig Büchner, *Kraft Und Stoff: Oder, Grundzüge Der Natürlichen Weltordnung, Nebst Einer Darauf Gebauten Moral Oder Sittenlehre, in Allgemein Verständlicher Darstellung* (Leipzig: Verlag von Theoh. Thomas, 1898), 295; Jacob Moleschott, *Der Kreislauf Des Lebens Physiologische Antworten Auf Liebig's Chemische Briefe* (Mainz: V. von Zabern, 1852), 237.

these arguments to the general population. Here are a few issues faced by Ottoman intellectuals and society during the process of modernisation.

Cemaleddin Afghani argued that when creatures progressed from a primitive state to a more advanced one, he noted the presence of evolution. Additionally, Afghani observed that both science and philosophy are also advancing. Islam's fundamental principles hinder these advancements, and he proposed Islamic modernity as a remedy for this intellectual stasis. Afghani expressed his opposition to the evolutionary perspective and proposed a modernisation initiative for Islam aimed at revitalising philosophy and science in Islamic territories.¹⁵⁰ Afghani is one of the Muslim Modernist Muslim intellectuals who criticised and refuted the work *L'Islamisme et La Science*. I will mention not only Afghani but also some other Ottoman and Muslim intellectuals.

Şemseddin Sami is a prominent figure in the early period of Ottoman evolutionism. His book *İnsan* (Human), published in 1879, with a subsequent publication titled *Yine İnsan* (Again Human) in 1886, is widely regarded as the earliest Turkish book on anthropology, particularly evolutionary anthropology, during the time of the Ottoman Empire. Şemseddin Sami embraced the theory of evolution. However, he did not make any reference to either Lamarck or Darwin. Also similar to Ahmet Mithat Efendi, Şemseddin Sami endeavoured to harmonise the Theory of Evolution with the Theory of Creation. The concept of 'Creative Evolution' was introduced by French philosopher Henri Bergson in 1907 through his work titled 'L'Évolution créatrice'. Although, *İnsan* was not controversial, *Yine İnsan* was a very controversial book and in this book Şemseddin Sami considered human as a animal-kind creature. Maybe this was related with Şemseddin Sami's readings and his influence from Western anthropology at that time.

Şemseddin Sami, along with his scientific approach, also had political and social aims while publishing these two works. While mentioning races, Şemseddin Sami categorised races as high, low, civilised, savage, placing Ottoman society at the top

¹⁵⁰ Monica M Ringer, *Islamic Modernism and the Re-Enchantment of the Sacred in the Age of History*, 2020, 114.

of this hierarchy. I think that Şemseddin Sami aimed to put Ottoman society and the Ottoman Empire in the same group with the West. He also aimed to support the spread of Western ideas, science, and philosophy in the Ottoman Empire. This approach lacked a scientific foundation and primarily addressed the socio-political landscape of the Ottoman Empire. He also aimed to give answers to the West and Orientalist intellectuals who were humiliating the Ottoman Empire and Islam. In addition, with some arguments in his books, *İnsan* and *Yine İnsan*, about the head and skull of humans, Şemseddin Sami influenced Early Republican anthropological studies.¹⁵¹

In one of his writings, Şemseddin Sami also claimed that the universe is composed of matter and force. Şemseddin Sami can be considered a vulgar materialist Ottoman intellectual. In his other writing, he says that ancient philosophers based their philosophies on empty imaginations and illusions, but with the thoughts of August Comte and Ludwig Büchner, this so-called ‘false philosophy’ of ancient philosophers had changed its place to positive philosophy based on science. Later, Baha Tevfik supported this idea. The concept of positive philosophy is the general thought of vulgar materialists and the followers of scientism. From that point on, there is no originality in Şemseddin Sami’s idea, like other vulgar Ottoman materialists of that era.¹⁵² That non-originality is not unique to Şemseddin Sami. The concepts of ‘force’ and ‘matter’ are the general concepts for vulgar materialist intellectuals not only in the Ottoman Empire but also in Europe, especially in the hometown of vulgar materialism, Germany.

Furthermore, it is important to note that Şemseddin Sami’s perspectives on evolution diverged significantly from Ahmed Midhat’s interpretation of evolution. Another intellectual who discussed evolution during that time period was Hoca Tahsin. Although Hoca Tahsin shared similar thoughts with Ahmed Midhat and Şemseddin Sami regarding evolution, he diverged from them in certain aspects. While not explicitly stating it, the author suggests the concept of elimination through the

¹⁵¹ Toprak, *Cumhuriyet ve Antropoloji*, 53–55.

¹⁵² Hanioğlu, ‘Blueprints for a Future Society: Late Ottoman Materialists on Science, Religion and Art’, 38.

metaphor of a sieve. In this metaphor, the sieve acts as a mechanism that determines which species survive and which do not, rather than just selecting. Also, this elimination pertains to philosophical and metaphysical matters, whereas Ahmed Midhat's and Şemseddin Sami's selection adopts a more materialistic perspective.¹⁵³

In Şemsettin Sami's work "Semerat-ı İlmi" (Fruits of Science), it is said that humans have a strong inclination towards science and are unable to accept anything that is not based on scientific principles. Through scientific advancements, it evolved from a vague outline to a fully fabricated entity. This demonstrates the progression of research and the adoption of scientific information as the sole form of knowledge, so reshaping the concept of religion. The concept pertains to the prevailing notion among Ottoman intellectuals of a scientific nature, which evolved into a comprehensive worldview embraced by the materialists of that time.¹⁵⁴ Şemseddin Sami also accepted the West as modern civilisation and praised Europe for their victory over religious fanaticism by scientific philosophy. He added that Islam is in harmony with science and can achieve what Europe did.¹⁵⁵ Şemseddin Sami regarded science related with civilisation and becoming civilised. From his perspective without losing Islamic core and essence, modern Western science and scientific philosophy should be used. By this way the Ottoman Empire would join the civilised World.

Hoca Tahsin is another influential intellectual on this topic that I will not mention in detail. He is essential for his pioneer position for Haeckelian evolution with his work *Tarih-i Tekvin Yahud Hilkat* (*The History of Existence or Creation*). Many intellectuals are interested in these topics, but I choose the most essential intellectuals from my own perspective. Some Islamist writers criticise Haeckel, like Büchner and claim that these intellectuals drive young Muslims to irreligiousness.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵³ Asil, 'The Pursuit of the Modern Mind: Popularization of Science, the Development of the Middle Classes, and Religious Transformation in the Ottoman Empire, 1860-1880', 347.

¹⁵⁴ Şemseddin Sami, 'Semerat-ı İlmi', *Hafta* 1, no. 19 (26 December 1881): 291.

¹⁵⁵ Kolland, 'A Strategic Eurocentrism: The Construction of Ottoman Evolutionism in an Uneven World (1870–1900)', 8.

¹⁵⁶ 'Haeckel ve Büchner', *Hikmet*, no. 15 (28 July 1910): 7–8.

The popularity of positivism, materialism, evolutionism, and vulgar materialism among Ottoman intellectuals during the late 19th and early 20th centuries can be attributed to their perception of the relationship between religion and backwardness. These intellectuals believed that religious authority hindered scientific progress and education. Moreover, the Ottoman intellectuals aimed to counter the Western and Orientalist intellectuals by showcasing their writings and work to demonstrate that Muslim or Ottoman intellectual thought was not antiquated. In the upcoming chapters, I will discuss the works of four intellectuals: Ahmed Midhat, Beşir Fuad, Abdullah Cevdet, and Baha Tevfik. These intellectuals explored vulgar, positivistic, and evolutionistic perspectives and made efforts to integrate their ideas with Islamic principles. Their goal was to introduce modern scientific and philosophical thought into the Ottoman Empire.

CHAPTER 4

AHMED MIDHAT AND CHANGE OF INTELLECTUALITY AND MENTALITY

4.1. Importance of Ahmed Midhat for the Thesis

Ahmed Midhat Efendi holds a prominent and unique position in the intellectual history of the Ottoman Empire and Turkey. His primary reputation is from his literary works; however, he also looked into subjects such as science, philosophy, and several different fields. Ahmed Midhat Efendi was widely recognised as a conservative person, with even intellectuals perceiving him as a conservative and deeply religious man during his whole writing career. That statement is partially incorrect. Ahmed Midhat penned articles and essays in his periodical *Dağarcık* during the early 1870s that diverged from Islamic ideology. Following his exile to Rhodes, his intellectual perspective underwent a profound transformation, leading to a significant expansion in his utilisation of Islamic rhetoric. One possible explanation for this is his intention to align himself with the bureaucracy. In addition, he aimed to employ Islam as a counter to the ideas of Orientalist and Western intellectuals, asserting that Islam was devoid of scientific principles both prior to and following his exile. His transformation exactly occurred in 1876¹⁵⁷ most probably to create good relations with Abdülhamid II after his return from exile. Ahmed Midhat Efendi, like many Ottoman intellectuals, viewed Islam as a means to utilise, safeguard, and elucidate scientific knowledge. Furthermore, according to that perspective, Islam aligns with science and supports it, in contrast to Christianity and other religions. Ahmed Midhat's main objection was not to the portrayal of the Orient by European intellectuals, but rather to the portrayal of the Occident in Ottoman society, which he

¹⁵⁷ Mardin, *Jön Türklerin Siyasî Fikirleri: 1895 - 1908*, 58.

believed was biased. However, Ahmed Midhat proposes a combination of the material elements of the Occident with the spiritual elements of the Orient.¹⁵⁸ s Mehmet Ö. Alkan says, Dağarcık is the first area in which science and religion conflicted in a written way in the Ottoman Empire, although Ahmed Midhat and Dağarcık support harmony rather than conflict between science and religion.¹⁵⁹

I choose Ahmed Midhat Efendi for this thesis to demonstrate the evolution of his intellectual ideas and his thought process on the subject matter. I want to show how Ahmed Midhat discussed that topic and used it as a tool in the discussions of modernisation and the adoption of Western ideas. I aim to show that in his early writings, he made an effort to prove the new scientific thought to society, defend himself against the reactions of Islamic scholars, and harmonise his scientific views with Islamic thought. I aim to emphasise Ahmed Midhat's strong reactions to Christian missionaries and emerging atheist Ottoman intellectuals. I believe that Ahmed Midhat attempted to express regret for his earlier views and later supported an anti-scientific perspective within the Ottoman Empire. In 1878, Ahmed Midhat assumed the position of the chief editor of *Takvîm-i Vekâyî*, the designated newspaper of the Ottoman Empire. As a result of this, Ahmed Midhat aligned himself with the ruling elite and the sultan of the Ottoman Empire. Subsequently, he assumed the role of advocate and guardian of the state's ideology and religion according to Islamic principles. Due to prevailing beliefs, he developed a strong opposition to materialism, evolutionism, and positivism, as he believed that these "Western ideas" would have detrimental effects on the Ottoman Empire, society, and Islam. His intellectual transformation appears to be driven mostly by pragmatic reasons rather than intellectual ones.

Ahmed Midhat Efendi is called the 'writing machine' because his works aim to raise people's awareness. Although he was known as an anti-materialist and religious intellectual, his intellectual road had two periods. In his first period, he published the

¹⁵⁸ Enur Imeri, 'Ahmed Midhat Efendis Apologie Der Wissenschaftskonformität Des Islam', in *Wissenschaft, Philosophie Und Religion — Religionskritische Positionen Um 1900*, ed. Anke von Kügelgen (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2017), 239–40.

¹⁵⁹ Mehmet Ö. Alkan, 'Türkiye'nin İlk Felsefe Dergisi: Felsefe Mecmuası', *Tarih ve Toplum*, no. 66 (1989): 50.

materialist journal *Dağarcık*¹⁶⁰, and in 1872, he was exiled to Rhodes because of praising Namık Kemal's play *Vatan Yahud Silistire* in a newspaper article. He always claimed that he did not know the reason for his exile and that he was a victim because of Namık Kemal and his friends.¹⁶¹ I think that Ahmed Midhat tried to forget and made people forget his *Dağarcık* days. The other reason for the change in mentality and intellectual view may have been the reactions against Ahmed Midhat, who realised that his pragmatic policy could not be achieved with this materialist and evolutionist approach. He turned against materialism as a means of effectively engaging the public. This change brought Ahmed Midhat, one of the most influential intellectuals of his era and an important officer and spokesman of the conservative group. Furthermore, in Ahmed Midhat's writings, there is a prevalent sense of confusion, which is not unique to him. Ottoman and Turkish intellectuals, dating back to the Tanzimat Era, struggled to distinguish between the East and the West, the old and the new, and science and art. The Ottoman Empire attempted to resolve this situation during the modernisation era.

Ülken asserted that Ahmet Mithat was the first to engage with the philosophical issues of the Western world in Turkish intellectual discourse. Until then, it was only political thought that worried the Tanzimat intellectuals and the Young Ottomans. Their interest in Western intellectual life was limited to this issue. While Suavi and Kemal occasionally addressed Descartes and Pascal, they did not have the chance to dive into the issues of modern Western philosophy. Nevertheless, Ahmet Mithat's transition from materialism in his youth to spiritualism in his old age suggests a broadening of his intellectual perspective that goes beyond the simplistic label of 'Islamism'.¹⁶² Ahmed Midhat brought a new breath to this transformation and add vulgarised philosophy to penetrate Ottoman society's mind.

¹⁶⁰ Although *Dağarcık* included many philosophical and scientific writings, it is not a complete philosophical or scientific journal. It is more accurate to call *Dağarcık* a general knowledge journal that contains topics about philosophy, science, history, animals, social issues, and so on. For this reason, *Dağarcık* is not only important for scientific and intellectual thought but also important for general knowledge in the Ottoman Empire.

¹⁶¹ Tanpınar, *On dokuzuncu asır Türk edebiyatı tarihi*, 442.

¹⁶² Ülken, *Türkiye'de çağdaş düşünce tarihi*, 147–48.

Ahmed Midhat's worldview is characterised by his efforts to challenge the growing technical superiority of the West and the dominant influence of associated Western spiritual trends, through what might be described as a 'filtering' approach. Innovations were deemed acceptable insofar as they aligned with his tradition-conscious understanding of modernisation, grounded in the belief that certain elements of Ottoman civilisation were already advanced. Ahmed Midhat firmly believed that the Islamic heritage contained innovative elements relevant to his own era, and that these should be integrated alongside the technical advancements adopted from the West. Within the Islamic tradition, he recognised a highly developed ethical framework, which he sought to instil in the minds of young people through a pedagogical approach centred on education.¹⁶³

Ahmed Midhat's perception of science and religion can be divided into two distinct phases. The first occurred during his *Dağarcık* period, while the second followed his return from exile in Rhodes. During his *Dağarcık* years, his understanding of science was shaped by materialism, positivism, and Lamarckian evolutionism. He did not refer to the natural sciences in a strict sense but instead accepted these philosophical ideas as science. Moreover, he rarely discussed religion or Islam, and his primary objective seemed to be to demonstrate that these concepts were not necessarily in conflict with Islam. After his return from exile, he underwent a shift in perspective, asserting that materialism, positivism, and evolutionism were incompatible with Islam. He criticised intellectuals who promoted these ideas, considering them blasphemous. From then on, he consistently advocated for the harmony between science and faith until his death. Ahmed Midhat also argued that both philosophy and religion seek truth, and I believe he held a similar view of philosophy as he did of science in this regard. Additionally, he used the idea of harmony between science and religion as a tool to oppose Christianity and Orientalist narratives. Despite this transformation in his intellectual stance, his belief in a fundamental link between science and religion remained unchanged.

Ahmed Midhat's intellectual shift also shows the political atmosphere in the Ottoman Empire. With the rise of the autocracy and conservative policies of Abdülhamid II,

¹⁶³ Imeri, 'Ahmed Midhat Efendis Apologie Der Wissenschaftskonformität Des Islam', 236.

Ahmed Midhat also increased his relations with society. He gave up the vulgar, materialistic understanding of science and harshly criticised this understanding. He continued to support science and scientific understanding. He also increased the political tone of his writings and became a voice for Occidentalism in the Ottoman Empire.

I selected Ahmed Midhat to demonstrate the process of making science more widely known and understood. He was one of the first intellectuals who sought to reconcile Islamic ideology with a scientific perspective. Additionally, he contributed to a popular science and philosophy journal during the time of the Ottoman Empire. In addition, I will show his religious and anti-scientific perspective, his attempts to align himself with established power structures, and his utilisation of intellectual reasoning to an end. This text will demonstrate the conservative stance taken by certain Ottoman intellectuals in response to the perspectives of Orientalist and Western intellectuals. I will show Ahmed Midhat from multiple points of view and free him from single-sided views, which only see him as a conservative literary man and novelist. Ahmed Midhat is a key intellectual in the process of modernisation and the discourse surrounding civilisation. He utilised his intellectual and theological beliefs to express his vision of Islam and to establish his stance in both the Ottoman Empire and the Western world.

Lastly, Ahmed Midhat should be considered one of the most important figures in the discussion of vulgar materialism, science, and religion. Ahmed Midhat can be accepted as the first vulgar materialist of the Ottoman Empire. He maintained a respectful attitude towards religion, while simultaneously adopting vulgar, materialistic, positivistic, and evolutionist perspectives towards science. While he was accused by clergy and religious intellectuals of infidelity, after his intellectual transformation to anti-materialism, he used almost the same perspective. For this reason, the example of Ahmed Midhat is important because, although vulgar materialist intellectuals, especially in this thesis, did not attack or support Islam, they were accused of infidelity. Ahmed Midhat also became a pioneer for integrating a materialistic perspective with Islamic support.

4.2. Brief Biography

Ahmed Midhat Efendi was born in 1844 in a poor artisan family. In 1854, he and his family moved to Vidin with Ahmed Midhat's older brother and returned to Istanbul again in 1857. Until 1861, he worked as an apprentice and learnt how to read and write French. In 1861, he and his family moved to Niş because of his work in the court of Midhat Paşa; after graduating from Niş Rüşdiye (Junior High School), he started to work at Tuna Vilayeti Mektubi Kalemi, gained Midhat Paşa's approval, and worked on some additional official work. His relationship with Midhat Paşa was also a breakpoint in the life of Ahmed Midhat Efendi. While Ahmed Midhat was improving himself autodidactically, he also took private lessons from Bulgarian Greek-Catholic civil servant Dragan Tsankov. Thanks to these lessons, Ahmed Midhat also broadened his perspective. He considered Catholic and Balkan perspectives from these lessons. During this time, he also started to write for the Tuna newspaper and moved to Sofia in 1866 as a translator. In 1867, Şakir Paşa patronised Ahmed Midhat, and after Midhat, Paşa became the second influencer of Ahmed Midhat. Even Midhat Paşa gave his name to Ahmed Midhat. Midhat Paşa gave Ahmed Midhat the name Midhat. That shows the influence of Midhat Paşa on Ahmed Midhat. In 1869, he became the chief writer of the Tuna newspaper and, in the same year, moved to Baghdad with Midhat Paşa. During this time, he became the chief author of the newspaper Zevra. His days in Baghdad are critical and influential for his intellectual life. In Baghdad, he continued his autodidactic education and took lessons from a scholar, Muhammed Bekir. In 1871, he moved back to Istanbul, and in 1872, he ordered French letters and founded his printing house. He published the short-lived journals *Devir* (Period) and *Bedir* (Full Moon). After closing these two journals, he published the *Dağarcık* journal. In his publications, the effect of his education is clearly seen, both autodidactic and lessons from different scholars; he successfully harmonises different and even conflicting concepts in his writings. While publishing *Dağarcık*, he aimed to become a more popular version of Mecmua-i Fünun of Münif Paşa, which he also emphasised in his memoirs, *Menfa*. While publishing *Dağarcık*, he became the first Ottoman intellectual who mentioned Lamarck. In that journal, he tried to harmonise Lamarckism with Islam. His writings in *Dağarcık* were likely a reason for his exile to Rhodes in 1873. He claimed that his

exile with Young Turks was a mistake. He likely intended to set himself apart from the political opposition. During his exile days, he wrote *Menfa*, and these days became the transformation of the ideas of Ahmed Midhat. He also published *Kırk Ambar* during these days. After his return to Istanbul, he continued his writing life and became the chief of the official newspaper *Takvim-i Vekayi* in 1878. He published most of his works after this date and became a pioneer in Turkish literature. He became friends with Beşir Fuad, and after his suicide, he wrote a book about him. This work marked the beginning of his anti-materialist thoughts, which he further expressed in his work *Ben Neyim*. He also translated the *History of Conflict Between Religion and Science* by William Draper and added a chapter to support the idea of harmony between science and Islam under *Niza-i İlm ü Din*. His main aim was to raise people's awareness and educate them. These two works, which I mentioned above, and other later works by Ahmed Midhat may be accepted as a reflection of systematic opposition and the fight against materialism and scientism in this intellectual thought. In 1889, he went to Europe for the International Congress of Orientalists in Stockholm. This journey is also influential for Ahmed Midhat's intellectual life. Ahmed Midhat gained a chance to explain his ideas about the relationship between Islam and science and the position of Islam on supporting science. He also became the Ottoman Empire's and Abdülhamid II's voice in this congress. Additionally, he embarked on a journey to Paris following the congress. He also met and discussed many foreign intellectuals in Istanbul. Ahmed Midhat also became one of the pioneers of wary Westernists and conservatives in this period. Because of his close relationship with the Hamidian Regime, he finished his official works after the Revolution of 1908 and became a teacher in Darüşşafaka. He also became an instructor in Darülfünun in his last years and died on December 28, 1912.¹⁶⁴

Ahmet Midhat wrote not only philosophical works but also novels, theatre plays, and short stories. He was a talented and multidimensional intellectual of his day. Academicians and intellectuals who have written about Ahmed Midhat consider his

¹⁶⁴ Tanpınar, *On dokuzuncu asır Türk edebiyatı tarihi*, 437–47; Orhan Okay, *Batı Medeniyeti Karşısında Ahmed Midhat Efendi* (İstanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 2017), 22–26; Ülken, *Türkiye’de çağdaş düşünce tarihi*, 142–47; İmeri, ‘Ahmed Midhat Efendis Apologie Der Wissenschaftskonformität Des Islam’, 230–31.

books, essays, and other writings to be shallow. While the validity of these statements remains undisputed, it is important to consider His Midhat's perspective and objective. As a pragmatic intellectual, he deliberately influenced the people he targeted in this manner, making his actions justified. This type of behaviour is the primary approach employed by Ottoman intellectuals to influence society.

While on his official assignment in Baghdad, Ahmed Midhat encountered Western philosophy, particularly materialism and evolutionism. It is likely that he was introduced to these ideas by Osman Hamdi Bey, the founder of the İstanbul Archaeology Museum, through the works he had purchased from France. In addition, he received instruction in Persian and the philosophy of religion from Can Muattar, an Oriental scholar.¹⁶⁵ Ahmed Midhat's intellectual life was influenced by his time in Baghdad. He enhanced his understanding of both Western and Eastern cultures. Perhaps he acquired most of the knowledge he discussed in *Dağarcık*, including his period of anti-materialism, during his time in Baghdad. Due to this factor, Osman Hamdi Bey holds a significant position as one of the most influential people who had a profound impact on Ahmed Midhat's intellectual development.

Ahmed Midhat acquired insights into Western culture and utilised them in his literary works as a result of his trip to Europe. Through this tour, Ottoman intellectuals were confronted with the West and expressed their immediate views as a result. This also demonstrates the dismantling of the preconceived notions held by the Ottoman intelligentsia. It is widely acknowledged that Ottoman intellectuals, such as Namık Kemal, argued that Europeans had a limited understanding of the East. Namık Kemal even wrote an article titled 'Avrupa Şarkı Bilmez' (Europe does not know anything about the East). Similarly, Ottomans themselves lacked knowledge of the West. Nevertheless, the experiences of Ahmed Midhat and subsequent encounters with the Western world, such as Abdullah Cevdet's observations in Europe, are significant strides in challenging preconceived notions. It involves not only engaging with Europe and the West but also including the cultural values, scientific advancements, and other material and non-material aspects of these countries. Ignorance or bias also played a significant role in shaping the interaction

¹⁶⁵ Ülken, *Türkiye'de çağdaş düşünce tarihi*, 144.

between science and religion. Due to the association of science and religion with culture, both in the past and now, a lack of understanding of the culture has led to conflicts in discussions on science and religion.

Ahmed Midhat also aimed to show Western culture to Ottoman society. Hilmi Ziya transfers the aim of Ahmed Midhat with his words, “To place enlightened ideas in the minds of the people instead of the superstitions of old Persian storybooks.”¹⁶⁶ Ahmed Midhat criticised ‘ancien’ Islamic scholars. Furthermore, this quotation can be accepted as a turning point in the transformation from ilm to fen/fünun. This was due to the integration of science into Islamic discourse by certain Islamic scholars, who explained it from an Islamic perspective. Ahmed Midhat aimed to change this perspective. While his perspective on science shifted from a materialistic perspective, he strongly believed that science was a must for Ottoman society. In addition, he emphasised patriotism more strongly in his writings. While he had social concerns in his early writings, after his return from exile and favourable relations with Abdülhamid II, his social concerns increased, and he also had political concerns, especially against the West and Orientalist thought.

Ahmed Midhat's thinking encompassed mysticism during both times and can be regarded as a form of commentary or an alternative interpretation of pantheistic/panentheistic philosophy. In addition, Ahmed Midhat actively participated in nearly all intellectual and literary disputes during the period of his four-decade writing career. His perspective was exceedingly extensive, enabling him to write about a wide range of themes. In doing so, he consistently sought to enhance society's consciousness and highlight the formidable influence and genuineness of the East. He desired to become an educator for the Ottoman society. Ahmed Midhat might be considered the pioneer of a deliberate resistance against radical Western influence and conservative modernisers due to his extensive understanding of both Eastern and Western cultures, knowledge in several fields such as science and spiritualism, and his rejection of materialism.

¹⁶⁶ Ülken, 146.

4.3. Dağarcık Days and Ahmed Midhat's Understanding of Materialism and Evolutionism

Ahmed Midhat Efendi explained the distinction between *ilm* and *fen* (science) and emphasised that such a distinction was not required in the Ottoman Empire before because of the lack of science and scientific writings. Nevertheless, given the introduction of modern science and scientific thinking into the Empire, it is imperative to establish this division at present. Ahmed Midhat expressed disapproval of the general public's indifference towards science and scientific understanding. Ahmed Midhat Efendi observed that the Ottomans had extensive interactions with the West in various domains at this time. He recognised a conceptual gap and highlighted the significance of incorporating the term "science" into their vocabulary. Ahmed Midhat Efendi asserted that science should possess its own set of norms and regulations while elucidating this differentiation. Ahmed Midhat defined "*ilm*" as the act of acquiring knowledge, which can encompass the field of science due to its all-encompassing nature.¹⁶⁷

Upon analysis of these notions, Ahmed Midhat asserted that science holds greater importance than *ilm* due to its adherence to regulations. Ahmed Midhat asserted that *ilm*, a comprehensive term, encompasses science, emphasising its significance. In the text, Ahmed Midhat acknowledged science as a distinct and autonomous field, similar to Mûnif Paşa and Mecmua-i Fünun. However, he also placed significant emphasis on *ilm*, demonstrating that while he adopted Western thinking, he remained connected to his Eastern heritage. The Ottoman intellectuals employed this duality due to their cultural heritage and vacillated between traditional and modern ideas. They occasionally experienced confusion and uncertainty when it came to introducing novel and Western concepts to society. Mûnif Paşa not only classified science but also elucidated its several subfields, whereas Ahmed Midhat just distinguished between *ilm* and *fen* in his writings. Ahmed Midhat's criticism of European intellectuals stems from their tendency towards complexity. Consequently, most Ottoman intellectuals, including Midhat himself, adopt a simple style and pragmatic attitude.

¹⁶⁷ Ahmed Midhat, 'İlm ile Fen', *Dağarcık*, no. 1 (1872): 26–29.

For this reason, when discussing Western science, they sought to harmonise it with Islam or to explain scientific knowledge using religious concepts. Additionally, like Münif Paşa, Ahmed Midhat aimed to promote the use of *fen* within society. This further illustrates Ahmed Midhat's position in the intellectual debate between East and West. He aspired to adopt and apply Western ideas within an Eastern framework, preserving the core values of the East.¹⁶⁸

This reveals Ahmed Midhat's efforts to modernise Islamic thought, as well as the broader Ottoman intellectual and societal perception of Islam, philosophy, and science. In doing so, he sought to preserve the essence of Islam and Ottoman culture by integrating Western scientific and intellectual ideas with an Islamic and Ottoman foundation. Through this approach, like many other intellectuals of his time, Ahmed Midhat aimed to transform both the Islamic understanding of and the perspective on science. However, Ahmed Midhat was more patriotic and closely aligned with state interests. His ultimate goal was to influence the policies of the Ottoman Empire.

Ahmed Midhat wanted to use Islam as a core, like Abdullah Cevdet wanted to achieve, and as the supporter of science and philosophy as a 'Weltanschauung' and the basic concept of the 'modernisation – civilisation' question of the Ottoman Empire. From that perspective, Ahmed Midhat is an eclectic figure in Ottoman intellectual history. While Ahmed Midhat wanted to harmonise Western material science's positivistic understanding of science with its moral, religious, and spiritual ways, he also wanted to use the Islamic structure of Ottoman society.¹⁶⁹ That idea reflects the pragmatic approach of Ahmed Midhat, like that of other Ottoman intellectuals of that era. For this reason, his ideas, again like those of other Ottoman intellectuals, had no ideological base; these ideas had a patriotic and pragmatic approach, even discussing scientific, intellectual, and philosophical topics. The first years of Ahmed Midhat during the publication of *Dağarcık* can be attributed to the years of Ahmed Midhat supporting the ideas of mystic pantheism/panentheism, materialism, and evolutionism, especially Lamarckian and, in some writings,

¹⁶⁸ Kara, *Din ile Modernleşme Arasında*, 143.

¹⁶⁹ Imeri, 'Ahmed Midhat Efendis Apologie Der Wissenschaftskonformität Des Islam', 236–38.

Darwinian evolution.¹⁷⁰ He combined these philosophical and intellectual topics with Islamic understanding and aimed to propose a modern and philosophical approach to Islam.

Ahmet Mithat's writings at *Dağarcık* and his early works until his exile to Rhodes were shaped by his commitment to the scientific principles of positivism and Social Darwinism, a common influence among many Ottoman intellectuals of that time who embraced positivism and materialism. Ahmed Midhat Efendi endeavoured to reconcile Islam with materialism and evolutionism through his publications in *Dağarcık*. Ahmed Midhat authored papers about evolution and Lamarckism in *Dağarcık*. Although Ahmed Midhat did not explicitly refer to Darwin and Darwinism, he employed arguments that align with Darwinist and Social Darwinist perspectives in his publications. It is inevitable that Ahmed Midhat knew about Darwin and Darwin's theories and read the works about Darwin's theories from Western sources. The articles in which his materialist, positivist, evolutionist, and Social Darwinist ideas are: 'Arzın Kadri' (Worth of the World), 'İntikam' (Vengeance), 'İnsan' (Human), 'Duvarın Bir Sesi' (A Voice from the Wall), 'Bir Mülazım-ı Diniye' 'İnsan-Dünyada İnsanın Zuhuru' (Human – Existence of Human in the World), 'Adem ve Nisnas' (Adam/Human and Orangutan) (part of *Redd-i İtiraz ve İzah-ı Hakikat- Denial and Objection and Explanation of the Truth*), 'Fikir-i Tahrib ve Fikir-i Tamir' (Idea of Ruin and Idea of Refit), 'Hayvanatın Hissi' (Sense of Animals) and 'İnsan Tenha Büyüse Ne Olur?' (What Happens if a Human Grows up Alone?)¹⁷¹.

Additionally, Ahmed Midhat wrote about social issues, obscure companies, and private organisations that were not well-recognized in the literature of the time. Ahmed Hamdi Tanpınar asserts that the entirety of Ahmed Midhat's concept may be observed in *Dağarcık*. He attempted to reconcile his recently acquired knowledge of Western positivism, materialism, evolutionism, science, and philosophy with Islamic belief. In this chapter, I will provide detailed information regarding his endeavour to

¹⁷⁰ Cem Doğan, 'Doğu ile Batı Arasında Bir Türk Filozofu: Ahmet Mithat Efendi'nin Hayatı ve Bilimsel/Felsefi Düşünceleri Üzerine', *Ekev Akademi Dergisi* 1, no. 1 (Summer 2013): 201.

¹⁷¹ Doğan, *Osmanlı Aydınları ve Sosyal Darwinizm*, 154.

reconcile Islam with Lamarckian evolutionism, which is the focal point of his work. Ahmed Midhat Efendi established the fundamental principles of his mindset by linking science with religion and addressing social issues in his writings in *Dağarcık*, despite undergoing significant intellectual transformation. Tanpınar highlighted that Ahmed Midhat incorporated religious ideology into Lamarckian evolutionary theory without any indication of melancholy. This evidence demonstrates that Ahmed Midhat genuinely embraced both Islamic and evolutionist ideologies. Official records state that *Dağarcık* was shut down due to unauthorised publishing; however, it is evident that the closure was actually a result of the content published in the journal. Ahmed Midhat published the *Kırk Anbar* journal during his exile, publishing 30 issues under the name of Mehmed Cevdet, his nephew, in Istanbul from 1873 to 1876.¹⁷²

When the articles of Ahmed Midhat in *Dağarcık* are analysed, it becomes clear why Beşir Fuad called him the master.¹⁷³ Ahmed Midhat was a preeminent figure among his peers and continued to be revered by subsequent generations. His essays in *Dağarcık*, together with his other works and endeavours to enhance public consciousness, served as a role model for Ottoman and Turkish intellectuals for an extended period. He was a pioneer of Lamarckism in the Ottoman Empire and helped popularise it. In his works, including *Dağarcık* and other writings, Ahmed Midhat Efendi endeavoured to integrate the realms of science, philosophy, and religion. His inclination towards Islam and the Quran is evident in his assertions that he refuses to acknowledge any knowledge or information that surpasses the *Quran*. This idea is evident in his writings during both his materialistic and anti-materialistic periods. Ahmed Midhat initially emphasised philosophy and science in his early publications, substantiating these ideas through Islamic thought. However, in his later works, he shifted his focus towards Islamic thought and offered critiques of materialistic philosophy and science. Ahmed Midhat expressed concerns about the secular nature of philosophy in his later years and directed his comments towards materialistic philosophy and science.

¹⁷² Toprak, 'Fikir Dergiciliğinin Yüz Yılı', 15–16.

¹⁷³ Tanpınar, *On dokuzuncu asır Türk edebiyatı tarihi*, 441.

Ahmed Midhat said that in his writings, he is not a ‘hakim’ (philosopher); he is only a student of philosophy.¹⁷⁴ Most probably it is related with the position of philosophy in the Ottoman Empire. Beşir Fuad wrote about Ahmed Midhat in one of his letters with Fazlı Necib and said that Ahmed Midhat was not a philosopher for his time [in the European context], but he can/should be considered a philosopher in the context of the Ottoman Empire.¹⁷⁵ Ahmed Midhat is called ‘Hace-i Evvel’ (The First Teacher) among Ottoman society and intellectuals. This name came from one of his first books published for children's education. That also shows that Ahmed Midhat's audience was not limited to intellectuals; he also wanted to raise awareness of the public, even Ottoman society's children.

In the preface article of the first volume of the journal *Dağarcık* ‘İfade-i Meram’, Ahmed Midhat expressed his dissatisfaction with the lack of translations of Western philosophical writings into Turkish. He also expressed his intention to fulfil this need by translating such works for the benefit of the public. While doing that, Ahmed Midhat adds that the authors of his references and translations wrote their writings and statements because they thought that these statements were essential for the core of the writing. Ahmed Midhat asserted that his citations and interpretations of these texts and authors should be regarded as a societal contribution and an indication of loyalty to one's country. Ahmed Midhat might have intended to pre-empt potential objections to his works by asserting that he just referenced these pieces from Western sources for the purpose of presenting them to society. In addition, he expresses his desire to translate and highlight advancements in Western science. An evident focus in this part is Ahmed Midhat's endeavours to serve the public and promote awareness through the dissemination and exposition of Western philosophy and science. Ahmed Midhat perceived his endeavour as patriotic, much like most Ottoman intellectuals. This attitude reflects their intention to serve as a mentor to the intellectual community of the Ottoman society during this period.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁴ Ahmed Midhat, ‘Felsefe ve Felsefe’, *Dağarcık*, no. 3 (1872): 81.

¹⁷⁵ Beşir Fuad and Fazlı Necib, *Mektubat* (İstanbul: Mihran Matbaası, 1888), 52.

¹⁷⁶ Ahmed Midhat, ‘İfade-i Meram’, *Dağarcık*, no. 1 (1872): 2–3.

In addition, Ahmed Midhat asserted that philosophy should not be equated with irreligiosity, as some people claim, and he advocates for the notion of collaboration between science and philosophy. Ahmed Midhat's approach to science, philosophy, and religion was also considered in the other intellectuals' writings in this thesis. Their arguments and works were based on the harmony of science, religion, and philosophy. While doing this, these intellectuals used a critical approach on the clergy, not Islam.

Based on this line of reasoning, the concept bears a resemblance to the connection between science and philosophy as proposed by Baha Tevfik, which will be discussed in the following chapters. Baha Tevfik further asserted that philosophy is a method of cognitive inquiry and exploration in the pursuit of objective reality. From this perspective, it bears similarities to religion, as both seek to uncover the truth. The key distinction lies in the fact that religion fosters a sense of community and cohesion among people, whereas philosophy does not aim to unify individuals under a shared framework. Instead, philosophy encourages individuals to independently choose their own path and embrace its truths, even in the face of widespread rejection. Ahmed Midhat's argument centres on the comparison between Islamic truth and philosophical truth, asserting that Islamic truth holds a superior position. This aspect of the topic may seem perplexing. He maintained that religion has a profound impact on people and their behaviour, and claimed that without Islamic truth, neither philosophy nor truth itself could exist in the world. Although he was a devout Muslim who regarded Islam as the ultimate truth, I believe he diminished the importance of philosophy within Islam due to his preference for pragmatic methods. He drew this analogy in response to a prevailing trend at the time of juxtaposing Islam with philosophy, using it to assert his position in the broader intellectual debate. Nevertheless, in this work, he highlighted the importance of philosophy and refrains from attributing irreligiosity to philosophy or philosophers. Ahmed Midhat defined the purpose of philosophy as a means of explaining the essence of existence.

From this perspective, philosophy and religion both have the common objective of seeking the truth. It is incorrect to create conflicts between science, religion, and philosophy because they all seek the truth from diverse perspectives. Although

Ahmed Midhat compared religion and philosophy from some perspectives and viewed philosophy as less significant than religion, particularly Islam, he mentioned the importance of philosophy and philosophical thinking and its relationship with science. Ahmed Midhat consistently considered philosophy as an essential concept and asserted that both science and philosophy are incomprehensible without religion. Ahmed Midhat considered religion a necessary condition for the pursuit of science and philosophy. From his standpoint, philosophy can be regarded as a method of scientific inquiry and rational thinking. His assertion that he accepted philosophical truths, even if others did not, reflected his inclination towards philosophy. Finally, he aimed to re-establish the significance of philosophy, with the intention of initiating scientific and intellectual discourse inside Ottoman society.¹⁷⁷ Ahmed Midhat's view on religion shows that he wanted to make science and philosophy more acceptable to Ottoman society by harmonising these concepts with Islam.

While Ahmed Midhat considered philosophy, science and religion as ways of searching for the truth from different perspectives and the conflict between science and religion is a so-called discussion, all scientists believe in the existence of a God who creates and shapes the universe, but the point where they separate is the description of the analysis of that creating power. For instance, 'tasarruf-ı ilahi' (predestination) and natural laws are almost the same things, according to Ahmed Midhat. Again, Ahmed Midhat tried to explain scientific phenomena with religious arguments and harmonise science and religion.¹⁷⁸ Ahmed Midhat also added that although most scientists accept God's existence, they reject God because of their enmity against the clergy and the church. From this point, this conflict is between scientists and the clergy rather than science and religion.¹⁷⁹ Ahmed Midhat criticised some Ottoman intellectuals, such as Beşir Fuad, who opposed religion because of their scientific views. According to Ahmed Midhat, the truth that philosophers, scientists, and clergy are searching for is in God. Some search for Him through

¹⁷⁷ Ahmed Midhat, 'Felsefe ve Felasife', 80–86.

¹⁷⁸ Ahmed Midhat, *Niza-i İlm ü Din - İslam ve Ulum*, vol. 4 (İstanbul: Tercüman-ı Hakikat Matbaası, 1900), 8–12.

¹⁷⁹ Ahmed Midhat, 4:47–48.

philosophy, religious beliefs, and scientific reasoning. It can be understood that rather than a conflict, there is a difference in the discourse of these approaches.

In his later work, *Menfa*, Ahmed Midhat said that he aimed to spread philosophy in the Ottoman Empire and tried to show that while other falsified religions suppressed thoughts and prevented philosophy, Islam gave freedom to philosophy and opened a way to free thinking and philosophy. Islam is a prerequisite for philosophy, according to Ahmed Midhat. He wanted to familiarise philosophy with Ottoman society with this exaggerated narrative.¹⁸⁰ Like other Ottoman intellectuals, Ahmed Midhat had a pragmatic approach in his writings. Like Beşir Fuad, he gave a higher position to Islam while insulting other religions, especially Christianity, about their view on science and philosophy. That is also a protectionist approach against Orientalist intellectuals and Christian missionaries.

Ahmed Midhat emphasised that philosophy has also been in difficulties like religion in his writing 'Felsefenin Sergüzeşt-i Âhvali' (Adventure of Philosophy). Ahmed Midhat, like the French philosophers of the Enlightenment and his friend Beşir Fuad, criticised the clergy for dominating and putting blocks on religion, philosophy, and science. He used examples from Christianity and Judaism to support his arguments. He said the obstacle between philosophy and science is not a religion but the clergy. Even clergy become an obstacle to religion and misuse it. Ahmed Midhat also criticised the clergy's non-scientific and non-religious behaviours and their efforts to show these behaviours as religious behaviours and misrepresentations of religion. Ahmed Midhat emphasised that the clergy tried to explain natural phenomena with religious arguments during the Mediaeval Era. He gave Galileo an example of that situation. During his discussion of Islam, Ahmed Midhat asserted that the religion embraces philosophy and only intervenes in spiritual matters that align with philosophical interests. Ahmed Midhat stated that even the Catholic Church asserts that Islam is consistent with science and philosophy. Prior to that time, there was limited progress in the fields of science and philosophy. However, the Ottoman press played a significant role in advancing the development of philosophy and science.

¹⁸⁰ Ahmed Midhat, *Menfâ*, 62.

Ahmed Midhat, in his writings such as *Dağarcık* and other publications, aimed to emphasise the significance of philosophy and science in Islam, contrasting them with what he considered to be distorted interpretations of Christianity and Judaism. He stated that “The Religion of Christ, and more accurately the Catholic mass, have taken the most tyrannical and cruel stance towards philosophy, and only the Religion of Jesus has aimed to harm philosophy's essence.”¹⁸¹ Ahmed Midhat's main target is Catholic Christianity. By doing so, he aimed to criticise and underscore the West, Orientalist thought, and Christian missionaries. That shows the political and social aspects of this topic.

Like the other intellectuals discussed in this thesis, Ahmed Midhat emphasised the necessity of incorporating scientific and philosophical ideas into Islam and Ottoman society to defend against Western influences and Orientalist criticisms. He argued that the conflict between science or philosophy and religion does not arise from the essence of religion itself but rather from the distorted perspectives held by certain clergy members. Finally, he once again assigned the press and intellectuals the responsibility of disseminating philosophy and science across the Ottoman Empire. This article can be accepted as the answer of Ahmed Midhat to Orientalist intellectuals who underestimate Islam and see it as non-scientific; Ahmed Midhat put Islam in a patron position for science and philosophy. He considered the problem a misinterpretation of Islam in this perspective, which considers Islam as non-scientific.

As in his other article, ‘Engizisyon’ (Inquisition), Ahmed Midhat claimed that religion did not hinder humanity's development and philosophy and science. In this article, Ahmed Midhat employed Voltaire's arguments to defend Islam against Christianity: "Voltaire asserts that Christians assert that Islam was disseminated through the sword, whereas Christianity spread solely through words." However, I, lacking knowledge of Arabic, cannot find any narration attributing Muslims to tormenting humanity with fire, even among those who investigate Islamic books,

¹⁸¹ Ahmed Midhat, ‘Felsefenin Sergüzeşt-i Âhvali’, *Dağarcık*, no. 5 (1872): 148–55. “Diyanet-i Mesîhiye ve sözün daha doğrusu Katolik ayini felsefe için en büyük zâlim ve en büyük gaddar makamını tutmuş ve felsefenin canına kastetmeye ancak diyanet-i İseviye yürümüşür.

especially those seeking reports against Muslims.”¹⁸² From Ahmed Midhat’s perspective, the clergy, not religion, is the source of any bad attitude against science and philosophy. That notion may be called ‘the conflict between science/philosophy and clergy’ rather than ‘the conflict between science/philosophy and religion’ from the perspective of Ahmed Midhat and other Ottoman intellectuals of that era, like Beşir Fuad and Abdullah Cevdet.

Ahmed Midhat published a reader’s letter and his reply to it in the sixth issue of *Dağarcık*. In this letter, the reader is told that philosophy was poorly named in Islamic history and society up to this point, and philosophy is known as Hikmet, an Islamic version of philosophy that may be called an aphorism. The reader added that ‘hikmet’ is better than philosophy, and the ulema approved; this will help it reach more people. Ahmed Midhat replied to this letter and said he was glad to hear that *Dağarcık* was read by many people and even by ulema and religious classes. He added that he preferred to use the word philosophy rather than ‘Hikmet’. From the letter, it can be understood that *Dağarcık* was read by many people, even by the ulema. Ahmed Midhat emphasised that in the ‘Teşekkür’ section of the writing. Ahmed Midhat defined his line by saying that he prefers the use of philosophy rather than Hikmet. That also reflects the change of mentality in the Ottoman intellectuals; even religious intellectuals like Ahmed Midhat became a part of this mentality change. Although they respect Eastern and predominantly Muslim discourse, they prefer Western philosophical thought to their intellectual, philosophical, and scientific approaches.¹⁸³

Ahmed Midhat’s thoughts on progress and scientific development opened the way for scientism to reach the next generation, as Münif Paşa did with Mecmua-i Fünun to spread scientific understanding to the general public. For instance, he connected anatomy with psychology and physiology, transforming presumptions about the

¹⁸² Ahmed Midhat, ‘Engizisyon’, *Dağarcık*, no. 7 (1872): 209–15. “Volter der ki Hristiyanlar İslamiyet’in kılıç ile konulduğunu, makam-ı itirazda beyan ve Hristiyanlığın yalnız kelamla vazedildiğini dermiyan ederler ise de benim Arapça bilmediğimden kat-ı nazar fakat ‘Arabi bilip de kütüb-ü İslamiye tedkik edenlerin ve bhusus Müslümanlık aleyhine rivayet arayıp gezenlerin dahi böyle beni beşeri ateşle tazib eylediklerine dair Müslümanlara atfedecek bir rivayet bulamamışlardır.”

¹⁸³ Ahmed Midhat, ‘Mektub - Teşekkür’, *Dağarcık*, no. 6 (1872): 172.

nature of life into exact truths such as $2*2=4$.¹⁸⁴ Beşir Fuad, Abdullah Cevdet, and Baha Tevfik, whose ideas contributed to a more profound scientific view and explanation of human nature. Baha Tevfik went a step further by correlating all human actions to physiology and psychology on a scientific basis.

Ahmed Midhat, in the article ‘Redd-i İ’tiraz ve İzâh-ı Hakikat’ (Objection and Denial and Explanation of the Truth), like his other articles, ‘Felsefenin Sergüzeşt-i Ahvâli’ and ‘Engizisyon’ which were published again in *Dağarcık* claimed that Islam supports and patronises philosophy rather than the ‘falsified version’ of Christianity. He added that not only falsified Christianity, but also despotic rulers negatively affected the development of science and philosophy in the West. According to him, during the Mediaeval Era, the Inquisition executed philosophers and scientists by burning them, accusing them of being irreligious, while Islamic philosophy and science thrived throughout their Golden Era. He asserted that Islam is the most liberal religion when viewed through the lens of science and philosophy. Science and philosophy thrived during the Islamic expansion, bolstered by the patronage of Islam and Islamic rulers. He cited a hadith to bolster his argument: "Even if knowledge is in China, seek it out." Ahmed Midhat asserted that science is an essential requirement for Islam and its followers, as indicated by this hadith. He asserted that Western science holds practical value for Muslims. The attribution of the work to unbelievers is inappropriate, as the West has derived scientific and philosophical knowledge from Islamic civilisation. Therefore, scientific and philosophical knowledge can be considered as part of Islam and Islamic civilisation. In this article, Ahmed Midhat's intellectual perspective is presented, which seeks to reconcile Islam, science, and philosophy, and acknowledges Islam as a proponent and advocate of science and philosophy.¹⁸⁵ Ahmed Midhat's critical perspective on the 'falsified version' of Christianity, which played a significant role in shaping his intellectual thought during both his materialist and anti-materialist periods. Ahmed Midhat's notion of civilisation focused on evaluating the spiritual dimension of life, which holds significant significance. He argued that Western civilisations are experiencing a decline in their level of civilisation, despite making advancements in material

¹⁸⁴ Ülken, *Türkiye’de çağdaş düşünce tarihi*, 325.

¹⁸⁵ Ahmed Midhat, ‘Redd-i İ’tiraz ve İzâh-ı Hakikat’, *Dağarcık*, no. 8 (1872): 242–47.

progress. This decline is considered as a second fundamental feature of his definition of civilisation, in addition to spirituality.¹⁸⁶

In another article, ‘Osmanlı Kütb-i Atîkesini Karıştırdıkça Frenklere Gülmemek Elimizden Gelmiyor’ (We cannot help but laugh at the Franks as we delve into the old Ottoman books), Ahmed Midhat explained that Europe had been freed from backwardness thanks to science. While explaining scientific developments in Europe, especially the astronomical explorations of Galileo and Copernicus, Ahmed Midhat claimed that European scientists and philosophers had learnt the core of their ideas from Islamic philosophers and scientists. The main aim of this article, like ‘Redd-i İ’tiraz ve İzah-ı Hakikat Felsefenin Sergüzeşt-i Ahvâli’ and ‘Engizisyon’ is to show that Islam supports and patronises science and philosophy, and also that modern science and modern philosophy in the West was born thanks to Islam and Islamic civilisation.¹⁸⁷ Ahmed Midhat wanted to answer Orientalist intellectuals with this argument and to show that the East is the source of science and philosophy. The arguments and accusations of the non-scientific structure of Islam are wrong.

In the first volume of *Dağarcık*, Ahmed Midhat published a summary of Jacques-Bénigne Lignel Bossuet’s *Méditation sur la brièveté de la vie* (Meditation on the brevity of life) as ‘Güzeran-ı Hayat’. While translating this work, he expressed his views on philosophers, stating that they should be the vanguards of society in terms of enlightenment and intellectual progress. Based on his perspectives, it is evident that Ahmed Midhat Efendi placed significant emphasis on the role of philosophers in enlightening society.¹⁸⁸ He might also point to himself and other Ottoman intellectuals as the society’s mentors, despite the fact that they were not philosophers, unlike the majority of intellectuals during that time, It can be inferred that Ahmed Midhat Efendi, in proposing novel guidelines for society, underestimates the significance of religion and religious authorities. At this point, it might be argued that Ahmed Midhat, in his reference to Bossuet, aimed to undermine the influence of

¹⁸⁶ Imeri, ‘Ahmed Midhat Efendis Apologie Der Wissenschaftskonformität Des Islam’, 240.

¹⁸⁷ Ahmed Midhat, ‘Osmânî Kütb-i Atîkesini Karıştırdıkça Frenklere Gülmemek Elimizden Gelmiyor’, *Dağarcık*, no. 8 (1872): 261–64.

¹⁸⁸ Ahmed Midhat, ‘Güzeran-ı Hayat’, *Dağarcık*, no. 1 (1872): 6–10.

Islamic intellectuals on Islam and emancipate Islam from their control. As a result, Ahmed Midhat aimed to provide a convenient and contemporary approach to Islam and the Muslim Ottoman society.

Ahmed Midhat authored a materialistic piece titled 'Duvardan Bir Sada'. In the opening, he stated that it is a follow-up to the 'Viladet' article, which was published in the second volume. In his article 'Viladet', he adopted a materialistic perspective, particularly influenced by the Büchnerian approach. This perspective emphasises the concept of the immortality of matter and the metamorphosis of material objects instead of their demise. Also, this article holds a significant position in Ottoman materialist thought. Within this article, a disembodied voice emanating from the wall expresses its curiosity about its future state. It demonstrates that matter undergoes transformation yet will never cease to exist. Prior to birth, he resided within the nucleus of the world, akin to other people. Following conception and birth, he transitioned into a human being, acquiring a family and embarking on a life journey. According to him, each phase he experienced was distinct from the others. His recollection of previous existences suggests a materialistic perspective, highlighting the connection between physical substance and the faculty of recall. Furthermore, his perspectives and enthusiasm expressed in this post are crucial. According to this article, Ahmed Midhat established a connection between spirit and matter. Despite the matter being referred to as the body in the article, its spirit remains within the matter. His concept of spirit can be seen as analogous to the notion of force in Büchnerian vulgar materialism. In this article on evolution, Ahmed explicitly stated that his views and concepts are within the framework of Islamic thought, making them all Islamic arguments. In addition, he asserted that he also approached philosophy from an Islamic standpoint. Ahmed Midhat asserted that his scientific and philosophical ideas should not be criticised as they do not contradict Islam. He asserted that upon reading the Quran and reviewing scientific data, he found no contradictions with these principles. Additionally. Like his other works, Ahmed Midhat assumed a prominent role in enlightening and increasing public consciousness.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁹ Ahmed Midhat, 'Duvardan Bir Sada', *Dağarcık*, no. 4 (1872): 99–102.

Hilmi Ziya Ülken claims that Ahmed Midhat's arguments are like the materialism of the 18th Century, French Materialism. It is similar to the 'hylozoism' of the Milesian School of Pre-Socratic Greek, which accepted matter as alive and energetic. French philosopher Henri Bergson and his philosophy 'panvitalisme' would also use that again. Ahmed Midhat's arguments in 'Duvardan Bir Sada', it is more suitable to call his ideas in that article as vulgar materialism.¹⁹⁰ In contrast to Hilmi Ziya Ülken, I believe that Ahmed Midhat's materialism does not bear resemblance to the materialism of 18th-century French intellectuals. As previously stated, the concept of the circulation of matter was widely embraced in French materialism during the 18th century. It later gained popularity in the vulgar materialism of German intellectuals such as Moleschott and Büchner during the mid-19th century. Ahmed Midhat emerged as a leading figure in this ideology under the Ottoman Empire.¹⁹¹

In his work 'Viladet' (Birth), Ahmed Midhat asserted that human beings existed before their birth, even within the bodies of their parents, as well as in many forms such as the expression, the kidneys of sheep, wheat grains, chicken eggs, and even water. In his paper, he presented arguments supporting the idea that people have existed on Earth since its early stages, even before the sun illuminated the world. Over time, this core has undergone transformation and evolved into a human form. In addition, the human body is not merely a precise structure; it comprises various components derived from both living organisms and inanimate objects. This concept bears in 'Duvardan Bir. This concept is linked to the eternal existence of physical substances in common materialistic beliefs. The impact of Ahmed Midhat's notion can be observed in the second chapter of Ludwig Büchner's book *Kraft und Stoff*. Ahmed Midhat, from a materialistic perspective, discussed the period before human birth. He asserted that while people possess physical bodies, it would be inaccurate to claim that they are solely comprised of their bodies. Similarly to Büchner's assertion that the brain is the core of the soul, Ahmed Midhat argued that the human spirit originated with the presence of blood during the foetal stage. Ahmed Midhat linked the concept of spirit with the state of being alive. Ahmed Midhat

¹⁹⁰ Ülken, *Türkiye'de çağdaş düşünce tarihi*, 151.

¹⁹¹ Yalçınkaya, *Learned Patriots*, 2015, 115.

underscored the significance of aligning the birth of humans with other natural occurrences, which often contradict Islamic beliefs and the idea of God's authority over all phenomena in the cosmos. Ahmed Midhat's perspective on this matter demonstrates a materialistic mindset and a lack of understanding of the theological arguments that rely solely on scientific evidence. It can also be linked to vulgar materialistic arguments and scientism.¹⁹²

In the 'Bir Mülâhaza-i Diniyye' (A Religious Consideration) article in *Dağarcık*, which is the continuation of the 'Viladet' article, Ahmed Midhat emphasised the previous section. He expressed his fear that these beliefs may lead him to contemplate the concept of reincarnation, which is deemed incompatible with Islam. While contemplating this matter, he sought to harmonise religion and science by asserting that the Quran prioritises its teachings above all else, although he had not encountered any scientific literature that contradicts the Quran. In addition, he claimed that the statements made by the wall were linked to 'Kalu bela', which refers to the spirits created by God or gods communicating with them. Moreover, the Quran and Islamic literature also include references to similar concepts mentioned by the wall to Ahmed Midhat. Ahmed Midhat asserted that the noise he perceived emanating from the wall is not a metaphysical phenomenon, as Pythagoras suggested, but rather a purely physical occurrence. He further clarified that his statement does not contradict any Islamic beliefs. An additional significant aspect of this article is that Ahmed Midhat Efendi, in the opening of the article, stated that he had conducted this conversation in a state of being partially awake and partially asleep, known as Yakaza in Islamic literature. This is a phase during which prophets received verses and Islamic mystics entered a trance-like state, similar to astral projection. Ahmed Midhat established the validity of his work by linking himself and the essence of his writing to the principles of Islamic mysticism. He asserted that matter amalgamated and shaped the body, constituting its particles. Upon demise, these particles would once again disperse and give rise to other material entities. In addition, He expressed admiration for his own 'Viladet' article through the words of

¹⁹² Ahmed Midhat, 'Viladet', *Dağarcık*, no. 2 (1872): 49–52; Büchner, *Kraft Und Stoff: Oder, Grundzüge Der Natürlichen Weltordnung, Nebst Einer Darauf Gebauten Moral Oder Sittenlehre, in Allgemein Verständlicher Darstellung*, 17–24, 317–42.

a character in the article. He attempted to demonstrate the validation of his beliefs by utilising a fictional persona.¹⁹³ This also exemplifies the distinctiveness and compatibility of Ottoman vulgar materialism with Islam. Ahmed Midhat, like many intellectuals in the Ottoman era, sought to safeguard Islam and employed Islamic-based arguments for this purpose. These scholars offered diverse perspectives to Islam in order to reconcile current scientific and philosophical ideas, even if their arguments were not in line with Islamic principles.

Despite Ahmed Midhat's presentation of a vulgar materialistic perspective on the subject of the human body and spirit, he managed to find Islamic foundations to support and justify his ideas inside Ottoman society. This also demonstrates the cautious stance of Ottoman intellectuals towards science and particularly materialist subjects. There is a noticeable lack of clarity regarding this novel intellectual approach, especially among people who are considered intellectuals.

In another writing, which was published again in *Dağarcık*, named 'Zûhur-u Mu'teriz' (Rise of Exceptor), Ahmed Midhat again explained the aim of *Dağarcık* and repeated that science and Islam do not conflict with each other. According to his perspective, the cause of underdevelopment is not Islam or religion; rather, it is a result of human actions and choices. According to Ahmed Midhat, it is incorrect to attribute the hindrance of science to religion. Ahmed Midhat argued that the Ottoman Empire's failure to modernise and develop can be attributed to several factors. These include a lack of engagement with Western science and philosophy, a hostile attitude towards Western ideas, a failure to study Islam from its original sources, and an inadequate understanding of Islam while attempting to learn it in Europe. Ahmed Midhat regarded Islam and Islamic knowledge as an essential requirement for Western science and philosophy. Furthermore, several individuals tried to persuade Ahmed Midhat to replace the term 'Hikmet' with 'philosophy'. However, Ahmed Midhat asserted his intention to persist in using the word 'philosophy', as both factions are dedicated to advancing Islam, as stated by Ahmed Midhat. He asserted that he possessed no texts that contradicted Islam, despite the fact that these

¹⁹³ Ahmed Midhat, 'Bir Mülâhaza-i Diniyye', *Dağarcık*, no. 4 (1872): 102–5.

writings are compatible with Islam. This demonstrated his endeavours to integrate scientific and philosophical principles into Islam.

Ahmed Midhat generally replied to claims in this article about his controversial articles, which were published again in *Dağarcık*. Some of these articles are ‘Viladet’ and ‘Duvarın Bir Sada’. While replying to claims against these articles, Ahmed Midhat said that he did not support the idea of reincarnation; he only supported the transformation and change in the matter. That is not the same idea as Pythagoras’ reincarnation, according to Ahmed Midhat. This idea aligns with Büchner’s concept of the ‘immortality of the matter’. He also replied by blaming Ahmed Midhat as an infidel with ayets and comments on these ayets and tried to show that his scientific and philosophical arguments are suitable for Islamic thought and do not conflict with Islam from any perspective. This indicates that Ahmed Midhat was knowledgeable about Islamic thought, the *Quran*, science, and philosophy. He brought a new perspective on the immortality of thought and interpreted it as a combination with the immortality of the matter of vulgar materialism.

This article also shows that *Dağarcık* was followed and read by a great circle, even opposite thought read *Dağarcık*. In addition, the tone of critiques against *Dağarcık* became harsher, and that opened the way for the closedown of *Dağarcık* and the exile of Ahmed Midhat.¹⁹⁴ Materialism was regarded as irreligiosity and even treason in that era in the Ottoman Empire. It can be understood that this topic was not an intellectual topic in the Ottoman Empire; it had political and religious bases.

Ahmed Midhat’s reference to Lamarck and Lamarckian evolution in some articles in *Dağarcık* made some conservative and religious circles angry. The articles in *Dağarcık* written by Ahmed Midhat created a great reaction and, especially, one of the ulema members, Harputlu İshak Hoca, published an article in the *Basiret* newspaper on March 4, 1873. İshak Hoca said that he was surprised about such a bizarre situation, publications of Ahmed Midhat about evolution and materialism, in the heart of the caliphate. İshak Hoca claimed that Ahmed Midhat was an atheist in

¹⁹⁴ Ahmed Midhat, ‘Zühur-u Mu’teriz’, *Dağarcık*, no. 8 (1872): 247–58.

the under-meaning of the article without mentioning *Dağarcık* and Ahmed Midhat, and the problem is that his publications weakened the core of the society's values. Also, Alper Yalçınkaya uses the term of 'symbolic capital' which was proposed by Pierre Bourdieu in that discussion. That means recognition, prestige etc. that a person or group holds. İshak Hoca claimed that Ahmed Midhat tried to influence society and aimed to gain prestige among the society.¹⁹⁵ That shows that this discussion is also about the position of intellectuals among the society.

The following day, Ahmed Midhat responded once more to İshak Efendi's piece in the *Basiret* newspaper. Ahmed Midhat asserted that the author of this post should not conceal their identity, as Ahmed Midhat openly used his own name in *Dağarcık*. In addition, he underestimated the opinions of İshak Efendi and declared his refusal to further engage in that conversation. Subsequently, he released the piece titled 'Redd-i İtiraz ve İzah-ı Hakikat' in the 8th edition of *Dağarcık*. Subsequently, in his literary endeavours, *Menfa*, Ahmed Midhat expressed his profound sadness regarding the debate and further stated that he would have experienced a greater sense of tranquillity had he been present for it during his period of exile.¹⁹⁶ Ahmed Midhat's sorrow also reflects his transformation in perspective and attitude towards Islam and Islamic ideology. I can demonstrate that another factor contributing to the severe criticism and backlash from conservative intellectuals towards Ahmed Midhat's articles is his inclination to view and interpret materialism as the sole source of scientific knowledge and technological progress, akin to German vulgar materialists. That concept is a manifestation of scientism. This endeavour also gained widespread popularity among the Ottoman intellectuals of the Late 19th and Early 20th Centuries.¹⁹⁷

During this time, İshak Hoca drew a parallel between this situation and the Paris Commune, asserting that these ideas had a detrimental impact on the Western world

¹⁹⁵ Yalçınkaya, *Learned Patriots*, 2015, 117.

¹⁹⁶ Erdoğan Erbay and Ali Utku, 'Hikmet-i Mâddiyeden Hikmet-i İslâmiyyeye Ahmed Midhat Efendi', in *Ben Neyim? Hikmet-i Mâddiyyeye Müdâfa'a* (Konya: Çizgi Kitabevi, 2012), 11–13.

¹⁹⁷ Asil, 'The Pursuit of the Modern Mind: Popularization of Science, the Development of the Middle Classes, and Religious Transformation in the Ottoman Empire, 1860-1880', 152–53.

and caused damage to both the empire and society. This intensified his criticism. Upon analysing İshak Hoca's critique, it becomes evident that the discourse surrounding Ahmed Midhat's publications and ideas transcended mere academic debate and extended into the political sphere of his day, ultimately becoming a matter of civilisation. Another significant aspect of İshak Efendi's allegations is his association between religion and patriotism. He regarded Ahmed Midhat Efendi and other intellectuals who held materialist, positivist, and evolutionist beliefs as being outside the scope of the Ottoman Empire and Muslim Ottoman society.¹⁹⁸ That shows how some Ottoman Islamic scholars wanted to monopolise and overtake the control of the notion of Muslimness and citizenship of the Ottoman Empire. Although Ahmed Midhat faced accusations for his materialistic and evolutionist ideas during his *Dağarcık* period, he repeated the same actions in his book *Ben Neyim?* (What am I?) He levelled identical allegations at materialists. He explicitly stated that they neglect their children and possess a worse status in society than animals.¹⁹⁹ Despite being accused himself, Ahmed Midhat also accused materialists. That proves the position of materialists and scientificists among the opposite group. Some perspectives have created a so-called war between science and religion, even in the absence of conflict between the two.

Furthermore, a follower of the Mevleviye sect, a mystical branch of Islam, known as Cahid-i Cahid, accused Ahmed Midhat of being irreligious, which ignited a discussion on this matter. Ahmed Midhat responded to the accusation against İshak Efendi in the article 'Zuhur-u Muteriz' published in the *Basiret* newspaper's publication called *Dağarcık*. Despite Ahmed Midhat's endeavours to reconcile Islamic ideology, the Quran, and the theory of evolution, he was unable to convince the majority of religious people and the government of the time. Due to Ahmed Midhat's ideas and writings regarding evolution and the shared ancestry between humans and apes, as well as the intense debates between Ahmed Midhat and other factions, the government of that time prohibited him from publishing any new works

¹⁹⁸ M. Alper Yalçınkaya, *Learned Patriots: Debating Science, State, and Society in the Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Empire* (Chicago ; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2015), 116–18.

¹⁹⁹ Ahmed Midhat, *Ben Neyim? Hikmet-i Maddiyye Reddiyye Müdafa'a* (İstanbul: Tercüman-ı Hakikat, 1891), 9–10.

on evolution or his beliefs on the subject. The literary term used to refer to this discussion and ban is ‘Midhat Efendi's monkeys’. During this age, the talks on evolution were stopped for a while.²⁰⁰ This discussion also highlights the criticism directed towards Ahmed Midhat and his influence on both the intellectual and social climate of the late Ottoman Empire. Later on, I will discuss how negative attitudes about evolution were not exclusive to the Ottoman Empire but rather were rather similar to those found in Western societies.

Ahmed Midhat translated Fenelon's *De la Terre, On Earth*, chapter of *Démonstration de l'existence de Dieu, tirée de la Connaissance de la nature, & proportionnée à la faible intelligence des plus simples*, (Demonstration of the existence of God, drawn from the knowledge of nature, & proportionate to the feeble intelligence of the simplest). In the preface, Ahmed Midhat asserted that Fenelon authored this article with the intention of demonstrating the presence of God. In this text, Fenelon elucidated the Earth's beneficence towards humanity and asserts that the preservation of this harmonious arrangement is contingent upon the existence of a creator who is indispensable. Despite acknowledging the unattractiveness of the Earth's physical form and the perception that even insects find it undesirable, the Earth provides its benefits upon every living being on the planet. Any being that originates from and derives sustenance from the Earth can be linked to the concept of Ahmed Midhat, the alteration of matter, akin to Büchner's notion of the eternal nature of matter, which will be extensively discussed in this chapter. Fenelon and the translator, Ahmed Midhat, associated the concept with the generosity of God.²⁰¹

He translated this chapter as ‘Arzın Kadri’. Even though these thoughts did not belong to Ahmed Midhat, he translated and shared these ideas and most probably adopted these ideas. It is an entirely submissive thought and does not have any scientific view. Although Fenelon and Ahmed Midhat see the Earth as God's creation, they scientifically explained its existence. I think Ahmed Midhat was a

²⁰⁰ Adnan Adivar, *Tarih Boyunca İlim ve Din* (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1987), 368–69.

²⁰¹ François Fénelon, *Démonstration de l'Existence de Dieu, Tirée de La Connaissance de La Nature, & Proportionnée à La Faible Intelligence Des plus Simples* (Paris: Avec approbation, & Privile, 1713), 21–27.

confused intellectual. He might also want to prevent possible reactions to this article and try to show his creationist Muslim way to the public. The scientific approach to the question of God's existence also reflects Ahmed Midhat's ideas about the relationship between science and religion. The thought of Ahmed Midhat reflected the idea of harmony between these concepts. Using scientific views to prove the existence of God is used by many religious intellectuals and scientists even today.²⁰² With this argument, Ahmed Midhat wanted to show that the existence of God can be proven with scientific arguments, and so it has occurred. For this reason, claims about the non-scientific way of religion, especially Islam, is wrong, according to Ahmed Midhat.

In another article, 'Küre-i Arzın Fen Nazarında Keyfiyyet-i Teşekkülü' (The Formation of the Terrestrial Globe in the Eyes of Science), Ahmed Midhat explained the formation of the Earth with scientific data. The key aspect of this piece is that Ahmed Midhat acknowledged the divine origin of the Earth, but he elucidated this phenomenon using scientific narration and drew upon Western references. Ahmed Midhat employed this strategy as a general approach to elucidate scientific events, similar to his earlier piece on the Earth's existence titled "Arzin Kadri". According to him, God is responsible for the creation of the world and its ultimate form. On the other hand, Ahmed Midhat argued that God specifically created the Earth. Additionally, Midhat suggested that people should examine and elucidate this concept using the principles of chemistry. Due to his religiousness and social awareness, he frequently invoked the name of God or referenced divine power. He integrated science with religion, and by this method, he attempted to captivate the public's interest. The key idea here is that, in addition to acknowledging the force of God, he emphasised the significance of science and suggested that the 'power of God' could be scrutinised and elucidated by scientific means.²⁰³

In the preface section of his book *Kainat* (The Universe), Ahmed Midhat tried to analyse the existence of the World and its development from the beginning of the

²⁰² Ahmed Midhat, 'Arzin Kadri', *Dağarcık*, no. 1 (1872): 25–26.

²⁰³ Ahmed Midhat, 'Küre-i Ârzın Fen Nazarında Keyfiyyet-i Teşekkülü', *Dağarcık*, no. 9 (1873): 279–86.

world and mentioned some ancient civilisations in this work. Ahmed Midhat explained two different views about the existence of the universe. The first one is a religious view mainly shaped around the narration of the *Torah*, and the second one is the scientific arguments of the era. He said that the *Torah* explains that the creation of the World was done in six days, and he adds that the *Quran* did not falsify this phenomenon, but the thoughts of science should also be read and analysed by humans. In that argument, he adds that this concept of six days is not the same as the six days in the world; it is a heavenly concept. He said that the Earth had existed long before ‘the creation of humans’ according to geology. Like his works in the Dağarcık journal, Ahmed Midhat claimed that in this section, rather than some religious sources, Adam and Eve lived in the world for more than a hundred thousand years, not 6000-7000 years. Ahmed Midhat refutes the *Torah* and the Bible's arguments and defines their non-scientific arguments from his scientific perspective. Again, like in his ‘İnsan’ and ‘İnsanın Dünya’da Zuhuru’ articles, Ahmed Midhat supported the idea of humans living like animals during the early ages in the world. During these ages, humans could not even cook their meats. After living in groups and creating primitive societies, humans learned to cook their foods, and those developments opened a new era for humans.

The other significant developments and steps for human evolution are cultural and social, most probably Babylonia for Ahmed Midhat. In this narration, he followed a similar way to religious arguments for giving importance to Babylonia for the development of humanity. In addition, this chapter, like his later work *Niza-i İlmiyye* Ahmed Midhat, after referencing and transferring the ideas of different authors, added his thoughts about these references. Additionally, he noted that by analysing fossils, people can observe the alterations and advancements in the Earth, as well as in animals and vegetation. This is a manifestation of Ahmed Midhat's evolutionary ideas. He expressed disapproval of religious beliefs, including those related to the *Torah*. However, he did endorse certain theological perspectives that lack scientific basis. He expressed disapproval of the *Torah*'s perspective on the presence of large bodies of water in the *Torah*. Tigris, Euphrates, Amu Darya, and Syr Darya were born from a river in heaven, but he even criticised that view and said that scientists explained how rivers are born; he also found Islamic arguments to show other views.

Ahmed Midhat clarified the viewpoints of Islamic scholars regarding the phenomenon of the sun's rising. During that debate, angels placed the sun in a basket and exhibited it to others. As a result of this phenomenon, the sun ascends and descends in the sky. Ahmed Midhat asserted that the origins of humanity can be traced back to China and India. He asserted that following a meteor impact, a deluge ensued, prompting the migration of mankind to Mesopotamia. Ahmed Midhat reconciled the account of Noah's deluge. Upon analysing this introductory part, it becomes evident that, like his other articles in his magazine *Dağarcık*, the author endeavoured to reconcile scientific knowledge with religious reasoning. Despite the conflicting or falsified nature of these beliefs, he endeavoured to reconcile them and sought to reach a compromise. This preamble section serves as an additional demonstration of the effort put into the *Dağarcık* periodical.²⁰⁴ It is seen that Ahmed Midhat wanted to harmonise religious narration with scientific knowledge. While criticising the concept of religion, he criticises the Torah, the Bible, and Islamic scholars rather than the core of Islam. He aimed to prevent negative reactions and accusations towards himself by doing so.

In the article titled 'İntikam' (Revenge), the fundamental principles of Social Darwinism are explored. Ahmed Midhat endorsed the concept of retribution in this piece. In this article, Ahmed Midhat argued that public retribution is advantageous and equitable, but personal retribution poses risks for people. Additionally, he asserted that there is a connection between vengeance and faiths, specifically highlighting Islam and Islamic law as permitting acts of retribution. Ahmed Midhat asserted that seeking revenge is a human characteristic, but it should be done in moderation without excessive measures. The amplification of retribution is merciless. Upon examining this argument, it can be observed that it is closely associated with Charles Darwin's theory of 'Natural Selection'. According to this idea, organisms acquired their characteristics through competition with one another and their surroundings due to limited resources. Therefore, revenge serves as a mechanism to ensure the survival of a species during the process of evolution. In another essay on the same issue, titled 'İnsan' (Human), Ahmed Midhat established a

²⁰⁴ Ahmed Midhat, 'Mukaddime', in *Kâinât* (İstanbul: Muharririn Zatına Mahsûs Matbaa, 1872), VI–LXI.

connection between the continuity of humans and the presence of challenge, greed, and benefit. During acts of revenge, people confront their adversaries driven by avarice, seeking to obtain both material and non-material advantages.²⁰⁵

Ahmed Midhat, while supporting a Darwinist and even a Social Darwinist argument, also used religious arguments and said that it is entirely suitable for religion. Ahmed Midhat, to prevent the struggle, says that people should not exaggerate this situation and should not take revenge personally. This also shows the social and intellectual way of Ahmed Midhat and his efforts to guide society while raising awareness of them. In addition, in this article, Ahmed Midhat mentioned that vengeance should be done as part of the law. That expresses Ahmed Midhat's loyalty to laws and combined laws with his scientific and social ideas. Ahmed Midhat, like some Ottoman intellectuals such as the Young Turks, gave importance to the environment and regarded it as a crucial actor for the sake and development of the Ottoman Empire. At the beginning of this article, he said that the European philosophers who examined human nature and conveyed their astonishment and were imitated could not finish. From this passage, it is evident that Ahmed Midhat and other Ottoman intellectuals had started to acquaint themselves with Western philosophy as well as Western scientific and intellectual ideas. As previously said, Ahmed Midhat perceived the source of advancements in the world to be the result of human competition rather than collective existence. While several animals do live in social groupings, they lack the capacity to undergo development comparable to that of humans. This competition is closely linked to Darwin's theory of 'Natural Selection' and in the context of social life, it has evolved into Social Darwinism. Ahmed Midhat acknowledged the existence of several domains within the realm of people, ranging from bacteria to human beings. He asserted that these diverse entities serve as evidence of the omnipotence of God. He clarified the inherent limitations of human beings' capacity for power. He asserted that while humans possess the capability to govern the universe, they are inherently feeble creatures. However, competition affords humans the opportunity to assert dominance over the globe. The competition in question bears resemblance to the fundamental competitiveness

²⁰⁵ Ahmed Midhat, 'İntikam', *Dağarcık*, no. 2 (1872): 37–38; Doğan, *Osmanlı Aydınları ve Sosyal Darwinizm*, 156–57.

inherent in capitalism. It is evident that this competition serves as a manifestation of modernisation and its rivalry with non-modern elements. When discussing the inadequacies of humans and comparing them to other creatures, it is important to note that people are unable to fulfil their requirements until a certain age and are even unable to walk for a length of time. In contrast, animals are capable of walking from the moment they are born and can meet their needs quickly.

Ahmed Midhat criticised the anthropomorphised view of religion, which he associated with Christianity and referenced through the ideas of Voltaire. His critique was not only rooted in religious sensitivity but also aimed to highlight the inherent weakness of human beings in the world. Additionally, he referred to other creatures, such as sandflies, and drew scientific inferences from them to demonstrate both the existence of God and the insignificance of humans within the vastness of the universe. While referencing God and employing religious discourse, Ahmed Midhat also incorporated Western science, scientific thought, and scientism in this and many other writings in his journal *Dağarcık*. In this piece, he adopted a Social Darwinist framework while also utilising a naturalist and empirical approach—both of which were dominant in the art and literature of the late 19th century. This reflects his multidimensional intellectual perspective, a trait shared by many Ottoman intellectuals of the period. However, it is notable that even when engaging with irreligious or secular concepts, they often felt the need to legitimise these ideas through religious arguments.²⁰⁶

In the second part of the ‘İnsan’ article ‘İnsan – Dünyada İnsanın Zuhuru (Human – Existence of the Human in the World)’, Ahmed Midhat continues on the same topic. At the beginning of the article, he briefly referenced the ‘Human’ article. Ahmed Midhat expressed his curiosity over the origins and global distribution of humanity as a species. According to Ahmed Midhat, philosophers and ecclesiastics had written and spoken extensively on that subject. He stated his intention to study this topic using scientific reasoning and logical reasons, carefully distinguishing them from any associated issues. Ahmed Midhat demonstrated his prowess with his persuasive argument. Despite being a devout Muslim, he expressed his intention to rely on

²⁰⁶ Ahmed Midhat, ‘İnsan’, *Dağarcık*, no. 2 (1872): 40–49.

scientific and reasonable evidence to elucidate this concept, rather than relying on religious reasoning and facts. According to Ahmed Midhat, variations in people's physical appearance in this text can be attributed to changes in temperature and geography. While there may be certain distinctions between humans and other animals, it is important to recognise that humans are, in fact, a part of the animal kingdom and cannot be dissociated from this group. Despite the numerous advancements and enhanced attributes of people, they are nonetheless unable to escape the inherent tendency to revert to an animalistic state. The crucial aspect inherent in people is their innate drive for advancement. Ahmed Midhat perceived humans as evolving creatures. Ahmed Midhat argued that humans share similarities with apes and orangutans, but these similarities are simply superficial. Ahmed Midhat cited Lamarck and asserted that certain apes and orangutans acquire the ability to walk upright on two feet, approaching a human-like state. Some people strongly condemn Lamarck, arguing that he failed to provide evidence of a direct lineage between humans and a common ancestor. Additionally, Lamarck asserted that humans have a common ancestry with apes. Ahmed Midhat thought that it is accurate to state that humans have a common ancestry with apes. Ahmed Midhat argued that people should not be offended by the statement, as several regions in Africa and other areas of the world have experienced situations of extreme deprivation, surpassing even the circumstances faced by apes and orangutans, characterised by malnutrition, poverty, and a lack of fundamental necessities. Ahmed Midhat asserted that according to Lamarck's thesis, the transmission of acquired knowledge to subsequent generations is deemed impossible. He provided an illustration to support his claim regarding the linguistic capabilities of humans. Human beings are unable to communicate verbally until they reach the age of 2 to 3 years. If Lamarck's theory is valid, humans would possess the ability to talk immediately at birth. Ahmed Midhat asserted that humans, unlike present-day apes, were not quadrupedal but rather bipedal, like the apes of today. He further posits that humans had several types, like the diversity shown in contemporary human populations, and evolved from these species over time. He claimed that the factor which affected evolution is the notion of competition.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁷ Ahmed Midhat, 'İnsan: Dünya'da İnsanın Zuhuru', *Dağarcık*, no. 4 (1872): 109–16.

Ahmed Midhat offered an original perspective on evolution, despite his criticism of Lamarckism, particularly its theory regarding the inheritance of acquired characteristics, and his reservations about Lamarckian evolution more broadly. Nevertheless, he supported the general concept of evolution and asserted that being descended from apes was not inherently negative, contrary to traditional beliefs. These statements carry significant weight within the intellectual landscape of the Ottoman Empire. Although the theory of evolution faced strong criticism and even censorship in parts of the Western world, Ahmed Midhat embraced it, offering a unique interpretation and risking marginalisation within the Ottoman intellectual sphere. While he supported biological evolution, he also advocated for the transformation of Ottoman civilisation into a more modern form. It is particularly noteworthy that, despite the growing prominence of Darwin's theory of evolution at the time, many Ottoman intellectuals favoured Lamarckian arguments. A likely explanation for this tendency lies in the dominance of the French language in Ottoman intellectual circles, which led Ottoman thinkers to engage primarily with French scientists and intellectuals through their readings and analyses.

Ahmed Midhat, in his article 'Fikr-i Tahrip ve Fikr-i Tamir' (Idea of Ravage and Idea of Restoration), used a Social Darwinist approach to the development of humanity and claimed that the development of humanity lies in the idea of ravage rather than the idea of restoration. He gave a religious example for that idea, the Murder of Abel by Cain in Abrahamic religions, and he says that even the first humans had the idea of ravage rather than restoration. He also added that even European countries reached their developments via that idea, and science and scientific thought owed their position to the idea of ravage because science is mainly used in wars and defeating enemies. That narrative is entirely about Darwin's 'Natural selection'. Although this article is considered as irrelevant to my thesis topic, from the perspective of that era, it is entirely relevant to the topic. Ahmed Midhat attempted to explain a scientific phenomenon because Social Darwinism was considered scientific at the time. Besides, there is a crucial point in that article. Ahmed Midhat tried to explain this 'scientific' thesis with religious arguments to mitigate potential backlash from religious individuals, ulema, and society.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁸ Ahmed Midhat, 'Fikr-i Tahrip ve Fikr-i Tamir', *Dağarcık*, no. 9 (1872): 257–65.

In his article “Kim Kimi Nasıl Tekfir Edebilir?” (Who can disagree with whom and how?) Ahmed Midhat added that science and humanity develop with disagreeing and refutations, but some people exaggerate this situation and make this in the name of God, declaring opposites as unbelievers. He wrote this article to reply to accusations about him, even irreligiosity.²⁰⁹ On the way to finding the truth, some groups spill blood in the name of God and religion. Ahmed Midhat says that all of these groups and every group claim they are the only true ones. Ahmed Midhat referred to a hadith: “After me, my ummah will separate into 73 groups, and every group will claim that they are the true one, but there is only one truth.” Giving a reference to Muhammed, Ahmed Midhat tried to support his idea with religious arguments. He also add that Islam is a goggle for people while looking at the phenomena; people should clean these goggles. He also adds that Islam, like philosophy, is in search of truth. He added that the Ottoman society should remove its blinders and find Islam’s philosophical perspective. If society did not enforce science in Islam and reveal philosophy at the core of Islam, it could not develop, according to his thought. In addition, he claimed that without knowing philosophy and science, the clergy or religious people should not try to falsify science and philosophy with only religious knowledge; it can only be made with scientific and philosophical knowledge. This shows the importance he gave philosophy and science in an intellectual base, along with Islam. Like most of his writings in *Dağarcık*, this writing also shows the triple way of the intellectual thought of him. While using Islamic notions of the society and core, he strictly wanted to enforce philosophical and scientific thought to this core. He believed in science, philosophy and Islam. Islam supports science and philosophy, and Muslims should know that and benefit from science and philosophy.²¹⁰ Ahmed Midhat, with an aim to revive Islam and the Ottoman Empire and stand against Orientalism and Christian Missionaries, always tried to harmonise Islam with modern science and philosophy. He bent Islam to fit these concepts into Islam. While doing this, he aimed to create modern, scientific and philosophical Islam to meet the needs of modern times.

²⁰⁹ Imeri, ‘Ahmed Midhat Efendis Apologie Der Wissenschaftskonformität Des Islam’, 232.

²¹⁰ Ahmed Midhat, ‘Kim Kimi Nasıl Tekfir Edebilir?’, *Dağarcık*, no. 7 (1872): 219–22.

4.4. Conversion of the Thought and Anti-Materialist Era

The European journey influenced Ahmed Midhat's intellectual life. He realised that thanks to this journey, his and other Ottoman intellectuals' arguments on Europe failed. During his journey, he gained the impression that European culture had two dimensions. The first one is material, and the second one is spiritual. According to Ahmed Midhat, Europe is developed in the first dimension, while weakness is in the second dimension. He criticised these dimensions in his works and tried to show that it is false to try to adopt both European and European cultures. From some perspectives, Ahmed Midhat can be accepted as one of the pioneers of Occidentalism in the Ottoman Empire and Ottoman intellectual thought. His rejection of materialism and his anti-materialistic perspective were shaped around Occidentalism thought. For this reason, Ahmed Midhat tried to shape individuality into Ottoman modernisation.²¹¹ Furthermore, Ahmed Midhat, while bringing Western science and philosophy, is against the idea of taking Western values, for only they are European.²¹² He wanted to use Western values for pragmatic reasons. In addition, he considered European values, philosophy and science as 'useful knowledge' in modernisation, so he aimed to harmonise these values with local values.

According to Orhan Okay, Ahmed Midhat's views during the *Dağarcık* days were not the result of conscious materialistic thinking. Instead, he just borrowed ideas from Western sources and incorporated them into his work.²¹³ From my perspective, that statement is false. Although Ahmed Midhat Efendi was not a conscious materialist, he read most of his time's essential books and past philosophers. He aspired to integrate these ideas with Islamic philosophy. Therefore, Ahmed Midhat might be characterised as a philosopher and scholar rather than an encyclopaedist. Ahmed Midhat had knowledge of both Western philosophy and science, as well as a

²¹¹ M. Alper Yalçınkaya, 'Ottoman Inconsistencies, Europe's Paradoxes: Ahmed Midhat Efendi on Science and Spirituality', *Rubrica Contemporanea* VI, no. 12 (2017): 13.

²¹² M. Alper Yalçınkaya, 'Science as an Ally of Religion: A Muslim Appropriation of "the Conflict Thesis"', *The British Journal for the History of Science* 44, no. 2 (June 2011): 164.

²¹³ Orhan Okay, *Batılılaşma devri Türk edebiyatı: fikirler, türler, topluluklar, temalar* (İstanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 2015), 38.

deep understanding of Eastern sources and Islamic ideas. Ahmed Midhat sought to integrate and align these ideas with Islamic ideology. Whether I accept the thought of Orhan Okay or not, Ahmed Midhat and his works should be accepted as a bridge between Western sources and Ottoman society. Ahmed Midhat's fascinating writing style and concise elucidation of the articles effectively demonstrate his intention to captivate the general audience. According to his claim in his book *Menfa*, he aimed to achieve what *Mecmua-i Fünun* failed to accomplish a decade previously, which was reaching the public. Midhat authored this book while in exile in Rhodes.

The transformation of the philosophical and intellectual ideas of Ahmed Midhat began with his work *Menfa*. He was exiled to Rhodes because of his writings. Following his exile, he underwent a transformation in both his intellectual and political views. Before his exile, he was a friend of Namık Kemal and opposed Abdülhamid II; after his exile, he became the Hamidian Regime's voice and an essential officer of some official courts and became opposed to the thoughts of Young Ottomans.²¹⁴ Ahmed Midhat started to change his philosophical thoughts in this exile, which was entirely changed in the 1880s. For instance, in his work, *Menfa* said that if he faced the intellectuals who were indifferent to religion when Ahmed Midhat became more religious and used religious arguments, he would have torn their beards and burnt their books. He also regarded these intellectuals' ideas and works as doing whatever they wanted in the absence of rivals. He considered these intellectuals as arrogant. He added that, until he realised human weakness, he could not even understand the closed-mindedness of humans, and he could not understand the greatness of God. Nevertheless, in this work, Ahmed Midhat said that humans should create their ideas with extreme events, observations, and empirical data. Ahmed Midhat, like other Ottoman intellectuals, engages in debate.²¹⁵ This statement illustrates the shift in Ahmed Midhat's mentality and its underlying reasons. The shift in his intellectual perspective, which started during his exile, intensified with the publication of his three volumes of *Müdafa* (Defence) in 1883. He mentioned that in this writing, while falsified Christianity does not support and

²¹⁴ Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, 281.

²¹⁵ Ahmed Midhat, *Menfâ*, 102.

has no base of progress, Islam has a progressive base and supports science.²¹⁶ Orhan Okay claims that Ahmed Midhat probably did not know about the ‘irreligiosity’ problem until then.²¹⁷

His anti-materialistic period began with the suicide of Beşir Fuad, following which he published *Ben Neyim*. In 1891, he declared his anti-materialist view, completely reversing his stance and becoming an opponent of materialism. This work can be accepted as the manifesto of Ahmed Midhat against materialism. I think Ahmed Midhat chose the name Ben Neyim? (What am I?) rather than Ben Kimim? (Who am I?) to give an answer to materialist philosophy and this philosophy’s arguments about the universe and the human body. Ahmed Midhat harshly criticised materialistic thought, especially on the human body. The main argument Ahmed Midhat opposed in this book is that humans only consist of matter and have no spirit. According to Ahmed Midhat, this renders humans as non-living entities that resemble various types of objects.

Ottoman intellectuals who embraced materialism and evolutionism faced allegations of being irreligious and opposing their nation and community. Although Ahmed Midhat faced allegations during his early years in *Dağarcık*, he later directed similar accusations towards the materialist, evolutionist, and scientific Ottoman intellectuals. The primary challenge faced by Ottoman intellectuals was the need to reconcile their pursuit of philosophy, science, and Western intellectual thought with the criticisms and objections raised by the ulema and other religious and conservative intellectuals. This issue was not exclusive to the Ottoman Empire; European intellectuals and philosophers were also enticed by the same circumstances, facing allegations of being materialistic, positivistic, evolutionistic, and scientific intellectuals who were irreligious and disloyal. The situation at hand gives rise to a conversation that encompasses both social and intellectual aspects, as well as philosophical foundations.

²¹⁶ Imeri, ‘Ahmed Midhat Efendis Apologie Der Wissenschaftskonformität Des Islam’, 233–34.

²¹⁷ Okay, *Batı Medeniyeti Karşısında Ahmed Midhat Efendi*, 313.

Ahmed Midhat mentioned his concern about the ‘problem’ of irreligiosity and weakness of faith in the young because of the effect of Western philosophical thoughts.²¹⁸ Ahmed Midhat likely discussed materialism, evolutionism, and positivism as part of Western Philosophy, which had a significant impact on the Ottoman Empire at that time. During that age, Ottoman intellectuals extensively embraced and employed the philosophical ideas that gave rise to scientism. His stringent policy likely stems from his desire to seek retribution for his past. The problem reached its climax with the suicide of Beşir Fuad and the writings by Ahmed Midhat titled Beşir Fuad and *Ben Neyim?*. Ahmed Midhat notes that Beşir Fuad, who placed great emphasis on science, had a superstitious nature, as seen by his suicide. Due to this rationale, he perceives materialism as a hazardous ideology, and for nearly a quarter of a century, he cautioned young Ottoman intellectuals about the dangers of materialism.²¹⁹ It is probably associated with apathy and experiencing a lack of strength and alone. Ahmed Midhat would once again encounter tedium when Beşir Fuad died. Following the experience, Ahmed Midhat developed a stance against materialism and began to criticise both extreme scientism and philosophy. However, it is important to note that this does not imply that Ahmed Midhat became opposed to science, scientific thought, or philosophy. He consistently advocated for the advancement of philosophy and science, while firmly opposing the integration of religious elements into the realm of science and philosophy within Ottoman culture, particularly among young Muslim intellectuals. Ahmed Midhat aimed to expose the spiritual frailty of Europe to young Ottoman intellectuals and sought to alter their intellectual outlook on Europe and European culture. These intellectuals had a strong inclination to unquestioningly embrace European culture over Islamic culture, and Midhat endeavoured to replace this tendency with a different set of values.²²⁰

In order to challenge the viewpoints of materialists, he selected the title *Ben Beyim?* for this work. Furthermore, within several pieces published in *Dağarcık*, he explicitly states his preference for employing the term 'felsefe' instead of 'hikmet'. Hikmet can

²¹⁸ Erbay and Utku, ‘Hikmet-i Mâddiyeden Hikmet-i İslâmiyyeye Ahmed Midhat Efendi’, 19.

²¹⁹ Ahmed Midhat, *Beşir Fuad* (İstanbul: Tercüman-ı Hakikat Matbaası, 1887), 134–35.

²²⁰ Yalçınkaya, ‘Ottoman Inconsistencies, Europe’s Paradoxes: Ahmed Midhat Efendi on Science and Spirituality’, 16.

be regarded as the ancient and Islamic counterpart of philosophy in the Eastern region, as previously stated. Ahmed Midhat expressed a desire to abandon the outdated term and adopt a new philosophical approach in his early works. However, in his later works, particularly his anti-materialist writings, Ahmed Midhat made the decision to replace the term 'felsefe' with 'hikmet' to refer to philosophy. This usage also demonstrates his intellectual and religious commitment to knowledge and philosophy.

This book serves as a refutation to Abdullah Cevdet's translation of *Fizyolocya-i Tefekkür*, taken from an excerpt of Büchner's renowned work *Kraft und Stoff*. While he is a pioneer of vulgar materialism, he transformed into an enemy of materialism in his later life. He also transformed into what he criticised in his youth. That is important for showing the political way of understanding of science, materialism and religion in the late Ottoman Empire.

Ahmed Midhat, in his critique of materialism, endeavoured to reconcile Islam with science and challenge the prevailing notion of a 'Conflict between Science and Religion' that was widely accepted in the Western world at that time. He achieved this by translating William Draper's *History of the Conflict Between Religion and Science*, thus establishing himself as a leading figure on this subject in the Ottoman Empire. Ahmed Midhat's harsh words in his anti-materialistic ideology can be interpreted as a response to Beşir Fuad's suicide and his revulsion against the viewpoints of intelligent, materialistic Ottoman intellectuals. Based on his writings, it is evident that he strongly opposed radical Westernism, particularly after the late 1880s, adopting a passive stance. It is incorrect to oversimplify Ahmed Midhat's extensive tenure as a member of a conservative and anti-Westernist group. In his *Dağarcık*, Ahmed Midhat sought to reconcile materialism with Islam to demonstrate the compatibility of scientific knowledge. Conversely, he also sought to reconcile science and Islam to expose the fallacy of materialism. Ahmed Midhat's publications encompass a coherent intellectual motif, spanning not only scientific and intellectual works but also literary compositions. His objective was to captivate and deeply influence the public's attention.

Although Ahmed Midhat's Dağarcık period is commonly referred to as the materialist period, it is important to note that this materialism does not align with atheism. He frequently employed phrases such as 'the might of God' and placed significant emphasis on his religious beliefs. Ahmed Midhat's comments indicate his belief in a creator, although his materialistic ideas were not as explicit and precise as those of Beşir Fuad and other Ottoman vulgar materialists. Ben Neyim? has reversed this scenario and attempted to challenge materialism by examining it through the lenses of Islam and science.

This effort is crucial for reconciling religious arguments with scientific thinking and methodologies to counteract materialism. In this work, Ahmed Midhat clearly expressed his opposition to materialism and established himself as a prominent intellectual within the anti-materialist movement. In addition, Ahmed Midhat criticised materialism by asserting that despite the claims made by materialists about its scientific nature, science cannot be adequately described through this superstitious ideology. He argued that explaining the phenomena in the universe solely through material objects is not scientifically valid. For example, if all things are composed only of matter, then the human brain should likewise be composed of matter. From this standpoint, it may be argued that universal intelligence should be uniform across all people. However, empirical evidence reveals that intellect varies across the diverse population of the cosmos.²²¹ While trying to confute the claims of materialism about being scientific, he uses discursive claims and, like materialists, the claim to be scientific.

Even Ahmed Midhat claimed at the beginning of *Ben Neyim?* that materialism is defended and supported by ignorant people and people who are estranged from spirituality and see them as animals and enemies for themselves.²²² Ahmed Midhat criticised scientism and its understanding of science, which considers science only as materialistic science. It is also a critique of Ottoman materialist intellectuals who regarded materialism as the only way to science, and maybe he wanted to forget his

²²¹ Ahmed Midhat, *Beşir Fuad*, 137–38.

²²² Ahmed Midhat, *Ben Neyim? Hikmet-i Maddiyeye Reddiyeye Müdafa'a*, 2–3.

past. These ideas of Ahmed Midhat Efendi are surprising. Because even though he was not an atheist-materialist, he had materialistic thoughts in his youth. Maybe he paid off old scores for his thoughts during the publication of *Dağarcık* from himself.

In *Ben Neyim?* Ahmed Midhat emphasised that personality and spirit differ from matter. That is contrary to materialistic thought. He also adds that, whether the matter changes and this is the feature of it, the spirit does not change, and it has a stable feature. It has a relationship with matter and the body. The important feature of the spirit is that the spirit controls the matter, which includes that spirit. From this perspective, Ahmed Midhat's idea about spirit and its relationship with matter is similar to the idea of spiritualism.²²³ Although Ahmed Midhat changed his ideas and intellectual views, it is hard to say that he refuted his past articles with *Ben Neyim?*. Although he had a materialistic perspective during his *Dağarcık* journal and especially in the 'Duvardan Bir Sada' article, he did not reject the existence and the position of spirit; he only attributed a position to matter with the influence of Büchnerian materialism. Even though he had a materialistic perspective and was a materialist from a perspective, he cannot be called a materialist like European materialists and all other materialists in the Ottoman Empire. He had a unique position among materialist intellectuals.

Ahmed Midhat regarded materialism as a bizarre philosophy. He even argued against accepting materialism as philosophy. According to Ahmed Midhat, materialism should not be accepted as a philosophy because it lacks original thought, differentiates old terms, and claims that its theories are new. In *Ben Neyim?* Ahmed Midhat said that materialists draw creativity up to the concepts of matter and force and that these concepts will go as far as the concepts of 'cevher' (core) and 'araz' (attribute) in Islam or Islamic philosophy, and that they claim it as something new and consider creativity to two creatures. He rejected the claim that man is a material being like the universe. It consists only of substances such as skin, bones, and meat and refuses to have any more. It is against the claim that the eye is merely matter and that force equates to seeing. The spirit also rejects the claim that life consists of

²²³ Erbay and Utku, 'Hikmet-i Mâddiyeden Hikmet-i İslâmiyyeye Ahmed Midhat Efendi', 22.

living only in sight.²²⁴ This book shows how Ahmed Midhat refuted materialist existence thought and supported Islamic creationism by arguing that there is no coming into being by itself and that material things should have spirit for a living. Ahmed Midhat was against the claims of materialism about being scientific and accepting that thought as a religion, as well as their stance against religion. Ahmed Midhat developed a protective attitude of Islam against that ‘so-called philosophy and scientific’ approach without rejecting and giving religious meaning to science and philosophy.

Ahmed Midhat also blamed materialism as a bizarre philosophy, even though he claimed that materialism should not be accepted as a philosophy, as one of the most significant reasons for nasty things like murders. He also criticised materialists for their efforts to make science understand the world and other things. With this approach, they try to outdo spirituality and explain every concept with materiality. He claimed that one of the most important naturalists, Camille Flammarion, was an important figure in the refutation of materialism. Ahmed Midhat, while publishing this work, opposed materialism, not the scientific approach of naturalism. The other thing Ahmed Midhat was against in this work was idolising materialistic philosophy, like religion. The key point of the discussion is Ahmed Midhat’s main opposition to materialism during that era. In this work, he was not against science; his opposition was against scientism and a materialistic understanding of the universe.²²⁵

While Ahmed Midhat criticised materialism, his arguments were mostly combined with religious discourse. For instance, he accepted that every matter needs a force to move. He added that this is not the force that materialism suggests, especially vulgar materialism. According to Ahmed Midhat, this force is the force or power of a creator. Like God creates the universe, he controls and interferes with everything in the universe.²²⁶ From this perspective, the concept of God holds an important position in the thought of Ahmed Midhat. Even in explaining scientific arguments,

²²⁴ Ahmed Midhat, *Ben Neyim? Hikmet-i Maddiyye Reddiyye Müdafa’a*, 13–18.

²²⁵ Ahmed Midhat, 4–8.

²²⁶ Ahmed Midhat, *Niza-i İlmi ü Din - İslam ve Ulum*, 1900, 4:38–39.

he mentioned God. This argument is not limited to his later writing life. Ahmed Midhat, in his *Dağarcık* times, mentioned the concept of God and his will to create and interfere with everything in the universe. In the scientific and philosophical thought of Ahmed Midhat, God is the creator and organiser of even science.

Ahmed Midhat also criticised materialism for the notion that philosophy is solely concerned with matter and the physical body. Curiously, Ahmed Midhat, unlike other intellectuals in his early years, rejected the scientific concept of materialism and referred to it as the 'so-called philosophy'. Ahmed Midhat vehemently opposed the materialists' perspective on the body and their outright denial of the existence of the spirit. He opposes those who are solely composed of physical matter. According to Ahmed Midhat, humans are not solely composed of physical matter, such as flesh and bones, but also possess a spiritual aspect that is essential to their existence. He refuted the notion that the body serves as the focal point for the five senses and is solely connected to the physical body. According to Ahmed Midhat's worldview, humans require a spirit to see the external world. He attempted to elucidate the sequence, including the scientific sequence, using religious conceptions and the discourse of 'The Power of God'. Contrary to popular belief, Ahmed Midhat did not oppose science itself. Rather, his primary objection was directed towards materialism and its classification as science.²²⁷

Ahmed Midhat, also in his early years while publishing *Dağarcık*, had similar thoughts on the relationship between body and spirit. Even in his writing 'Duvardan Bir Sada', which was criticised for its lack of religiousness, he expressed similar ideas. Despite having materialistic inclinations, he placed significance on the spiritual realm and expounded upon several notions pertaining to the spirit and spirituality, as evidenced in this article. Furthermore, he advocated for the concept of the 'Power of God' as shown in *Dağarcık*, while simultaneously endorsing scientific reasoning. Although he acknowledged the validity of science and scientific knowledge, he sought to elucidate scientific notions through theological reasoning. As a devout person, Ahmed Midhat acknowledged that all things, including scientific

²²⁷ Ahmed Midhat, *Ben Neyim? Hikmet-i Maddiyeye Reddiyeye Müdafâ'a*, 15–21.

conceptions, are creations of God. His scientific perspective and comprehension are influenced by religious ideology. Ahmed Midhat deserves recognition as a trailblazer in advocating for the idea of a harmonious relationship between science and religion. Additionally, as previously stated, Ahmed Midhat opposed the endorsement of materialism as a scientific truth without evidence. This comprehension has become a fundamental aspect of the discourse around science and religion, both in the past and in the present.

While Ahmed Midhat shared certain ideas regarding the connection between the body and the soul, he also held contrasting views on the topics of the body, matter, and the distinction between humans and animals. For instance, in 'Duvardan Bir Sada' article, he had some thoughts similar to the immortality of the matter; in *Ben Neyim?*, Ahmed Midhat harshly criticised these arguments. He presented additional reasons regarding the significance of spirit, emphasising that while matter may be eternal and transferable across beings, all organisms require a spirit in order to exhibit behaviour and sustain life. In this book, Ahmed Midhat had a transformation in his perspective, shifting from a materialistic attitude to a more robust spiritual outlook. Ahmed Midhat asserted that these self-proclaimed philosophers, who adhere to materialism, employ scientific reasoning to diminish the authority of God and reduce the significance of God's existence in the perception of humans. He asserted that coincidence has little impact in the cosmos. This concept is employed to diminish the significance and authority of God.

The human body's ability to regenerate itself continuously implies that it is not a made object but rather originated from the basic source of matter. Ahmed Midhat asserts that although matter constitutes the universe and human bodies, it lacks the ability to create anything. According to Ahmed Midhat, God is the creator of all concepts in the cosmos. This perspective connects everything in the universe, including scientific concepts, which God also created. Ahmed Midhat further emphasised in *Ben Neyim?* that while the human body is composed of matter, it also requires the presence of spirit. Ahmed Midhat opposed the perspective and coercive stance of vulgar materialists. According to Ahmed Midhat, the confirmation and evidence of the spirit pose a setback for materialists and the presence of God. Ahmed

Midhat stated that the influence of spirit on human personalities is more significant than any physical changes in their bodies. Ahmed Midhat further asserted that materialists endeavour to persuade themselves of their assertions. Ahmed Midhat Efendi attempted to reconcile his thinking with both religion and science while simultaneously seeking to demonstrate the unscientific nature of materialistic beliefs.²²⁸ Ahmed Midhat's harsh style in this section also showed the importance of this discussion and its reflection on scientific and religious areas. For this reason, Ahmed Midhat had a religious and scientific base to show his rightfulness.

Ahmed Midhat asserted that the concepts proposed by materialists can be disproven through the application of physiology and psychology. For instance, the emotions of a baby towards his mother or the emotions of an innocent human cannot be explained as a physical manifestation, and they counter materialist philosophers by attributing such experiences to the divine intervention of God. According to Ahmed Midhat, psychology and physiology are subject to the impact of the spirit. Additionally, human activities are also subject to the influence of the spirit. It is God who both creates and governs that spirit. According to Ahmed Midhat, the spirit of humans has a greater influence on psychology and physiology than the physical and material aspects of humans.²²⁹ In this work, Ahmed Midhat explores the correlation between psychology and physiology, elucidating these topics through religious reasoning. While attempting to reconcile science and religion and establish a connection between the two, Ahmed Midhat also underestimates the comprehension of the materialistic perspective of science. Ahmed Midhat asserted that the absence of a spiritual essence in humans results in a lack of transformation in their personality, regardless of any changes in their physical body. According to Ahmed Midhat, the spirit has an impact on one's personality, and scientific fields such as physiology and psychology are influenced by the spirit and religious notions. He claimed that naturalists and realists have contrasting perspectives from materialists about the nature of matter, its role inside the human body, and the process of its transformation. His objective is to establish a scientific foundation for his claims. He

²²⁸ Ahmed Midhat, 57–65.

²²⁹ Ahmed Midhat, 66–82.

sought to challenge materialism and its scientific arguments by employing both religious and scientific methods to expose the flaws of materialism, as perceived from his standpoint.²³⁰

The last point Ahmed Midhat criticised, in *Ben Neyim?*, is the relationship between the spirit and the brain. Ahmed Midhat accepted the role of the brain in the senses of humans, but he criticises materialists for their thoughts on spirit. According to him, materialists argue that humans perceive emotions such as fear and love through the brain. However, He emphasised that these emotions are actually the result of the spirit, which materialists do not acknowledge. Once again, he employed the concepts proposed by naturalists on the essence of the spirit and its location within the brain to counter the arguments put forth by materialists. Finally, he argued that if there is no essence or soul during the process of bodily transformation, then there is no logical reason for our memories and recollections to exist. In addition, he asserted that throughout human sleep, cognitive processes such as memory and recollection persist, providing evidence for the connection between the brain and consciousness, as opposed to adopting a purely materialistic perspective on brain function. Ahmed Midhat aimed to give a scientific perspective and challenge the materialistic understanding of the brain with these arguments.²³¹ The relationship between thought and feelings became a discussion topic for materialists and spiritualists. It is an important topic for 'science and religion discussion'. One of the reasons for Ahmed Midhat's publishing of *Beşir Fuad* and *Ben Neyim?* is to warn and raise awareness of society, especially the young, about materialism and atheism.²³² With these translations, Ahmed Midhat Efendi aimed to break the ideological thought of extreme Westernists about the superiority of the Western in science and show that science is not a product and monopoly of Western civilisation. This thought of the superiority of Western science was also associated with modernity by materialist intellectuals²³³, and this idea was criticised during that time. This question pertains to

²³⁰ Ahmed Midhat, 83–101.

²³¹ Ahmed Midhat, 102–14.

²³² Okay, *Batı Medeniyeti Karşısında Ahmed Midhat Efendi*, 314.

²³³ M. Şükrü Hanioğlu, *The Young Turks in Opposition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 16.

the examination and exploration of advancements and contemporary developments in Europe, as well as the Ottoman Empire. According to this perspective, religion is seen as a hindrance to the advancement and contemporary development of modern people. Ernest Renan is a proponent of this concept.²³⁴ Renan perceived Islam as an oppressive force that hindered intellectual growth and progress. Renan's unfavourable perspective on Islam is equally applicable to Islamic countries, as previously stated. This statement not only expresses a sarcastic perspective on Islam and the East, but also reveals a belief in European superiority and, from certain viewpoints, a racist interpretation. It reflects the scientific understanding of that particular time.

According to his perspective, this limits the progress of development and scientific advancements. He referred to Muslim territories and asserted that Muslim Youngs, as young as ten or twelve, began receiving education and becoming zealous Muslims, contributing to this non-scientific people.²³⁵ Renan regarded Islam as both a hindrance to scientific progress and a source of indoctrination that fanaticism from the early stages. Similarly to Ernest Renan, Modernist Islamist intellectuals regarded science and progress as crucial aspects of modernity and attempted to imbue Islam with a modern and scientific outlook.²³⁶ Ottoman intellectuals wanted to use science and development as an answer to the negative claims of Orientalist intellectuals. Not only modernist Islamists but also other intellectuals shared the same thought and aimed to modernise Islam and make it scientific. In addition, Islamic modernists and Reformist Islamists regarded Islam as more rational and scientific than other religions. They claimed that Islam had less space for miracles, so Islam was more realistic and empiric for these intellectuals and intellectuals. They also thought Islam had more space for civilisation and, importantly, was more united and had fewer schisms and sects than Christianity.²³⁷

²³⁴ Ringer, *Islamic Modernism and the Re-Enchantment of the Sacred in the Age of History*, 2.

²³⁵ Ernest Renan, *L'Islamisme et La Science* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1883), 2–3.

²³⁶ Ringer, *Islamic Modernism and the Re-Enchantment of the Sacred in the Age of History*, 126.

²³⁷ Cemil Aydın, *The Idea of the Muslim World: A Global Intellectual History* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2017), 74.

Although Ahmed Midhat's intellectual views transformed over time, he strongly criticised materialist, evolutionist, positivist, philosophers whom he was influenced by while writing in *Dağarcık*, such as Büchner, Flammarion, Figuer, Darwin, Descartes, and Schopenhauer. However, he acknowledged the importance of reading these philosophers and intellectuals to understand their perspectives. He believed that in order to effectively refute their ideas, one must first be familiar with them. Ahmed Midhat further stated that he perused these literary works to discover his own identity. This indicates that Ottoman intellectuals were in pursuit of their identity while simultaneously seeking a novel approach to modernise the empire. Ahmed Midhat asserted that these philosophers and intellectuals rejected the notion of human individuality and personality in the pursuit of scientific principles. Ahmed Midhat vehemently challenged that belief, asserting that these intellectuals also outright questioned the existence of God, heaven, hell, and other related concepts. Ahmed Midhat claimed responsibility for debunking this purportedly unscientific thinking. Ahmed Midhat asserted that materialists maintain their acceptance of scientific reasoning as the sole means to explain the universe. However, he contends that these purported scientific arguments are not truly scientific, but rather employed to support their own claims.²³⁸

Ahmed Midhat criticised materialists for their approach to scientific understanding, specifically their discursive manner and interpretation that undermines the importance of religion and the unique qualities of human beings. Ahmed Midhat acknowledged that he had not opposed all the perspectives of materialists regarding the subject. However, his primary resistance lies in their arguments regarding abstract concepts and their attempts to embrace these arguments as scientific. He asserted that the transfer of matter from one organism to another, in accordance with the principle of matter's eternal existence, is akin to a jest, and he deems this argument to lack scientific validity. An intriguing aspect of that argument is that Ahmed Midhat endorsed that concept in his works in *Dağarcık*. Ahmed Midhat primarily opposed the concept of immortality and the ability of matter to change form among living beings. In *Ben Neyim?* Ahmed Midhat argued that the existence

²³⁸ Ahmed Midhat, *Ben Neyim? Hikmet-i Maddiyeye Reddiyeye Müdafa'a*, 24–37.

of an all-powerful creator is essential for the universe, and this creator can create according to their desires, including making material modifications, as materialists assert. This quotation presented Ahmed Midhat's creationist perspective, in which he has a materialistic view that places God in a higher position and diminishes the significance of human creation. He rejected the perspective of materialists, who believed that matter could influence everything in the cosmos.²³⁹

Ahmed Midhat's most prominent expression of his opposition to materialism and scientism is his refutation and translation of William Draper's *History of the Conflict between Religion and Science*. This work, titled *Niza-ı İlm ü Din*, was published in four volumes between 1895 and 1900 in the *Tercüman-ı Hakikat* newspaper. Ahmed Midhat incorporated his responses to Draper into each part when translating this work. This approach might be referred to as analysis and critique. Ahmed Midhat asserted that the issue of confrontation between science and religion is a prominent theme in Christianity, particularly in Catholic Christianity, as argued by Draper. The existing literature on this subject already highlights the inherent tension between scientific inquiry and Catholic Christianity. Ahmed Midhat argued that instead of prohibiting and censoring, Islam promotes research and opposes those who obstruct scientific progress. Ahmed Midhat sought to counter the assertions made by Orientalist and Western intellectuals, such as Ernest Renan, who argued that Islam lacks a scientific basis and is incompatible with scientific principles. From this perspective, it can be argued that Ahmet Mithat played a significant role in promoting science and modernisation within the context of Islam. This work also has a political way and somehow legitimised the rule of Abdülhamid II by arguing the superiority of Islam over Christianity.²⁴⁰ That is one of the most important points which shows the organic relations between Ahmed Midhat and the Hamidian Regime.

Ahmed Midhat asserted that when discussing the conflict between science and religion, it is important to include Islam as a subject. Draper argued that Islam, rather

²³⁹ Ahmed Midhat, 38–56.

²⁴⁰ Afacan, 'Of the Soul and Emotions: Conceptualizing "the Ottoman Individual" through Psychology', 38.

than Christianity, supported and fostered scientific pursuits. He claimed that Christianity lacks any aspect that promotes science and growth. Ahmed Midhat asserted that his purpose in creating this addition is to demonstrate to Westerners, Europeans, and Americans that there is no contradiction between science and Islam. He emphasised the compatibility between science and Islam while highlighting the conflict that exists between a distorted version of Christianity and science. Ahmed Midhat, like his friend Beşir Fuad, was impacted by the ideas of the French Enlightenment philosopher Voltaire on Christianity and its scientific limitations. Additionally, he said that most publications criticising Islam and examining the conflict between science and Islam are devoid of value. However, he considered Draper's work to be worthy of reading, studying, and discussing. Ahmed Midhat also added that "Since this debate flows between sciences in general, Islam naturally participates in this debate as well."²⁴¹ According to Ahmed Midhat's claim, there are so many worthless books about this topic that they show us that the topic 'Conflict between science and religion' was an interesting topic in that era; there were discussions about Islam and science in Europe.²⁴² Furthermore, one could contend that Ahmed Midhat exaggerated the importance of the East and underestimated the West, considering the claims made by Western science and philosophy that have been present in Eastern and Islamic philosophy. An additional crucial aspect is the manifestation of Ahmed Midhat's Occidentalist viewpoint, which had significantly influenced his writings since the days of *Dağarcık*.

This refutation is an extensive segment in the book due to the significance of the work. This work serves as both a translation and a criticism of previous work that discusses the concept of a 'conflict between science and religion'. While it is true that there were other works released around that time that challenged the conflict thesis

²⁴¹ Ahmed Midhat, *Niza-i İlm ü Din - İslam ve Ulum*, vol. 1 (İstanbul: Tercüman-ı Hakikat Matbaası, 1896), 6–12.

²⁴² The most important and controversial work about science and Islam is French intellectual Ernest Renan's *L'Islamisme et la Science*. This work is a conference paper and states that Islam is an obstacle to science. Many Ottoman and Muslim intellectuals wrote refutations to this work. Some of them are Namık Kemal, Cemaledin Afgani, Ataullah Bayezidof, and Celal Nuri. So, not only Ottoman intellectuals but also other Muslim intellectuals wrote and discussed that topic. For instance, Ataullah Bayezidof was the imam of Petersburg and wrote his refutation in Russian and later sent it to Ahmed Midhat, and then it was published in Ottoman Turkish in the early 1890s, before the publication of Namık Kemal's refutation in 1908 by Ahmed Rıza.

and criticised Islam's supposed conflict with science, Ahmed Midhat translated Draper's work and successfully refuted certain aspects of it. The significance of Ahmed Midhat's comments in this work lies in their demonstration of his approach to the subject. An additional crucial aspect of this study, as well as *Ben Neyim*'s argument, is that Ahmed Midhat largely relinquished his scientific approach in these writings and fully embraced Islam. He actively challenged the scientific principles of Islam, assumed a scientific stance, and provided Islamic perspectives on scientific matters. Adnan Adıvar argued that the Ottoman readers placed greater significance on and were greatly impacted by the writings of Draper, as opposed to the remarks and rebuttals of Ahmed Midhat.²⁴³

Suppose the argument of Adnan Adıvar is true. In that case, Ottoman intellectuals and literary elite tend to talk about the arguments and thesis of anti-religious Western intellectuals and want to know about these arguments. That also shows that this new 'class' was not so much interested in the arguments of Islamic scholars about this thesis and discussions of 'science' and 'religion'. The perspective of Early Republican elites on science and religion proves the argument of Adnan Adıvar for that topic.

Ahmed Midhat learnt Draper's work from Fatma Aliye Hanım, daughter of Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, and a famous woman intellectual and one of the first feminists of the Ottoman Empire.²⁴⁴ While reading Draper's work, Ahmed Midhat realised that Draper is a notable 'man of science' and that his arguments are important to read and analyse. For this reason, Ahmed Midhat chose this work to translate and analyse. Ahmed Midhat bases his ideas in this work on the concept of religion, which Draper mentioned, and claimed conflicts with Christianity. According to Ahmed Midhat, Draper praised Islam rather than Christianity for supporting science, and Draper praised 'Saracens'; Crusaders called Muslims Saracens, which means non-Christian.²⁴⁵ Draper also did not criticise harshly Islam, Protestantism and Buddhism.

²⁴³ Aydın, 'Beyond Culturalism ? An Overview of the Historiography on Ottoman Science in Turkey', 202.

²⁴⁴ Imeri, 'Ahmed Midhat Efendis Apologie Der Wissenschaftskonformität Des Islam', 235.

²⁴⁵ Yalçınkaya, 'Science as an Ally of Religion: A Muslim Appropriation of "the Conflict Thesis"', 166–67.

That also became a useful tool for Ahmed Midhat to explain his political perspective in addition to his religious perspective.²⁴⁶ Ahmed Midhat's aim is more political and religious rather than scientific in this work. By doing so, he also aimed to refute the ideas of Christian missionaries and Orientalist intellectuals. This work also shows that Ahmed Midhat, like other 'post-Renan' Muslim modernists, defended the superiority of Islam over Christianity in rationality and science.²⁴⁷

The harmony thesis is widely accepted in Islamic literature rather than the conflict thesis. Draper considered a conflict between science and religion between the 4th century, from the Fall of the Roman Empire to the 19th Century. While Ahmed Midhat accepted that he considered this conflict only for Catholic Christianity. Ahmed Midhat added that the discussion of science and religion is not true; he claimed this question should be analysed as a topic under the history of science. Ahmed Midhat also added that he translated this book to show the conflict between science and Catholic Christianity.²⁴⁸ From this argument, defending Islam in this discussion is unnecessary because Islam is the most scientific religion. In addition, because of the effects of Christian missionaries in the Ottoman Empire, He wanted to reduce the effect of Christianity with this translation and shows that Christianity is a non-scientific rather than scientific way of Islam.

The interesting thing about the thesis of Ahmed Midhat was that rather than using scientific arguments to prove Islam is reconciling with science, he uses natural theological arguments mostly based on the Quran. With these arguments, he claimed that the Quran and Islam see science as an obligation for Muslims. Ahmed Midhat also wanted to promote cultural activities and the traditional concept of ilm by interpreting the new Western science. From his perspective, natural theology can be used to promote and legitimise many things, like Western science. Rather than

²⁴⁶ Yalçinkaya, 'Din, Bilim, "Din ve Bilim": Araştırma Hatları ve Vaat Ettikleri Üzerine Bir Değerlendirme', 275.

²⁴⁷ Cemil Aydın, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia: Visions of World Order in Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 52–53.

²⁴⁸ Ahmed Midhat, *Niza-i İlmi ü Din - İslam ve Ulum*, 1900, 4:374–75.

mentioning materialistic science, Ahmed Midhat's emphasis on natural theology reflects his scientific thoughts from his *Dağarcık* days.²⁴⁹

Şükrü Hanioğlu, while mentioning Ahmed Midhat's translation and criticism of Draper, tells and emphasises two things. The first one is why this topic became a salient topic among the Ottoman intellectuals and why conservative Ottoman intellectuals did not write many refutations to this work while conservatives in Europe harshly criticised this work.²⁵⁰ The first question is about the superiority of science and the reflection of this discussion on the Ottoman Empire. In Europe and the Ottoman Empire, science was seen as superior to religion in some circles. For this reason, this topic was also prominent for Ottoman intellectuals. From my perspective, the answer to the second question is that Draper did not directly attack Islam, and most of his accusations were against Christianity.

Even Draper wrote that even Islamic conquests in southern Europe, especially in southern Italy, contributed to the development of science and philosophy in Europe, which is an important point for Ahmed Midhat to support and defend Islam and its relationship with science and philosophy. I think Draper mentioned the influence of Islamic philosophy and the retranslation of classics from Arabic literature in the Renaissance. Ahmed Midhat adds that European kings sent their heirs to Islamic palaces and education centres to learn science and philosophy.²⁵¹

In some parts of his translation, Ahmed Midhat tried to legitimise or explain his views of Draper about the concept of religion. For instance, while Draper explained the non-scientific way of Christianity, he said that the paganisation of Christianity made it non-scientific. At this point, Ahmed Midhat said that rather than his opposition to Christianity, Draper regarded Christianity as not suitable for science because of its pagan, non-scientific notion. Draper adds that with references from Newton, even worship of Christianity is similar to paganism. From this perspective,

²⁴⁹ Berna Kılınç, 'Ahmed Midhat and Adnan Adivar on History of Science and Civilizations', *Nuncius* 23, no. 2 (2008): 297–99.

²⁵⁰ Hanioğlu, *The Young Turks in Opposition*, 16.

²⁵¹ Ahmed Midhat, *Niza-i İlm ü Din - İslam ve Ulum*, 1896, 1:525–26.

Ahmed Midhat adds that Draper's opposition is not completely Christianity; he opposes the non-scientific way of paganised Christianity with the words "The reason for Draper's judgements in favour of science and against religion is not his opposition to religious truths per se, but rather his objection to the inclusion of unnecessary and insignificant matters into religion by later adherents of its methods and rituals. In this matter, those who adhere to religious truths, including believers and the devout, are also in agreement with him. Even the staunchest critics of Draper, such as Catholics, acknowledge that only Allah is worthy of all forms of worship and reverence." He added that to learn and adopt the West's science and philosophy, young Muslims should also learn the core of Islam, which is completely in harmony with science.²⁵² In my opinion, Ahmed Midhat makes this argument to show that Abrahamic religions do not have any opposite sides to science at their core. While mentioning the importance of science for Islam and learning the core of Islam, Ahmed Midhat also emphasises the original source of Islam rather than superstitions, like the pagan way of Christianity, because the core of Islam and modernisation of Islam with its original sources is an important topic about the topic of modernisation and westernisation in that era.

Draper and Ahmed Midhat share similar thoughts about the rise of science in Europe. Draper explained that Islam, Islamic science and philosophy entered Europe from France and Sicily. Thanks to this spread and the works of Ibn Rüşd, the philosophy of Aristotle was revived in Europe, and especially with the period of Reformation, with the abolishment of pagan doctrines, science in Europe rose. Ahmed Midhat added that it is good to see the rise of science and philosophy achieved with Islam's influence. Ahmed Midhat also showed Draper's argument that Islam is a scientific religion and the source of modern Western science and philosophy, while Catholic Christianity is portrayed as a non-scientific religion.²⁵³

²⁵² Ahmed Midhat, 1:193–201. "Draper'in ilim lehinde ve dîn aleyhinde hüküm vermesinin sebebi hakikat-I dîniyeye muhâlefeti kaziyesi olmayıp bilahere şunun bunun usul ve merâsim-I diniyedendir diye birtakım lüzumsuz ve ehemmiyetsiz şeyleri dine katmış olmalarına muhalefet yüzünden o hükmü vermektedir. Bu babda hakayık-ı asliye-i dîniyeye riayetkar olan mutekidler mütedeyyinler dahi kendisiyle beraberdirler. Zira Draper'in asıl muteriz aleyhi olan galat-ı Katolikan bile her türlü ibadet ve perestîşe layık Hakk 'azze ve celle Hazretlerinden başka kimse olmadığını ikrar ederler."

²⁵³ Ahmed Midhat, *Niza-i İlmi ü Din - İslam ve Uhum*, 1900, 4:346–52.

Ahmed Midhat added that the Western understanding accepts religion as only the composition of moral issues. For this reason, Christianity declined. According to him, if people see religion as the original meaning of religion as associated with science, people, especially Europeans, would understand that religions are in harmony with science. He showed Islam as an example of this situation and says that Islam means science.²⁵⁴ With this argument, he also attributed a material meaning to Islam in addition to its spiritual meaning. That shows the aim of Ottoman intellectuals to reach the core of religion. They considered this way as the only way to modernisation.

Ahmed Midhat said that the Quran includes every truth, but that does not mean that it is a book like an encyclopaedia; it includes the core and spirit of the truth in the universe. Even scientific and philosophical thought may accept it as a guide. He added that there are some controversies in Europe, and some attacked religion in the name of science, but Islam should be excluded because of supporting science. He clarified his reason for translating this work to raise awareness of the young about the topic and prevent them from becoming followers of that dangerous path that was opened with materialistic and atheistic philosophy.²⁵⁵ His other aim is to show that there is no conflict between science and religion, contrary to Draper's thought.²⁵⁶

While Islam is undoubtedly compatible with science, this does not mean it provides scientific information in the same way schools do. Ahmed Midhat explains that although the Qur'an is not a science book, it paved the way for scientific inquiry and thought. The Qur'an offers insights into the history of the universe and encourages scientific exploration by promoting and supporting a scientific mindset. Although the *Qur'an* does not contain all scientific knowledge, it opens the path for scientific development. This perspective is significant because Ahmed Midhat aimed to respond to intellectuals who compared science and religion and criticised religion as unscientific. He emphasised that while religion, especially Islam, may support

²⁵⁴ Yalçınkaya, *Learned Patriots*, 2015, 155.

²⁵⁵ Ahmed Midhat, *Niza-i İlm ü Din - İslam ve Ulum*, 1896, 1:212–14.

²⁵⁶ Ahmed Midhat, 1:228.

science, religion and science operate from different perspectives and within different domains. Religion, he argued, is not about empirical knowledge but is rooted in faith. Science, on the other hand, is concerned with empirical data and the physical world. According to Ahmed Midhat, science explains material existence, whereas religion and metaphysics come into play when science reaches its limits. For this reason, philosophy, metaphysics, and religion take over when science can no longer provide answers. From Ahmed Midhat's point of view, it is meaningless to compare science and religion directly, as they serve different purposes in explaining the universe. This argument is crucial for understanding the distinction between science and religion. In this regard, Ahmed Midhat's approach is like that of M nif Pa a.

Ahmed Midhat clarified the differences and positions of science and religion. In his critique, he challenged the notion that either science or religion can provide a comprehensive explanation for all phenomena in the cosmos. According to him, there is no contradiction between these phrases, yet some generate what is known as conflict by encroaching onto one other's boundaries. He thought that Christianity employs theological reasoning to elucidate scientific ideas, which contributes to the conflict between science and religion. Although both the Bible and the Quran refer to the origin of the cosmos, the Bible provides a more comprehensive explanation compared to the Quran. According to Ahmed Midhat, Christianity exerts influence over science and scientific ideas, but Islam just acknowledges God's role in this process. This implies that the Bible and Christianity have a greater impact on the field of science. He asserted that it was not Islam, but rather distorted Christianity, that attempted to diminish the importance of science in order to elevate religion. For example, Augustine of Hippo exaggerated the importance of Christianity during its emergence as a dominant religion. Islam proclaims its own virtues from its pinnacle of success. Gazali and İbn R  d were proponents of science and scientific thinking.²⁵⁷

While Ahmed Midhat stated that Islam is a scientific religion, he occasionally employed arguments that appear to conflict with a scientific approach. For instance,

²⁵⁷ Ahmed Midhat, *Niza-i İlm   Din - İslam ve Ulum*, vol. 2 ( stanbul: Terc man-ı Hakikat Matbaası, 1896), 243–48; Ahmed Midhat, *Niza-i İlm   Din - İslam ve Ulum*, 1896, 1:207–8; Ahmed Midhat, *Niza-i İlm   Din - İslam ve Ulum*, 1900, 4:336; Ahmed Midhat, *Niza-i İlm   Din - İslam ve Ulum*, vol. 3 ( stanbul: Terc man-ı Hakikat Matbaası, 1898), 130–31.

when discussing miracles, he claimed that the miracles of Muhammad do not contradict science. From this argument, it becomes evident that he redefined the boundaries between science and religion.²⁵⁸ This suggests that although he maintained there is no inherent conflict between science and religion, especially Islam, he nevertheless placed religion outside the domain of scientific rules in certain contexts. In fact, this stance, commonly held by religious figures and intellectuals, often serves to intensify the debate surrounding science and religion. Furthermore, Ahmed Midhat asserted that holy books should not be limited to ethical and religious teachings alone. According to him, religion and civilisation are essentially the same, as are religion and the nation. In his view, this spiritual understanding lays the foundation for the material progress of humanity.²⁵⁹

Based on the arguments in the book, according to Ahmed Midhat, the title of this book should be *Katoliklik Aleyhine Yeni bir Hücum* (A New Attack Against Catholicism) rather than Conflict between Science and Religion. Draper claimed that the papacy and clergy became an obstacle to the development of science in Europe. Islam and Christianity have different approaches because they understand science and religion differently. In Islam, it is believed that humans can reach spiritual enlightenment through science, which is seen as harmonious with religious teachings. In contrast, some interpretations of Catholic Christianity have historically been viewed as opposing scientific inquiry and free thinking.²⁶⁰

While Draper argued that spirit is a driving force in all creatures, in this argument, he adds that it is not exceptional for humans. Other creatures also have that spirit. From this argument of Draper, it can be understood that Draper underrates the position of humans among other creatures and considers indifferent humans to animals in this argument. That argument can be seen as a conflict with religion, especially Judaism, Christianity and Islam. With this argument, Draper also regarded humans as indifferent creatures to animals, as Ahmed Midhat did in his early works. Although

²⁵⁸ Ahmed Midhat, *Niza-i İlm ü Din - İslam ve Ulum*, 1896, 1:330.

²⁵⁹ Ahmed Midhat, *Niza-i İlm ü Din - İslam ve Ulum*, 1898, 3:130–32.

²⁶⁰ Ahmed Midhat, *Niza-i İlm ü Din - İslam ve Ulum*, 1900, 4:333–36.

this argument has a scientific foundation, it clashes with religion if we accept the 'spirit' of Draper as the 'spirit' of all religions. Although Ahmed Midhat had some objections to this argument in his later works, he supported it in his early works, especially Dağarcık. The idea that the spirit is the driving force contrasts with the concept of vulgar materialism. Draper also presented some arguments that align with the Islamic understanding. For instance, Draper claimed their spirits will reach God when humans die. According to Ahmed Midhat, this argument is true, and the spirit undergoes a process after death before reaching God. Interestingly, Ahmed Midhat shared some thoughts like Draper's. Ahmed Midhat also has some arguments like vulgar materialism. With this approach, Ahmed Midhat separates from the classical Islamic approach, which makes him different from other Muslim scholars and intellectuals.²⁶¹

Ahmed Midhat also added an addendum section to the fifth chapter of *Niza-i İlm ü Din* as a part about the relationship between science and Islam, 'Conflict Respecting The Nature Of The Soul – Doctrine of Emanation And Absorption' as 'Tarafımızdan Zeyl 'Ulum ve İslam' (Addendum from Us 'Science and Islam). In this book section, he explained how Islam and science are coherent with each other from his own perspective. He viewed this book as a solution to the Ottoman Empire's problems, if one reads it correctly. He also added that he wanted to show Ottoman society and these confused people that even Draper accepted Islam as the only scientific religion; but because of his irreligiosity, he tried to criticise all religions, including Islam. Even while claiming that Draper gave misinformation about Islam and Islamic thought, he gave misinformation about Islam and Islamic empires. For instance, he said that İbn Rüşd was oppressed because of his thoughts. Ahmed Midhat claimed that Draper fabricated a story to blame Islam. For this reason, atheists and materialists used Draper's argument to criticise Islam. He warned confused Muslims and atheists and said that if they read the work of Draper, they would understand that Islam is the most scientific religion and supports science. If they read that book, they would protect themselves against the influence of Christian missionaries and European intellectuals. He warned confused scientists and intellectuals, with the

²⁶¹ Ahmed Midhat, *Niza-i İlm ü Din - İslam ve Ulum*, 1896, 2:183–85.

effect of Beşir Fuad's death, about the influence of Western 'atheist' intellectuals who criticised all religions and considered them the enemies of science.²⁶² Ahmed Midhat warns young Muslims about the 'conflict between science and religion' discussion. He warns that there is no conflict between science and Islam contrary to other religions and that Islam also supports and patronises science. Young people should believe in Islam and its support for Islam and not blame Islam for this so-called conflict.²⁶³ This warning is also against materialist and scientistic intellectuals who blame Islam for that discussion.

Ahmed Midhat added that not only Draper but also other European philosophers like Ernest Renan, Victor Cousin, August Comte, Ludwig Büchner, and Arthur Schopenhauer, atheists, materialists, and naturalists, supported İbn Rüşd without knowing the conflict between İbn Rüşd and Gazali. Most European intellectuals and philosophers believe İbn Rüşd is a hero of philosophy and free thinking. He regarded İbn Rüşd as a religious philosopher, and European intellectuals and philosophers praise for him is important, according to him.²⁶⁴ He wanted to use Islamic philosophers like İbn Rüşd to show that Islam is completely in harmony with science and philosophy. Ahmed Midhat used Draper's sympathy for Islam and Islamic philosophers like İbn Rüşd to show that he aimed to prove that even Western intellectuals accept that Islam is in harmony with science rather than Christianity. Furthermore, Ahmed Midhat Efendi may have aimed to answer the claims of Orientalist intellectuals about the non-scientific way of Islam.

The interesting thing about Ahmed Midhat's argument is the similarities and differences between his ideas and Baha Tevfik's ideas. Baha Tevfik claimed that when science reaches the border, philosophy takes the stage, but there is a difference between Ahmed Midhat's approach and Baha Tevfik's approach; while Ahmed Midhat draws a strict border to science and religion, Baha Tevfik considers philosophy as the processor of science. In this argument, science continues to

²⁶² Ahmed Midhat, 2:238–43, 247.

²⁶³ Ahmed Midhat, *Niza-i İlm ü Din - İslam ve Ulum*, 1898, 3:88–92.

²⁶⁴ Yalçınkaya, 'Science as an Ally of Religion: A Muslim Appropriation of "the Conflict Thesis"', 172.

develop; when it reaches the border, philosophy takes the stage, but science does not stop continuing.²⁶⁵ In the argument of Ahmed Midhat, science has a limit, but in the argument of Baha Tevfik, there is no limitation for science. Ahmed Midhat also thinks that people should believe the religious truth in the area that science cannot reach.²⁶⁶

Ahmed Midhat said that there may be challenges between science and religion in some areas, like immortality and the existence of God. Since science and philosophy cannot explain these areas, people behave according to their beliefs. Ahmed Midhat, with this argument, introduced a philosophical perspective to the discussion of science and religion. Ahmed Midhat argued that a philosophical foundation is essential for this discussion, and it is impossible to separate philosophical thinking from these phenomena.²⁶⁷ In the thought of Ahmed Midhat, there is a limit to science; when people reach that limit, they should believe in religious concepts. The limitation of science may open new fronts in the conflict between science and religion, and even Ahmed Midhat had scientific understanding, and he is against this conflict with this argument; he contributes to arguments for the conflict thesis.

Ahmed Midhat had changed some of his intellectual and scientific views. For instance, Ahmed Midhat claimed that geology is insufficient to explain whether evolution exists or not. According to Ahmed, scientists cannot prove evolution with fossils. Ahmed Midhat added that some scientists do not accept evolution as a scientific argument. Ahmed Midhat also rejected the concept of evolution and common ancestry. He added that humans came from Adam rather than a common ancestor with apes.²⁶⁸ So to support his religious beliefs, he underrated scientific data. In my opinion, there are two reasons for that. The first one is that Ahmed Midhat Efendi did not want to contradict his religious beliefs, so he underrated scientific data. Second, if he accepts evolution and common ancestors in this book, he sparks

²⁶⁵ Baha Tevfik, 'Maksad ve Meslek', *Felsefe Mecmuası*, no. 1 (8 May 1913): 1.

²⁶⁶ Ahmed Midhat, *Niza-i İlmi ü Din - İslam ve Ulum*, 1896, 2:434.

²⁶⁷ Ahmed Midhat, 2:245.

²⁶⁸ Ahmed Midhat, *Niza-i İlmi ü Din - İslam ve Ulum*, 1900, 4:150–55.

the debate of ‘conflict between science and religion’, so he chose to underrate scientific knowledge.

Ahmed Midhat also changed his intellectual view about geology and evolution like many areas. For instance, in the article ‘Duvardan Bir Sada’, in *Dağarcık* journal, Ahmed Midhat mentioned geology's importance in understanding and analysing the world. In ‘Viladet’, ‘İnsan’, ‘Dünya’da İnsanın Zuhuru’ articles, Ahmed Midhat emphasised his tendency to evolve. He considered humans as apes and a part of evolution. He also changed his view about geology and evolution, and as can be seen in this book, he became an anti-evolutionist intellectual.

Draper said that in Abrahamic religions, rather than evolution, creatures, existed suddenly, like the creation of Adam. Eve was created from the ribs of Adam. He says this information can also be found in Sumerian, Babylonian, and Assyrian sources. Ahmed Midhat Efendi replied to this claim. He said that this information exists in the Torah, not in the Quran. These are not scientific, and the Quran does not support the idea of the creation of Eve from the rib of Adam. If this claim were true, scientists could easily prove that deficiency in the human body.²⁶⁹ With this argument, Ahmed Midhat aimed to support his claims with scientific arguments. He also aimed to show the scientific way of Islam and that arguments of Islam can easily be proven with scientific experiments. He refuted Judaism and other religions’ arguments in this argument and finds them non-scientific. He added that trying to harmonise Judaism or Christianity with science is untrue. Because in the Torah and Bible, there are conflicts with science, which causes the rise of irreligiosity in the West. From Ahmed Midhat’s perspective, there is no such problem in Islam because no argument conflicts with science in the Quran and Islam.²⁷⁰

In addition, Draper claimed that Muhammed learnt philosophy from Christian clergy who studied Plato and Aristoteles. Ahmed Midhat replied to this argument that “Draper's words about the birth of the Prophet Muhammad, were not intended as a

²⁶⁹ Ahmed Midhat, *Niza-i İlm ü Din - İslam ve Ulum*, 1898, 3:482–88.

²⁷⁰ Ahmed Midhat, 3:288–89.

criticism against him or Islam but perhaps were said in a biased manner.”²⁷¹ According to Ahmed Midhat, Western intellectuals mostly misunderstood and misinform people about Islam and Islamic history, although they do not have the intention of attacking Islam.

In his book *Beşir Fuad*, Ahmed Midhat criticised materialists who tried to implement their views as scientific truth. Ahmed Midhat said that they would know the certainty of their ideas with their current knowledge. According to Ahmed Midhat, they also could not deny eternity with their current knowledge. He added that, while criticising the spirit, eternity materialists also criticised the existence of the spirit and refused eternal life. They associate existence with only the matter. Ahmed Midhat emphasised that materialists accepted only the matter, even though they do not accept this thought, as Ahmed Midhat clarifies in his work about Schopenhauer. Ahmed Midhat criticised confused materialists on this point. From his perspective, Beşir Fuad’s suicide may also be correlated with confusion and accepting materialism as scientific truth.²⁷²

Although his intellectual view had changed from *Dağarcık* to his later works after his exile, Ahmed Midhat Efendi always aimed to harmonise the East and the West and science and religion.²⁷³ This aim can be considered the general intellectual view and aim of the Tanzimat Era intellectuals of the Ottoman Empire. There were two different groups of intellectuals discussing adopting Western and modern values. In that case, Beşir Fuad was one of the group's fathers who wanted to adopt these values completely, and Ahmed Midhat was the father of the other group, which is more authentic and wants to harmonise Western and modern science with Islamic and cultural values. As a Muslim and his self-positioning as a guide to society like other Ottoman intellectuals, Ahmed Midhat Efendi claimed that Islam does not conflict with science.

²⁷¹ Ahmed Midhat, *Niza-i İlm ü Din - İslam ve Ulum*, 1896, 1:346.

²⁷² Ahmed Midhat, *Beşir Fuad*, 142–44.

²⁷³ Okay, *Batı Medeniyeti Karşısında Ahmed Midhat Efendi*, 424.

Ahmed Midhat also wrote a letter to his friend Beşir Fuad. In his letter, he expressed his appreciation for him and said that writing about the same person or the same people is good for progress. This shows the progressive way of Ahmed Midhat. He criticised Beşir Fuad for mentioning the suppression of the clergy against Voltaire without providing more details. He added that he would do things Beşir Fuad did not in his work.²⁷⁴ He indicated that Beşir Fuad could increase his literary output by writing other books on Voltaire and translating his works. Ahmed Midhat sought to liberate Ottoman society from religious and cultural biases regarding philosophy. Perhaps he selected Voltaire due to Voltaire's scathing critiques of Christianity and its suppression of scientific and philosophical pursuits. He aspired to advance philosophy in the Ottoman Empire, inspired by the teachings of Voltaire and a deep appreciation for philosophical discourse. He believed that by fostering philosophical growth, like that in the Western world, it would pave the way for further advancements in thought and ideas.

Ahmed Midhat supported his assertion about the concord of science, philosophy, and Islam by referring to European intellectuals and philosophers. In his monograph on Voltaire, Ahmed Midhat argued that even Voltaire, in his play *Le fanatisme, ou Mahomet le Prophète* (Fanaticism, or Mohammad the Prophet), criticised Islam. However, Midhat claimed that Voltaire supported Islam over Christianity and believed that Islam was conducive to science and philosophy. According to Ahmed Midhat, Voltaire's intention was not to destroy Islam, but rather to critique religious fundamentalism. Ahmed Midhat's analysis of this play demonstrates his favourable and delicate remarks regarding both the play itself and Voltaire. Ahmed Midhat may have had the intention of averting potential backlash directed towards Voltaire and his philosophical ideas. Therefore, in his book, he noted that Voltaire, despite his criticism of Islam, conducted a comparison between Islam and Christianity and concluded that Islam is more scientific and intellectual than the distorted version of Christianity. Ahmed Midhat also expressed a small critique of Beşir Fuad for referencing Voltaire. Ahmed Midhat desired Beşir Fuad to acknowledge Voltaire's endorsement of Islam in the context of science and philosophy. He asserted that the

²⁷⁴ Ahmed Midhat, *Volter* (İstanbul, 1887), 2–4.

Ottoman Empire lacked intellectuals or philosophers of the calibre of Voltaire, and hence did not require the presence of such a figure. According to Ahmed Midhat, Voltaire's hostility to the priesthood in France is the reason. In Islam and the Ottoman Empire, there is an absence of clergy. He argued that there is no necessity for a philosopher or intellectual who opposed the clergy. Ahmed Midhat suggested that if the Ottoman Empire were to have a prominent intellectual and philosopher, such a person should be Beşir Fuad. I believe Beşir Fuad's resistance to Christianity and the largely Christian clergy, as well as his status as an Enlightenment philosopher/intellectual, encouraged Ahmed Midhat to make that assertion.²⁷⁵

Ahmed Midhat's other thought and criticism about European (atheist) intellectuals and philosophers is their understanding of religion as the imprisonment of intellectuality.²⁷⁶ Ahmed Midhat's main aim during his intellectual life was to falsify this argument for Islam and show the scientific and intellectual way of Islam while developing the thesis of harmony between Islam and scientific and philosophical thought rather than conflict between religion and science and philosophy.

In one of his letters to Fatma Aliye, Ahmed Midhat stated that the philosophies and ideas of Büchner and Schopenhauer led people towards atheism, and he rejected the philosophies of both thinkers. He also added that his translation and commentary on Draper's work demonstrate that Islam does not conflict with science.²⁷⁷ At this point, while Ahmed Midhat criticised Schopenhauer's philosophy, he also strongly condemned Büchner's extreme scientific perspective, even as he emphasised the importance of science from an Islamic standpoint. He noted that although materialists claimed to have developed their theories solely based on science, in his view, such ideas were not genuinely scientific. He refuted materialist arguments using scientific sources, according to his own interpretation. Moreover, he argued that due to the materialists' 'bias' and their tendency to label all their arguments as

²⁷⁵ Ahmed Midhat, 38–39, 48.

²⁷⁶ Yalçinkaya, 'Science as an Ally of Religion: A Muslim Appropriation of "the Conflict Thesis"', 178.

²⁷⁷ Fatma Samime İnceoğlu and Zeynep Berktaş, *Fazıl ve Feylesof Kızım: Fatma Aliye'ye Mektuplar* (İstanbul: Klasik, 2011), 355–64.

scientific, he deliberately employed scientific reasoning to counter them. Ahmed Midhat was not opposed to science itself; on the contrary, he supported it, but he objected to the extreme interpretations of science and philosophy.²⁷⁸ His primary criticism was directed at the dominance of materialist thought in science and its rejection of all non-material concepts. In this anti-materialist phase, his overarching remark on materialism and scientism was that materialists sought to limit God's power, stemming from their lack of understanding.

4.5. Conclusion of the Chapter

The thoughts and arguments of Ahmed Midhat show his sophisticated intellectual style and his intellectual sources, which shaped his intellectual life during his forty-year writing journey, even though he changed his intellectual view upside down. Although some intellectuals and intellectual historians, like Hilmi Ziya Ülken, claimed that Ahmed Midhat was an atheist in his youth while publishing *Dağarcık*, I disagree with that idea. Although Ahmed Midhat had materialistic and evolutionist ideas during that time, he tried to harmonise them with Islamic thought to modernise them for Islam's sake. Rather than calling him an atheist²⁷⁹ I refer to Ahmed Midhat as a confused intellectual, like many Ottoman thinkers of the time. Especially after his exile from Rhodes and the suicide of Beşir Fuad, the intellectual transformation of Ahmed Midhat brought him the line of the state mind. He became the voice of the state's policy. With this transformation, Ahmed Midhat transformed into an 'organic intellectual' ²⁸⁰ in the words of Antonio Gramsci and became an ideological thought of the state's thought. The only constant is his patriotic thought during his forty years of intellectual journey. Drifts during his intellectual journey show us the mentality of Ottoman and Turkish intellectuals. Also, his transformation from vulgar materialism to anti-materialism shows us the political way of this discussion in the Ottoman Empire.

²⁷⁸ Ahmed Midhat, *Ben Neyim? Hikmet-i Maddiyeye Reddiyeye Müdaf'a*, 36–37.

²⁷⁹ Ülken, *Türkiye'de çağdaş düşünce tarihi*, 147.

²⁸⁰ Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, trans. Joseph A. Buttigieg, vol. 2 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 202.

In one of his newspaper articles published in 1898, Ahmed Midhat wrote: “If we try to Europeanise only for the sake of becoming European, we shall lose our own character. If we, on the other hand, add the European civilisation to our own character, we shall not only preserve, perpetuate and maintain our character but also fortify and refine it.”²⁸¹ Ahmed Midhat also sought to challenge the notion of an intrinsic ideological connection between science and Europe. In doing so, he aimed to demonstrate that adopting the scientific values of the West was not equivalent to Westernisation, but rather a necessity inherent in Islam. This idea was not unique to Ahmed Midhat; it was widely shared by many late Ottoman intellectuals. Their primary motivation was to preserve the Ottoman and Islamic identity while simultaneously pursuing Westernisation and modernisation. I will explore this idea in greater depth in the chapter on Abdullah Cevdet, not only in relation to science but also within the broader social context. Ahmed Midhat also positioned himself as a defender of the Ottoman Empire against Western criticism through his writings. He contributed to the construction of conceptual binaries such as ‘we’ and ‘the other’.²⁸² This shows that the main aim of Ahmed Midhat is a political stance against the West.

Ahmed Midhat sought to counteract his time's dominant, revelation-independent or positivistic understanding of science and legitimise the classic Islamic understanding of science. He postulates an almost universally positive attitude towards the secular sciences in Islamic history. On the other hand, Ahmed Midhat derives the active role of the moral and spiritual aspects of the Islamic religion from the semantics of the term ‘ilm’. He presents them as constitutive elements of modern society. Islam is already firmly anchored in society and, at the same time, seen as necessary for its prosperity. This view allows him to look at Europe as a model from an observer's perspective and, to some extent, to objectify Europe and the West as objects of investigation.²⁸³

²⁸¹ Ringer and Charri  , ‘Introduction’, 5.

²⁸² Hande Birkalan-Gedik, “‘Orientalism Alla Turca’: Evolutionary Desires, Imperial Nostalgias, and Western Anxieties in Ahmed Midhat’s *Avrupa’da Bir Cevl  n*”, *History of Anthropology Review*, 4 October 2021.

²⁸³ Imeri, ‘Ahmed Midhat Efendis Apologie Der Wissenschaftskonformit  t Des Islam’, 237.

Ahmed Midhat, because of his ideas and grasp of so many different thoughts, cannot be accepted as a philosopher, but he was not ignorant, as Tevfik Fikret considered.²⁸⁴ He is one of the most influential figures in Turkish intellectual and literary history. He also became a pioneer for late Ottoman vulgar materialist intellectuals with his early writings and anti-materialist intellectuals of the Late Ottoman and Republican intellectuals and the public with his late writings. He is an essential figure for both vulgar materialist and anti-materialist Ottoman intellectuals. In addition, Ahmed Midhat, with his first works, became one of the pioneers of scientific and, with his later works, became one of the pioneers of anti-materialist Ottoman intellectuals. As Münif Paşa became one of the pioneers of modern scientific and intellectual thought in the Ottoman Empire, Ahmed Midhat became one of the pioneers of vulgar materialist thought and later became the pioneer of anti-materialist thought in the Ottoman Empire.

I claim that Ahmed Midhat completely comprehended the intellectual arguments he proposed in his writings. For instance, while he supports Social Darwinism and arguments related to social Darwinism, such as the conflict between creatures, he also mentioned the world's beauty. This shows that Ottoman intellectuals were confused, and their main motivation was populism and catching society rather than intellectual impetus.

Ahmed Midhat Efendi was a religious intellectual throughout his life. While publishing *Dağarcık* and introducing vulgar materialist, positivist and Lamarckist evolutionism to Ottoman society, he analysed these philosophical and intellectual thoughts with Islamic understanding. He also did the same thing for scientific understanding. Rather than other intellectuals in the following chapters, Beşir Fuad, Abdullah Cevdet, and Baha Tevfik, Ahmed Midhat did this because of his devotionality to Islam instead of his political and pragmatic approach.

Ahmed Midhat is an important figure for his generation and later generations from both materialist/scientific and anti-materialist/conservative Ottoman intellectuals.

²⁸⁴ Tevfik Fikret, 'Timsal-i Cehalet', *Mütalaa*, 25 May 1897, 3.

Even his influence continued until the first years of the Republic. Ahmed Midhat became one of the most important intellectual figures of the last years of the Ottoman Empire and brought new perspectives to almost all different approaches and fronts of intellectual discussions, which had been continued for many years. That makes Ahmed Midhat a critical figure both for this thesis and Ottoman intellectual history.



CHAPTER 5

BEŞİR FUAD: MYSTIC OF SCIENCE

5.1. Importance of Beşir Fuad for this Thesis

Beşir Fuad is one of the most influential figures in Ottoman and Turkish intellectual history. He can also be accepted as a breaking point for intellectual and scientific thought in Ottoman and Turkish intellectual history. He also brought the supremacy of scientific and philosophical thought among religious thought. With this approach, he influenced later-generation Ottoman intellectuals. His approach influenced even some early Republican intellectuals. Although he did not directly attack Islam, he should be accepted as the first intellectual to declare war against the concept of religion in the Ottoman Empire. Beşir Fuad was also one of the first Ottoman intellectuals to take a position against Christianity. That can be considered a reactionary position to the West and a protective position to the Ottoman Empire in an intellectual base. Beşir Fuad's patriotic thought explains this stance. Because Islam and the Ottoman Empire were considered a whole, Beşir Fuad protected and even praised Islam in his writings against Christianity to protect the Ottoman Empire. Although some intellectuals and academicians claim that Beşir Fuad was the first Ottoman positivist and materialist, that is false. Even though Beşir Fuad was not the first Ottoman and Turkish materialist and positivist intellectual, he was the first intellectual who used these terms as an intellectual tool in the Ottoman Empire.

His other importance is explaining his scientific, materialist, and positivistic views through literature. He praises realism and naturalism against romanticism and classicism. By doing so, he contributed to science and scientific thought in the literary area. Thanks to this, physiology and psychology gained importance, and feelings and religion (in some perspectives) lost their importance in the literary area.

Beşir Fuad, through his literary approach, advanced the concept of scientific thought and played a significant role in its societal acceptance.

The other reason for choosing Beşir Fuad for the thesis is his suicide; Beşir Fuad's suicide is very speculative in Turkish intellectual history. Some scholars and academicians, especially Islamic and conservative ones, claimed that Beşir Fuad's suicide was to prove the absence of the spirit. They used this argument to attack positivism, materialism, and scientific thought. I want to show that there is no connection between Beşir Fuad's suicide and his positivistic, materialistic, and scientific thinking. Other intellectuals in the Ottoman Empire also discussed this situation. Even Ahmed Midhat wrote and discussed the suicide of Beşir Fuad. I will show the supremacy of scientific thought and the contrast between scientific and reactionary thought, the critique of Christianity, and the praise of Islam, even by an atheist intellectual.

Analysing Beşir Fuad's scientific and religious understanding reveals a difference between him and previous intellectuals like Münif Paşa and Ahmed Midhat. He received religious education during his childhood. Because of his education in Jesuit schools in Ottoman Syria, he disfavoured Christianity. In addition to his disfavour for Christianity, he usually stood against the concept of religion, but he favoured Islam over it. His understanding of science is similar to that of the following intellectuals, Abdullah Cevdet and Baha Tevfik. Rather than hard science, he used almost the same approach with German vulgar materialist intellectuals like Ludwig Büchner.

Influenced by positivism, he approached almost every notion from this perspective. Although he did not mention Islam and Islamic sources, he praised Islam and emphasised the harmony of science and Islam. Because of his influence on later generations, Beşir Fuad became a milestone for Ottoman intellectual history. Furthermore, he became one of the most important figures and pioneers of scientific thought in Ottoman and Turkish intellectual history. Rather than science, scientism and a vulgar materialistic approach became dominant in Ottoman intellectual history, particularly in discussions of 'science' and 'religion'.

5.2. A Brief Biography

Beşir Fuad was born in 1852. Ahmed Midhat reported that he had learned from Beşir Fuad's friends that Beşir Fuad received his early education at Fatih Rüşdiyesi in Istanbul. He recounted his experience there as follows: "We studied Emsile, Bina, Maksud, İzhar (all of which are books for learning Arabic), and logic (most probably classical Islamic logic). We toiled over each of them for a year. In the end, our five years of effort went down the drain."²⁸⁵ From this, we understand that he did not value classical Islamic education. He was, in fact, opposed to it and regarded it as a waste of time. His anti-religious worldview likely began forming during this period, even before his time at the Jesuit School in Syria, which he attended while his father served as governor of Adana. His critical views on Christianity and religion in general were shaped there, and this experience had a lasting impact on his personality and intellectual development. At this school, Beşir Fuad also received his first exposure to the West, Western culture, philosophy, and the French language. The foundations of his intellectual, philosophical, and scientific outlook were laid during this period. He later attended Military College in 1867 and the Imperial Military School (Harbiye) in 1871, eventually becoming an aide-de-camp to Sultan Abdülaziz, possibly due to the influence of his uncle, who was the governor of Bursa. Beşir Fuad volunteered in the Ottoman-Serbian War (1875–1876), the Ottoman-Russian War (1877–78), and the Cretan Revolt in 1878. He also authored books on military science and techniques.²⁸⁶ His voluntary participation in these wars reflects his patriotism and serves as a counterargument to those who claim that materialists are necessarily unpatriotic or indifferent to their countries.

His intellectual writing career about intellectual, philosophical, and scientific topics started when he resigned from the military. Beşir Fuad's intellectual life spanned only four years, from 1883 to 1887. During his military mission, he also authored articles and writings about military matters. In his short time as a writer, he published more than ten books and hundreds of newspaper articles. He also became the

²⁸⁵ M. Orhan Okay, *Beşir Fuad: ilk Türk pozitivist ve natüralisti* (İstanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 2016), 19–20.

²⁸⁶ Okay, 20–21.

influential writer, even the lead writer, of *Envar-ı Zeka* (Lights of Intelligence), *Hâver* (East), *Güneş* (Sun), *Saadet* (Felicity) and *Tercüman-ı Hakikat* newspapers. He wrote military, literary, educational, scientific, cultural and daily writings. He was a sophisticated intellectual.

Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın said that the translation of Beşir Fuad from Ludwig Büchner influenced the young generation. It is known that Beşir Fuad translated a chapter from Ludwig Büchner's book. Most probably, Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın mentioned Ludwig Büchner's magnum opus *Kraft und Stoff*.²⁸⁷ There is no copy of this work, whether Beşir Fuad translated this book. If Beşir Fuad had translated this book, it would have given a higher position in Turkish intellectual history. With his approach and way of thinking, he can be called the first Western-style intellectual of the Ottoman Empire. Beşir Fuad is also important for bringing a new thought and code of discussion to Turkish intellectual history. Beşir Fuad also thought *Kraft und Stoff* was the starting point for transforming the philosophy.²⁸⁸ That shows that Beşir Fuad was one of the pioneers of the scientification of philosophy in the Ottoman Empire.

In 1887, he committed suicide by cutting his wrists. His suicide is important for Turkish positivism and social life because he claimed he did this for science. During his suicide, Beşir Fuad wrote a letter about his feelings while he was dying and donated his body to the Royal Military School after his death. Ahmed Midhat claimed that in his work *Beşir Fuad*, when a human dies, their spirit gets free from the body. For this reason, s/he has no right to decide their body. For this reason, Beşir Fuad's family was right to reject donating his body to Royal Medical School.²⁸⁹ From this perspective, Ahmed Midhat considers the main component as the spirit in the human body; when a spirit is gone, there is only a corpse. This argument is a religious one and conflicts with materialistic and scientific perspectives, and in that argument, Ahmed Midhat and Beşir Fuad had different perspectives and ideas about the existence or the situation of the spirit. Suicide of

²⁸⁷ Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın, *Edebi Hatıralar* (İstanbul: Akşam Kitaphanesi, 1935), 36.

²⁸⁸ Hanioglu, 'Blueprints for a Future Society: Late Ottoman Materialists on Science, Religion and Art', 34.

²⁸⁹ Ahmed Midhat, *Beşir Fuad*, 100–101.

Beşir Fuad became one of the reasons for attacks against positivism and materialism among Islamist circles.

The figures whom Beşir Fuad influenced in these eras were Ahmed Midhat, Muallim Naci, Mustafa Reşid, Nabizade Nazım, Fazlı Necib, Hüseyin Rahmi (Gürpınar), Ali Kemal, Mehmed Celal, Menemenlizade Tahir, Mizancı Murat, Ebüzziya Tevfik, Şerafeddin Mağmumi, a friend of Abdullah Cevdet from Imperial School of Medicine and also a member of İttihad ve Terakki, and so on.²⁹⁰ Beşir Fuad influenced not only science writers but also men of letters, political figures, and journalists, as evidenced by his followers and influencers. He did not accept Islamic sciences as a part of science, but although he did not accept Islamic science as a part of ‘real science’, he did not directly attack Islam. This is the general understanding of the intellectuals of that era. Although they did not believe in Islam, most were atheists; while criticising religions, they excluded Islam and even claimed that it supports science. They did this to gain popularity and avoid public backlash. According to him, only the natural sciences are real science. This perspective shows the extreme positivist view of Beşir Fuad. Ahmed Midhat considered Beşir Fuad as the only master of Western education/thought in the Ottoman Empire. Beşir Fuad had knowledge of European science in that era; his scientific understanding was heavily influenced by a simplistic and reductionist view of science, often referred to as scientism.

5.3. Dawn of Vulgar Materialism

Beşir Fuad was the first Ottoman intellectual who followed the way of German vulgar materialism and vulgar materialist intellectuals and philosophers. From that standpoint, Beşir Fuad was the first intellectual to explicitly label this concept within the Ottoman Empire, while I designate Ahmed Midhat as the first Ottoman scientist. Beşir Fuad is recognised as a pioneering figure in Ottoman intellectual history who introduced the concept of systemised vulgar materialism and made significant contributions to Ottoman materialistic understanding as a scientist. While Ahmed Midhat integrated materialistic philosophy with Islamic reasons, Beşir Fuad did not

²⁹⁰ Okay, *Beşir Fuad: ilk Türk pozitivist ve natüralisti*, 188–206.

have a similar objective. Beşir Fuad was the first pure Ottoman materialist; although some intellectuals like Ahmed Midhat had materialistic notions prior to him, they reconciled materialism with Islamic thinking.

In his suicide letter to Ahmed Midhat, Beşir Fuad reiterated his materialistic thoughts and the people who have influenced him. He also recommended the works of these influences to the readers.²⁹¹ In this way, he digressed from the first era of Tanzimat intellectuals and initiated a new era. He also stayed away from political discussions and only wanted to transfer his ideas to the public, aiming to raise their awareness. This stand of Beşir Fuad is similar to Münif Paşa's aim. The main difference is that Beşir Fuad had a philosophical perspective, while Münif Paşa's main aim was to educate the public, although Beşir Fuad also had an aim to touch on the public. That shows the common ground of Ottoman intellectuals in this thesis in terms of their social worldview.

In my opinion, Beşir Fuad is an intellectual who was both forgotten and deliberately made to be forgotten. The primary reason for this neglect lies in his belief in the superiority of science over religion and all other concepts, as well as his negative attitude towards religion. Moreover, Beşir Fuad regarded religion as an idealistic and spiritual construct, in contrast to Abdullah Cevdet, who viewed religion as a social institution vital for the cohesion of society. Consequently, Beşir Fuad did not emphasise the importance of Islam, or any religion, in his writings, nor did he utilise Islamic references to appeal to society. By contrast, Abdullah Cevdet saw Islam as a valuable social tool and frequently invoked it in his works to influence public opinion. Although Beşir Fuad did not attribute significance to Islam in the way that Abdullah Cevdet did, he did praise Islam in comparison to Christianity when he did refer to it. This suggests that Beşir Fuad strategically framed his arguments to resonate with the public, making his approach both pragmatic and patriotic.

Ahmed Midhat also said that Beşir Fuad only knew Arabic and Persian at the level of a junior high school pupil and read the Quran from its French translation. The

²⁹¹ Ahmed Midhat, *Beşir Fuad*, 71–72.

translation that Beşir Fuad read is most probably tafsir. That means this translation was a critical translation of the Quran and was made by a Western translator or intellectual. This led to a Western-influenced and negatively critical approach to the Quran and Islam. Ahmed Midhat also said that Beşir Fuad had told Ahmed Midhat that he read Islamic publications by Western intellectuals as commentaries and abridgements. This demonstrates Western influence on Ottoman intellectuals. Some Ottoman intellectuals used Western translations to read Eastern sources, like the example of Beşir Fuad. Beşir Fuad said that he could not find the Turkish versions of Islamic and Eastern sources; for this reason, he read these works from the French translation.²⁹² If Beşir Fuad's argument is true, the lack of interest in Ottoman society, even in their own sources, and the lack of literacy among the public. This also reflects the interest of the West in the East and the situation of the East and Ottoman society, learning about their culture and religion from Western sources and translations. That also reflects the approach of extreme Westernist and scientific Ottoman intellectuals of that era. Some of them learnt the cultural and religious information of the East from Western sources. That makes Western science, knowledge and philosophy a centre for knowledge. It is also important for the discussion of 'science and religion'; these translations and transfers make this discussion in the Ottoman Empire Eurocentric and one-sided. Two of the most important figures of vulgar materialism in Ottoman intellectual history, Beşir Fuad and Baha Tevfik, followed that way, while Abdullah Cevdet successfully used Eastern sources, too. That is correlated with the intellectual sphere of intellectuals and their educational background. From this perspective, westernisation and the change in the mentality and intellectual sphere of the Ottoman intellectuals gain momentum with this discussion in the Ottoman intellectual world. That makes the discussion of 'science and religion' a sophisticated topic, and it is hard to name this discussion in only one way.

The importance of Beşir Fuad in Turkish intellectual history is that he was the first positivist and extreme materialist of the Ottoman Empire. Like his materialistic thought, positivism became a lifestyle for Beşir Fuad, too. Şerif Mardin righteously

²⁹² Okay, *Beşir Fuad: ilk Türk pozitivist ve natüralisti*, 41.

says that the positivism of Beşir Fuad is not the same as August Comte's positivism. Beşir Fuad's positivism gives importance to facts and material things in science. This thought gained importance and popularity in mid-19th-century Europe and later affected almost every field of life during the late 19th century.²⁹³ This Weltanschauung also reflected Ottoman intellectuals and became the key factor of modernisation for extreme Westernist and scientific groups in the Ottoman Empire. This positivism reflects vulgar materialism and scientific thought, which only accepts the results of empiricist data and material things. This approach refused every other data; for instance, feelings and information come from religion and religious sources. This understanding of positivism is not limited to Beşir Fuad in that era; almost all materialist Ottoman intellectuals were influenced by this understanding of positivism, especially Abdullah Cevdet and Baha Tevfik. Even this positivistic understanding can be seen in the writings of Ahmed Midhat in Dağarcık. From that perspective, positivism became a scientific and philosophical view and transformed into a lifestyle for Ottoman intellectuals.

According to Alper Yalçınkaya, the position of Beşir Fuad for Ottoman materialism, scientism and science cannot be underrated, but there were few followers and supporters of him during his era, and most of his followers and rivals were in the literary area. That shows the weak and insecure position of those intellectual thoughts in the Ottoman Empire. Furthermore, Beşir Fuad's arguments on the superiority of science to poetry and scientists to poets were criticised, and Beşir Fuad was seen as arrogant for these thoughts. During the 1880s, Ottoman intellectuals proved their tendency toward Islam and Ottoman society; that tendency reflects patriotism from that era's perspective. Beşir Fuad's atheistic arguments made this more challenging for him. Ahmed Midhat Efendi, even though he was accused of atheism, called Beşir Fuad a lost soul. He was also called a lost soul in addition to an arrogant intellectual.²⁹⁴ That shows the challenging position of materialism in society and even among intellectuals of that era in the Ottoman Empire.

²⁹³ Mardin, *Jön Türklerin Siyasî Fikirleri: 1895 - 1908*, 59.

²⁹⁴ Yalçınkaya, *Learned Patriots*, 2015, 172.

Thanks to Beşir Fuad, a Western intellectual tradition started to settle down in the Ottoman Empire. According to Güzin Dino, he was the peak point for Ottoman thought during his era.²⁹⁵ Furthermore, like most Ottoman intellectuals, Beşir Fuad had the objective of enlightening and instructing society. Perhaps his affinity for Islam and commendation of Islam in his writing are connected to his pragmatic agenda. This pragmatic approach is favoured by Ottoman intellectuals who adhere to materialism, evolutionism, and positivism.

The reason is maybe like German vulgar materialists about popularising science and their thoughts. With a pragmatic approach, Beşir Fuad aimed to educate society and persuade Ottoman elites and intellectuals about German vulgar materialism and 'Naturwissenschaft'. According to him, "an idea that considered it a mistake to go against the will of masses would prevent progress".²⁹⁶ He considered progress to be a crucial topic and included society in this context, rather than restricting it to only the privileged or educated people. Furthermore, this showcased Beşir Fuad's dedication to enhancing the availability and distribution of scientific knowledge and comprehension. He considered German vulgar materialism and 'Naturwissenschaft' as tools to promote the progress of the Ottoman Empire. He regarded these two notions as distinct techniques for understanding science. Moreover, religion is not pertinent to this understanding. His viewpoint indicated that he considered religion an obstacle to advancement but recognised Islam's importance in protecting the Ottoman Empire against Western intervention. His affiliation with Islam is mostly driven by political motives rather than religious beliefs.

Beşir Fuad was the first Ottoman intellectual to assert the supremacy of science over religion. This establishes him as a pioneer in the exploration of the relationship between 'science' and 'religion' during the later period of the Ottoman Empire while maintaining a respectful stance towards Islam. The perspectives on science and religion vary between Beşir Fuad and other Ottoman intellectuals, particularly those

²⁹⁵ Selahattin Hilav, 'Beşir Fuad'ın "Mektûbât"ını Okurken', in *Şiir ve Hakikat*, by Handan İnci (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2019), 13.

²⁹⁶ Hanioğlu, 'Blueprints for a Future Society: Late Ottoman Materialists on Science, Religion and Art', 37.

who adhere to vulgar materialism. This renders the discussion less stringent compared to Europe. Instead of a scientific discourse, this is a conversation about the Ottoman Empire that focuses on materialism and anti-materialism, evolutionism and anti-evolutionism. When discussing materialism, it is important to note that Beşir Fuad's sources of materialism differ slightly from those of the classical materialists of that time. Beşir Fuad embraced a vulgar form of materialism and was primarily influenced by Ludwig Büchner and Jacob Moleschott, who were considered vulgar materialists, rather than being influenced by La Mettrie, Baron d'Holbach, and Diderot. That demonstrates that Ottoman materialism is like German vulgar materialism rather than French materialism. German vulgar materialism is well-suited for representing the beliefs of Ottoman intellectuals regarding the integration of science, philosophical analysis, and criticism of religion. However, this phenomenon cannot be adequately elucidated solely through various methodologies of materialism. Additionally, it can be stated that the Ottoman Empire and intellectuals began to shift their attention from France to Germany. The various methods of modernisation may also account for the changes observed in the late Ottoman Empire.

His efforts show that Beşir Fuad believed in science with solid emotions and endeavoured for it even while dying. He deserved the rank of 'ilim mistiği' (mystic of science), which Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar attributed.²⁹⁷ This mysticism is unrelated to mysticism in religion or spiritualism; it emphasises a strong tendency toward a worldview or philosophy. Beşir Fuad also found a scientific reason for his suicide. He thought that he would be in a "delirium of persecution" like his mother. This solid tendency for scientific information and inheritance in biology influenced him to prevent the inevitable ending; he chose to end his life. In his letter to Ahmed Midhat, he said, "My mother had delirium persecution. She experienced delusions of persecution. Over the past few weeks, I found myself feeling similarly. As a remedy to escape this, I considered no option better than suicide." ²⁹⁸

²⁹⁷ Tanpınar, *On dokuzuncu asır Türk edebiyatı tarihi*, 300.

²⁹⁸ Ahmed Midhat, *Beşir Fuad*, 73, 80. "Validem tecennüm etmişti. Kendisinde hezeyan-ı tazallumi (delire du persecution) vardı... İşte şu birkaç hafta zarfında, böyle bir müşkül mevkide bulunmaya başladı. Bundan kurtulmaya çre olarak intihardan evla bir şey göremedim."

It is known that Beşir Fuad had an uncertain opinion about the spirit, like Voltaire. For instance, Voltaire said that he could not obtain information about the existence or absence of the spirit, according to Beşir Fuad's book *Volter*. However, Beşir Fuad used an argument attributed to Voltaire, stating that when a nightingale dies, its song ceases. Beşir Fuad also used the argument of an Islamic scholar, İbn Abbas, that when the lamp's oil is finished, the lamp's light goes off. Beşir Fuad said that these two arguments have the same base, so according to Beşir Fuad, when creatures die, their spirit disappears and is not immortal. He did not tell this argument directly, but he gives an example: when a candle blows out, its light goes away, and when a nightingale dies, its sound goes away.²⁹⁹ This indicates that Beşir Fuad had a Muslim readership. Beşir Fuad also read Islamic sources and sometimes used them to prove his arguments. This makes it challenging to definitively define Beşir Fuad's perspective on the spirit concept. This caused some controversies about Beşir Fuad and his thoughts among some intellectuals.

Although Beşir Fuad did not say a certain thing about the existence of the spirit in one of his articles, he praised Franz Josef Gall for his thoughts, which broke the dominance of metaphysics on spirit. Beşir Fuad refrained from mentioning the existence of the spirit, likely due to the lack of a definitive scientific opinion on the matter. Beşir Fuad added that some intellectuals or philosophers also try to prove the existence of metaphysics, but they could not find any proof for metaphysics or spiritual things.³⁰⁰ Beşir Fuad had a materialist and positivistic approach to spirit. According to that view, spiritual actions exist rather than the spirit. The concept of 'force' in vulgar materialism, which accepts force as the inseparable counterpart of matter, can, in my view, explain this. He also rejected all spirituality and metaphysics and correlates everything in the universe into scientific and materialistic content. Although there is a spirit, according to Beşir Fuad, this spirit is not the same thing that religions, and Islam, suggest; it is more like the force of German vulgar materialism.

Beşir Fuad published an essential monograph about Voltaire. The introduction and conclusion parts are important for reflecting the ideas of Beşir Fuad about Voltaire,

²⁹⁹ Beşir Fuad, *Volter* (İstanbul: Kitabçı Arakel, 1887), 124–25.

³⁰⁰ Beşir Fuad, 'Kısm-i Fenni: Mebhas-i Kihf ve Netâyici', *Saadet*, 6 October 1886, 3.

free-thinking, and bigotry; the body part is like a biography of Voltaire; for this reason, rather than the body part, the introduction and conclusion parts are important to see Beşir Fuad's idea about Voltaire and using his thoughts for Ottoman intellectuality. The body part provides a broad perspective on 19th-century Europe, Voltaire's life, and his struggles with bigotry. The body part is also important for introducing philosophers and scientists like Newton, Bacon, Descartes, Copernicus, Galileo, and Kepler to Ottoman society. Another significant aspect of the book is its discussion of Voltaire's historical understanding. Beşir Fuad mentioned that Voltaire opposes viewing history solely as political history; he says that history should include social events, scientific thought, and intellectuality. In this way, Voltaire wants to reduce the power of religious and political authority in history writing and increase the importance of the public, science, thought and philosophy in history writing. He aimed to provide people with a historical perspective that includes science and philosophy. With this thought, he aimed to break the dominance of authority in history and show the development of science and philosophy throughout history.³⁰¹

While mentioning Voltaire, Beşir Fuad drew a portrait of him as a hero of scientific rationalism. Beşir Fuad used this idea to approach Ottoman modernisation and aimed to interpret modernism from a materialistic perspective. This approach also serves as a critical perspective on the Hamidian Regime. Furthermore, Voltaire emerged as an Enlightenment figure who contributed significantly to the Ottoman Enlightenment.³⁰² This demonstrates that Ottoman intellectuals also used scientific and intellectual thought for political reasons. They also adopted Enlightenment ideas and intellectuals and tried to use them to shape the modernisation of the Ottoman Empire and Ottoman society.

Furthermore, Beşir Fuad tries to show that the same thing is valid for the Ottoman Empire, and science and philosophy are efficient for development throughout

³⁰¹ Remzi Demir, *Türk Aydınlanması ve Voltaire: Geleneksel Düşünceden Kopuş*, İnceleme (Ankara: Doruk Yayınları, 1999), 55.

³⁰² Korhan Mühürçüoğlu, 'Beşir Fuad's Voltaire: Liberating the Individual', *Middle Eastern Studies* 58, no. 6 (17 November 2021): 860–61.

history. This book not only mentions the challenge of religious bigotry but also mentions important scientists and philosophers like Münif Paşa and Ahmed Midhat and their contributions. Beşir Fuad's monograph on Voltaire sparked significant debate among intellectuals. That is important for portraying science as a heroic figure against bigotry and oppression.

After publishing this book, Ahmed Midhat published a critical Voltaire monograph, and later, Beşir Fuad went into a discussion with Muallim Naci. This incident shows us that Ottoman intellectuals were sophisticated and had discussions about many topics. For instance, they mention philosophical figures and combine selected topics with different perspectives and areas. For this reason, while discussing science and religion, I use various perspectives and topics of intellectuals, like literature and philosophy. In his book about Voltaire, Beşir Fuad praised Voltaire's writings and thoughts, particularly those opposing Christianity. For instance, Beşir Fuad mentioned that Voltaire wrote and clarified his opposition and hostility not only to Catholic Christianity but also to Protestant Christianity. While mentioning this opposition, Voltaire used Calvin as an example to illustrate his view of Protestantism. According to Voltaire, Calvin burnt Michel Servet, the first describer of microcirculation, theologian, cartographer, and Renaissance humanist. With this information, Voltaire indicated that, although Protestantism is often perceived as more supportive of science compared to Catholic Christianity, it has also been involved in oppressing scientific progress. Beşir Fuad also mentioned Voltaire's oppression by both Catholic and Protestant clergy.³⁰³

According to Beşir Fuad, Voltaire demolished Christianity with his scientific and rational ideas. Beşir Fuad regarded that science, and rationality could easily demolish religions and their non-scientific and non-rational arguments. With these examples, Beşir Fuad aimed to show the oppressive way of Christianity. He also wanted to frustrate Christians and Orientalist intellectuals' 'humanist' arguments against Islam. He did this for political reasons and aimed to protect the Ottoman Empire from negative attitudes. Beşir Fuad considered science and knowledge as the sun.

³⁰³ Beşir Fuad, *Volter*, 59–63.

According to him, this sun rises day by day. Nevertheless, this sun was eclipsed with the birth and acceptance of Christianity as the state religion by the Roman Empire. While the sun of science was eclipsed in the West and people lived in inadequate conditions in the scientific context, the sun was reborn in Islamic civilisation with scientists and intellectuals like Farabi, İbn Sina and İbn Rüşd. With Islam spreading to Spain, light and darkness came face to face and skirmished. After that, thanks to the Renaissance, the sun was reborn in Europe. However, the clergy stood against intellectuals and scientists during this era due to their dark past. These brave scientists and intellectuals did not give in to the pressures and became the pioneers of the Enlightenment. These figures are Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo, Newton, and Bacon.³⁰⁴ According to the preface section of Voltaire's monography of Beşir Fuad, he regarded Christianity as the enemy of science and thinking. He depicted Christianity as a brutal tyrant who affects kings and emperors and stands against developments.

In this way of thinking, Beşir Fuad shared the same idea with French Enlightenment intellectuals like Voltaire, Rousseau, and the leaders of the French Revolution. Most probably because of the political and social atmosphere of the era, Beşir Fuad praised Islam while vilifying Christianity. Beşir Fuad stood against the concept of religion, including Islam, but he did not say anything wrong against it. In addition, in one of his writings, Beşir Fuad said that because Islam considers science as a must, everyone should learn science.³⁰⁵

What is important to note is that, while many major Enlightenment figures who influenced Beşir Fuad were deists, Beşir Fuad himself was shaped by German vulgar materialists, particularly Ludwig Büchner, in his views on religion. Beşir Fuad employed philosophy to promote his scientific, anti-religious, and anti-authoritarian ideas. The philosophers he engaged with in his writings were selected accordingly. For this reason, he did not place emphasis on influential thinkers such as Hume and Kant. Philosophy, for Beşir Fuad, was a tool to disseminate his views and to reshape

³⁰⁴ Beşir Fuad, 3–7.

³⁰⁵ Beşir Fuad, 'İcmâl-i Ahval: Maarif Hakkında', *Ceride-i Havadis*, 27 November 1884, 249–50.

it into a discipline compatible with science, just as he excluded religion and metaphysics from the scientific worldview. Furthermore, he regarded philosophy as the sum of all sciences, explicitly excluding metaphysics. He also stated that an âlim (scholar/scientist) is someone who studies all the branches of philosophy.³⁰⁶

Beşir Fuad also used the ideas of Voltaire to transform the ‘proto-citizenry’ of the Hamidian Regime under the influence of the Hanafî sect of Islam into ‘proto-individualism’ as Mühürçüoğlu considers.³⁰⁷ While Beşir Fuad supported individualisation, he also wanted to weaken the role of religion in this process. In addition, although Beşir Fuad was a patriot, he gave much more importance to freedom. For this reason, he wanted to break burdens like religion.

After the publication of *Volter* by Beşir Fuad, Ahmed Midhat wrote a book about Voltaire, again with the name *Volter*, as a critical reply to Beşir Fuad’s book. Beşir Fuad also added that Voltaire was a member of the so-called ‘Union of Emancipation’ with Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo, Newton, Bacon, Descartes and Bruno, as the important figures of the Enlightenment. This shows that Beşir Fuad emphasised scientists, intellectuals and philosophers who conflicted with Christianity, especially the Catholic clergy. Beşir Fuad emphasised emancipation from religious authority, which transformed into oppression by the clergy. From the perspective of Beşir Fuad, the only way to develop science, philosophy, and intellectuality is to emancipate from the clergy's oppression. Beşir Fuad regarded Voltaire as a hero who fought against religious bigotry.³⁰⁸ Ottoman intellectuals respected Beşir Fuad and Ahmed Midhat for their attitude against any kind of oppression. This respect also reflects the emancipatory attitude of the Ottoman intellectuals, which mostly originated from religious and political oppression in the Ottoman Empire. In his book *Beşir Fuad*, Ahmed Midhat said that Beşir Fuad rejected anything that opposed materialism. Ahmed Midhat also claimed that although Beşir Fuad was a patriot because he tended to materialism, which was not

³⁰⁶ Beşir Fuad, ‘Musahebat-ı Leyliye’, *Tercüman-ı Hakikat*, 4 January 1887, 3.

³⁰⁷ Mühürçüoğlu, ‘Beşir Fuad’s Voltaire: Liberating the Individual’, 864.

³⁰⁸ Beşir Fuad, *Volter*, 7–8.

accepted even in Europe in these times, all his virtues were overshadowed by materialism.³⁰⁹

In addition to the strong tendency of Beşir Fuad, in the years of writing Beşir Fuad, Ahmed Midhat started to take against materialism. He began to see materialism as weak and harmful to the nation, and these thoughts of Ahmed Midhat would evolve, and he began to see materialists as an enemy and even like animals in his work *Ben Neyim?*. This perspective resembles a materialistic interpretation of positivism. In other words, it can be considered like the positivistic view of science by sticking to the idea of giving importance to empirical facts. Although Beşir Fuad was accepted as the first positivist, naturalist, and theorist of this literary movement in the Ottoman Empire, the next generation did not mention him enough in their works. This could be attributed to his suicide and the media's lack of interest in him after his death. Although some intellectuals shared similar ideas with Beşir Fuad, maybe they did not even hear his name and were influenced by other intellectuals who said similar things to Beşir Fuad on a philosophical and intellectual basis.³¹⁰

In a public access discussion in the writing series of 'Taassubun Zararları' (Harms of Bigotry) in *Ceride-i Havadis* journal, Beşir Fuad is the director of this writing series. This writing series is mostly about religious bigotry and criticises religious bigotry; some of the critiques go far and turn into critiques about religion. The inference is that almost no intellectual or writer in that era could easily criticise religion, especially Islam.³¹¹ This situation also shows an intellectual understanding of Beşir Fuad and reflects his aim in his writings. The main idea of Beşir Fuad in some of his writings is that science should replace the position of religion. That does not mean science should be religion; it should be the most important thing for humans. Science holds a significant place in scientism and materialistic positivism, similar to how religion is often viewed as superior to other aspects of life. He also added that

³⁰⁹ Ahmed Midhat, *Beşir Fuad*, 13–15.

³¹⁰ Okay, *Beşir Fuad: ilk Türk pozitivist ve natüralisti*, 187.

³¹¹ Mehmet Akgün, 'Beşir Fuad', in *Tanzimat'tan Günümüze Türk Düşünürleri Cilt 3: Tanzimat'tan Cumhuriyet'e Bilimsel ve Felsefi Düşünce Temsilcileri*, ed. Süleyman Hayri Bolay (Ankara: Nobel, 2015), 1719.

science makes an important contribution to ethics. He attributed the superior position to science, which may affect or influence everything. In one of his letters to his friend Fazlı Necib, Beşir Fuad tells Fazlı Necib: “After reading the philosophy books which I recommend, you [should] detract romantic/poetical parts from your mind and only keep critical parts in your mind.” In that letter, Beşir Fuad said that science should be the first topic of school education. Science education facilitates the rapid acquisition of morality and ethics. Beşir Fuad also correlated science with patriotism and considered science education essential for patriotism. Beşir Fuad aimed to break the relationship between religion and patriotism and correlated patriotism with science. While mentioning the importance of science, chemistry, physiology, mathematics, and physics, he emphasised the importance of learning Western languages. This episode shows the transition of the intellectual centre of the Ottoman Empire from the East to the West. Finally, Beşir Fuad asserted that the study of philosophy should come after the study of science.³¹² His advice to Fazlı Necib is clarified by his philosophical approach. Beşir Fuad believed that philosophy should be scientific and learnt after science. The reason for that thought may be the desire to base philosophy on scientific principles after understanding both fields sequentially.

The first journal of Beşir Fuad, *Hâver*, was closed because of metaphysical writings, and Beşir Fuad published *Güneş* newspaper instead of *Hâver*. *Hâver* may be accepted as the first literary magazine with a scientific worldview in the Ottoman Empire. Beşir Fuad said that *Güneş* will only publish articles about science and scientific information.³¹³ From that point, it may be readily understood that Beşir Fuad was against metaphysical topics and did not want to publish articles about metaphysics in his journal; he only wanted to publish scientific articles. For this reason, Beşir Fuad closed his journal *Hâver* and published *Güneş*. Beşir Fuad aimed to show science as the sun with the name of his journal, turning the face of the society from the East. This can also be understood from the cover page of the *Güneş* journal, which depicts the sunrise and this sunrise dispelling the darkness, which describes the sun of science against bigotry.

³¹² Beşir Fuad and Fazlı Necib, *Mektubat*, 16–22.

³¹³ Okay, *Beşir Fuad: ilk Türk pozitivist ve natüralisti*, 58.

Almost all the knowledge of Beşir Fuad came from Western sources. He even relied on Western sources for his knowledge of Islam and the East. His proficiency in English, French, and German correlates with this, but it's important not to overlook a crucial aspect. The result is his attachment to Western intellectuals and reason, especially after the Enlightenment, which stands against the authority of religion. His apathy to Eastern culture and the concept of religion defines his intellectual worldview and his writing life. The remarkable point about Beşir Fuad and his view of language also reflects the change in Ottoman intellectuals. He is one of the first to move away from the tradition of valuing proficiency in Arabic and Persian, which was important for the Ottoman intelligentsia up to this point. Fuad was not the first intellectual who learnt Western languages, but he can be accepted as one of the first, maybe the first, intellectuals who replaced Western languages instead of Eastern languages and opened a new era for Turkish intellectual history towards the Western world and tradition.

Beşir Fuad also gave importance to knowledge and its spread. While mentioning Voltaire in his work, Beşir Fuad emphasised *Encyclopédie*, the first book published by Diderot and d'Alembert; later, Voltaire contributed articles about philosophy and literature. Beşir Fuad mentioned that people who did not want to spread science tried to prevent this work. Most of these group members are clergy, especially Jesuits and Jansenists. From the perspective of Beşir Fuad, the clergy is not only an obstacle to science but also wants to prevent the spreading of every kind of knowledge, which reduces the power of religious authority and makes it questionable.³¹⁴ Both Voltaire and Beşir Fuad considered religion as an obstacle not only to science but also to philosophy, literature, and other kinds of knowledge that contributed to the development of people. From this perspective, Beşir Fuad, like Voltaire, considered religion and clergy as the enemy of enlightenment and development of the human mind and reason. This approach shows that, like Ahmed Midhat, Beşir Fuad thought that the discussion of the 'conflict between science and religion' is a discussion which is not entirely between science and religion. It is understood from that paragraph that both Beşir Fuad and Voltaire regarded the clergy as opponents of

³¹⁴ Beşir Fuad, *Volter*, 67–70.

science, philosophy and free thinking rather than religion. This discussion is not an ontological discussion but an epistemological and discursive discussion.

Beşir Fuad, despite not explicitly stating his religious beliefs, was among the early Ottoman intellectuals who asserted the supremacy of science over religion. Beşir Fuad can be seen as a manifestation of the ‘cult of science’ in Turkish intellectual history,³¹⁵ which also gained prominence during the Early Republican Period. He was among the early Ottoman intellectuals who argued that Westernisation and modernisation could only be accomplished by institutional reforms and a transformation of intellectual and philosophical thinking, essentially a change in mindset. This also represents a significant departure from old conceptions in the field of epistemology and marks the beginning of modern concepts. Beşir Fuad also sought to articulate his views on the pre-eminence of science among the educated people in the Ottoman Empire. His objective was to convince the Ottoman elite to adopt a worldview that prioritises scientific-orientated materialism and scientism.³¹⁶

His thoughts had also represented Ottoman and Turkish intellectual controversy for 150 years. Because since those times, there has been a controversy about how the aspect of adoption from the West continues, and I think it will continue in the near future. Although he did not criticise Islam directly, he critiqued religion through Christianity. He harshly criticised Christian ecclesiastics in his early writings. He considers Giordano Bruno (1548-1600) a leader of the scientific view against the pressure on authority and zealous views of these ecclesiastics.³¹⁷ In this article, he also considered a conflict between science and religion, emphasising that religion is an obstacle to science and oppresses it. He criticised ecclesiastics while mentioning scientific figures and their relationship with the public. He criticised ecclesiastics for fooling people with heaven and hell. From this argument, it is understood that Beşir Fuad’s main opposition is against the clergy.³¹⁸ Beşir Fuad was also against the

³¹⁵ Ekrem Işın, ‘Osmanlı Materyalizmi’, in *Tanzimattan Cumhuriyete Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 2 (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1985), 366.

³¹⁶ Hanioglu, ‘Blueprints for a Future Society: Late Ottoman Materialists on Science, Religion and Art’, 37.

³¹⁷ Beşir Fuad, ‘Târîh-i Felsefeden Bir Katre: Geordano Bruno’, *Hâver*, no. 1 (12 April 1884): 22–26.

³¹⁸ Beşir Fuad, ‘Katoliklerin İki Velîsi’, *Hâver*, no. 3 (11 May 1884): 92–95.

leader and guide position of clergy and their misdirection of the public. He accepted and regarded that the only guide should be science. Again, in his early writings, Beşir Fuad harshly criticised the clergy because of their actions as healers transforming water into medicine with praying. In that writing, Beşir Fuad shown his opposition to miracles and the non-scientific way of the miracles. He added that sometimes clergy is wrong, and non-scientific information and treatments kill people rather than cure them. Beşir Fuad exemplifies Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo and Newton for supporting science and humanity. He says that these scientists and other scientists change the lives of humans in a good way, but the clergy cannot do that; even clergy save some people; this is a mere flea.³¹⁹ Another important point in this writing is that Beşir Fuad declared the superiority of science over religion again; actually, Beşir Fuad criticised the clergy and their interpretation of religion by the clergy in general.

Beşir Fuad criticised not only Christianity and Christian ecclesiastics but also other religions and ecclesiastics, including Islam and Islamic ecclesiastics. Because his main aim was to spread and get his scientific views and ideas through people, because of his pragmatic approach, he did not say negative things about Islam, even though sometimes he praised Islam in his writings. He also glorified Islam in his writings in the *Ceride-i Havadis* journal. In his writing *İcmâl-i Ahval* (*Compendium of Circumstances*), probably in the education section of this writing series, Beşir Fuad says, “Muhammed’s religion, which includes every truth, prognosticates the necessity and importance of science and education explicitly.”³²⁰ Most probably, Beşir Fuad wrote an excellent and elevatory position on Islam because of his hate against Christianity, and the other reason may be related to attracting the attention of the public and making them more interested in science by associating with Islam and transferred the idea of promoting and even order to obtain the scientific knowledge by Islam. Beşir Fuad also used Voltaire’s approach to Islam to compare Christianity and Islam, showing that Islam supports science and does not conflict.

According to Beşir Fuad, misconceptions about Islam is originated from the Christian clergy, and Voltaire also stood against this approach of the clergy. Voltaire

³¹⁹ Beşir Fuad, ‘Sudan İlaç’, *Güneş*, no. 2 (1884): 87–96.

³²⁰ Akgün, ‘Beşir Fuad’, 1719.

added that Christians, especially the clergy, slander Islam as non-scientific and Voltaire uses ayets to refute the slanders of Christian clergy.³²¹ In my opinion, Beşir Fuad used Voltaire's arguments for two reasons. The first reason is to prevent public reactions to his thoughts. The second reason is the same as Ahmed Midhat's reason. Both of these intellectuals tried to prevent the spread of Christianity in the Ottoman Empire via missionaries. For this reason, both intellectuals harshly criticised Christianity, saying Islam supports science and philosophy while Christianity does not. Beşir Fuad, like Ahmed Midhat, followed a pragmatic way of influencing the public. In one of his letters to Muallim Naci, he said two things would attract attention if the existence were analysed. These are 'force' and 'matter'. Beşir Fuad added that this thought changed the philosophical way of the World. In addition, Beşir Fuad said that while analysing and examining the world and matter, people should analyse it scientifically rather than through poetic discourses.³²²

With this approach, Beşir Fuad regarded no difference between even humans with the matter. He underrates the position of humans, which religions give importance to. This philosophical and so-called scientific, actually non-scientific, approach makes it hard to name the discussion as a science and religion discussion because of its discursive and exaggerated approach to science. Beşir Fuad also mentioned the importance of 'force' and 'matter' in his articles. For instance, in his article 'Hararet ve Hayat' (Heat and Life), which was translated from Ludwig Büchner's 'Wärme und Leben' in his book *Physiologische Bilder* (Physiological Imaginations), he mentioned that heat is a force, and every action produces some heat, and this heat supported another action.³²³

Beşir Fuad also supported Herbert Spencer's views about the categorisation of science and art. In this categorisation, physiology is in first place, and art is in last place.³²⁴ This categorisation is also similar to the categorisation of science by August

³²¹ Beşir Fuad, *Volter*, 125–36.

³²² Beşir Fuad and Muallim Naci, *İntikâd* (İstanbul: Kitabcı Arakel, 1887), 70–71.

³²³ Beşir Fuad, 'Hararet ve Hayat', *Hâver*, no. 1 (12 April 1884): 13–17.

³²⁴ Işın, 'Osmanlı Materyalizmi', 366.

Comte. Beşir Fuad took the categorisation of science a step further in the late Ottoman intellectual world. Münif Paşa and Ahmed Midhat praised Western sciences rather than Islamic science. However, Beşir Fuad only accepted Western and even experimental sciences as ‘real’ science and excluded not only Islamic sciences but also non-experimental sciences. Beşir Fuad, while suggesting science to Fazlı Necib, said mathematics is the key to science. Mathematics is included in poetry, and knowing mathematics makes it easier to understand poetry. After mentioning the subtopics of mathematics, Beşir Fuad suggested chemistry, physics, physiology and geology to Fazlı Necib. Beşir Fuad regarded science as the basis of philosophy; this reflects Beşir Fuad's idea that philosophy should be scientific.³²⁵

The other important thing is that while Beşir Fuad’s influencers Comte and Spencer gave importance to sociology, Beşir Fuad gave sociology last place in his classification. Another important point in this categorisation is that religion has no position in this categorisation. In the ideal society of Herbert Spencer and Beşir Fuad, there is no place for religion. It is known that, in religious societies, religion is the most important thing, and even science should fit into religion. However, in Beşir Fuad’s thought, science is the only guide, and even science becomes like a religion which cannot be questioned, and every other concept should be scientific and fit into science. While Beşir Fuad praised Islam in his writings for political reasons, he was against the concept of religion.

This work is, in fact, a translation of a chapter from Ludwig Büchner’s *Physiologische Bilder*. Beşir Fuad translated the first chapter of the book, titled ‘Das Herz’ (The Heart). His translation was published in issues 15–19, 21, 23, and 24 of the journal *Envar-ı Zekâ*. Like Büchner, Beşir Fuad explained the function of the heart from a scientific perspective. For both thinkers, the heart is an ordinary organ, no different from others, and not the seat of emotions or any special feelings. From this standpoint, both Beşir Fuad and Ludwig Büchner asserted that the heart's sole function is to pump blood, it is an organ, like any other, with no connection to brevity, belief, or virtue. It is merely a machine within the human body.³²⁶ According

³²⁵ Beşir Fuad and Fazlı Necib, *Mektubat*, 18–19.

³²⁶ Beşir Fuad, ‘Kalb’, *Envar-ı Zeka* 1, no. 15 (1883): 401.

to Beşir Fuad, since the brain is the centre of thought and emotions are physical sensations, the true centre of emotions is the brain, not the heart. From this perspective, he approached emotions through a scientific lens. For him, the vital principle is solely a matter of force, matter, and the movement of matter, there is no room for metaphysical explanation. This view closely parallels the arguments of Claude Bernard and his positivist physiological ideas: the processes within the human body are nothing more than observable scientific phenomena. Beşir Fuad also added that what matters most in the universe is not the force itself, but how that force is organised and brought together.³²⁷

Beşir Fuad emphasised the significance of evolution with this comment. According to vulgar materialism, the belief is that everything in the cosmos is made up of force and matter. From this standpoint, all entities possess a common fundamental nature, and transformations have occurred as a result of the process of evolution. The scientific and materialist approach is also indicative of naturalist and empiricist perspectives. Beşir Fuad also disagreed with the perspective of poets and novelists regarding the correlation between emotions and the heart. This perspective should also be regarded as a direct challenge to Romanticism and religious beliefs, which prioritise emotions and assert that the heart is the core of emotional experiences. From an alternative standpoint, one may argue that this concept bears resemblance to the notion of man-machine integration and opposes the idea of humans holding a unique position in the cosmos. This translation is crucial for introducing German vulgar materialism into the Ottoman Empire and the intellectual world.

Before this translation, the existence of German vulgar materialism became certain in the Ottoman intellectual world, even though some intellectual thoughts were already similar to it. With his empirical and positivistic views, Beşir Fuad became the pioneer of the realisation and materialisation of all spheres of life in Ottoman and Turkish intellectual history. In the philosophical and scientific view of Beşir Fuad, three aspects are important: ‘tarassud’ (observing), ‘kuvve-i mümeyyize’ (force of examining), and ‘tecrübe’ (experiment). These three steps form the notion of ‘tettebbû’. According to Beşir Fuad, humans learn the knowledge of the universe

³²⁷ Beşir Fuad, *Beşer* (İstanbul: Mihran, 1886), 65–68.

from this concept.³²⁸ Empiricism and positivistic understanding can also benefit from this explanation. Beşir Fuad, influenced by Claude Bernard's quotation, "Experimenter, the examiner of the nature," said, "Observation shows, experiment exposes."³²⁹ Beşir Fuad only accepts human senses and experimentation as the only way to reach knowledge. Beşir Fuad rejected all other sources of knowledge except the human senses. This reasoning reflects a materialistic interpretation of the world. Religion and metaphysical knowledge are unnecessary in this interpretation and explanation. The only way to interact with the universe and science is through the human senses.

Beşir Fuad translated some of his works about physiology and evolutionism from European sources. For instance, he translated *Histoire d'une bouchée de pain* (The History of a Mouthful of Bread) by Jean Macé with the same name as 'Bir Lokma Ekmeğin Tarihi'. This work is like a letter, which shows the aim of educating the public by Beşir Fuad and Jean Macé. From that perspective, this work also reflects the pragmatic approach of Beşir Fuad because the letter this article includes is written for a little girl. Beşir Fuad wants to explain his ideas, even to a child. Beşir Fuad published this article as a series in eleven issues. The first part of the article is important for its approach, and in the other parts, Beşir Fuad and Macé mention the physiological structure of the digestive system. Although Beşir Fuad had no strong influence from French materialists, there are effects of French materialism in some of his thoughts. For instance, all creatures are machines. That is like 'l'homme machine' of French materialist philosopher La Mettrie. Beşir Fuad thinks that this machine is more complex in complex creatures and more straightforward in simple creatures. Beşir Fuad used arguments like those of evolutionism. That 'scientific' approach is also against the religious view. Another important argument is Beşir Fuad's reference to Thales: "Know thyself." With this reference, Beşir Fuad also emphasises the importance of physiology and opens the way for his arguments about physiology and evolutionism.³³⁰

³²⁸ Beşir Fuad, 'Musahebat-ı Leyliye', *Tercüman-ı Hakikat*, 27 December 1886, 3.

³²⁹ Beşir Fuad, *Victor Hugo* (İstanbul: Mihran, 1885), 185.

³³⁰ Beşir Fuad, 'Bir Lokma Ekmeğin Tarihi', *Güneş*, no. 1 (1884): 22, 27–28.

With the effect of Büchner, Beşir Fuad rejected religious and philosophical speculations, considered them nonsense, and thought they should give place to science and scientific truth. When Fazlı Necib, one of Beşir Fuad's friends, asked in one of his letters whether the teaching of ethics should not be viewed as superior to the education of science for the development of the human, Beşir Fuad said that although the teaching of ethics and morality is important, cruelty was attached if philosophical and moral perspectives are not connected with scientific values.³³¹ Beşir Fuad, like many materialist intellectuals of that era, held evolutionary thoughts that could be considered Social Darwinist. For instance, in another letter to Fazlı Necib, Beşir Fuad claimed that ethics was hereditary rather than a learnt conception. That idea reflects the strictly scientific view of Beşir Fuad.³³² This is an important step for the scientific approach to ethics. That is also an important step for creating a scientific society. With this approach, Beşir Fuad and German vulgar materialists, especially Ludwig Büchner, brought a deterministic and scientific approach to ethics and morality. After Beşir Fuad, Baha Tevfik went further and wrote in more detail about ethics and morality, their relationship and dependence on science, and the materialistic approach to scientific data.

Ludwig Büchner is also important because his thoughts about morality profoundly influenced Ottoman vulgar materialists, too. Although Ludwig Büchner does not mention the way of creating the new scientific morality, he emphasises that in his masterpiece *Kraft und Stoff*, a new kind of morality should be created based on scientific understanding.³³³ Like Büchner, Beşir Fuad also accepted that everything in the universe is based on 'force' and 'matter'.

They possessed a comprehensive understanding of these two concepts and rejected alternative ideas within the realm of science. Moreover, they connected human behaviour with both science and scientism. Ottoman intellectuals with materialist

³³¹ Poyraz, 'Science versus Religion: The Influence of European Materialism on Turkish Thought, 1860-1960', 66.

³³² Beşir Fuad and Fazlı Necib, *Mektubat*, 78.

³³³ Büchner, *Kraft Und Stoff: Oder, Grundzüge Der Natürlichen Weltordnung, Nebst Einer Darauf Gebauten Moral Oder Sittenlehre, in Allgemein Verständlicher Darstellung*, 475–791.

leanings, particularly Beşir Fuad, Abdullah Cevdet, and Baha Tevfik, reflected deeply on the roles of science, morality, and religion. Their aim was to construct a new form of morality grounded in scientific reasoning. From this perspective, although Büchner did not explicitly address the matter in his book, Ottoman vulgar materialist intellectuals sought to base this new scientific morality on the principles of psychology and physiology. Thus, they intended to strengthen the prominence of science and individuality in human behaviour, prioritising them over religious or cultural norms. The Ottoman secular intellectuals also aimed to lessen the influence of religion on people's lives and behaviours. Specifically, Baha Tevfik strongly focused on this topic and highlighted the significance of physiology and psychology in his writings rather than relying on religious sources. Intellectuals and bureaucrats throughout the Early Republican period endeavoured to establish a novel form of morality, primarily based on scientific reasoning. This emerging scientific morality should supplant the prevailing theistic morality that held sway in society during this period.³³⁴

In another letter, Beşir Fuad also emphasised that philosophers should have deep scientific knowledge. In addition, Beşir Fuad said that philosophers should exclude metaphysics from the subject of philosophy and not study it.³³⁵ In this respect, Beşir Fuad excluded philosophical metaphysics and religious topics from the area of philosophy and considered metaphysics and religion as non-scientific concepts. Beşir Fuad shared a similar perspective with German vulgar materialists, acknowledging that science serves as the catalyst for philosophy. This idea also combines philosophy and vulgar materialist thought, giving us a new perspective on science. This perspective is also associated with providing a scientific basis for every aspect of life. The other important figure for this perspective in Turkish intellectual history is Baha Tevfik. That shows the positivistic approach of vulgar materialist Ottoman intellectuals in not only philosophical ways but also every aspect of life.

³³⁴ Poyraz, 'Science versus Religion: The Influence of European Materialism on Turkish Thought, 1860-1960', 69.

³³⁵ Beşir Fuad and Fazlı Necib, *Mektubat*, 30–31.

Beşir Fuad stated that: “... tahayyül etmemeli, bakmalı, tetkik etmeli.”³³⁶ (...should not imagine, should look, should examine) Although he used these words to explain his naturalist view and Emile Zola's view, it also reflected the positivist view of Beşir Fuad. He aimed to apply this idea in all areas of life. His scientific thought is based on this idea. Empiricist philosophers and vulgar materialist intellectuals influenced Beşir Fuad in this thought.

Again, in his work, *Beşer*, Beşir Fuad quoted Herbert Spencer's *Education*. Spencer, in this work, classified human activities according to their importance. The first is directly ministering to self-preservation; the second is securing the necessities of life, indirectly ministering to self-preservation; and the third is having for their end the rearing and discipline of offspring, involved in the maintenance of proper social and political relations and the fifth and the last one are making up the leisure part of life, devoted to the gratification of the tastes and feelings.³³⁷ This may be considered one of the earliest versions of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. According to Beşir Fuad, the natural sciences occupy the second tier, while literature and art are positioned at the fifth. Religion is not explicitly mentioned in this classification; however, due to its social function, it can be placed in the fourth tier. Even so, religion holds a significantly lower status than science, in accordance with the classifications of both Herbert Spencer and Beşir Fuad. In the preface to his monograph on Victor Hugo, Beşir Fuad highlighted the concept of ignorance and explores its underlying causes. He argued that people choose ignorance over science, knowledge, and progress for specific reasons. The desire to preserve the status quo is on the top. He asserted that older generations are more inclined to protect the existing system, and thus ignorance is more prevalent among them.³³⁸ For Beşir Fuad, this tendency is rooted in a conservative attachment to outdated structures. However, unlike some of the intellectuals and philosophers who influenced him, he does not explicitly identify these structures as religious or political traditions. In this context, while discussing Victor Hugo's resistance to the old order, he also alludes, albeit indirectly, to the

³³⁶ Beşir Fuad, *Victor Hugo*, 182.

³³⁷ Herbert Spencer, *Education: Intellectual, Moral, and Physical* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1866), 32; Beşir Fuad, *Beşer*, 3–4.

³³⁸ Beşir Fuad, *Victor Hugo*, 6–10.

efforts of young Ottoman intellectuals to challenge the traditional religious and intellectual systems and to establish a new one. Although he does not state this outright, it is evident through his references and the broader context of his writings. Moreover, Beşir Fuad opposed the old system not only in religious terms, but also intellectually and literarily. He advocated for a transition in literature, from Romanticism to Realism and Naturalism, from emotion to reason, and from subjective interpretations of nature and knowledge to empirical, scientific approaches.

In this work, Beşir Fuad mentioned philosophy and separated it into three phases: spiritualism, pantheism and materialism. He added positivism as a new philosophy and explains positivism and its relationship with 'truth'.³³⁹ The reason for mentioning positivism in more detail than other philosophies are his tendency toward positivism. Beşir Fuad considered the evolution of philosophy from spiritualism to materialism and, in some perspectives, from a religious base to a material and positivistic base like the 'Law of three stages' of August Comte.

Orhan Okay emphasises that Beşir Fuad's arguments about his suicide are a false excuse, and he thinks that Beşir Fuad committed suicide because of the fear of the 'delirium of persecution', as his mother suffered. To support this argument, he references Ahmed Midhat and says that Beşir Fuad did not suffer from poverty; he could sustain his family. Orhan Okay, from his perspective, correlates the suicide of Beşir Fuad to his scientific perspective and dedication to science.³⁴⁰ In addition, some intellectuals and academicians claim that Beşir Fuad committed suicide to claim the absence of the spirit. However, Beşir Fuad refuted this claim in his letter, stating, "Some poets will attribute this case to the influence of their spiritual powers, while others will want to believe that I am so weary and helpless in proving my point that I am on the verge of giving up on life."³⁴¹ The reasons for that argument are

³³⁹ Beşir Fuad, 166–67.

³⁴⁰ Okay, *Beşir Fuad: ilk Türk pozitivist ve natüralisti*, 76.

³⁴¹ Ahmed Midhat, *Beşir Fuad*, 61–62. "Şu vakayı şairlerden bazıları kuvve-i ruhaniyyelerinin tesirine ve bazıları dahi isbat-ı müddeadan aciz kalıp terk-i hayat edecek derecede bizar olduğuma hamletmek isteyecekler."

underrating materialism and taking the easy way about finding the actual reasons for the event.

Şükrü Hanioğlu also claims that “[Beşir Fuad] took notes describing his deteriorating condition until he lost consciousness to prove that life was no more than a scientific phenomenon.”³⁴² He also draws a similar approach to the death of Beşir Fuad. Still, Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar’s rank may have influenced the correlation between Beşir Fuad’s death and his scientific views. However, in his last letter to Ahmed Midhat, it can be found in the details about the condition that led Beşir Fuad to suicide; rather than materialistic thought, his problems led to Beşir Fuad’s suicide. The important point is his dedication to science and aim of serving science until the last moment. Other, mostly wrong, arguments contributed falsely to discussions of ‘science’ and ‘religion’ and fed this pseudo dichotomy.

Beşir Fuad’s suicide letter begins with the phrase ‘Mezardan Bir Sada’ (A Voice from the Grave). A significant point in this letter is that Beşir Fuad refers to Ahmed Midhat as a hakim (philosopher),³⁴³ which reflects the mutual respect these intellectuals held for one another. From both the book and the letter addressed to Ahmed Midhat despite their differing approaches to philosophy, science, scientific understanding, and religion, they maintained a respectful intellectual relationship. Ahmed Midhat’s explanation of his attempts to protect Beşir Fuad from materialist thought reveals a self-righteous attitude towards materialism, scientism, and Beşir Fuad’s views. This self-assured stance was not unique to Ahmed Midhat but was also evident among other late Ottoman intellectuals writing on similar topics, including Beşir Fuad himself. In this so-called debate, both sides tended to underestimate or dismiss the other’s viewpoint. For instance, as previously mentioned, when Ahmed Midhat discussed Beşir Fuad’s suicide, he highlighted his own efforts to dissuade Beşir Fuad from adopting materialist and scientific ideas. This approach hinders the possibility of a serious, academic-level discussion on the relationship between science and religion. Instead, it often turns the exchange into a discursive debate that

³⁴² Hanioğlu, ‘Blueprints for a Future Society: Late Ottoman Materialists on Science, Religion and Art’, 37.

³⁴³ Ahmed Midhat, *Beşir Fuad*, 61.

lacks rigour in certain areas. As a result, it becomes difficult to define this discussion in clear terms, whether in relation to its historical existence, intellectual perspective, or argumentative structure, within the context of late Ottoman intellectual history. For this reason, in various parts of this thesis, I have found it necessary to clarify the content and standpoint of the intellectuals involved, to prevent confusion arising from the ambiguity surrounding the nature and framing of this debate.

In his suicide letter, he stated that his rivals in the field of literature would assert that he took his own life due to his inability to surpass them in intellectual contests. He asserted that this anticipated assertion is erroneous. In the letter, he asserted that composing a scientific piece is more challenging than crafting a poem. He asserted that the human senses are prone to leading people astray, therefore rendering them an unreliable means of seeing reality. Beşir Fuad's letter also acknowledges the potential for certain aspects of science to undergo modification. In this branch of study, people can formulate rational hypotheses. People choose this approach instead of relying on their sensory perception. He emphasised his opposition to fictional storytelling in writing and his support for representing reality. In that letter, he also detailed the method by which he intended to carry out his suicide. In addition, he strongly condemned poets who fail to take any practical action towards promoting heroism. Another crucial aspect of this letter pertains to Beşir Fuad's unwavering patriotism and his poetic expressions of dedication to serve the public through his writings. In his letter to Ahmed Midhat, Beşir Fuad further elucidated the motive behind his suicide. Based on his correspondence, he anticipated experiencing paranoia like his mother. To escape from this predicament, he embraced a lifestyle of debauchery and maintained a mistress. Consequently, this resulted in financial hardships and complications for both his spouse and paramour. To resolve this dilemma, Beşir Fuad committed suicide. Using suicide as evidence to disprove the existence of a soul or to contribute one's life to scientific research is incorrect. In his correspondence with Ahmed Midhat, he explicitly said that he took his own life due to personal circumstances. However, even in the act of taking his own life, he had a desire to contribute to scientific knowledge and carried out his suicide in a manner akin to an experiment. In addition, he stated that he donated his body to the Royal

Medical School for use as a cadaver. This was not accomplished due to the prohibition of utilising Muslim remains as cadavers.³⁴⁴

According to some claims, Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar claimed that Beşir Fuad's suicide letter is as important as the Tanzimat Edict. This argument is false from my perspective. In addition, it shows that discussions on science and religion are too primitive in Turkish intellectual history. Some academicians approach this event as if there is nothing else in that topic and put forward only one specific and even personal event as a breakthrough. However, the suicide letter of Beşir Fuad to Ahmed Midhat brought a new era, this time for Ottoman intellectual thought. With that letter sound of materialism was more transparent. This letter did not wholly change Ottoman and Turkish intellectual thought, but how Beşir Fuad opened supported this change in mentality and intellectuality. In addition, scientism became one of the dominant intellectual thoughts, especially after the Second Constitutional Era, and even became a state policy in the Early Republican Period. Apart from its importance in Turkish intellectual history, giving such an important position to this event shows how academicians approach history, especially intellectual history. Although necessary, this letter did not dramatically change Ottoman and Turkish history like the Tanzimat Edict.

Ahmed Midhat mentioned that in his work *Beşir Fuad*, he tried to convince Beşir Fuad to give up materialism.³⁴⁵ It is understood that Ahmed Midhat considered materialism as a threat. Even Ahmed Midhat considers materialism and materialistic thought as the reason for suicide. I think Ahmed Midhat wanted to 'confess his sins' from his materialist period. The interpretation of science from a materialistic perspective and materialism as a lifestyle harm emotion and cause bad things for people from the perspective of anti-materialist intellectuals. From his letter, Beşir Fuad lived for science; he devoted his death to science. Even after his death, he wanted to serve science by granting his body as a cadaver. He was the 'mystic of science' from this perspective, as Tanpınar says.

³⁴⁴ Ahmed Midhat, 60–85.

³⁴⁵ Ahmed Midhat, 15.

Due to his unwavering dedication to science and scientism, I consider him to be the most important supporter of scientism in the intellectual sphere of the Ottoman Empire. I use the term ‘scientism’ instead of ‘science’ since Beşir Fuad did not possess the qualifications or expertise of a scientist. He was an ardent materialistic positivist who held a firm belief in the dominance and authority of science above all else. He regarded science as a comprehensive framework that elucidates all the enigmas of the universe, akin to a religious doctrine. After his suicide, so many people, especially young ones, committed suicide in İstanbul. In addition, the suicide of Beşir Fuad has provided a fresh perspective on suicide due to its conflict with Islamic beliefs, which strictly prohibit suicide. This thesis will explore the details of his suicide in subsequent chapters, as it is closely linked to discussions on materialism and religion, which are the focus of this research. His friend Ahmed Midhat was profoundly impacted by this death, and it had a significant role in altering Ahmed Midhat's intellectual perspective. Prior to Beşir Fuad's demise, Ahmed Midhat held nearly identical perspectives as Beşir Fuad. For instance, in Ahmed Midhat's monograph on Voltaire, he expressed similar ideas to Beşir Fuad in certain sections. Additionally, in Schopenhauer's book, which was released two months later, the suicide of Beşir Fuad was discussed. Ahmed Midhat censured Beşir Fuad indirectly, refraining from explicitly mentioning his name. He claimed that these people prefer destruction and demise rather than growth and progress.³⁴⁶

Tanzimat intellectuals were heavily influenced by the suicide of Beşir Fuad. Jale Parla claims that until the suicide of Beşir Fuad in 1887, Tanzimat authors were judgemental in the father's role and coherent in the son's role. Although Jale Parla claims this argument for literature, it is also valid for other intellectual fields. Beşir Fuad changed this role and became a non-coherent son. Jale Parla also says that Beşir Fuad is like Icarus. Like Icarus' effort to reach the sun, he wanted to reach the truth.³⁴⁷ Beşir Fuad certainly initiated significant discussions during the Tanzimat Era. As Jale Parla says, he disrupted traditional roles in Tanzimat, abolishing the

³⁴⁶ Ahmed Midhat, *Schopenhauer'in Hikmet-i Cedidesi* (İstanbul: Tercüman-ı Hakikat Matbaası, 1887), 155.

³⁴⁷ Jale Parla, *Babalar ve Oğullar: Tanzimat Romanının Epistemolojik Temelleri* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1990), 108–9.

coherent role of young intellectuals. As a result, young intellectuals of this era began to publish their critiques and works. This also means that while talking about 'science and religion' topics, young intellectuals use a more liberal style and philosophical and scientific language, and coherence would not be the priority for this young generation. In addition, Beşir Fuad removed the knowledge boundaries between the West and the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, we can accept Beşir Fuad as one of the intellectual pioneers of Westernisation.

Ahmed Midhat criticised not only Beşir Fuad but also other materialists and scientificists there. He also tried to confess his sins from his days during *Dağarcık* day while he was a religious scientist. Beşir Fuad is another breaking point for Ottoman intellectual history with Münif Paşa and Ahmed Midhat. While Münif Paşa is the starting point of Western scientific thought, scientism, and philosophical thought, also Ahmed Midhat was the pioneer of harmonising Islam, scientism and philosophy in his first years and later harmonising science with Islam and became an anti-scientistic; Beşir Fuad is a pioneer of absolute scientism and accepts the power of science on religion and even every concept in the World. He used a few religious arguments to support his scientific, intellectual and philosophical thought. He only mentioned that Islam supports science rather than Christianity oppresses science and philosophy. This separates Beşir Fuad from other intellectuals of that era. As mentioned in the previous chapters, Münif Paşa and Ahmed Midhat use religious information to support their scientific arguments. With Beşir Fuad, the approach had changed, and the intellectuals I used for my thesis, even though they mentioned the importance of God and religion, did not associate science and religion. They gave up explaining scientific knowledge with arguments based on religious knowledge.

5.4. Reflection of Positivism in Literature

Beşir Fuad is an important figure in also for Turkish literature. He opened a new way in literature in addition to intellectual life. In literature, he introduced realism and Naturalism and the pioneer of these genres, Emile Zola, to readers and literature circles while criticising Romanticism and its pioneer, Victor Hugo, who influenced Turkish writers and literature in this era. He wrote the first critical literary biography

of Victor Hugo and compared Hugo and Romanticism with Emile Zola and Naturalism.

This work resounded in the intellectual area of that era so much. Beşir Fuad and Menemenlizade Mehmet Tahir's intellectual discussions widened and even transformed into harsh discussions. So many intellectuals and the public entered this discussion. This also shows that intellectuality and interest in intellectual topics became popular in that era. While mentioning Zola, Beşir Fuad explains Zola's theory. According to Zola, there is nothing for us, only life, because humans cannot feel and sense anything except the five senses.³⁴⁸ With this argument, both Zola and Beşir Fuad reflected not only their literary views but also their intellectual views. While praising the realistic/naturalistic view, this argument also praises the positivistic intellectual view and rejects every other notion that cannot be sensed with the five senses, including metaphysical and religious concepts. Beşir Fuad, while mentioning Zola and the dependence of literature on science, emphasised that Zola was influenced by *Introduction à l'étude de médecine expérimentale* (An Introduction to the Study of Experimental Medicine) by Claude Bernard and applied the principles of Bernard to his literary works.³⁴⁹

His aim to change the mentality of Ottoman intellectuals also influenced the discussion of Romanticism and Realism in the Ottoman Empire.³⁵⁰ Physiology is one of the important topics for Beşir Fuad. In addition, in *Beşer*, Beşir Fuad is against the human figure of Tanzimat, which is against the imaginary human figures of Turkish classical poetry. He also regarded Tanzimat's human figure as imaginary and wanted to create a real human figure in literature.³⁵¹ This human figure is, in naturalistic meaning, and Beşir Fuad explains the human body in his work *Beşer* on a scientific and materialistic base.

³⁴⁸ Beşir Fuad, *Victor Hugo*, 181.

³⁴⁹ Beşir Fuad, 183.

³⁵⁰ Parla, *Babalar ve Oğullar: Tanzimat Romanının Epistemolojik Temelleri*, 117.

³⁵¹ Işın, 'Osmanlı Materyalizmi', 365.

Beşir Fuad also criticised Ottoman educational members for not teaching these scientific disciplines at schools. According to Beşir Fuad, the human body is like a mathematical equation; to understand and analyse this equation, people need to know the physiology. It is a must to know about physiology. From the critique of Beşir Fuad, it is also understood that science education in the Ottoman Empire is insufficient compared to science education in Europe. Specific to physiology, it may be associated with some reason. There are two reasons for this thought. The first reason is religion and religious thoughts. Because in Abrahamic religions, especially Islam, some organs have different feelings. For instance, in Islamic thought, the heart is the centre of feelings, and the nafs are also crucial for the Islamic concept. The second reason is about literature. Because literature has similar ideas to religion, literature attributes some sensations to organs like religion. In this book, Beşir Fuad did not directly criticise Islam and made his criticism of literature, especially Romanticist literature, which is heavily based on the feelings of human beings. In his critique of attribution of the centre of feelings to literature, he says: “Is it worth that feeling our minds with rhyming couplets and going astray with poetries which are about the feelings of the heart and why we do not know what the actual mission of this organ is.”³⁵²

Beşir Fuad was also against giving sentimentalist thoughts or missions to heart.³⁵³ From this perspective, he is against Romantic poetry and literature. Beşir Fuad, from the scientific perspective, claimed that the centre of physical feelings is the brain and uses physiology in his works to show that his arguments are scientific.³⁵⁴ He stood against the attribution of feelings to the organs and also consider the romantic literature, which may affect the feelings of humans and reduce the power and impact of reason in human behaviours. There is an intimation about the criticism of

³⁵² Beşir Fuad, *Beşer*, 7.

³⁵³ Okay, *Beşir Fuad: ilk Türk pozitivist ve natüralisti*, 102–3.

³⁵⁴ Like Beşir Fuad and other Ottoman intellectuals in this thesis, some of the other Ottoman intellectuals, especially the Young Turks correlated brain with emotions or thinking rather than spirit or heart. For instance Şerafeddin Mağmumi, one of the friends of Abdullah Cevdet from Tıbbiye and important figures of the early days of İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti emphasises that thought in some of his Works. For detailed information about his thoughts about that subject look at: Şerafeddin Mağmumi, *Vücut-ı Beşer* (İstanbul: Kitabcı Arakel, 1893).

religions. Because religions like literature attribute feelings to organs, the heart is the centre of feelings and emotions in religions. He wanted to make all concepts, including literature and science, and abolish the old and ‘ancien’ perspectives on feelings.

He wanted to show readers the power of the ‘real’ world rather than emotions and a melancholic way of romanticism.³⁵⁵ Mehmet Kaplan says that Beşir Fuad closed an era and opened a new era in Turkish literature.³⁵⁶ Although he criticised Romanticism, he was not the enemy of Romanticism; he considered Romanticism as a period between Classicism and Realism/Naturalism.³⁵⁷ From that perspective, there is an evolution between literary concepts rather than contrast. He thought that evolution is also valid for literature, like all spheres of the universe. Literature evolved from Classicism based on emotions to Realism/Naturalism based on scientific bases and reality. Beşir Fuad had an evolutionary perspective for not only living creatures but also every concept in the universe. He had a positivistic understanding of evolution in society, which evolved in three steps: the theological era, the metaphysical era, and the positive era. Shortly, in Beşir Fuad’s understanding, society should evolve into a scientific base from religious understanding. From this perspective, he used the evolutionary thought of positivism in all eras of life and explained these with his ‘scientific’ arguments.

Jale Parla says that, with Beşir Fuad, Ottoman intellectuals began to have a cultural depression. Before Beşir Fuad, Ottoman intellectuals did not experience cultural depression, particularly when defending and supporting Islam and the East against Western arguments from intellectuals like Ernest Renan. The mentality of the intellectuals explains Jale Parla's argument. For instance, intellectuals before Beşir Fuad, like Namık Kemal, had sympathy for science or Western intellectuality. Their primary goal was not to fully embrace Western ideas but rather to safeguard the

³⁵⁵ Mehmet Kaplan, ‘Birinci Baskı İçin Birkaç Söz’, in *Beşir Fuad İlk Türk Pozitivisti ve Naturalisti*, by Orhan Okay (İstanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 2019), 5–6.

³⁵⁶ Hilav, ‘Beşir Fuad’ın “Mektûbât”ını Okurken’, 13.

³⁵⁷ Okay, *Beşir Fuad: ilk Türk pozitivist ve natüralisti*, 132–34.

Ottoman Empire. These intellectuals were more interested in the political sphere than philosophical and scientific thought, except Ali Suavi, who was also interested in philosophy and a little science; he mentioned these topics in his journal *Ulum*. Although Beşir Fuad wrote some political writings, he never became a political figure like Abdullah Cevdet and even like Baha Tevfik. This may be because of the strict censorship policy of the Hamidian Regime of that era. Beginning with Beşir Fuad, adopting Western science and intellectuality became the first topic for intellectuals. This also caused depression for the intellectuals of that era because of rapid and strict change. Rather than completely protecting and supporting Eastern culture, Ottoman intellectuals began to use the values of the West; when they supported Ottoman or Islamic values, they also used Western science, philosophy, and culture. Jale Parla adds that until Beşir Fuad, Ottoman intellectuals did not ask any ontological and metaphysical questions. They supported their ideas with ayats and hadiths. They wanted to protect their texts. Beşir Fuad and subsequent generations abolished this role. Beşir Fuad and young intellectuals brought Western thought and mentality.³⁵⁸

Beşir Fuad, shortly before his death, was in harsh and intense intellectual discussions about literature, romanticism and realism/naturalism discussions. The discussions on literature grew even after his death. Followers of scientism argue that science and literature should be correlated. This situation contributed to the rise of realism and naturalism in novels, Parnassianism in poetry and the decline of Romanticism in Turkish literature. He also wanted to implicate realism and naturalism in Turkish literature, so he wanted to make literature on a scientific base. His critical biography of Victor Hugo is the first in Turkish; he criticised Romanticism and praised Naturalism in his book *Victor Hugo*. The effects of Herbert Spencer and August Comte can be seen in Beşir Fuad's writings.

Beşir Fuad pioneered the discussion of ‘hayalliyun – hakiyyun’ (romanticism – realism) and old–new discussion in literature. While Münif Paşa and Ahmed Midhat made the distinction between ilm and science and declared science as the winner, Beşir Fuad strengthened the position of science and made it unquestionable by

³⁵⁸ Parla, *Babalar ve Oğullar: Tanzimat Romanının Epistemolojik Temelleri*, 48.

applying it to all spheres of life. Maybe he mentioned hayalliyun as the reflection of feelings and religion and hakiyyun as the reflection of reason, science and truth.³⁵⁹

His relationship with realism and naturalism reflects his materialistic positivist thought. From this point, his thoughts on literature are that literature also should be founded on a scientific base. For this reason, he praised Naturalism and Realism while criticising Romanticism. Another important connection between His naturalism and ethics is that rather than romanticism, in naturalism, humans' actions are based on physiology and psychology, and that makes it more realistic. This understanding also shows that science has a stronger role than social constructions and religions. With his literary understanding, He also aimed to free and give a scientific base to human actions, freeing them from religious and social control. This reflects the scientific view of Beşir Fuad, which places science on top of everything and gives it the power to explain everything in the universe.

Beşir Fuad affected the development of Turkish literature with his thoughts on realism, naturalism, and romanticism. Although it cannot be directly connecting his views on science and religion topic, he wanted to apply science in all spheres of life. For this reason, his views on literature are important for understanding his views on science and his scientism. In addition, he was not against poetry; his main argument was that poetry should have a scientific base and be far away from unrealistic thoughts, just as literature should have a scientific base.³⁶⁰ In addition, one of his letters to Muallim Naci Beşir Fuad said that Ottoman society needs consciousness rather than poetry.³⁶¹ Beşir Fuad emphasised the importance of consciousness about the World there. Science can achieve consciousness rather than unrealistic poetry and religious thoughts. This also shows that Beşir Fuad gave importance to development and considers science and consciousness to this development.

³⁵⁹ I use this argument because hayal means dream and imagination, hakikat means truth in Turkish and Beşir Fuad maybe correlate hayal with feelings and religion, while he correlates hakikat with reason and science. He criticised religion and praises science and truth in his Works and show the truth and science as the guide for the Ottoman society instead of feelings and religion.

³⁶⁰ Erdoğan Erbay, *Eskiler ve Yeniler: Tanzimat ve Servet-i Fünun Neslinin Divan Edebiyatına Bakışı* (Erzurum: Akademik Araştırmalar, 1997), 326.

³⁶¹ Beşir Fuad and Muallim Naci, *İntikâd*, 27.

Beşir Fuad remeanded metaphysics and maybe poetry with the word romantic/poetical. Understanding metaphysics is the religion rather than the religious concept, according to him. Like other things in the universe, He tried to base philosophy on scientific values and separated them from other concepts like religion, literature, and so on, which are not part of science and scientism. He was against metaphysics and metaphysical concepts. He emphasised philosophers should know all of the science of their era except metaphysics; he emphasised that he does not accept metaphysics as part of science and produces serious works about their knowledge to show it. For this reason, according to his thought, there were many philosophers in the 19th century, and he gave August Comte and Émile Littré as examples of his thought. In that letter, he claimed that Hugo is not a philosopher according to his thoughts.³⁶²

Although Ottoman vulgar materialists placed science and religion in an unquestionable position like religion, they never gave these concepts a metaphysical base. Beşir Fuad's ideas were not entirely suitable for Büchner's ideas against positivism's transformation into religion. However, as it is known, Beşir Fuad combined positivism, vulgar materialism and evolutionism and created a unique vulgar materialism for the Ottoman Empire.³⁶³

5.5. Conclusion of the Chapter

There is no such an influential Ottoman intellectual on such short notice as Beşir Fuad. Beşir Fuad published journals, articles, and books in various fields, such as physiology, psychology, literature, and biographies, in only three years. He served as a mentor for younger generations and significantly contributed to the scientificization of Ottoman intellectual thought. It may be an exaggeration, but I claim that post-Tanzimat Ottoman intellectual thought can be divided into two periods: before Beşir Fuad and after Beşir Fuad. He brought a new perspective and changed the mindset of the Ottoman intellectuals, especially Westernist and scientistic Ottoman intellectuals.

³⁶² Beşir Fuad and Fazlı Necib, *Mektubat*, 31.

³⁶³ Hanioğlu, 'Blueprints for a Future Society: Late Ottoman Materialists on Science, Religion and Art', 34–35.

Beşir Fuad was also an essential figure in standing against religious and political bigotry in the Ottoman Empire. Rather than as a political and religious approach, Beşir Fuad was against bigotry as a political approach with the influence of French philosophers. He used his anti-bigotry approach while mentioning his scientific and positivistic approach. There was bigotry against positivistic and other ‘unfavorable’ intellectual ideas in the Ottoman Empire. Beşir Fuad’s efforts are essential for the challenge of the liberation of Western intellectual ideas in the Ottoman Empire.

Beşir Fuad was also the first Ottoman intellectual influenced only by Western sources, which showed the intellectual way the young westernist and scientific Ottoman intellectuals would follow in later generations. Many intellectuals were influenced by Western sources; Beşir Fuad accepted the West as the only source; he even read the Quran and Islamic sources from the French translation. That shows that the younger generations, especially westernist and scientific Ottoman intellectuals, regarded the West as the important and the only way to reach ‘the truth’ and the key to the modernisation of Ottoman society and the Ottoman Empire. Like in material modernisation, the West became a target and tool for non-material modernisation in Ottoman intellectual history.

His works and thoughts show that Beşir Fuad was the first conscious Ottoman vulgar materialist and positivist. Before him, some intellectuals had ideas about positivism and vulgar materialism; Beşir Fuad used these intellectual thoughts, knowing their meaning and contents. Münif Paşa, Ahmed Midhat, and some other Ottoman intellectuals used positivistic and (vulgar) materialistic arguments and ideas in their works; Beşir Fuad explained these concepts and introduced them to Ottoman society. That makes Beşir Fuad the teacher of positivism and vulgar materialism in the Ottoman Empire. For this reason, Beşir Fuad may be accepted as a breaking point for Ottoman intellectual history.

Beşir Fuad also brought scientific and positivistic thinking into Ottoman intellectual life. Although there was scientific thinking before Beşir Fuad, he mixed science and intellectual thought. Even he aimed to make everything scientific and positivistic. He even thought that literature should be scientific. His approach can be seen as standard

in the heyday of scientific and positivistic thought in the Ottoman Empire. Because of his approach, I call him 'extreme scientistic'. His scientistic approach opened the way for Ottoman intellectuals and placed Ottoman intellectual life into the physical ground. His combination of abstract and concrete concepts can also be seen as the key to Ottoman modernisation and creating a new modern society in their lifestyle, thinking, and behaviours.

Another essential aspect of Beşir Fuad for Turkish intellectual history is his anti-religionist approach, even praising Islam. His main target was Christianity. It is related to his political approach to the West and his patriotic feelings. That makes his view on religion political rather than religious and intellectual. That does not mean that he had no intellectual arguments on the topic of religion. He placed his arguments on intellectual and philosophical bases. That shows that Ottoman intellectuals used intellectual arguments while defending the Ottoman Empire. It is understood that Ottoman modernisation was not one-sided; it had multiple ways. It may be said that Beşir Fuad became a pioneer in anti-religionist positivistic thinking during the Late Ottoman and the Early Republican Period, although this effect was not directly.

In addition to his positive contributions to Ottoman intellectual history, he had some negative contributions, too. Because of some of his actions, Beşir Fuad was criticised harshly, especially by Islamic and conservative intellectuals in the Ottoman Empire and Turkey. He is criticised even today by these spheres. The first one is his anti-religionist approach. Even though he praises Islam against other religions, especially Christianity, he is correlated with atheism and anti-religionism in the Ottoman Empire and Turkey. That created a false perception that all positivists and materialists are atheists and anti-religionists. This perception is not unique to the Ottoman Empire and Turkey, but this perception took place with Beşir Fuad in there. The suicide of Beşir Fuad strengthened the negative attitude towards positivist and materialist intellectuals. Anti-positivist and materialist intellectuals blamed positivist and materialist intellectuals as Boheme and people who were living out their lives. Although they endeavoured for the Ottoman Empire, these intellectuals were also seen as traitors, mostly by their opponents.

Overall, Beşir Fuad is a breaking point for Ottoman intellectual history. Although there were some efforts before him, he systematised scientific thinking in Ottoman intellectual history. He created a new perspective and mindset for Ottoman intellectuals. He started a new era for Ottoman intellectual history during his short writing period, only three years. He became a mentor of scientific thinking even a prophet of scientism in the Ottoman Empire. He opened the way for intellectuals such as Abdullah Cevdet and Baha Tevfik and some other intellectuls. He also became a target for anti-positivists and anti-materialists during both in his era and even today. His efforts for scientific thought, the positivisation of all spheres of life and his patriotic approach to religion make Beşir Fuad an important figure both for Ottoman intellectual history and this thesis.



CHAPTER 6

ABDULLAH CEVDET: RELIGIOUS INFIDEL

6.1. The Importance of Abdullah Cevdet for this Thesis

There is almost no such intellectual as Abdullah Cevdet, who influenced the Late Ottoman and Early Republican intellectual history. His writings spread into wide spheres, such as literature, philosophy, history, science, daily concerns, and politics. Abdullah Cevdet was also one of the founders of İttihad-i Osmani Cemiyeti (Committee of the Ottoman Union), the precursor of İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti (Committee of Union and Progress). Abdullah Cevdet is also an important political and crucial opposing figure who contributed to both the intellectual and political life of the late Ottoman Empire and had an important impact on the intellectual life of Early Republican Turkey, especially during the reforms of Westernisation and modernisation. His political life and efforts to influence Ottoman society reflected his aim in his intellectual, scientific, political and social writings. Even though he was an atheist intellectual, he wanted to use some aspects of Islam and Islamic thought as a tool to create a new scientific 'imagined' society. That does not mean that he only used Islam as a tool. His writings showed his understanding of Islam, and his thoughts became a tool. He wanted to harmonise the essence of Islam with scientific and materialist, positivist and evolutionist intellectual thought.

Abdullah Cevdet used both Eastern and Western sources while doing this harmonisation. For instance, he quoted from the works of Herbert Spencer, William Shakespeare, Charles Darwin, and Gustave Le Bon, as well as from the works of Gazali, Ömer Hayyam, and the Quran. Abdullah Cevdet wanted to harmonise not only Islam and modern thought, but also the East and West. This meant that his goal encompassed not only the 'question' of enlightenment and development, but also the

'question' of civilisation. In addition to his aim of creating a new scientifically imagined society, Abdullah Cevdet wanted to create a new scientific 'civilisation' based on the values of both the East and the West. Abdullah Cevdet aimed to separate Islam's religious and social structures and make Ottoman society follow the second one.³⁶⁴

Abdullah Cevdet sought to construct a new scientifically imagined society and to promote an understanding of scientific and materialist Islam, primarily for pragmatic reasons. His aim was to prevent the growing influence of the West, including Orientalists and Christian missionaries, within the Ottoman Empire, and to render the Empire and its society compatible with modern conceptions of science and civilisation. Beyond this pragmatic perspective, Abdullah Cevdet held a deeper philosophical view. According to his understanding, entities such as living beings, ideas, social concepts, and institutions, religion, social values, and society among them, are living organisms. Therefore, these concepts should be subject to a process of evolution. They must adapt and transform over time under the influence of both internal and external factors. In this framework, Abdullah Cevdet's understanding of evolution extended beyond the physical characteristics of biological organisms to include social and intellectual constructs. According to this view, social institutions and religion must evolve to meet the demands of the modern world. This perspective is sometimes associated with his efforts to reform Islam, but at other times it leans toward Social Darwinist thought, particularly in relation to his broader goal of social reform.

His objective can be described through the concepts of 'tenvîr' (illumination) and 'tenevvür' (enlightenment). Abdullah Cevdet aimed to transform the structure of Ottoman society by initiating a fundamental shift in mentality. Central to this project was the replacement of religion, traditionally a core component of social identity, with science and scientific reasoning. Another important contribution of Abdullah Cevdet to scientific, materialist, positivist, and evolutionary thought in the Ottoman Empire lies in the way he reshaped perceptions of these ideas. Prior to him, such

³⁶⁴ Hanioglu, *Bir Siyasal Düşünür Olarak Abdullah Cevdet ve Dönemi*, 131.

concepts were largely regarded as purely intellectual or philosophical and thus remained abstract, both in the eyes of Ottoman society and many intellectuals. Thanks to Abdullah Cevdet, this began to change these once-theoretical ideas started to take on more concrete social and political dimensions. His efforts served as an example for other intellectuals of the period. This approach was not limited to Abdullah Cevdet alone but also influenced the Young Turks and the early Republican ruling elites and intellectuals, who likewise sought to construct a new society through these concepts. One of their aims was to reinterpret Islam as a religion grounded in science and reason, under the influence of such ideas. Tarık Zafer Tunaya argues that Abdullah Cevdet believed in the necessity of maintaining a balance among Ottomanism, Islamism, and Turkism, and that only Ottomanism could preserve Ottoman society.³⁶⁵ For this reason Abdullah Cevdet used sociological arguments in his worksmostly. Abdullah Cevdet used Social Darwinism to hold Ottoman society together and make it stronger against the pressure of the West and separatism.

In addition, Abdullah Cevdet began to articulate these concepts alongside notions related to the natural flow of life, such as religion and cultural values, with the aim of making these newly harmonised ideas more accessible to the broader society. He sought to popularise materialism and utilise it for political and sociological purposes. For example, he attempted to reconcile Islam with materialism in order to construct a new form of Islam that could serve the needs of society. In doing so, he aspired to build a new society grounded in materialist science while retaining an Islamic foundation.

Through this endeavour, Abdullah Cevdet also aimed to position himself as both the leader of an alternative, non-Western modernism and an Islamic müctehid, a reformer who would employ Western science and intellectual traditions without abandoning the spirit of the Ottoman Empire and Islam. His materialist understanding of science, defined as useful knowledge, functioned both as a tool for reshaping society and as a means of defending it against Christian missionaries,

³⁶⁵ Tarık Zafer Tunaya, ‘Amme Hukukumuz Bakımından İkinci Meşrutiyetin Siyasi Tefekküründe “Garbcılık Cereyanı”’, *İstanbul Üniversitesi Hukuk Fakültesi Mecmuası* 14, no. 3–4 (1948): 609.

Orientalists, and the broader cultural influence of the West. His understanding of ‘science’ and ‘religion’ can be seen as a complex and layered portrait. For instance, despite having a deeply religious background, Abdullah Cevdet was also a political figure and a prominent leader of the Ottoman opposition. These experiences shaped his views on both science and religion. He made extensive use of religious arguments and frequently referred to Islamic sources. Like many of his contemporaries, he held a somewhat vulgarised view of science; however, he employed this perspective strategically to achieve political goals. While using scientific or scientistic language, he sought to engage with social issues. He primarily translated contemporary sociological texts, though he also wrote on these subjects himself. In addition, he openly criticised the authoritarian regime of his time and aimed to liberate science and scientific thought from state control, making them more accessible to the public. As such, his scientific discourse was largely framed through a Social Darwinist lens. He similarly employed Islamic arguments to achieve this end.

Although many intellectuals of the period shared similar goals and perspectives, Abdullah Cevdet emerges in this thesis as the most pragmatic and grounded among them. Finally, in the chapter, I will discuss how Abdullah Cevdet used the core principles of Islam in his attempt to transform it into a materialistic and scientific system. This means that he employed Islamic arguments to reinforce his scientific claims, particularly in support of materialist thought. Moreover, he sought to leverage Islam’s social authority to reach the Muslim Ottoman public. In conclusion, Abdullah Cevdet utilised Islamic discourse as a vehicle for disseminating his vulgar materialist and scientific ideas within Ottoman society.

6.2. Brief Biography

Abdullah Cevdet was born in 1869 in Arapgir, Malatya. He took his first education from his father, a military clerk, and his uncle, an imam. His first education was mainly on religious education, as was common for Ottoman citizens at the time. He attended Ma‘mûretü’l-Azîz, Elazığ Military School and then the Military High School in Istanbul in 1885. Later, he attended the Imperial School of Medicine in 1889. The Imperial Military School marked a pivotal moment in Abdullah Cevdet’s

intellectual and political development. He met with materialistic thoughts there, probably after reading Felix Isnard's *Materialisme et Spiritualisme* (Materialism and Spiritualism) with the recommendation of his friend and later comrade İbrahim Temo; after reading that book and with the effects of intellectual discussions and the intellectual and political atmosphere in the Royal Medical School, his intellectual, religious, and political thoughts had sharply changed in the first years of his studentship there. German vulgar materialist intellectuals also influenced Abdullah Cevdet in scientific contexts, such as Ludwig Büchner, Ernest Haeckel, Karl Vogt, French sociologist Gustave Le Bon and modernist Islamists such as Muhammed Abduh, and harmonised these ideas and created his own ideas for his scientific imagined Ottoman society. He was religious until his first years in that school and became a materialist-atheist, but Islam still had a position in his political and intellectual thoughts. Abdullah Cevdet was also a political figure and one of the founders of İttihad-i Osmani Cemiyeti in 1889, the precursor of İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti. He also had an essential role in İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti and continued his publications in Europe along with other Young Turks. As Tunaya emphasises that according to Abdullah Cevdet political parties should have bases in the society.³⁶⁶ Abdullah Cevdet used this approach in his intellectual and political perspective and rely on social needs and sensibilities.

His publications include not only philosophical but also political and social writings. Because of his political opposition and writings, he faced many exiles during the Hamidian Regime and had to move from one country to another in Europe. After Abdullah Cevdet was arrested in 1895, he was exiled to Tripoli, fled to Tunis in 1897 and later fled to France. He published the *Ottoman* journal with his political comrades such as İshak Sukuti and Tunalı Hilmi.³⁶⁷ When he was in Germany, he sent a personal postcard; for this reason, he was deported from Germany and returned to Genova again. He also became the leader of Genova branch of İttihad ve

³⁶⁶ Tunaya, 606.

³⁶⁷ Abdullah Cevdet also other journals of İttihad ve Terakki such as *Meşveret* (Consultancy), *Mizan* (Libra), *Kanun-i Esasi* (Constitution), *Sada-i Millet* (Voice of the People), and *Kürdistan*. Abdullah Cevdet was very active figure in the intellectual side of İttihad ve Terakki especially from 1890s to Second Constiution in 1908. That also shows that Abdullah Cevdet was a very active intellectual for his era and wrote in many newspapers, journals in addition to his own journal *İctihad* and his books, translations and political actions.

Terakki.³⁶⁸ During these days, he and some of the Young Turks agreed with the Hamidian Regime, and Abdullah Cevdet became the doctor of the Embassy of Vienna. He left Vienna and his work in the Embassy of Vienna and returned to Genova in 1903. During these days, he founded İctihad Printing House and began to publish *İctihad*³⁶⁹ journal. He also founded a library named Kütübhone-i İctihad. İctihad³⁷⁰ was harshly criticised among Islamic circles and scholars. Even Şerif Hüseyin criticised *İctihad* in the revolt memorandum. Even he remarked that *İctihad* was one of the reasons for that revolt.³⁷¹

In the first issue of *İctihad*, he published an article named ‘Les Idées Directrices’ (Guiding Ideas), which reflected the aim of *İctihad*. In 1904, after his alienation from İttihad ve Terakki, he founded Osmanlı İttihad ve İnkılap Cemiyeti (Ottoman Committee of Union and Reform), with some anarchist arguments. In 1905, he was sentenced, and his printing house was closed. He moved his printing to Cairo and continued to publish it until 1911.³⁷² Because of the political atmosphere, he was obliged to publish *İctihad* in different countries, first in Geneva, then in Cairo; after his return, he started to publish *İctihad* in İstanbul from 1911 to 1932.

Because his estrangement from his political friends and politics he concentrated on intellectual writings during these days.³⁷³ During his days in Egypt, he met Prens

³⁶⁸ Tunaya, *Türkiye’de Siyasal Partiler Cilt 1 İkinci Meşrutiyet Dönemi*, 52.

³⁶⁹ In addition to publication locations also topics of *İctihad* can be analysed in three stages. Between 1904 and 1911, İctihad mostly includes political writings, between 1911 and 1917, İctihad includes mostly social writings. After World War I, Abdullah Cevdet changed his direction and until his death he published most literary Works in İctihad. That shows that Abdullah Cevdet used different tools to educate the society and changed these tools from time to time because of political reasons.

³⁷⁰ In addition to spreading his thoughts to the Ottoman society and create a new understanding of Islam and a new scientific ‘imagined’ Ottoman society, Abdullah Cevdet had another aim; that is transfer of knowledge from the West to the East and from the East to the West. So, Abdullah Cevdet not only wanted to teach the Western knowledge to the Ottoman society, but also wanted to show his perspective about Islam, the Ottoman Empire and Ottoman society to the West. Maybe, he published *İctihad* also in French for this reason.

³⁷¹ İsmail Kara, ed., *İslam Siyasî Düşüncesinde Değişme ve Süreklilik: Hilafet Risâleleri 4. Cilt* (İstanbul: Klasik, 2002), 420.

³⁷² Ülken, *Türkiye’de çağdaş düşünce tarihi*, 351–53.

³⁷³ Tunaya, *Türkiye’de Siyasal Partiler Cilt 1 İkinci Meşrutiyet Dönemi*, 211.

Sabahattin and his group. That may show us that Abdullah Cevdet was alienated from the group of Ahmed Rıza, the centralist group, and made a close relationship with Prens Sabahaddin, the decentralist group. While *İctihad* was the first journal which criticised Islam during the Second Constitutional Era, Abdullah Cevdet collected donations from the public with the arguments of making Islam heard by Europe. He also applied to King Abdullah of Morocco for help, but his efforts remained unreturned.³⁷⁴

Sometimes, Abdullah Cevdet and some of the other Young Turks agreed with the Hamidian Regime not to write and publish publications against the Hamidian Regime. That became the general attitude of Ottoman oppositional intellectuals of that era. They took money or state missions in return for giving up their opposition writings. Abdullah Cevdet sent some of this money to İttihad ve Terakki in the first years of this agreement. Some intellectuals were exiled as state officials to the far parts of the empire. For instance, Abdullah Cevdet became a state doctor in Fizan during his exile there. Although Abdullah Cevdet, like other Young Turks, used the money he received in return for the agreement to establish a new printing house and publish works, he was ostracized by his friends because he agreed with the palace. During his agreement with the palace about giving up writing against the palace and the Hamidian regime, he continued to send articles to the *Osmanlı* journal anonymously. Because of this attitude, he sometimes faced problems in some countries in Europe where he lived because of the political pressures of the Ottoman Empire. He continued his opposition attitude during these days. Because of his agreement with the palace, He became a non-grata among the ruler class and his political fellows. He did not return to the Ottoman Empire until 1911, even after the Second Constitution. He gave up writing political articles, books, and social and scientific writings, especially after the Second Constitution and withdrew from the political arena.

He concentrated on philosophical and social writings rather than political writings until his death and was forgotten among political and intellectual figures. His meeting with Atatürk in 1925 is important to understand his influence sphere. In this

³⁷⁴ Hanioglu, *Bir Siyasal Düşünür Olarak Abdullah Cevdet ve Dönemi*, 129–30.

meeting, Atatürk mentioned that he and his friends made real what Abdullah Cevdet, and his friends told in the past. Although he was alienated from the intellectual and political arena, his intellectual and political thoughts influenced the intellectuals and ruling elite of the Early Republican Era. He went aside and continued his writings in his journal *İctihad* and died in 1932 in İstanbul.³⁷⁵

As Şerif Mardin states, the ideas and thoughts of Abdullah Cevdet show that how materialist, organicist and Darwinist thought of the West influenced the Late Ottoman intellectuals were.³⁷⁶ In addition to the influence of Western thought, Ottoman intellectuals, even materialist, positivist, and evolutionist intellectuals, harmonised these thoughts with the values of Ottoman society, especially with Islamic thought. Although Ottoman vulgar materialist intellectuals were deeply influenced by German vulgar materialism, the Ottoman one was not a copy of the German one; it had some original ways of harmonising with Islamic arguments and some social ways of the Ottoman society. He was also influenced by Modernist Islamist Muhammed Abduh's views on Islam during his meeting in Genova in 1905.³⁷⁷

Abdullah Cevdet was a scientific/vulgar materialist intellectual who was engaged in discussions of positivism, evolution, vulgar materialism, science, and religion. This helps us regard his development in approximately 30-40 years of writing, including the Hamidian, Second Constitutional, and Early Republican Era. He wrote and translated many books about philosophy, science, poetry, sociology, religion, and history. He also wrote in many journals, including *Musavver Cihan*, *Mîzan*, *Meşveret*, *Mechveret Supplément Français*, *Osmanlı* and his journal *İctihad*, with many name changes. He mainly wrote political and social writings in journals and newspapers. For this reason, I will use only a few of his writings published in journals and newspapers and focus his attention on social and scientific writings. The reason for that may be Abdulhamid II's dethronement and Abdullah Cevdet's

³⁷⁵ For detailed information about Abdullah Cevdet, his life and political life look at: Hanioglu, *Bir Siyasal Düşünür Olarak Abdullah Cevdet ve Dönemi*.

³⁷⁶ Mardin, *Jön Türklerin Siyasî Fikirleri: 1895 - 1908*, 19.

³⁷⁷ Hanioglu, *Osmanlı'dan Cumhuriyet'e Zihniyet, Siyaset ve Tarih*, 60.

alienation from the political area, even by his friends. One of the topics faced by Abdullah Cevdet and his political fellows, Young Turks, Abdullah Cevdet, supported that the title of the Ottoman family should be abolished. Hence, Abdullah Cevdet wanted the abolishment of monarchy and transformation of the Ottoman Empire into a democratic regime, a republic.³⁷⁸

İctihad reflected the ideas of Abdullah Cevdet for a long time, from the pre-Second Constitutional Era to the Early Republican Period. Although he was excluded from intellectual and political environments, his impact continued somehow. With the order of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, he translated *Le Bon Sens (Commonsense)* of Jean Meslier/ Baron d'Holbach to Turkish first in Arabic letters in 1928 and Latin letters in 1929 under the name of *Akl-ı Selim* (Good Sense). The discussion between science and religion continued even during the Early Republican Period. This debate still had been accepted as a topic of modernity and Westernisation even though the ruling elite changed their view about the position of religion.

6.3. A New Interpretation of Islam and Harmonising Efforts with Materialism

Intellectuals like Münif Paşa, Ahmed Midhat and Beşir Fuad had intellectual and scientific aims while using science and intellectuality for their political or worldviews. Abdullah Cevdet also had specific goals and motivations. He aspired to be a prominent figure in both politics and religion, but after the Second Constitution, he withdrew from the political sphere and ceased to write political works. Even with his journal, *İctihad*, he announced his efforts to become a religious and social leader figure for Ottoman society. This leadership, unlike that of a mufti, shaykh al-Islam, or an Islamic scholar, was driven by Abdullah Cevdet's desire to transform Islam through intellectual and scientific means.

³⁷⁸ One of the reasons why Abdullah Cevdet and the Young Turks faced off was because of this topic, although they supported the dethronement of Abdülhamid II, which may be correlated with the pragmatic approach of the Young Turks and common sense in Ottoman society. Because the aim of the Young Turks is the dethronement of Abdülhamid II, and the Ottoman society has no problem with the Ottoman Empire. To get the support of the society, the Young Turks mostly mentioned the despotic rule of Abdülhamid II, and they tried to show him, not the Ottoman monarchy, as the problem of the Ottoman Empire. For this reason, Abdullah Cevdet and the Young Turks faced off, and the alienation of Abdullah Cevdet from the movement of the Young Turks became clearer.

Abdullah Cevdet, like many other intellectuals in the late Ottoman era, sought to popularise their writings to attract public interest. Therefore, similar to the majority of Ottoman intellectuals, he employed simple language to be comprehensible to even the public of Ottoman society. He also followed the early days of Ahmed Midhat and Beşir Fuad and popularised evolutionism, materialism, and positivism to appeal to the public more easily. He also went one step further from Beşir Fuad and developed his materialism into biological materialism.³⁷⁹ In his publications, Abdullah Cevdet employed Social Darwinist ideas to position the Ottoman Empire and Ottoman society as a formidable competitor to the West and Western culture. Upon analysing Beşir Fuad's writings on materialism, positivism, evolutionism, and science, it becomes evident that the author employs these notions for philosophical and intellectual purposes. In contrast, Abdullah Cevdet incorporated religious, social, and political motives into this framework. Beşir Fuad aspired to contribute to Ottoman society and expressed disapproval towards Christianity while praising Islam. Unlike Abdullah Cevdet, his goal was not to assume a role as a political and social leader, nor to establish a new kind of Islam or an Islamic society based on his ideas. Abdullah Cevdet asserted that an elite based on biological superiority should govern society. Indeed, that statement reflects Abdullah Cevdet's intellectual perspective rooted in Social Darwinism.³⁸⁰ I observe a similar pattern among other Ottoman intellectuals. However, Abdullah Cevdet stood out as the only one who aspired to become a prominent social and political figure, utilising science to achieve a new order in society.

Abdullah Cevdet, along with other materialist intellectuals in the Ottoman Empire and most of the Young Turks, sought to employ Darwinism, and later its reinterpretation, known as social Darwinism, as a means of modernising and advancing civilisation. However, as previously stated, materialist intellectuals only attempted to apply these concepts within a philosophical and intellectual framework. Abdullah Cevdet also attempted to apply these ideas in the fields of politics, society, and religion at the same time. Abdullah Cevdet is commonly regarded as the

³⁷⁹ Işın, 'Osmanlı Materyalizmi', 367.

³⁸⁰ Doğan, *Osmanlı Aydınları ve Sosyal Darwinizm*, 175.

foremost advocate of radical Westernism during the decline of the Ottoman Empire, particularly among the Young Turks. However, it is important to note that many claims made about him and his writings are not accurate in the realms of social, political, and intellectual discourse. Contrary to popular belief, Abdullah Cevdet did not advocate for the acceptance of the West and Western culture, regardless of the potential benefits or drawbacks. During his time, most intellectuals, including his political allies and society at large, regarded him as a prominent intellectual and made efforts to marginalise his political, social, and intellectual pursuits.

Abdullah Cevdet distinguished himself from other Ottoman intellectuals by advocating for a comprehensive reform and reinterpretation of Islam and Ottoman society through an intellectual, scientific, and materialistic approach. His goal was to adapt Islam to the demands and circumstances of the contemporary world. In addition to this, he also aimed to safeguard certain fundamental aspects of Islam. Abdullah Cevdet's intention extended beyond embracing Western ideas such as science, philosophy, enlightenment thought, and political thought of Western intellectuals. Rather, he aimed to imbue Islam with rationality, scientific principles, and a materialistic perspective. Due to this motive, he aspired to become a mujtahid and a prominent political figure inside Ottoman society, with the goal of advancing the nation's scientific progress without subjecting it to Western dominance.

Abdullah Cevdet, along with other Ottoman vulgar materialists, established a connection between philosophy and scientific ideas. He asserted that philosophy plays a crucial role in integrating many fields of knowledge, particularly within the context of the Ottoman Empire. In the absence of philosophy and its ability to establish connections across various scientific disciplines, the convergence of sciences would be impossible, rendering them virtually devoid of any practical utility. Philosophy plays a crucial role in unifying scientific disciplines. Abdullah Cevdet and other Ottoman scholars may have prioritised philosophy because of this rationale. They intended to integrate science and scientific reasoning into the realm of philosophy. He sought to establish a form of Islam that incorporates philosophical principles, believing that philosophical thinking harmonises science, intellectual inquiry, and Islam's teachings. He established a connection between the functioning

of factories and the interplay between science and philosophy. Philosophy aims to integrate different scientific disciplines, much like assembling pieces to create a functional machine. From some perspectives, Abdullah Cevdet emphasised the importance of philosophers possessing knowledge in the field of science. Abdullah Cevdet's ideas bear resemblance to Baha Tevfik's remarks regarding the pivotal role of philosophy in advancing scientific knowledge.³⁸¹ This demonstrates that Ottoman intellectuals, particularly those who subscribed to vulgar materialism, assigned significant importance to philosophy and established a strong connection between it and science. Additionally, they proposed that Ottoman civilisation acquire knowledge in philosophy, with the intention of using philosophy to pursue their goals by envisioning a novel scientific 'imagined society' in their minds.

His aim bore resemblance to the endeavours of German vulgar materialists in their pursuit of creating a new society. In 1897, he popularised science through his writing series titled 'Herkes için Kimya' (Chemistry for Everybody), published in the magazine *Musavver Cihan* (Illustrated World). Subsequently, Baha Tevfik, along with his acquaintances Ahmed Nebil and Subhi Edhem, adopted a similar approach, propagating the ideology of vulgar materialism and promoting a scientific understanding of this perspective through their written works. Although Abdullah Cevdet was probably an atheist and adhered to vulgar materialism, evolutionism, and positivism, he frequently integrated these concepts with Islamic ideology in his writings. This approach enabled him to develop a scientific interpretation of Islam that addressed the needs of the contemporary era. His main aim was not to find a middle ground between science and religion, but rather to reorient Islam along scientific lines. This highlights his pragmatic approach and his effort to draw the attention of the Muslim population of the Ottoman Empire to his views, with the broader goal of transforming Ottoman society into a modern, scientific one.

Abdullah Cevdet distinguished himself as an intellectual of his time, deviating from the norms of both vulgar materialists and classical Ottoman thinkers. Abdullah Cevdet aimed to employ Islam as a framework for his scientific and intellectual thoughts. As previously said, Abdullah Cevdet utilised Islam to establish his

³⁸¹ Abdullah Cevdet, *Fünun ve Felsefe ve Felsefe Sânihaları* (İstanbul: Matba-i İctihad, 1912), 24–28.

envisioned 'scientific society'. Consequently, he viewed Islam through a scientific and materialistic lens. Abdullah Cevdet, like Friedrich Ueberweg and David Friedrich Strauss, poses the questions, "Are we not Muslim?" and "Do we not possess a religious belief?" He responded negatively to the first question and affirmatively to the second one. Based on this perspective, it may be inferred that Abdullah Cevdet aimed to reframe Islam as a philosophical and intellectual construct, employing it in a philosophical manner rather than as a religious belief system.³⁸²

Abdullah Cevdet wanted to interpret Islam in a scientific way. That idea conflicted with Classical Islamic thought, and Islamic scholars and intellectuals harshly criticised Abdullah Cevdet for his thoughts because, according to their thoughts, that would harm the essence of Islam and transform it into non-Islamic, even a non-religious concept. It would also be hard to accept this new understanding of Islam common people, Islamic scholars, intellectuals, and the ruling elite. In addition, Abdullah Cevdet and his thoughts were criticised by Abdullah Cevdet's political and intellectual friends, especially among Young Turks, because of intellectual and political reasons. That makes Abdullah Cevdet a lonely figure in Ottoman intellectual history and discussions of 'science' and 'religion' of that era in the Ottoman Empire. That also caused the alienation and withdrawal of Abdullah Cevdet from the political arena.

Some claimed that Abdullah Cevdet was a Bahai and wanted to convert Ottoman society into Bahaism. For example, Şükrü Hanioglu misunderstands or twists some of Abdullah Cevdet's words and claims that Abdullah Cevdet in his article 'Mezheb-i Bahauallah Dini Ümem' (The doctrine of Bahauallah, a world religion) Abdullah Cevdet asked Muslims to convert to Bahaism which is an intermediary step between Islam and materialism.³⁸³ It is wrong because although Abdullah Cevdet praised Bahaism, he did not say anything about converting to Bahaism.³⁸⁴ On that topic, I agree with Necati Alkan. Abdullah Cevdet only mentioned his affection for Bahaism

³⁸² Hanioglu, *Osmanlı'dan Cumhuriyet'e Zihniyet, Siyaset ve Tarih*, 59.

³⁸³ Hanioglu, *The Young Turks in Opposition*, 202.

³⁸⁴ Abdullah Cevdet, 'Mezheb-i Bahauallah Dini Ümem', *İctihad*, no. 144 (1 March 1922): 3015–17.

and did not have such an aim as using Bahaism as a bridge to positivist and materialist worldviews.³⁸⁵

Abdullah Cevdet and his followers aimed to introduce this new concept of religion under the hood of Islam. Their view was criticised harshly during that time and even today. Most Muslims and Islamic scholars harshly criticise this view and modernist approaches to the classical interpretation of Islam. From a different perspective, Abdullah Cevdet can be seen as the modern Martin Luther of the Ottoman Empire. Still, his scientific and non-clerical reflection places Abdullah Cevdet in a different position from clerical reformists. Abdullah Cevdet also aimed to use scientific understanding and science at the core of Islam. He said that “the difference between science and religion is that science is a light without heat and religion is heat without light”³⁸⁶, these concepts should fit into each other.

Abdullah Cevdet translated the work of Reinhart Dozy, *Het Islamisme: De Voornaamste Godsdiensten* (Islamism: The Major Religions-Tarih-i İslâmiyet). This translation aims to prepare an intellectual background to purify Muhammed from metaphysics and narrate him on a material and historical basis. In addition, this work is the first Islamic History translated into Turkish and written by an Orientalist European intellectual.³⁸⁷ This work and translation of Abdullah Cevdet are important for regarding the Orientalist approach to Islam and Islamic history. With this work Abdullah Cevdet also aimed to materialise Islam and move it from a spiritualist understanding. Thanks to this Abdullah Cevdet wanted to pull Islam from its supreme and untouchable position.

The publication of critiques of Islam is a typical occurrence in the Western world, particularly in Europe. Abdullah Cevdet's translation was the first critique of Islam

³⁸⁵ Necati Alkan, “‘The Eternal Enemy of Islām’: Abdullah Cevdet and the Baha’i Religion”, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 68, no. 1 (February 2005): 11–12.

³⁸⁶ Abdullah Cevdet, ‘Mezheb-i Bahauallah Dini Ümem’, 3016.

³⁸⁷ Also, Abdullah Cevdet’s translation is essential for the reflection of his arguments to the Ottoman society. Because Abdullah Cevdet was regarded as an atheist intellectual and opponent figure of the Sultan and an important political figure for the Young Turks. In addition to writer of this work, translator of this work, Abdullah Cevdet, Islamic scholars and intellectuals stood aloof from this work.

and its prophet. Due to this critique, this work constituted a significant turning point for the Ottoman Empire and Ottoman intellectual history. This book sparked contentious debates among intellectuals and scholars in the late Ottoman Empire over religion, philosophy, and intellectual matters. It introduced a fresh viewpoint and methodology to the study of Islamic history, particularly the era of Muhammed, among Ottoman intellectuals and scholars. Even Westernist intellectuals, like Celal Nuri, expressed criticism of Abdullah Cevdet for his work. This criticism places Abdullah Cevdet in a unique position among Ottoman intellectuals, even those who were Westernists at the time. Abdullah Cevdet and his acquaintances provided this book at discounted rates to students and coffeehouses. Islamic intellectuals, other intellectuals, and the public expressed opposition to this book. Following numerous requests submitted by Şeyhulislam to the government, this book was prohibited, and the remaining copies were discarded into the sea from the Galata Bridge. Nevertheless, Abdullah Cevdet generously contributed several copies of the book to the Muslim communities in the Russian Empire, including regions like Azerbaijan and Central Asia.³⁸⁸

One of the controversial books of the Ottoman Empire is *Tarih-i İslamiyet*. Oppression of the sultan and authority were also felt in this book, and its publication was banned for a while. Abdullah Cevdet felt compelled to publish this book in Egypt in 1908. There are two reasons for that. The first one is Abdullah Cevdet, who was familiar with Egypt from his opposition and exile times. The second reason is that Egypt had a much freer and more liberal atmosphere than the Ottoman Empire during that era, with the effect of British dominance there; the publication of such books and the spread of modern and Western ideas in Egypt were more accessible than in the Ottoman Empire. Egypt was more developed in intellectual, literary, and some other contexts than the Ottoman Empire since the Napoleonic Invasion in most cases. For this reason, Egypt influenced the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century in almost all areas and became a role model for Ottoman modernisation.³⁸⁹

³⁸⁸ Hanioglu, 'Garbcılar: Their Attitudes toward Religion and Their Impact on the Official Ideology of the Turkish Republic', 137–39.

³⁸⁹ To see the influence of Egypt on the Ottoman Empire, look at: Johann Strauss, *The Egyptian Connection in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Literary and Intellectual History* (Beirut: Orient-Institut der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft, 2000).

Abdullah Cevdet said in the translator's statement that the primary cause of underdevelopment in Classical Islamic thought is the oppressive governance of the sultans and governing elites. This statement serves as a strong critique of the autocratic practices implemented by Abdülhamid II towards the Young Turks, other opposition parties, and nearly all citizens inside the Ottoman Empire, as perceived by the Young Turks. Abdullah Cevdet drew a connection between his thesis and these actions of Abdülhamid II. Abdullah Cevdet also commended Reinhart Dozy for his work. According to him, Dozy accomplished something of great importance with the release of this work. Considering Dozy's meticulous research and extensive knowledge about Islam and its prophet, Muhammed, it is reasonable to regard him as a Muslim. Abdullah Cevdet also uses the hadith, which he frequently used in his works: "Wisdom is the lost treasure of Muslims; wherever they find, they shall take it." Abdullah Cevdet incorporates more verses from the Quran in this composition as well as in his other literary pieces. In the introductory section, Abdullah Cevdet employed a verse that extols wisdom and asserted that the pursuit of knowledge and wisdom is superior to prayer in the context of Islam. According to him, he asserted that he translated this book with the intention of serving religious objectives and to provide enlightenment to the Muslim community. In this part, Abdullah Cevdet discussed the correlation between wisdom and merit in Islam. Abdullah Cevdet asserted that intelligence and merit are the core tenets of Islam, serving as means to articulate the essence of Islamic truth. Abdullah Cevdet, in this work, additionally outlined the crucial borders of his new concept of religion.³⁹⁰ Abdullah Cevdet's aim can be seen as the revival of the Islamic Renaissance under his intellectual leadership.

Because of pressures and the political atmosphere in the Ottoman Empire, Abdullah Cevdet removed the preface section of the book. Some statements of Abdullah Cevdet about Dozy, such as Dozy should be accepted as Muslim, reflect the idea of creating a new religion by Abdullah Cevdet, which is based on vulgar materialism. In this book, Dozy and Abdullah Cevdet wrote statements about Muhammed, reducing his ethereal personality and claiming that Muhammed had epileptic attacks and

³⁹⁰ Abdullah Cevdet, 'İfade-i Mütercim', in *Tarih-i İslamiyyet* (Mısır: Matbaa-i İctihad, 1908), 3–5.

hallucinations and claims that he took these revelations during this time.³⁹¹ These ideas reduce the religious way of Islam and materialise it while finding a scientific and reliable base for sources of Islam. This idea is suitable for the concept of Abdullah Cevdet's new religion. From my perspective, this book is one of the most important examples which shows the perspective of Abdullah Cevdet on Islam. While reducing the religious way of Islam, Abdullah Cevdet wanted to transform it into a scientific worldview. In addition, that shows the position of science in this new worldview.

After the publication of *Tarih-i İslamiyyet*, Muslim scholars and intellectuals wrote and published refutations against this book. For instance, Şehbenderzâde Ahmed Hilmi wrote *Tarih-i İslam* (History of Islam) in 1910 and 1911 in two volumes; İsmail Fenni Ertuğrul made his refutation against this book in the first years of the Republic, in 1928, under the name of *Kitab-ı İzâle-i Şükûk* (The Book of Removal of Suspicion). The translation of İsmail Fenni Ertuğrul shows that the discussions of Islam and its materialisation is a long-term debate and are still ongoing debates in the Early Republican Era in the intellectual sphere. While Abdullah Cevdet translated materialist intellectuals' works from the West, sometimes he gave answers to these works, as Ahmed Midhat did while translating Draper's work, and harmonised the ideas of these works with Classical Islamic thought of Ottoman society and wanted to make suitable materialistic thought for the religious and cultural sensitiveness of the society. While Abdullah Cevdet aimed to find a social base for his ideas on religion, he also wanted to transform Islam into a vulgar materialistic scientific perspective.

Abdullah Cevdet's answer to Ludwig Büchner's *Die Wissenschaft und Die Philosophie* (Science and Philosophy) in *Aus Natur und Wissenschaft* is his work titled *Fünun ve Felsefe ve Felsefe Sânihaları*. He combined the ideas of ancient and Islamic philosophers, Bible verses, Quran verses, hadiths and quotes from modern philosophers and scientists. With this effort, he tried to associate religion, science and philosophy. Not only in this work but also in most of his works, Abdullah Cevdet tried to combine religion and experimental science with philosophy and create an eclectic scientific-ethical philosophy and religion. Thanks to this, his main

³⁹¹ Reinhart Pieter Anne Dozy, *Tarih-i İslamiyyet*, trans. Abdullah Cevdet (Egypt: Matbaa-i İctihad, 1908), 39-47.

aim was to adopt Islam for the modern age and prevent the expansion of Western influence and Christianity in the Ottoman Empire. He also used quotes from Islamic philosophers for his views. For instance, while trying to outdo metaphysical Islam and putting terms like love, he used the words of Rumî.³⁹²

In this work, Abdullah Cevdet used quotations from Islamic and Western philosophers to praise the knowledge of reason, knowledge and scientific thought. Abdullah Cevdet also used ayets and hadiths in this book to show that Islam praises science and reason and gives importance to these concepts. Abdullah Cevdet also emphasised that knowledge, wisdom, and science are the best notions for Islam. Abdullah Cevdet said these ideas are the best in Islam and should be worshipped above all else.³⁹³ While criticising Classical Islamic thought, Abdullah Cevdet sometimes used Islamic arguments besides materialist arguments. This is important for penetrating society. Abdullah Cevdet also thought it was wrong to correlate backwardness with Islam and people who regard Islam as the reason for backwardness and non-scientific thought.³⁹⁴

In the first issue of his journal *İctihad*, Abdullah Cevdet published an article, 'Tahkikat-ı İlmiyye' (Inquiry of Science); Abdullah Cevdet explained the aim of him and his journal *İctihad*. According to that writing, the aim of *İctihad* is to find the reasons for the backwardness of Muslims and revive Muslims in intellectual and scientific meaning.³⁹⁵ Abdullah Cevdet advised Muslims to act rather than become passive. Because if Muslims become passive, that causes laziness and backwardness. For this reason, Muslims should be active, and thanks to this active stand, Muslims would find science, development and progress.³⁹⁶

³⁹² M. Şükrü Hanioglu, 'Bir "Mu'tekid Kâfir"ın Büyük Projesi ve Dilmestî-i Mevlânâ', in *Dilmestî-i Mevlânâ ve Gazâlî'de Ma'rîfetullah, Rubâ'îyyât-ı Gazâlâ, Orfide Şi'r ve İrfân*, by Abdullah Cevdet Karlıdağ, ed. Erdoğan Erbay, Nimet Yıldırım, and Ali Utku (Konya: Çizgi Kitabevi, 2014), 11–20.

³⁹³ Abdullah Cevdet, *Fünun ve Felsefe ve Felsefe Sânihaları*.

³⁹⁴ Abdullah Cevdet, 'Şime-i Husumet', *İctihad*, no. 88 (22 January 1914): 1949–51.

³⁹⁵ Abdullah Cevdet, 'Tahkikat-ı İlmiyye', *İctihad* 1, no. 1 (1 September 1904): 16.

³⁹⁶ That also related with Abdullah Cevdet's aim of creating a new society based on science and progress. So, even in the first issue of *İctihad* Abdullah Cevdet developed the structure of his imagined society.

Science and reason are critical concepts for Abdullah Cevdet. In his work, *Hadd-i tedib, Ahmed Rıza Bey'e açık mektub* (Boundary of propriety, An Open Letter to Ahmet Rıza Bey), Abdullah Cevdet quoted a hadith “Religion is the reason, who has no reason, has no religion.” Abdullah Cevdet implies scientific reason while giving this hadith as an example. Abdullah Cevdet also adds in this open letter to Ahmed Rıza, “Science is the religion of higher class, religion is the science of the masses.”³⁹⁷ Abdullah Cevdet frequently employed this argument in his written works. Based on this logic, it may be inferred that Abdullah Cevdet's objective was to provide a scientific and rational foundation for Islam and elevate the general population to a higher social and educational status. This demonstrates Abdullah Cevdet's intention to position himself as a political and social figure within the emerging scientific 'imagined society'. Abdullah Cevdet's correspondence with Ahmed Rıza reveals that not only him, but also several other intellectuals from the Ottoman Empire, particularly the Young Turks, aspired to establish a novel society grounded in scientific and rational principles, supported by Islamic justifications. Their intention was to hinder the Western expansion into the Ottoman Empire and relegate it to a subordinate position by introducing scientific and intellectual ideas from the Modern West to reform Islam and Ottoman society.

In *Fünun ve Felsefe ve Felsefe Sânihaları*, Abdullah Cevdet's quotations are important. He used most of them to harmonise his ideas with Islamic philosophy and discourse; for instance, Abdullah Cevdet mentioned the hadith of Muhammed: “Wisdom is the lost treasure of Muslims; wherever they find it, they shall take it.” In addition, Abdullah Cevdet mentioned another hadith which explains the betterness of researchers and learners to those who only pray.³⁹⁸ Abdullah Cevdet used another hadith about the obligation of learning science and knowledge for Muslim men and women.³⁹⁹ Based on his quotes, it is evident that Abdullah Cevdet aims to demonstrate to the Ottoman community that Islam is in favour of science and people

³⁹⁷ Abdullah Cevdet, *Hadd-i Tedib, Ahmed Rıza Bey'e Açık Mektub* (İstanbul: Matba-i İctihad, 1912), 66.

³⁹⁸ Abdullah Cevdet, *Fünun ve Felsefe ve Felsefe Sânihaları*, 29–30.

³⁹⁹ Abdullah Cevdet, ‘Doktor Gustave Le Bon M. Le D’ Gustave Le Bon’, *İctihad*, no. 8 (18 July 1905): 118–20.

who have a passion for scientific pursuits. Therefore, society should also provide support for this cause, and there is no negative impact of science on Islam. According to Islam, even he and other scholars hold superior positions. Abdullah Cevdet endeavoured to demonstrate the compatibility of Islam with his sociological perspective. Abdullah Cevdet sought to integrate science, materialism, evolutionism, positivism, and Social Darwinism with Islam to establish a scientific Ottoman society.

According to Şükrü Hanioglu, Abdullah Cevdet successfully established a version of Islam that was devoid of religious duties, and in doing so, he became a prominent figure in the Ottoman Empire and Ottoman society, comparable to Guyau. Abdullah Cevdet aspired to emulate the intellectual prowess and influence of Büchner, Strauss, and Abduh within the Ottoman Empire. Abdullah Cevdet had a clear inclination towards integrating disparate viewpoints in both his works and academic pursuits. Abdullah Cevdet's publications indicate that he did not fully grasp the ideas of these figures, despite his desire to integrate them in a philosophical, scientific, and Islamic manner. While Abdullah Cevdet did not completely assimilate the concepts of these people, he adeptly employed and integrated these ideas in his writings. Abdullah Cevdet's translation of the works of various intellectuals, philosophers, researchers, and scientists with conflicting beliefs could be seen as a lapse of judgement. Abdullah Cevdet sought to integrate the concepts of these contrasting people to establish a novel scientific utopian society, encompassing philosophical, scientific, and materialistic ideals, while incorporating the fundamental principles of Islam. Abdullah Cevdet aspired to convert Ottoman civilisation into a modern society with scientific and philosophical principles, while still retaining its Islamic core. Abdullah Cevdet's project rendered him and his thoughts distinctive, not just inside Ottoman intellectual circles, but also within the realms of religion, society, and politics.⁴⁰⁰

In one of his writings, 'Kastamonu'da Kurun-u Vusta' (The Medieval Period in Kastamonu), in his journal *İctihad*, Abdullah Cevdet criticises anti-evolutionists. He

⁴⁰⁰ M. Şükrü Hanioglu, 'Bir "Mu'tekid Kâfir"ın Büyük Projesi ve Dilmestî-i Mevlânâ', in *Dilmestî-i Mevlânâ ve Gazâlî'de Ma'rîfetullah, Rubâ'îyyât-i Gazâlî, Orfî'de Şi'r ve İrfân*, by Abdullah Cevdet, ed. Erdoğan Erbay, Nimet Yıldırım, and Ali Utku (Konya: Çizgi Kitabevi, 2014), 13–15.

said that the people who claim that instructing Darwinism at schools is blasphemy are not suitable for the 20th century and are like the people of the Medieval Era. He also said that even turbaned people should understand this.⁴⁰¹ In this article, Abdullah Cevdet underlined that the instruction of evolution does not conflict with religion. He also wanted to show that not only the instruction of evolution but also the concept of evolution does not conflict with Islam. According to that article, Islamic understanding should reinterpret itself for the conditions of the Modern Age and should be free from the understanding of the Medieval Era. According to Abdullah Cevdet, the only way to develop and be free from the West's oppression is to keep facing the Modern Era. That is the reflection of Ottoman intellectuals' opinion on modernisation and the situation of the Ottoman Empire. Almost all of them accepted that changing their minds in the way of modernisation was the only way to sustain the life of the Ottoman Empire.

Abdullah Cevdet strongly challenged Islamic intellectuals and aimed to highlight the significance of scientific comprehension. Abdullah Cevdet endeavoured to achieve two noteworthy milestones through this approach. The first objective is to update and modernise Islamic intellectual discourse, while the second objective demonstrated the impressive scientific knowledge and intellectual capacity of Islamic intellectuals. Abdullah Cevdet sought to utilise Islam within a modern context to challenge Orientalists and Christian missionaries. Throughout this effort, his primary goal was to enhance Ottoman society while maintaining its Islamic foundations and core. During the process of modernisation, the Ottoman society could utilise Islam, which is one of its most essential components. Hence, this undertaking seeks to counteract the advancing influence of Western culture. Abdullah Cevdet and other Ottoman intellectuals saw evolution as a political and social issue, not just an intellectual one. They held the belief that comprehending and scrutinising evolution might serve as a means of protecting the Ottoman Empire and Ottoman civilisation from the Western Orientalist viewpoint.

Abdullah Cevdet set himself apart from other vulgar materialists in the Ottoman Empire by striving to reconcile philosophy and religion with scientism. He

⁴⁰¹ Abdullah Cevdet, 'Kastamonu'da Kurun-u Vusta', *İctihad*, no. 58 (27 March 1913): 1271–74.

incorporated quotations and analysed the ideas of philosophers from Eastern and Western traditions, employing their notions to reconcile science, philosophy, and religion. Nevertheless, it is crucial to acknowledge that his comprehension of religion was firmly rooted in a materialistic mindset. Abdullah Cevdet held the belief that religion was still necessary for human societies, even in the era of modernity. The core tenet of his ideology was developed around this concept. Through the construction of his original philosophy, he eradicated and rectified the unscientific elements of Islam, while basing it on scientific foundations. He purposefully chose liberal justifications to buttress his own arguments when discussing Islamic philosophers and concepts. Abdullah Cevdet adeptly merged materialistic ideologies with liberal interpretations of Islam to successfully shape people's mindsets. Abdullah Cevdet endeavoured to further modernist ideas and his materialistic convictions within the context of Islam. Nevertheless, it cannot be asserted that his attempt was successful.⁴⁰² Although he wanted to use Islam to hold Ottoman society together, this understanding of Islam scientific imagined society which includes some Islamic arguments in social ways.

Abdullah Cevdet also supported the redeeming of women while protecting Islam. While publishing *İctihad* in Genova 1905, he sent questionnaires about Islam reform to Muslim and Christian intellectuals and intellectuals. A French writer replied to this letter tersely, "Close the Quran, veil the women". Although he did not do it as an answer to this intellectual deliberately, Abdullah Cevdet published an article in 1911 and approached this topic differently, saying that "Both open the Quran and unveil the women."⁴⁰³ Abdullah Cevdet's approach shows his modern view that topic and French intellectual's arguments show the sardonic perspective on the topic.

Abdullah Cevdet asserted that the fundamental issue with all faiths, without any exceptions, is a deficiency in rationality. This inadequacy poses a significant hindrance to the progress of religions. Utilising philosophical reasoning may assist in overcoming this issue. Abdullah Cevdet's motivation to actualise Islam stems from

⁴⁰² Hanioglu, 'Garbılar: Their Attitudes toward Religion and Their Impact on the Official Ideology of the Turkish Republic', 136.

⁴⁰³ Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, 385.

the fact that he believes impediments hinder the rationality of Islam and prevent it from adapting to modern realities. Abdullah Cevdet sought to establish the principles of rationality within Ottoman civilisation through his writings and references to Islamic philosophers. Through this endeavour, he intends to streamline the process of establishing his new religion centred around materialism, prioritising rationality and meeting the demands of contemporary society. Abdullah Cevdet perceived this novel concept as a crucial means of emancipation from the severe circumstances that the Ottoman Empire and Muslim society had grappled with for generations. Abdullah Cevdet's writings suggested that he perceived the issue of reason and non-scientific circumstances as not exclusive to Ottoman and Islamic communities. This predicament is observed in all nations where religious beliefs hold sway.

From the works of vulgar materialists, it can be understood that they wanted to remove these religions. August Comte created a positivistic religion in France, which was popularised in Brazil and accepted as a religion there. In the Ottoman Empire, Abdullah Cevdet became the representative of the movement to create new religions instead of old, non-scientific, and non-wisdom. From this perspective, Abdullah Cevdet and some Ottoman intellectuals believed that the desired reforms and developments could not be achieved without reforming Islam, like the Lutheran Reformation of Christianity.⁴⁰⁴

This endeavour to modernise Islam encompasses not only its social aspects but also its scientific and intellectual dimensions. Abdullah Cevdet and other Ottoman intellectuals, particularly the Young Turks, endeavoured to bring about the Ottoman Enlightenment by initiating reforms within Islam and promoting a more rational and scientific approach to the religion. Also, their objective was to enhance the scientific nature of Islam and mitigate any potential conflict between Islam and science. This stands in contrast to Western intellectuals who perceived a contradiction between 'science' and 'religion'. This can also be interpreted as a response to the West and Christian missionaries, representing the triumph of 'scientific' Islam over 'non-scientific' Christianity. It can also be considered as an objection to contemporary

⁴⁰⁴ Hanioglu, 'Garbilar: Their Attitudes toward Religion and Their Impact on the Official Ideology of the Turkish Republic', 143–44.

debates about the West and its use of discussions against the East, particularly the Ottoman Empire.

Abdullah Cevdet, in a rebuttal to the ideas put out by English orientalist academic David Samuel Margoliouth, contended that the notion equating Islam with stagnation and savagery is erroneous. He opposed the notion that Christianity will have a greater positive impact on Eastern Lands compared to Islam, resulting in their increased development and technological advancement. He also acknowledges the challenge of converting Muslims through Christian missionaries.⁴⁰⁵

As previously mentioned, Abdullah Cevdet had a religious background. He published a poetry book in 1891, *Ramazan Bahçeleri* (Gardens of Ramadan), which includes a eulogy to Muhammed; he published the translation of a chapter of Ludwig Büchner's *Kraft und Stoff, Der Gedanke* (Thought) as *Fizyolocya-i Tefekkür* (Physiology of Thought). Another turning point in the intellectual life of Abdullah Cevdet was the publication of this translation. He also began to publish works on vulgar materialism, reflecting the transformation of his formerly strict religious views. One of the key influences on his thought was a quotation from Jacob Moleschott: "Thought is the product of matter," which served as a guiding principle for his vulgar materialist outlook. This quotation symbolises the shift in Cevdet's intellectual and religious thought. He came to believe that all phenomena in the universe occur through the power of matter and force. Even concepts traditionally attributed to the soul or spirit, such as consciousness and emotion, were, in his view, realised through matter alone. In this framework, the existence or function of a soul is unnecessary for explaining human or cosmic activity. Such thinking directly opposed the foundations of religion, which attribute faculties like thought and feeling to immaterial spirits. Instead, Cevdet viewed matter and force as the sole sources of everything in the universe. His support for vulgar materialist thought positioned him as a committed materialist intellectual, who not only wrote extensively on these ideas but also actively sought to disseminate them.

⁴⁰⁵ Abdullah Cevdet, 'RÉPONSE Du Professeur MARGOLIOUTH (Suite)', *Idjtihad*, n.d., 1–5.

Abdullah Cevdet was one of the first translators of *Kraft und Stoff* in the Ottoman Empire.⁴⁰⁶ He translated chapters ‘Gedanke’ (Thought) as ‘Dimağ’, *Dimağ: ‘Dimağ ve ruh ile arasındaki münasebet-i fenniye’yi tedkik*’ (Thought: Investigation on Scientific Relation between Thought and Soul) from ‘der Mensch’ (The Man) and ‘Gehirn und Seele’ (Brain and Soul) chapters of *Kraft und Stoff*.⁴⁰⁷ Şükrü Hanioğlu claims that Abdullah Cevdet mainly translated from *Der Mensch* and *Sitz der Seele* (Place of the Soul) chapters. The quotations and Abdullah Cevdet’s expressions show that Şükrü Hanioğlu has some failures about the thoughts of Abdullah Cevdet. Abdullah Cevdet’s view of humans is a man-machine thought. This thought was created by French materialist La Mettrie, who considered all humans as machines and developed the idea of French philosopher René Descartes, who regarded all animals as machines. Abdullah Cevdet also thought that in this perspective, the notion of the soul existed in both humans and animals, but there is a significant difference in the understanding of the soul in Abdullah Cevdet’s thought compared to the religious concept of the soul. In Abdullah Cevdet’s thinking, the soul is the product of matter. It matches the idea of vulgar materialists and positivists that everything in the universe is the product of matter and force. Another important thing about this idea is that Abdullah Cevdet was influenced by different materialist philosophers, including La Mettrie. The Ottoman materialists learnt from different sources and did not stick with only vulgar materialist views.⁴⁰⁸ Abdullah Cevdet continued to translate from *Kraft und Stoff* during his authorship. His work *Fenn-i ruh: dimağ ve ruh, tefekkür, vicdan, dimağ ve tefekkür* (Science of Spirit: Mind and spirit, thought, conscience, mind and thought) from the chapters of *Kraft und Stoff*; ‘Gehirn und Seele’ (Mind and Spirit), ‘Der Gedanke’ (Thought), and ‘Das Bewusstsein’ (Conscience). As can be understood from the names of the chapters, Abdullah Cevdet translated the chapters about the activities of the mind and brain. It

⁴⁰⁶ Although some claimed that Beşir Fuad translated this work, there is no copy of this translation. Abdullah Cevdet is the first translator of *Kraft und Stoff* in the Ottoman Empire.

⁴⁰⁷ Baha Tevfik and Ahmed Nebil, fully translated *Kraft und Stoff* into Turkish in 1911. They said that in the preface section, Baha Tevfik and Ahmed Nebil says that while translating *Kraft und Stoff*, they benefited from the translations of Abdullah Cevdet. That shows that Abdullah Cevdet is an important and influential figure for the intellectuals of that era.

⁴⁰⁸ Hanioğlu, ‘Blueprints for a Future Society: Late Ottoman Materialists on Science, Religion and Art’, 39–40.

is known that activities like thought, and conscience are attributed to soul and spirit, and soul and spirit are attributed to the heart. Abdullah Cevdet, with a translation from Büchner, refuted this perception and explained these concepts scientifically and in a vulgar materialist way.⁴⁰⁹

In this translation, Abdullah Cevdet's idea was transferred from Ludwig Büchner, which conflicted with Islamic arguments. However, the arguments of this book conflict with classical Islamic thought; Abdullah Cevdet explains in the preface chapter why he translated that book. He explained that this was due to the popularity of necromancy, not only in the Ottoman Empire but also in the West. He considered necromancy idiocy and wants to make a scientific base for the concept of spirit.⁴¹⁰ Abdullah Cevdet translated and discussed these topics after the Second Constitutional Era, when such discussions were common. For instance, this year, Baha Tevfik and his friend Ahmed Nebil translated the full version of *Kraft und Stoff* as *Madde ve Kuvvet* and joined the 'science' and 'religion' discussions.

Abdullah Cevdet also wrote about the section on 'Das Bewusstsein' in *Kraft und Stoff* by Ludwig Büchner in his journal *İctihad*. Abdullah Cevdet said that conscience is not constant over time. Abdullah Cevdet also added that conscience is about material processes in the human body and environmental factors rather than metaphysical ones like spirit. People's thoughts change because of the processes and changes in their bodies, brains, and nerves, and this change is ongoing. It is a process that continues constantly.⁴¹¹ This article shows that Abdullah Cevdet correlated human actions with brain functions and environmental factors, not spiritual and religious notions. Concepts like conscience, which shapes human actions, are like living organisms and change from time to time. Abdullah Cevdet wanted to show that social concepts in the Ottoman Empire should change according to the conditions of that era, and it was necessary to change some notions to adapt to the

⁴⁰⁹ Ludwig Büchner, *Fenn-i Ruh: Dimağ ve Ruh, Tefekkür, Vicdan, Dimağ ve Tefekkür*, trans. Abdullah Cevdet (İstanbul: Matba-i İctihad, 1911).

⁴¹⁰ Büchner, 4–5.

⁴¹¹ Abdullah Cevdet, 'Vicdan', *İctihad*, no. 28 (1 August 1911): 800–803.

new system and improve living conditions. Abdullah Cevdet used social Darwinist arguments in this article to drive society this way.

In his work *Dimağ*, Abdullah Cevdet had similar thoughts to Beşir Fuad about the processes of thinking and actions of creatures. In this work, he emphasised that functions like thinking and feeling, especially feelings, are associated with the brain and material things, although they are not entirely material notions. Thanks to enzymes and processes in the brain, humans and animals perform their mental and physical actions.

Abdullah Cevdet, like other materialists, especially vulgar materialist intellectuals, claimed that matter is the form of continuity of energy, as Ludwig Büchner emphasises in *Kraft und Stoff*. Although Abdullah Cevdet thought that the spirit is separate from the body, he stated that its relationship with the brain is just a coincidence. It has no critical effect on the actions of people.⁴¹² Abdullah Cevdet considers humans as mechanical organisms rather than spiritual creatures like La Mettrie and Descartes did.⁴¹³

He believed that animals possess a spirit akin to that of humans. Abdullah Cevdet aimed to establish a connection and draw parallels between humans and animals. Abdullah Cevdet simplifies the explanation of human societies by drawing parallels to animal groups. This idea also serves as a rebuttal to spiritualism and religious beliefs. Due to this dispute, Abdullah Cevdet and other intellectuals who adhere to materialism place significant stress on the relevance of material possessions in all aspects of life. Abdullah Cevdet's views suggested that there is little distinction between people and animals, implying that humans lack any distinct qualities that set them apart from animals, contrary to the teachings of Abrahamic religions. These ideas also pertain to progress and its significance for humans and society. This is

⁴¹² Abdullah (İbn Ömer Cevdet), *Dimağ: Dimağ ve Ruh ile Arasındaki Münasebet-i Fenniyyeyi Tedkik* (İstanbul: Vatan Kitabhanesi, 1893), 41–46.

⁴¹³ Although Abdullah Cevdet thinks differently from Beşir Fuad about the spirit, their results are almost the same. Beşir Fuad said that there is no spirit, but there is spiritual action. Abdullah Cevdet thinks that there is a spirit, but Abdullah Cevdet's understanding of the spirit is different from the concept of the spirit in religions. Abdullah Cevdet's idea is similar to the idea of Beşir Fuad that spirit is the combination of spiritual actions.

particularly true following the 1850s, as materialism and industrialisation gained prominence, with material progress being regarded as a crucial element in societal advancement. The Ottoman intellectuals were similarly inspired by this ideology and recognised that material progress, development, and advancement were crucial for societal improvement.

Abdullah Cevdet translated the ‘Der Gorilla’ chapter of *Aus Natur und Wissenschaft* by Ludwig Büchner as *Goril*.⁴¹⁴ In the afterword section of this book, Abdullah Cevdet argued that he translated this book according to the hadith: “Wisdom is the lost treasure of Muslims; wherever they find it, they shall take it.” He claimed that he translated this book to spread science with the order of the prophet and, indeed, Islamic doctrine. He frequently used this hadith in his works to show his aim to readers.⁴¹⁵ In *Goril*, Abdullah Cevdet mentioned the similarities between humans, apes and gorillas. Abdullah Cevdet continued the tradition of adapting evolution into social life, which began with Münif Paşa in the 1860s. While translating this work Abdullah Cevdet also mentioned Darwin and his theory of evolution in his own words. That makes Abdullah Cevdet and this translation important for Turkish intellectual history. Because Abdullah Cevdet became one of the first intellectuals who mentioned Darwin and his theory of evolution in the Ottoman Empire, that opened the way for explaining social concepts with the theory of evolution and Ottoman intellectuals, like Social Darwinists in Europe, used this term for the social structure, that shows their pragmatic way and using Western knowledge as ‘useful knowledge’.

Using Islamic doctrines, ayets and hadiths to attract the public's attention and bring them to the topic they wanted to underline using Islamic arguments. From another

⁴¹⁴ Although he says that he translated Gorilla chapter from the French version named Science et Nature, because of the mistake of Şükrü Hanioglu and taking the easy way out of Turkish academicians, almost every work which was written about Abdullah Cevdet tells that he translated this chapter from Büchner’s another book *Natur und Geist oder Gespräche zweier Freunde über den Materialismus und über die realphilosophischen Fragen der Gegenwart, in allgemein verständlicher*. From in his book *Bir Siyasal Düşünür Olarak Abdullah Cevdet Bey ve Dönemi*. However, in his article Blueprints, Şükrü Hanioglu corrected his mistake Hanioglu made another mistake for Goril. He quotes wrong page of the epilogue section of the book in all of his works which he mentioned this book. Almost everyone mentions Goril and this epilogue follows the mistake of Şükrü Hanioglu.

⁴¹⁵ Ludwig Büchner, *Goril*, trans. Abdullah Cevdet (Mamuretü’l-Aziz: Matbaa-i Vilayet, 1894), 57.

perspective, it can also be considered that Abdullah Cevdet and most other Ottoman intellectuals tried show the West that Islam, at least their understanding and interpretation of Islam, does not conflict with science and scientific thought. The other important thing about that translation is that Abdullah Cevdet mentioned the name of Charles Darwin while giving information about evolution. That shows that the Ottoman intellectuals tried to teach Darwinian evolution to Ottoman society in addition to Lamarckian evolution, which they had tried to teach since the 1860s.

Abdullah Cevdet also wanted to use the same method as Ahmed Midhat Efendi. Abdullah Cevdet and Ahmed Midhat mention the similarities between humans and animals and give examples from animal communities while explaining how human societies function. While this approach has a social way, it also has a biological and evolutionary way. With this approach, both Abdullah Cevdet and Ahmed Midhat tried to show the similarities between humans and animals, which were gained in an evolutionary way. Furthermore, Abdullah Cevdet took a more radical approach, employing social Darwinism to mould Ottoman society through the lenses of vulgar materialism, evolutionism, positivism, and the Islamic essence. Abdullah Cevdet wanted to melt these concepts in the Ottoman culture and tried to create a new society against the Orientalist Western culture, which aimed to expand into the East and dominate the East; with this new culture and society, Abdullah Cevdet wanted to protect the Ottoman Empire and the society.

Abdullah Cevdet, while explaining the struggle between animals, underlined the importance of strength and tricks.⁴¹⁶ The first one is also used by Social Darwinists for the strength of humans. The important thing about the contribution of Abdullah Cevdet to this thought is the importance of tricks in his thought about evolution. That shows the perspective of Ottoman intellectuals on Social Darwinism. Abdullah Cevdet could use the concept to illustrate his political influence and the state of the Ottoman Empire in relation to the Western powers. Abdullah Cevdet, a prominent player in the Ottoman opposition, believed that any means were justified in his efforts to remove Abdülhamid II. He could exploit the favourable circumstances to counterbalance the dominance of the Western powers and protect the Ottoman

⁴¹⁶ Büchner, 41.

Empire. From this standpoint, it may be argued that Ottoman intellectuals, particularly the Young Turks, employed contemporary Western intellectual knowledge for intellectual pursuits as well as religious, social, cultural, and political objectives.

Most Ottoman intellectuals with a scientific background believed that literature should conform to scientific principles. In this context, Abdullah Cevdet can be considered an exceptional case. Despite his adherence to scientism, he maintained that literature, particularly poetry, did not necessarily need to follow scientific guidelines. During this period, he adopted a cautious stance; however, he did not reject classical poetry outright. At times, he used the term ‘heart’ interchangeably with ‘mind’, acknowledging the Islamic theological and classical poetic understanding that considers the heart to be the seat of reason. Cevdet’s use of emotional expression in his writings reflects his attentiveness to the sensitivities of Ottoman society. He skilfully employed classical terminology and cultural elements to resonate with his audience, exemplifying his pragmatic approach. He asserted that many traditional expressions found in poetry could still be employed, but in a way that aligns with scientific thinking. He claimed to have developed a new materialist framework to replace religion and proposed that this framework could be effectively communicated through classical poetic elements. Moreover, scientific and natural phenomena could, in his view, be explained using poetic metaphors. Cevdet believed that the essence of poetry lay in its content rather than its form. Consequently, he saw no issue in utilising the formal structures and stylistic features of classical poetry when expressing materialist ideas. In this regard, his views on literature diverged significantly from those of Beşir Fuad. While Beşir Fuad argued that literature should be regarded as a branch of science and approached in a strictly scientific manner, avoiding romantic and imaginative elements, Abdullah Cevdet did not consider it necessary to subsume literature under scientific disciplines.⁴¹⁷

Abdullah Cevdet also tried to popularise science in journals. He wrote ‘Herkes İçin Kimya’ in *Musavver Cihan*. In this chapter he quoted from Ludwig Büchner’s book

⁴¹⁷ Hanioglu, ‘Blueprints for a Future Society: Late Ottoman Materialists on Science, Religion and Art’, 43–45.

Licht und leben: Drei allgemeinverständliche naturwissenschaftliche Vorträge als Beiträge zur Theorie der natürlichen Weltordnung (Light and life: three generally understandable scientific lectures as contributions to the theory of the natural world order).⁴¹⁸ Abdullah Cevdet emphasised everything consists of matter or material phenomena in this chapter. He also mentioned the immortality and transformation of matter in the universe like other vulgar materialists, especially Ahmed Midhat, in his article 'Duvardan Bir Sâda'.⁴¹⁹

Some of the followers of scientism in the Ottoman Empire spoke highly of Abdullah Cevdet. For instance, Baha Tevfik wrote an article about Abdullah Cevdet and İctihad journal in his journal *Felsefe Mecmuası*. Baha Tevfik said that the philosophical and scientific arguments mentioned in *Felsefe Mecmuası* have been exercised in the *İctihad* journal. Baha Tevfik described *İctihad* and, Abdullah Cevdet as a warning voice and call for civilisation. It is also a subtle and patriotic movement that considers society and humanity's benefits rather than being a pompous journal. *İctihad* is also a reflection of the truth and the right. Readers searching for these virtues would find the voice and reflection of their hearts in *İctihad*. Baha Tevfik describes *İctihad* as a trustworthy source for readers who search for scientific, sociological and religious knowledge.⁴²⁰ Like other intellectuals and especially vulgar materialists, they regarded themselves as the guide of society on the road to enlightenment. Vulgar materialists emphasise that they are patriotic people. The main reason for their effort to show their patriotism is the accusation of anti-materialists about them and stigmatising them as the public's enemies and even with harsher expressions, like I mentioned in the previous chapters of work, *Ben Neyim?*, of Ahmed Midhat. The other important point which should be understood from the words of Baha Tevfik in this article is that he emphasized the difference between Abdullah Cevdet and himself. He considered himself as the theorist of vulgar

⁴¹⁸ Ludwig Büchner, *Licht Und Leben: Drei Allgemeinverständliche Naturwissenschaftliche Vorträge Als Beiträge Zur Theorie Der Natürlichen Weltordnung* (Leipzig: Verlag von Theodor Thomas, 1882).

⁴¹⁹ Abdullah Cevdet, 'Muktebesat-ı Fenniye: Herkes İçin Kimya', *Musavver Cihan*, no. 4 (23 September 1891): 30.

⁴²⁰ Baha Tevfik, 'Asar-ı Cedide', *Felsefe Mecmuası*, no. 7 (21 August 1913): 109.

materialism in the Ottoman Empire while regarding Abdullah Cevdet as the practitioner of this intellectual view.

6.4. Efforts to Creating a New Social Darwinist Islamic Society

While mentioning philosophy, Abdullah Cevdet said that whether philosophy contributes to self-happiness is insufficient to solve the problems of the Ottoman Empire.⁴²¹ To solve this problem, Abdullah Cevdet wanted to use vulgar materialistic ethics, as Büchner proposed. Şükrü Hanioğlu claims that Abdullah Cevdet wanted to transform Islam into secular materialism as Felix Isnard replaced 'il faut de la religion' (we need religion) with 'il faut de la morale' (we need morals).⁴²² Although he had some points, Abdullah Cevdet aimed to use Islam and transformed into a moral way with scientific understanding. Islam is a moral issue in Abdullah Cevdet's imagined scientific society.

As Creel states, although Abdullah Cevdet supported individualism, he had some corporatist thoughts and influences from 19th-century corporatists such as Le Bon. That is a contradiction because Abdullah Cevdet pointed out that the problems of Ottoman society are due to its excessive communalism and consequent lack of the individualistic spirit.⁴²³ Abdullah Cevdet, motivated by his desire to transform Ottoman society, employed some corporatist arguments due to his political position in İttihad ve Terakki. For instance, in his article 'Hanedan-i Osmani', he supported the corporation of Ottoman nations rather than the rule of [Ottoman] dynasty to live together.⁴²⁴ While using corporatist arguments he also aimed to create a new type of individual.

While publishing his works to achieve his aims to create a new 'scientific imagined Ottoman society' based on scientific and Islamic values, Abdullah Cevdet published

⁴²¹ Abdullah Cevdet, *Fünun ve Felsefe ve Felsefe Sânihaları*, 31–32.

⁴²² Hanioğlu, 'Blueprints for a Future Society: Late Ottoman Materialists on Science, Religion and Art', 41.

⁴²³ Frank Warner Creel, 'The Program and Ideology of Dr. Abdullah Cevdet: A Study of the Origins of Kemalism in Turkey' (Phd Dissertation, Chicago, The University of Chicago, 1978), 41.

⁴²⁴ Abdullah Cevdet, 'Hanedan-ı Osmani', *İctihad* 2, no. 2 (October 1906): 217–19.

different kinds of works from different cultures and authors. For instance, he published literary translations from both the East and the West, like his translation of the history of Islam by Reinhart Dozy and his works about social reforms and development, like his translations from Gustave Le Bon.⁴²⁵ Abdullah Cevdet used many sources from different and even opposite views, cultures and religions while trying to penetrate society. That shows that Abdullah Cevdet's 'imagined' scientific society includes not only Western but also Eastern and Islamic values and concepts.

Abdullah Cevdet also wanted to use Social Darwinist thoughts for Ottoman society. From that perspective, Abdullah Cevdet can be regarded as one of the pioneers of Social Darwinism in the Ottoman Empire. However, some of the writings of Ahmed Midhat include Social Darwinist influences. Abdullah Cevdet's biological materialism was for creating a new society under the influence of Gustave Le Bon's ideas. In addition, Abdullah Cevdet also believed that a society could not live without religion.⁴²⁶ With the influence of Gustave Le Bon, Abdullah Cevdet wanted to create a new Ottoman and Turkish society by using Social Darwinist ideas based on conflict. Abdullah Cevdet also claimed that, with the influence of Le Bon, the masses move with their emotions rather than reason, and Abdülhamid II uses it wisely. As Şerif Mardin says, although he does not mention it directly, in the subtext, it can be easily understood that Abdullah Cevdet wishes that Young Turks would use the same method.⁴²⁷

Abdullah Cevdet, while creating the idea of his ideal society, also used the ideas of Ernest Haeckel about the inequality between creatures, adopted Darwin's natural selection, and used these concepts for the development of society. One of the founders of vulgar materialism, Ludwig Büchner, thought there should be an 'Ersatzreligion' (substitute religion) for society.⁴²⁸ Abdullah Cevdet used this idea.

⁴²⁵ Ülken, *Türkiye'de çağdaş düşünce tarihi*, 355–56.

⁴²⁶ Abdullah Cevdet, 'Tarihten Bir Sahife-i Hunin: Saint Barthélemy', *İctihad*, no. 147 (15 April 1922): 3072.

⁴²⁷ Mardin, *Jön Türklerin Siyasî Fikirleri: 1895 - 1908*, 151–52.

⁴²⁸ Ludwig Büchner, *Das Künftige Leben Und Die Moderne Wissenschaft: Zehn. Briefe an Eine Freundin* (Leipzig: Verlag von Max Spohr, 1889), 137–42.

Abdullah Cevdet and Ludwig Büchner's understanding of 'Ersatzreligion' are not the same, but both wanted to use this concept as a Weltanschauung.

While Ludwig Büchner sought to use his vulgar materialist ideas as a form of religion for society, attempting to shape society according to his philosophy, Abdullah Cevdet aimed to reform Islam through scientific thought and vulgar materialist philosophy. For nearly thirty-five years, Abdullah Cevdet pursued this goal, striving to reinterpret Islam within a materialist and evolutionist framework. As a result of these efforts, he was frequently subjected to harsh criticism and was often marginalised from intellectual and political circles, including by his own peers. This severe criticism continued into the Early Republican Period, during which he became a target for non-Westernist figures. Even today, he remains a controversial figure, frequently criticised and portrayed as a militant atheist who sought to abolish Islam and establish a new atheist society in the Ottoman Empire based solely on Western values and culture.

He also had Social Darwinist thoughts on about women. In one of his writings, 'Mme. O. de Lebedeff' in *İctihad*, he claimed that the influence of the works of Darwin, Spencer and Théodule-Armand Ribot is easily understood the influence of women and mothers' in life. He also added that with a quotation from Firdawsi that humans are the prolongation of their mothers. For this reason, mothers and women are crucial to society.⁴²⁹ From that writing, it is understood that Abdullah Cevdet wanted to give an important position to women in his imagined society based on Social Darwinist thought. Abdullah Cevdet wanted the subjection of women in the Ottoman Empire. That can signify the cultural and sociological transformation aimed at the Ottoman and Islamic societies by Abdullah Cevdet.

In some of his writings, Abdullah Cevdet attempted to reconcile Social Darwinism with racist thought. For instance, in his article "Ruhü'l-Akvâm Fasıl 3: Irkların Merâtib-i Psikolojiyesi" (Spirit of Nations, Chapter 3: The Psychological Classification of Races), published in the journal *İctihad*, Cevdet categorised races into four groups. According to this classification, the Indo-European race occupied

⁴²⁹ Hanioglu, *Bir Siyasal Düşünür Olarak Abdullah Cevdet ve Dönemi*, 174.

the highest rank and was described as the most intelligent and most instrumental in the progress of civilisation. Cevdet argued that the superiority of the Indo-European race stemmed not from intelligence per se, but from intrinsic characteristics.⁴³⁰ As a result, he did not believe in racial equality. This perspective was likely shaped by the perceived position of the Ottoman Empire in relation to Europe. Although many Ottoman intellectuals sought to protect the Empire and its society from Western domination, they also recognised that aligning with Western models was necessary for the Empire's survival.

Abdullah Cevdet influenced not only intellectuals of the Late Ottoman Empire and the Early Republican Era but also political thought and oppositions in that era. For instance, he published a booklet, *İki Emel* (The Two Dreams), in 1898 and was very influential among the Young Turks in that era. Abdullah Cevdet also questioned the legitimacy and authority of Abdulhamid II in that era and took his position as the opposite of the Hamidian Regime. He built his thoughts and writings on this perspective and positioned himself as a guide and pioneer for society, contrasting with the non-scientific and illiberal Hamidian Regime. He shaped his thoughts around the 'liberty, freedom and brotherhood' motto.

Abdullah Cevdet also positioned himself as a kind of religious leader, though his ideas were not realised during the Ottoman period and were later harshly criticised, particularly during the Early Republican era. Even today, Abdullah Cevdet's views continue to attract strong criticism. He was labelled an infidel, and even his political allies within the Committee of Union and Progress eventually excluded him from the political sphere of the Young Turks. His ideas, such as establishing a new ethical framework grounded in vulgar materialism and diminishing the influence of Islam, were, however, realised during the Early Republican period. Notably, around 1930, the notion of creating a new moral system based on vulgar materialist thought became part of the state ideology. In this respect, Abdullah Cevdet and the founding fathers of the Turkish Republic shared similar aims and programmes. Controversies surrounding Abdullah Cevdet's ideas persist to this day. Certain political circles

⁴³⁰ Abdullah Cevdet, 'Ruhul Akvam Fasil 3: Irkların Merâtib-i Psikolocyaıyesi', *İctihad*, no. 4 (September 1907): 269–82.

continue to criticise him for his radical intellectual and political views on religion and society. Abdullah Cevdet argued that science is the religion of the upper classes, whereas religion is the science of the masses. According to his view, the fundamental problem with Islam was that even Muslims treated their religion as though it were science, yet did nothing to advance Islam in a way that could match the progress of scientific knowledge. At the time, science had advanced significantly, while Islam, in his view, had fallen behind. Therefore, he believed Islam needed to be reinterpreted through a scientific lens and grounded in a scientific foundation.⁴³¹

Abdullah Cevdet wanted to reform or reinterpret Islam from a scientific and materialist base and perspective. This shows that Abdullah Cevdet's position as a political figure, as well as his intellectual approach, affected his writings. He knew about society and its sensitivities and tried to appeal to and reform them in the scientific way that Abdullah Cevdet desired. In his articles, 'Mısır'da Necmü't Terakkiü'l İslami Medresesi' (Madrasah of the Star of Progress of Islam in Egypt) and 'Une Profession de Foi' (A Profession of Faith) in *İctihad*, Abdullah Cevdet said that Muslims would reject the enlightenment if that would come directly from the West, especially from the Christian world. For this reason, the progressive way of Islam, that Islam has many progressive elements, should be found; Abdullah Cevdet claimed in that article that he considers himself as a guide who would find the progressive way of Islam and use it to enlighten the Ottoman society and Muslims. In this way, Muslims would be grateful to Abdullah Cevdet and other intellectuals, and they would embrace this progressive approach and enlightenment. Abdullah Cevdet added that he and other intellectuals talk about Islam and women for this reason.⁴³²

While Abdullah Cevdet tried Islam and the Islamic core while transforming society, he also aimed to create new materialistic ethics freed from religious dogmas and values. Abdullah Cevdet shared Büchner's goal of establishing new materialistic ethics. This understanding of materialism, known as scientific/vulgar materialism, places science at the centre of everything and treats it as a dogmatic value, much like

⁴³¹ Abdullah Cevdet, 'Şehzâde Mecid Efendi Hazretleri'yle Mülâkat', 1257.

⁴³² Abdullah Cevdet, 'Mısır'da Necmü't Terakkiü'l İslami Medresesi.', *İctihad* 2, no. 1 (July 1906): 16–17; Abdullah Cevdet, 'Une Profession de Foi', *İdjtihad* 1, no. 6 (May 1905): 89.

religion. Interestingly, while creating this secular, vulgar, materialist ethics, the first influence of Abdullah Cevdet was Felix Isnard, not Ludwig Büchner. Abdullah Cevdet thought the same thing as Isnard: ethics should replace religion. Abdullah Cevdet and his influencer Felix Isnard tried to base these new ethics on experimental science and reason, two tenets of vulgar materialism. Abdullah Cevdet found these arguments exciting and tried to apply these ideas to Ottoman society. Abdullah Cevdet wanted to reform Islam by incorporating modern and scientific ideas while retaining its essence.⁴³³ Abdullah Cevdet mentioned despotic rulers and tyranny again in his translation of *Della Tirannide* (Of Tyranny) by Vittorio Alfieri as *İstibdad*. In the book's preface, Abdullah Cevdet characterises tyranny and despotism as societal diseases that require cure. Maybe Abdullah Cevdet uses the term disease to prove that this topic is an important scientific problem for the Ottoman Empire and society. Abdullah Cevdet may correlate this concept with his profession because he was a doctor. He emphasised the detrimental effects of physical diseases, bodily grief, despotic rulers, and tyranny on the structure of society and the state. Abdullah Cevdet suggested that elites, especially intellectual elites, should enlighten society to cure this disease and solve the problem.⁴³⁴ Abdullah Cevdet wanted to create a scientifically imagined Ottoman society by abolishing despotic and tyrannical rule.

Abdullah Cevdet also had some Social Darwinist thoughts. For instance, in his article 'Silisile-i Saltanat Meselesi' (Issue of Lineage), he said that one of the reasons for the backwardness of the Ottoman Empire was the marriage of the sultans with handmaidens, not with loyal women. According to Abdullah Cevdet, this practice led to incapable heirs and new sultans. Abdullah Cevdet correlated this phenomenon with animals. He claimed that animal kittens cannot live like free animals in bad conditions. The children of slaves cannot live like free humans. For this reason, the Ottoman Empire started to collapse. Abdullah Cevdet also added that sultans and sultans' sons should not blame Abdullah Cevdet for this thought because this is accurate, and philosophers and scientists mentioned this in their works. For instance, Paul Henri Ribot wrote about the issue of heredity and its relationship with the

⁴³³ Hanioglu, 'Blueprints for a Future Society: Late Ottoman Materialists on Science, Religion and Art', 40–41.

⁴³⁴ Vittorio Alfieri, *İstibdad*, trans. Abdullah Cevdet (Egypt: Matba-i İctihad, 1908), 9–24.

mother in his work *Hérédité Psychologique* (Hereditary Physiology), and Charles Darwin mentioned the importance of the mother to the father in heredity in his works.⁴³⁵ Abdullah Cevdet mentioned his sources and wants to make his arguments scientific, legitimate and reliable in this way. Maybe Abdullah Cevdet thought that if he only used his thoughts in this article, these ideas would be disapproved by both the society and the sultan because Abdullah Cevdet is an essential figure for Young Turks. For this reason, he harmonises his ideas with the arguments of Ribot and Darwin to protect himself from possible oppression.

Abdullah Cevdet referenced Henry Thomas Buckle's concepts regarding the societal aspect. In his article 'Thomas Henry Buckle' in *İctihad*, he emphasises that the driving force behind the progress of all societies is science and scientific understanding. Abdullah Cevdet believed that progress and competition among humans are crucial for development, just as it is in nature. He argued that the competition observed among organisms in nature might be likened to the competition for scientific knowledge among humans. He asserted that these endeavours would lead to an enhancement in the standard of living. Abdullah Cevdet included one of his poems in this text and claims that he expressed this viewpoint 14 years ago.⁴³⁶ Abdullah Cevdet mentioned that he wrote these arguments before Henry Thomas Buckle to show that the Ottoman intellectuals also had the knowledge of evolutionary and modern thoughts.

Abdullah Cevdet was in full cry on the West and Muslims in his writing 'Cihan-ı İslam'a Dair' (On the World of Islam). Abdullah Cevdet highlighted the underdevelopment of Islamic societies and states, as well as the significant impact and growth of Western cultural, economic, and political influence, which has resulted in the control of Muslim cultures and states. Abdullah Cevdet stated that the West holds Muslim societies and traditions in contempt. Abdullah Cevdet's critique encompasses the West's ideologies, domination, and subjugation of the East, as well

⁴³⁵ Abdullah Cevdet, 'Silsile-i Saltanat Meselesi', *İctihad*, no. 6 (May 1905): 86–90.

⁴³⁶ Abdullah Cevdet, 'Henry Thomas Buckle', *İctihad*, no. 10 (13 March 1906): 153–55. Abdullah Cevdet uses this poem in his work *Fünun ve Felsefe ve Felsefe Sanîhaları*. Abdullah Cevdet also claims that in that article he published this poem in his poetry book *Kahriyyar* (Distress), but I cannot find the poem in the version of 1906 version, maybe he published the poem in the first edition of the book.

as the backwardness of Muslim communities. According to him, in civilisations where Muslims and non-Muslims coexist, it is evident that the living conditions of non-Muslims are more affluent than those of Muslims. Abdullah Cevdet argued that despite Islam's directive to engage in work and strive for growth, Muslims fail to comply with this command. Abdullah Cevdet substantiated his opinions by referencing ayets, hadiths, and apophthegms from significant Islamic personalities. In addition, he expressed disapproval towards people who advocate for discontinuing learning after reaching a specific age. He emphasised that people of all ages, regardless of whether they are young or older, should learn. Abdullah Cevdet also condemned people who proudly proclaim their poverty and view it as a fundamental component of Islam. He argued that to overcome poverty, Muslims should actively engage in employment, embrace scientific knowledge, and apply it to all aspects of their lives. Abdullah Cevdet emphasised the role of tyrannical rulers while discussing the causes of the underdevelopment of Islam and Islamic society. According to him, certain rulers hinder the progress of science and other areas. The ecclesiastics endorse these actions of the tyrannical rulers and suppress knowledge, development, and progress in the name of Islam. Abdullah Cevdet also expressed disapproval of the concept of fatalism and the attribution of every action and occurrence to destiny. He emphasises the importance of scrutinising the true cause of events and employing scientific methods.⁴³⁷

Abdullah Cevdet also underlined the reason for the backwardness of the Ottoman Empire and Muslim societies in his writing 'Şime-i Muhabbet' (The Nature of Attachment) in *İctihad* as considering the West as enemies and underestimating the power of the West because of this, denying the science and development of the West. Abdullah Cevdet said that it is wrong to see the West as the enemy. He added that the Ottoman society should blame itself rather than the West because of this backwardness. The Ottoman and Muslim societies chose this backwardness; it was not imposed by the West. Abdullah Cevdet also said that the difference between the Ottoman Empire and the West is between ignorance and science. In this article,

⁴³⁷ Abdullah Cevdet, 'Cihan-ı İslâm'a Dair', *İctihad*, no. 26 (14 July 1911): 761–67. Abdullah Cevdet, in 1922, published the extended edition of this article as a booklet as *Cihan-ı İslâm'a dair bir nazar-ı tarihî ve felsefî* (*On the World of Islam: Historical and Philosophical Aspect*).

Abdullah Cevdet also regarded European civilisation as the only civilisation, and there is no other civilisation.⁴³⁸ Consequently, people perceived Abdullah Cevdet as lacking knowledge about Ottoman civilisation and Islam. It is not accurate to claim that he disregarded Ottoman civilisation and Islam. Abdullah Cevdet asserted that Western civilisation is the only civilisation. To avert the collapse of Ottoman culture, it is imperative for both Ottoman civilisation and Islam to assimilate certain Western principles and integrate themselves into Western civilisation. Abdullah Cevdet perceived Western culture as the pivotal factor for advancement and safeguarding against the decline and expansion of Orientalist thought.

Abdullah Cevdet added that the Ottoman society and Muslims also deny and harm the progressive way of Islam.⁴³⁹ ‘Şime-i Husumet’ and ‘Şime-i Muhabbet’ articles express the reason for the backwardness of the Ottoman Empire and other Muslim states is not Islam; it is the mentality of these nations and societies. He suggested that to escape this state of underdevelopment, it is necessary to embrace certain ideas and principles from Western culture as a guiding framework.

Abdullah Cevdet did not assert that every thought of the West should be embraced and all the values of Islam should be discarded. He employed this approach in his intellectual and political writings. He aspired to embrace the scientific and intellectual traditions of the West, reconcile them with Islam, and establish a fresh interpretation of the religion. He aimed to incorporate biological materialism concepts into his writings. His intention was to demonstrate the significance of biological distinctions among nations and align Ottoman society with the esteemed category of Indo-European nations, while still preserving its fundamental principles, such as Islam. He aimed to establish a rational, contemporary, empirical, and atheistic interpretation of Islam. By adopting this approach, he had the belief that Ottoman society and Muslims would attain a profound understanding of Islam. During this process, Abdullah Cevdet aimed to be the vanguard and figurehead of this transformation.

⁴³⁸ Abdullah Cevdet, ‘Şime-i Muhabbet’, *İctihad*, no. 89 (29 January 1914): 1979–84.

⁴³⁹ Kara, *Din ile Modernleşme Arasında*, 33.

Although using Western science, intellectuality, and mentality of the West, Abdullah Cevdet was against a close relationship between the Sultan and Western businessmen who were only considered the source of profits. He argued that Muslims in European faculties have been initiated into the sciences of the West; they alone could make the most of it and the most easily assimilated into Muslim peoples.⁴⁴⁰

Although Abdullah Cevdet wanted to create a philosophical and intellectual religion, most vulgar materialist Ottoman intellectuals did not have such an aim. Most of the Ottoman vulgar materialist intellectuals, except Abdullah Cevdet, did not follow the way of the Marburg School, which proposed a new kind of interpretation of Kantian ethics and Jean Marie Guyau's ideas, which proposed a philosophical religion without obligations and sanctions. Abdullah Cevdet a 'religious infidel' as Şükrü Hanioglu says.⁴⁴¹ Abdullah Cevdet wanted to create a new understanding of Islam, like the 'imagined' religions that the Marburg School and Jean Marie Guyau proposed. Abdullah Cevdet published articles, books, newspapers, and translations to achieve his aim, and he even translated a book about the history of Islam written by an Orientalist writer, Reinhart Dozy.

For this reason and to assort with society's sensitivities, Abdullah Cevdet tried to harmonise these concepts by interpreting Islam in a materialist, positivist, sometimes even evolutionist, Social Darwinist and a little bit scientific way. By doing so, he aimed to create a Modern Muslim Ottoman society. He did not give up using Islam and Islamic concepts in his writings, even in the early Republican period's first years. For instance, in some of his writings in *İctihad*, he says that banners containing ayets and hadiths about social values should be hung on the streets to channel society to the 'right' way.⁴⁴² That may also be understood as the absence of progressive and scientific institutions that shape Islam in a progressive and scientific society and direct society with these new concepts. With the foundation of the Turkish Republic and institutional reforms, that perspective was changed.

⁴⁴⁰ Abdullah Cevdet, 'Erreurs et Vérités', *Idjtihad*, no. 8 (July 1905): 120.

⁴⁴¹ Hanioglu, 'Bir "Mu'tekid Kâfir"ın Büyük Projesi ve Dilmestî-i Mevlânâ', 2014, 11–12.

⁴⁴² Hanioglu, *Osmanlı'dan Cumhuriyet'e Zihniyet, Siyaset ve Tarih*, 58.

6.5. Conclusion of the Chapter

Abdullah Cevdet's aim to become Ludwig Büchner⁴⁴³ of the Ottoman Empire were unsuccessful. One reason is the conservative structure of the Ottoman intellectual, ulema and society. The other reason is that the portrait of Abdullah Cevdet and other materialist intellectuals drawn by themselves conflicts with Islamic discourse. For these reasons, not only Abdullah Cevdet but also other materialist, positivist and evolutionist Ottoman intellectuals could not fully penetrate Muslim society's mind and harmonise their ideas with Islam. They could not create the society and Islam that they wanted. The problem of penetrating society became a general problem for the intellectuals of the Ottoman Empire and Turkey; for this reason, almost none of them reached their aims to create an 'imagined society'.

While Abdullah Cevdet was creating religious 'Wahrheit' (Truth), he relied on three major sources. The first is two foundations of Islam, the Quran and hadith; the second is works of Muslim mysticism, poetry, and philosophy; and the last is a collection of statements on science attributed to Muslim leaders and intellectuals.⁴⁴⁴ That shows that Abdullah Cevdet's Islamic understanding is a combination of classical Islam, philosophical thought and science. He also accepted the scientific and philosophical developments of Islamic scientists and philosophers. He combined them with modern scientific, philosophical and intellectual thought.

In his time and even today, Abdullah Cevdet had been criticised for his thoughts. Creating a new understanding of Islam did not work for the Ottoman Empire and society. Because Abdullah Cevdet, other vulgar materialist intellectuals and Young Turks wanted to use Western intellectuality, scientific thought, philosophy, materialism, positivism and evolutionism more than Classical Islamic thought. That disturbed Islamic scholars and intellectuals, the ruling elite, especially during the Hamidian Era and the public. Abdullah Cevdet's aim of creating a new scientific 'imagined' religion and a new Ottoman society fizzled out. Later, Early Republican

⁴⁴³ Mardin, *Jön Türklerin Siyasî Fikirleri: 1895 - 1908*, 234.

⁴⁴⁴ Hanioglu, 'Blueprints for a Future Society: Late Ottoman Materialists on Science, Religion and Art', 51–52.

ruling elites and intellectuals wanted to use the legacy of Abdullah Cevdet and tried to shape the society.

Due to his efforts to present materialist science to society and to reconcile science with Islam, Abdullah Cevdet is a crucial figure for this thesis. Moreover, his intellectual, social, and political position makes him a remarkable figure in the history of Turkish thought. His pragmatic approach also highlights the need to analyse discussions on ‘science’ and ‘religion’ in a manner distinct from Western frameworks. This is because many individuals, including intellectuals and scholars, tended to interpret almost every concept through the lens of Islamic literature. Even science and intellectualism were often assessed in relation to Islam. Unlike their Western counterparts, particularly those in Britain and the United States, Ottoman intellectuals approached this issue not only as a scientific and intellectual matter, but also as a political and social one, aiming to shape a new society. For this reason, Abdullah Cevdet, like many other Ottoman intellectuals, considered the science–religion debate a vital issue for societal transformation. In this regard, his views echo those of Ernest Haeckel, who famously stated: “Where faith begins, science ends.”⁴⁴⁵ That shows the effort of Abdullah Cevdet to create a scientific religion.

While aiming to create an ‘imagined’ society, Abdullah Cevdet gave an essential role in Islam. He believed that Islam created a nation for its believers.⁴⁴⁶ For this reason, he wanted to strengthen Islam and make it scientific and philosophical. By doing so, he aimed to sustain the life of Ottoman society and protect it from the effect of Orientalist intellectuals, Christian missionaries and the political power of the West. That gives Abdullah Cevdet’s thoughts a political dimension in addition to his intellectual, philosophical, and scientific thoughts.

Early Republican ruling elite and intellectuals were deeply influenced by the Late Ottoman vulgar materialist intellectuals, especially the intellectuals of the Second Constitutional Era. Intellectual discussions and political and social moves of the

⁴⁴⁵ Hanoğlu, 53.

⁴⁴⁶ Mardin, *Jön Türklerin Siyasî Fikirleri: 1895 - 1908*, 236.

Early Republican Period can be put in a different place from the Second Constitutional Era. Abdullah Cevdet is one of the most important figures who brought the intellectual discussions of the pre-Second Constitutional Era, the Second Constitutional Era and the Early Republican Period. Although the ruling elite of the Early Republican Period had some different perspectives from the intellectuals or ruling elite of the Late Ottoman and Second, especially the Second Constitutional Period, the intellectuals of the Second Constitutional Period influenced them heavily. They learned scientism, enlightenment thoughts, pragmatic arguments, and the core of most of the Early Republican Period reforms from the Late Ottoman intellectuals, especially from the intellectuals of the Second Constitutional Era, mostly from Young Turks. Considering this information, it is understandable why Mustafa Kemal Atatürk ordered Abdullah Cevdet to translate Meslier's work. Abdullah Cevdet, in one of his writings, said that when he met Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, he considered some of his ideas, which he wrote in 1902 (six years before the Second Constitution), actualised.⁴⁴⁷ That shows the influence of the Late Ottoman intellectuals on the Early Republican Period and the continuity of intellectual thought during this period. Continuity between the Late Ottoman and Early Republican intellectuals and intellectual thought rather than a break.

After 1924, Abdullah Cevdet reduced using ayets, hadiths and other religious arguments. I think he reduced using religious tools because of the abolishment of the caliphate and the foundation of the Directorate of Religious Affairs. Abdullah Cevdet reduced using religious arguments, hadiths and ayets because the newly founded Turkish Republic adopted to shape the understanding of Islam and new Turkish society under this new understanding of Islam. There is no need to create an understanding of Islam and a new 'imagined' society using this understanding of Islam. Abdullah Cevdet also gave up his 'role' as a religious, social and political guide and only continued his role as a Westernist intellectual until his death.⁴⁴⁸

⁴⁴⁷ Abdullah Cevdet, 'Gazi'nin Köşkünde', *İctihad*, no. 194 (15 December 1925): 3813–16.

⁴⁴⁸ That also contributes to draw the boundraies of the thesis. Thanks to Abdullah Cevdet's approach, I limit the chapter about him with his writings which were written until 1924. By this way I limit the topic with only Late Ottoman Period.

CHAPTER 7

BAHA TEVFIK: DAWN OF MONISTIC THOUGHT

7.1. Importance of Baha Tevfik for this Thesis

Baha Tevfik is the final intellectual examined in this thesis. He is the only figure among those discussed who wrote exclusively during the Second Constitutional Era. Like Beşir Fuad, his writing career lasted approximately five years, yet he produced a significant number of works. His writings can be characterised as both scientific and philosophical. Baha Tevfik sought to make philosophy scientific and science philosophical, reflecting the evolving nature of scientific and philosophical thought among Ottoman intellectuals of the period. In certain respects, Baha Tevfik's approach aligns with that of Beşir Fuad; however, there are also notable differences. Unlike Beşir Fuad, Baha Tevfik placed greater emphasis on philosophy, positioning it as the guiding force behind science. As such, philosophy holds a central role in his intellectual framework, even as he embraced a philosophical interpretation of evolution namely, monistic evolutionism. From a progressive perspective, Baha Tevfik may be regarded as the final representative of the vulgar materialist and evolutionist school of thought in the Ottoman Empire. This view holds some validity, as Baha Tevfik, unlike many other Ottoman intellectuals discussed in this thesis, expanded upon both philosophical and materialist perspectives while rejecting nearly all others. His personal motto "The truth must always be spoken everywhere. There is neither a specific time nor a specific place for this."⁴⁴⁹ illustrates his determination to disseminate his understanding of 'truth' without hesitation. This attitude can be attributed both to his intense intellectual commitment and to the liberal atmosphere of the Second Constitutional Era. Notably, Baha Tevfik did not harshly criticise

⁴⁴⁹ Enur Imeri, 'Baha Tevfiks Vision Einer Religionsfreien Gesellschaft', in *Wissenschaft, Philosophie Und Religion — Religionskritische Positionen Um 1900* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2017), 290.

Islam, nor did he dwell on it extensively in his writings; instead, he expressed his ideas indirectly.

Baha Tevfik's monistic evolutionism is a similar thought as the monistic ideas of Ernest Haeckel. It also represents the core of monism. Monism attributes oneness. So, everything comes from the 'one'. That can be related to Islam, other religions and philosophical thoughts like pantheism and panentheism. I think Baha Tevfik used monism and monistic evolutionism to efficiently serve the idea of evolution to Ottoman society and Muslims. That makes Baha Tevfik pragmatic and pragmatic like other Ottoman intellectuals Baha Tevfik had no aim like Abdullah Cevdet to become a guide for society. Even though Baha Tevfik was a popular figure in that era, he did not have such an aim.

The other important aspect of Baha Tevfik is that he and his friends are the most critical figures against the concept of religion among the intellectuals in this thesis. The reason for that approach is probably related to the liberal atmosphere of the Second Constitutional Era. Even though it lasted a little bit, there was a liberal atmosphere in almost all intellectual, social and political areas. Thanks to this liberal atmosphere, Baha Tevfik and his friends used more critical approach. Even though he criticised the concept of religion harshly than other intellectuals in this thesis, he was aware of criticising Islam directly. Instead, he asked questions in his writings, tried to make readers question, and criticised Islamic thoughts in some areas and perspectives. In addition, the personal thoughts of Baha Tevfik also influenced his intellectual, philosophical, and religious thoughts. For instance, His ethical view and understanding were shaped around this individualistic thought. Baha Tevfik praised individualism while the general attitude was communitarianism to save the Ottoman Empire from collapsing.⁴⁵⁰

Baha Tevfik took Abdullah Cevdet as an example for his scientific thought and understanding. He praised Abdullah Cevdet for seeking 'the naked truth in science

⁴⁵⁰ Mehmet Ö. Alkan, 'Düşünce Tarihimizde Önemli Bir İsim: Baha Tevfik', *Tarih ve Toplum*, no. 43 (April 1988): 44.

and religion'.⁴⁵¹ Like Abdullah Cevdet's motto, "Science is the religion of the elites, and religion is the science of the masses." Baha Tevfik also had a motto and published it in all issues of *Felsefe Mecmuası*: "Religion is a non-arbitrary philosophy; philosophy is an arbitrary religion."⁴⁵² In addition, Baha Tevfik considers philosophy as the completion of all knowledge. According to Baha Tevfik, every knowledge in the universe is based on philosophical knowledge. That also summarises Baha Tevfik's point of view on the idea of knowledge. Baha Tevfik created a correlation between philosophy, science, and scientific and philosophical knowledge. That is also an important aspect of the scientific and philosophical understanding of Baha Tevfik, which I will mention in this chapter. Like Abdullah Cevdet's perception of accepting science as a religion, Baha Tevfik considers philosophy as a religion. Ottoman intellectuals had a perspective and aim to analyse and interpret religion from different perspectives, such as science and philosophy. While doing this, they also aimed to serve this interpretation to the Ottoman society and make them think about it. They aimed to make people think from the perspective these intellectuals used.

Because of his complete translation of *Kraft und Stoff* with Ahmed Nebil, Ottoman readers gained the chance to read that work thoroughly. Because Baha Tevfik mentioned monism, materialism, evolutionism, positivism and philosophical scientism, the progress of these thoughts from the 1860s to 1910s among intellectuals can be seen. That will also help us to see the discussions in that period between intellectuals and the interpretation of scholars, especially Islamic scholars, on these topics. That also contributes to that era's social and intellectual atmosphere. There is an atmosphere of intellectual debate among the intellectuals and scholars of this era, mainly thanks to the liberal atmosphere of the Second Constitutional Era.

Baha Tevfik also did not take any Islamic education; all his education is Western but he took some lessons about Islam, because during the reign of Abdülhamid II, Islamic courses are compulsory in all degrees. Baha Tevfik had a Western

⁴⁵¹ Hanioglu, 'Blueprints for a Future Society: Late Ottoman Materialists on Science, Religion and Art', 65.

⁴⁵² *Felsefe Mecmuası*, 1913.

background in general. That shows that Baha Tevfik has different background from most Ottoman intellectuals.⁴⁵³ Baha Tevfik is also different from the Ottoman intellectuals in this thesis. Maybe because of his background, Baha Tevfik did not mention Islam for political reasons so much and did not aim to harmonise science and Islam in his works in political ways but in a scientific approach.

Baha Tevfik and his friends had an aim to protect scientific Islam, the Ottoman Empire and society from Western influence and expansion like other intellectuals. In addition, they also did not mention that they publish their works to prevent the influence of Christian missionaries and Orientalist intellectuals. They sometimes show the similarities between their concepts and Islamic arguments; they harmonise these concepts with Islamic arguments like other intellectuals in this thesis. Rather than political aims, Baha Tevfik and his friends had more intellectual aims in their writings, and this approach separates them from the other Ottoman intellectuals in this thesis.

Baha Tevfik's approach to 'science' and religion displays both similarities and differences when compared to the other intellectuals discussed in this thesis. Although he had received some religious education, he lacked the religious grounding that characterised the other figures analysed. His antipathy towards religion began in childhood, and he was already critical of it during his high school years. It can be argued that Baha Tevfik exhibited the weakest religious affiliation among the intellectuals examined here. In most of his writings, he expressed disapproval of religion as a concept, while simultaneously expressing admiration for Islam, particularly Islam's openness to science and scientific thought. Despite this, he strongly criticised Islamic scholars and the ways in which Islam was misinterpreted by Muslims. In this regard, his views align with those of Beşir Fuad and Abdullah Cevdet. However, he diverged from Abdullah Cevdet in that he did not use religious argumentation or quotations from Islamic sources, although he occasionally referred to Islamic scholar friends who were sympathetic to science. Baha Tevfik expressed consistent admiration for science and made a conscious effort

⁴⁵³ Ülken, *Türkiye'de çağdaş düşünce tarihi*, 330–31.

to ensure that all ideas conformed to scientific principles. His writings clearly reveal his attempts to render philosophy scientific. Moreover, he sought to correlate human behaviour with scientific principles and believed that ethics should be grounded in science.

Although Baha Tevfik shares certain similarities with Beşir Fuad and Abdullah Cevdet, he can be regarded as more scientific and more distanced from religion and religious discourse than either of them. I will not only mention Baha Tevfik but also mention his friends in *Felsefe Mecmuası*, such as Ahmed Nebil, Subhi Edhem and Edhem Necdet. I add these figures into that chapter, similar to why I added some other writings in the chapter on Münif Paşa. Ahmed Nebil, Subhi Edhem and Edhem Necdet shared almost the same ideas with Baha Tevfik. They wrote in the same journal, *Felsefe Mecmuası*. In addition, Ahmed Nebil wrote some of his writings with Baha Tevfik, so I cannot and will not separate him from Baha Tevfik.

For this reason, I will mention their writings in that chapter and make it a prosopographic chapter rather than a monographic chapter that only includes Baha Tevfik. That also shows that intellectual and philosophical thought had more followers in the Second Constitutional Era than in the Hamidian Era, and intellectuals may have come together and found societies to publish their works and discuss their ideas. Thanks to this, they spread their ideas quickly to Ottoman society and joined discussions among intellectuals.

7.2. Brief Biography

Baha Tevfik was born in İzmir in 1881/1882 or 1884. His friend Subhi Edhem claimed that Baha Tevfik was born in 1884. His father is a custom official. He was educated at İzmir Highschool. His negative thoughts on religion started in high school, and he discussed religion with some of his teachers. He started to write for local newspapers of İzmir, and his interest in materialism arose during this era. After graduating from high school, he attended Mekteb-i Mülkiye in İstanbul. His interest in Western literature and philosophy rose during his education in Mülkiye, which started during high school. After graduating from Mülkiye, he returned to İzmir.

During his time in İzmir, he became friends with Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu, Ömer Seyfettin and Şehabettin Süleyman. This shows that he also attended an intellectual circle during his time in İzmir. During his time in İzmir, he also wrote for the *İzmir* newspaper. He also started to publish his first books during this time. Most of these books and writings are about literature and philosophy. After the dethronement of Abdülhamid II, with the effect of a free atmosphere, Baha Tevfik went to İstanbul, and a new era began for him. During his writing times in İstanbul, he started publishing *Piyano* (Piano) journals. He wrote criticisms about literature and philosophical writings in that journal. He also published a journal called *Düşünüyorum* (I am thinking). After that, he published a humorous magazine called *Eşek* (Donkey). After that, in 1910, he established a publishing house named *Teceddüd-i İlmî ve Felsefî* (Renewal of Science and Philosophy) and began to publish their works from this house. Baha Tevfik, like Abdullah Cevdet, found a publishing house, which shows that he was in an intellectual circle and had friends who shared similar thoughts with him. That will also contribute to this chapter becoming a prosopographic chapter. He became a head writer in *20. Asırda Zeka* (Intelligence in the 20th Century). He was very active in the intellectual sphere of İstanbul and İzmir. The most crucial journal Baha Tevfik and his friends published was *Felsefe Mecmuası* (Philosophy Journal). It was the first philosophical journal in the Ottoman Empire. He died in 1914 at a very young age. Baha Tevfik wrote many articles and books, some of which were written only by Baha Tevfik, but Baha Tevfik wrote some with his friends, mostly Ahmed Nebil. Some of his pen mates in İstanbul were Ahmed Nebil, Ömer Seyfettin, Subhi Edhem, and Memduh Süleyman. Although he had no strong political aims like Abdullah Cevdet, he wanted to raise public awareness. For this reason, he used plain language.⁴⁵⁴ The intellectuals in his era also praised Baha Tevfik. For instance, Bezmi Nusret Kaygusuz praised Baha Tevfik as a very clever, vigilant and enlightened figure.⁴⁵⁵

One of the important works of this publishing house was the translation of *Kraft und Stoff* by Ludwig Büchner, which affected not only the Ottoman vulgar materialists

⁴⁵⁴For detailed information about Baha Tevfik's life this chapter will be beneficial; Rıza Bağcı, *Baha Tevfik'in Hayatı, Edebi ve Felsefî Eserleri Üzerinde Bir Araştırma* (İzmir: Kaynak Yayınları, 1996), 11–38.

⁴⁵⁵ Bezmi Nusret Kaygusuz, *Bir Roman Gibi* (İzmir: İhsan Gümüşayak Matbaası, 1955), 55.

but also all of them worldwide. This book was translated into many languages and called the Bible of Vulgar Materialism. Before Baha Tevfik and Ahmed Nebil, Abdullah Cevdet translated some parts of this book. Still, Baha Tevfik and Ahmed Nebil translated this book completely. Some claim that Beşir Fuad also translated this book, but there is no evidence that he translated this book; although he read and was influenced by the masterpiece of Ludwig Büchner. Unlike Abdullah Cevdet, Baha Tevfik and Ahmed Nebil do not use Islamic quotations like ayets and hadiths in this translation to attract the attention of Ottoman society. Baha Tevfik invited Ulema to try to refute this work.⁴⁵⁶ The controversies in this book continued until the Early Republican Period. This book is the main work of controversies on scientism and vulgar materialism in the Late Ottoman Empire.

Baha Tevfik wrote on many topics such as philosophy, literature, science, and social topics. For instance, he wrote on feminism, anarchism, the famous philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche⁴⁵⁷, ethics, evolution, and vulgar materialism. Baha Tevfik also believed that anarchism became the last step for humanity.⁴⁵⁸ He may be called as a sophisticated intellectual like other intellectuals in this thesis. From this perspective, Baha Tevfik and his ideas and works had similar points to other Ottoman intellectuals in this thesis about mentioning different topics. The point which separates Baha Tevfik from other intellectuals in this thesis, while other intellectuals praise Islam among other religions, especially Christianity, was that Baha Tevfik did not have such an aim. Unlike other Ottoman intellectuals in this thesis, Baha Tevfik had no aim to protect and support the Ottoman Empire and society against the West. He only wanted to educate Ottoman society with his writings. He criticised the concept of religion and sometimes aimed to make people question some concepts of Islam while mentioning the good ways of Islam.

In addition, Baha Tevfik, like other Ottoman intellectuals in this thesis, sometimes conflicts with himself. He sometimes supported opposite thoughts in some of his

⁴⁵⁶ Hanioglu, 'Blueprints for a Future Society: Late Ottoman Materialists on Science, Religion and Art', 67.

⁴⁵⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche also had an influence on the ethical view of Baha Tevfik and that may be accepted as an important point for the Ottoman intellectual history.

⁴⁵⁸ Mete Tunçay, *Türkiye'de Sol Akımlar. Cilt 1: 1908 - 1925* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2009), 45.

writings. That is not special for Baha Tevfik; that is the general understanding of that era. Because these arguments and concepts were brand new for the Ottoman intellectuals, they sometimes adopted different thoughts and quickly changed their minds. They also wanted to analyse these concepts deeply; for this reason, they sometimes mix these opposite concepts and thoughts in their articles and writings.

7.3. Monistic Evolutionism and Scientific Philosophy or Philosophical Science

In the preface section of *Felsefe Mecmuası* 'Birkaç Söz' (A Few Words), Baha Tevfik says that he and his friends, for the first time, founded a library, Teceddüd-i İlmi ve Felsefi Kütüphanesi. That library aimed to spread progressive and philosophical ideas to Ottoman society. In addition, Baha Tevfik emphasises that thanks to *Felsefe Mecmuası* and Teceddüd-i İlmi ve Felsefi Kütüphanesi, they aimed to influence the curriculum of the schools.⁴⁵⁹ From this point, Baha Tevfik and his friends, such as Ahmed Nebil, Ethem Necdet, Ahmet Şuayb, and Subhi Edhem, wanted to educate Ottoman society. That does not mean that they had the aim, like Abdullah Cevdet or other Young Turks, to become the guide of a new imagined Ottoman society based on scientific, intellectual and philosophical arguments. Also, Abdullah Cevdet, in his journal *İctihad*, called *Felsefe Mecmuası* 'bir ezan-ı medeni' 'call to prayer for civilisation'. That shows the perspective of Ottoman vulgar materialists to shape a new understanding of civilisation for Muslim Ottoman society.

Baha Tevfik clarified his views on philosophy and science in the 'Maksad ve Meslek' (Intention and Profession) article of *Felsefe Mecmuası*. In this writing, Baha Tevfik claimed that philosophy is the science of the future. Science could advance to a certain point in any era. This is the point of assumption and theory, beyond which science cannot advance, and this is where philosophy comes into play. "Yesterday's philosophy is the science of today, and the science of tomorrow is the philosophy of today." Baha Tevfik also noted that we should analyse good and benevolent thoughts in two distinct categories. These are physiology and psychology, which analyse the intellect, and the sciences, which analyse the object. That opens the way for logic and

⁴⁵⁹ Baha Tevfik, 'Birkaç Söz', *Felsefe Mecmuası*, no. 1 (8 May 1913): 0.

ethics.⁴⁶⁰ Baha Tevfik embraced science and regarded scientific knowledge as the only way to be pursued. While Baha Tevfik may not be recognised from his perspective as a prominent critic of religion in the intellectual history of the Ottoman Empire, his systematic thought did indeed involve a profound critique of religion as it relates to the study of philosophy. He challenged the conventional perception of knowledge and science, which typically included theological or religious elements that were seen to have a valid claim to knowing. The following remark outlines the fundamental features of Baha Tevfik's thought, which reflect the systematic work of an Ottoman intellectual who played a significant role in the discussion regarding the future vision of the Turkish people, advocating for a radical approach. This method was characterised by a social reformation program that began with humans and was intended to build a materialistic worldview across all social levels. The aim was to establish a progressive and ideally homogeneous society in the 19th century.⁴⁶¹ Although Baha Tevfik wanted this social progress and change, he did not, like Abdullah Cevdet and other Young Turks, aim to become a guide or pioneer for it. Although it is claimed that he was one of the founders and members of 'Osmanlı Sosyalist Fırkası' (Ottoman Socialist Party)⁴⁶², his writings, in this thesis, are not political.

Although Baha Tevfik was very productive, his ideas were mostly fantastic for his time. Ömer Seyfettin described Baha Tevfik as: "He was very hardworking and intelligent, but he had no aim. He could have been a wonderful philosopher with his intelligence but only became a fantasist." Another friend of Baha Tevfik, Memduh Süleyman, says that Baha Tevfik spent his life in the way of science and fought against zealotry. It is a general view that the intellectuals of this era, especially vulgar materialists, regarded themselves as the soldiers of enlightenment. Baha Tevfik and his friends had this opinion, too.⁴⁶³ Baha Tevfik considered in the popular

⁴⁶⁰ Baha Tevfik, 'Maksad ve Meslek', 1.

⁴⁶¹ Imeri, 'Baha Tevfiks Vision Einer Religionsfreien Gesellschaft', 269.

⁴⁶² Tunaya, *Türkiye'de Siyasal Partiler Cilt 1 İkinci Meşrutiyet Dönemi*, 278.

⁴⁶³ To see the article of Ömer Seyfeddin about Baha Tevfik look at: Ömer Seyfeddin, 'Baha Tevfik', *Karagöz*, no. 32 (22 May 1330): 113.

materialism of the mid-nineteenth Century the 'Wahrheit' and philosophy of the future. He considers philosophy as the science of the future.⁴⁶⁴

According to him, philosophy first imagines something and creates the basic concepts; then, science builds material things upon these abstract concepts. His belief and understanding of this idea of philosophy made him calmer and more future-orientated than Abdullah Cevdet's fanatic view, which is changing today with the power of the masses. Baha Tevfik's ideas are different from Abdullah Cevdet's in some ways. With this characterisation of striving for knowledge as a constitutive characteristic of man, Baha Tevfik creates the basis for granting philosophy, despite its speculative nature, a right to exist in the system of positive sciences.⁴⁶⁵

Baha Tevfik strongly opposed the notion of metaphysics, both in its philosophical and theological connotations. His opposition to metaphysics is particularly evident in his articles in *Felsefe Mecmuası*. He asserted that certain renowned philosophers are likewise opposed to metaphysics and its instructions. Furthermore, he asserts that metaphysics cannot be considered a science because it lacks empirical evidence to support its assertions. According to Baha Tevfik, the absence of empirical data in metaphysics means that there is no evidence or substantiation for metaphysical concepts and ideas. Baha Tevfik also added that instead of studying 'redundant' knowledge and topics like metaphysics, people should study 'necessary' knowledge like science and scientific knowledge.⁴⁶⁶ This anti-metaphysical approach is like Beşir Fuad's approach. Rejecting metaphysics means not only rejecting philosophical metaphysics but also rejecting religious metaphysics. Baha Tevfik, like Beşir Fuad, rejected religious metaphysics and religions. He did not in any way develop his program in confrontation with Islamic legitimization claims regarding the compatibility of religion and science, but rather, in the spirit of positivism and materialism, his devastating judgement of any epistemological claims of religion

⁴⁶⁴ From that perspective we may say that Baha Tevfik used the perspective of positivism and tried to make every concept scientific.

⁴⁶⁵ Imeri, 'Baha Tevfik's Vision Einer Religionsfreien Gesellschaft', 279.

⁴⁶⁶ Baha Tevfik, 'Mekteb Dersleri', *Felsefe Mecmuası*, 1329, 42–43.

because of the premises of his thinking.⁴⁶⁷ Baha Tevfik's aim is a representation of the secularisation of all concepts. Thanks to this, he wanted to make all the concepts material.

Baha Tevfik expressed admiration for science, philosophy, and intellectual pursuits in his writings. When discussing science or philosophy, he establishes a connection or draws comparisons between these two concepts. Baha Tevfik's publications rarely involve direct comparisons or correlations between scientific knowledge or philosophy and religion or religious understanding. That indicates his disregard for religion or religious knowledge. Consequently, he deliberately avoided attempting to directly reconcile, correlate, or compare philosophy and science with religion in his writings. Within certain portions of his texts, he offered critiques of metaphysics and raised inquiries about religion. However, it is important to note that he does not seek to reconcile or integrate religion or metaphysics with religion. While he occasionally employed certain concepts such as monism, which bears resemblance to Islamic ideology, his intention was not to reconcile them as done by other Ottoman intellectuals like Abdullah Cevdet and certain members of the Young Turks movement.

Baha Tevfik's thoughts are based on three pillars. These are 'the law of evolution; the infinity of matter, its immortality, and the impossibility of its creation or annihilation; and the theory of the cell', which would take the position of philosophy. Baha Tevfik and Subhi Edhem were friends, and these two intellectuals tried to associate the view of the force of Büchner with monism.⁴⁶⁸ That thought shows us that Baha Tevfik and his friends built their ideas and scientific philosophy, or philosophical science, as the reflection of vulgar materialism in the Ottoman Empire. Although Baha Tevfik and his friends based their scientific and philosophical understanding on these three pillars, they did not aim to use these concepts to create a new society with these concepts like Abdullah Cevdet. From this point of view, Baha Tevfik and his friends Ahmed Nebil, Edhem Necdet and Subhi Edhem are

⁴⁶⁷ Imeri, 'Baha Tevfiks Vision Einer Religionsfreien Gesellschaft', 269.

⁴⁶⁸ Hanioğlu, 'Blueprints for a Future Society: Late Ottoman Materialists on Science, Religion and Art', 69–70, 76.

breakpoints for scientific/vulgar materialism in the Ottoman Empire. Because there was no such intellectual as Baha Tevfik, his friends criticised the concept of religion excluding Islam.

Baha Tevfik established a connection between philosophy and science, considering it an essential requirement based on positivism and materialism. He considered both positivism and materialism as the approach employed in both science and philosophy. In this perspective, it is noteworthy that the sciences, as understood by Baha Tevfik, are consistently associated with the concepts of ‘ilm’ and ‘fünün’, materialism, and positivism. Materialism, as defined by Baha Tevfik, is the belief that everything, including the soul, can be ultimately explained by matter.⁴⁶⁹ By accepting ‘the law of evolution, infinity of matter and theory of the cell’ as the three pillars of Baha Tevfik’s thought, Baha Tevfik’s scientific understanding is based on positivism and materialism, like other Ottoman intellectuals in this thesis.

Baha Tevfik had prioritised the examination of classifying the sciences based on their understanding of the eternal and original character of the universe. The most advanced field of science must also incorporate the fundamental concepts of other fields. The placement of nature observation at the forefront does not ensure this outcome, as natural science does not encompass other disciplines that investigate different facets of human existence. Politics, history, and jurisprudence pertain specifically to the characteristics and behaviours inherent in human nature. Therefore, at Baha Tevfik, psychology takes precedence over natural science as the main area of study within philosophy.⁴⁷⁰ Like Beşir Fuad, with the influence of August Comte, Baha Tevfik used a classification among sciences. There is a difference between Baha Tevfik’s concept of science and classification from Beşir Fuad and August Comte, who changed the human position in this classification.

Baha Tevfik also can be considered as the reflection of Beşir Fuad in the Second Constitutional Era for their similar thoughts, especially on science and philosophy. For instance, Baha Tevfik also supported the idea that Beşir Fuad mentioned in his

⁴⁶⁹ Imeri, ‘Baha Tevfiks Vision Einer Religionsfreien Gesellschaft’, 280.

⁴⁷⁰ Imeri, 287.

work *Beşer*. According to that thought, humans should be examined and understood through material and scientific aspects, such as physiology and psychology, rather than relying on social constructs like cultural and religious connections. This also gave rise to the development of abstract humanism. The interpretation of Baha Tevfik, influenced by Beşir Fuad, received severe criticism from Turkists during that time.⁴⁷¹ This demonstrates that debates around science and materialism had a significant impact not only on religious, intellectual, and philosophical domains, but also on political realms. Baha Tevfik not only embodied the ideals of Beşir Fuad during his time, but he also had a political stance like Abdullah Cevdet. However, unlike Abdullah Cevdet, Baha Tevfik did not seek to reconcile Islam with philosophy or science. Baha Tevfik is distinct from other Ottoman intellectuals, making him a unique personality in this regard.

Felsefe Mecmuası focused on Western philosophy rather than Eastern philosophy. The philosophical writings it contained were primarily composed of translations and excerpts from European philosophers. The most significant among these were the translations and excerpts from Immanuel Kant and Ernst Haeckel. The journal reflects Baha Tevfik and his associates' views on scientism; they interpreted philosophy and other topics from a scientistic perspective throughout the publication. As a group, Baha Tevfik and his colleagues carried on the individual efforts of Beşir Fuad in advocating for the superiority of science and became the collective voice of scientism. Baha Tevfik was also considered one of the three pillars of Ottoman vulgar materialism, alongside Beşir Fuad and Abdullah Cevdet. Each of these intellectuals represented a distinct approach to scientism, combining it with different perspectives. For instance, Beşir Fuad fused scientism and vulgar materialism with literature, particularly realism and naturalism, and scientific thought. Abdullah Cevdet, on the other hand, blended scientism with Islam and classical poetry. Baha Tevfik integrated it with philosophy, placing particular emphasis on the role of philosophy and its impact on humanity. Baha Tevfik translated many philosophical works, including both complete texts and selected excerpts. The most important among these are the articles on Kant and his philosophy published in *Felsefe*

⁴⁷¹ Işın, 'Osmanlı Materyalizmi', 366.

Mecmuası, as well as a book on Nietzsche. As Hasan Ünal Nalbantoğlu suggests, Nietzsche's ideas had a notable influence on Baha Tevfik and his circle. Sharing in the Angst (anxiety) that befell a society rapidly retreating into modernity amid the collapse of an empire, they embodied what Karl Mannheim termed the 'freischwebende Intelligenz' (socially unattached intelligentsia).⁴⁷²

In addition to Hasan Ünal Nalbantoğlu's claims, this 'anxiety' is valid for almost all Late Ottoman intellectuals. The intellectuals I analysed in this thesis, all the intellectuals had this 'anxiety' and mainly used their arguments with this anxiety. They even harmonised, correlated and combined Islamic and cultural values with these modern philosophical and scientific arguments. Only Baha Tevfik and his friends did not have such an aim to harmonise or correlate these ideas with Islamic and cultural values most of the times. That makes Baha Tevfik unique, more universal, and Western than other intellectuals in this thesis who use local values.

Baha Tevfik accepted Nietzsche's perspective on the concept of God. Nietzsche perceived God as a lifeless cadaver or deceased entity during the Modern Era, while Baha Tevfik regards God and religion as superfluous, particularly in light of the advancements in science during that period. It might be argued that Baha Tevfik, rather than Nietzsche, introduced a new deity: science. While Nietzsche held a pessimistic view of the Enlightenment, Baha Tevfik embraced many aspects of the Age of Enlightenment.

Baha Tevfik and his followers also espoused their positivist, evolutionist, scientific, and vulgar materialist ideologies as philosophy. Additionally, they aim to establish a scientific foundation for philosophy, focusing on certain subtopics, such as Beşir Fuad. The scientific knowledge is based on positivism and materialism. Their ideology can be described as scientific, or even scientific, as it firmly embraces the principles of science and has surpassed religion in terms of its influence and credibility.

⁴⁷² Hasan Ünal Nalbantoğlu, 'Nietzsche ve Heidegger Türkçe'nin Evinde: Farklı Dilde Aynı Metafizik', *Toplum ve Bilim*, no. 98 (Autumn 2003): 89.

In the preface section of *Madde ve Kuvvet*, Baha Tevfik and Ahmed Nebil clarified that, while they harshly criticised the concept of religion, they did not criticise Islam. They specifically state that the religion criticised by Büchner is Christianity, including its corrupted version. Büchner denounced the illogical practices of this morally compromised religion. Both Islam and Christianity were the targets of Büchner's attacks. Currently, Baha Tevfik and Ahmed Nebil asserted that Islamic scholars have been unable to provide a response to these accusations. The upsetting thing about this topic is the lack of knowledge of Islamic scholars' foreign languages. Baha Tevfik and Ahmed Nebil claimed they translated the book, enabling Islamic scholars and others to respond to the allegations. They expressed similar ideas in the preface section of *Vahdet-i Mevcud Bir Tabiat Aliminin Dini*. In the preface section of this work, Baha Tevfik stated that authors of such works do not intend to attack Islam. If they do attack, it indicates a lack of understanding of Islam. Also, in the conclusion part, he added that Islam is a scientific religion which these authors want to create.⁴⁷³ They emphasised the difference between Vahdet-i Vücut (unity of existence) and Vahdet-i Mevcut (monism). They claimed that their aim for translating this book is to show the truth to people. Baha Tevfik and Ahmed Nebil emphasised the Islamic scholars' unknowingness of Western languages again. For this reason, they could not reply to the arguments of Western intellectuals who are against Islam. In addition, Baha Tevfik and Ahmed Nebil said that they translated this book and their other books to show the arguments of their enemies, the Western intellectuals against Islam. Again, Baha Tevfik and Ahmed Nebil claim that the critiques of Haeckel against Islam came from his lack of knowledge about Islam. Baha Tevfik and Ahmed Nebil speak highly of Islam and say Islam is a wonderful religion that no scientist could refuse. They said that they translated this book with the support of their friend Hafız İsmail Efendi. He claimed that science and Islam have no contradiction with each other.⁴⁷⁴ Although Baha Tevfik and his friends did not have a program to protect Islam, they sometimes, maybe to protect themselves, protected Islam in their writings and tried to show scientific, philosophical and

⁴⁷³ Mehmet Ö. Alkan, 'Osmanlı Darwinizmi', *Cogito*, no. 60–61 (Winter 2009): 351–53.

⁴⁷⁴ Ludwig Büchner, *Madde ve Kuvvet*, trans. Baha Tevfik and Ahmed Nebil (İstanbul: Teceddüd-i İlmî ve Felsefî Kütübhanesi, 1911), 5–8; Ernst Haeckel, *Vahdet-i Mevcud Bir Tabiat Aliminin Dini*, trans. Baha Tevfik and Ahmed Nebil (İstanbul: Dersaadet Kütübhanesi, 1327), 2–6, 86–88.

modern ways and compatibleness of Islam with these values. Even Baha Tevfik considered Islam as a cement for Ottoman society and used it.

Ernest Haeckel regarded and accepted monism as a religion and religious understanding rather than an intellectual or philosophical concept. For this understanding of religion, Ernest Haeckel proposed some prerequisites, like basic knowledge of evolution, logic and intelligence to understand basic concepts, belief in understanding, and preventing the attacks of dualism and pluralism and preventing the mind from religious superstition. According to Haeckel, people should abandon the arguments of Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and other religions and find pure ethics based on anthropological data. In this way, Haeckel faced criticism from Baha Tevfik and Ahmed Nebil, who claimed that Haeckel lacked sufficient knowledge of Islam and invited Islamic scholars to challenge his views.⁴⁷⁵ Unlike Abdullah Cevdet's effort to create a rational Islam, Baha Tevfik did not intend to create a new religion for Ottoman society or become the intellectual leader of monistic Islam, although he proposed some arguments and reformations for Islam. While presenting Haeckel's evolutionary idea, Baha Tevfik claimed that Islam is the consequence of the evolution of religion. Some Islamic scholars criticised that perspective. To refute their ideas, Baha Tevfik criticised the 'poverty' of Ottoman Muslim scholars.⁴⁷⁶ Baha Tevfik placed evolution and evolutionary thought at the centre of his intellectual world and analysed every concept with it. As he proposed Islam as the last chain of evolution of religions, he used scientific perspective. In addition, because evolution is a continuous process, Baha Tevfik believed that Islam should evolve in a more scientific way.

Baha Tevfik wanted to adopt most of the Western World's concepts and implementations of the Western World in almost all areas. For instance, Baha Tevfik emphasised that physical education and sports classes should be taught in the Ottoman Empire's schools like in the West, the aim of Baha Tevfik was actualised in

⁴⁷⁵ Ernst Haeckel, *Der Monismus Als Band Zwischen Religion Und Wissenschaft*. (Leipzig: Alfred Kröner Verlag, 1908), 27–28; Haeckel, *Vahdet-i Mevcud Bir Tabiat Aliminin Dini*, 62–64.

⁴⁷⁶ Hanioglu, 'Blueprints for a Future Society: Late Ottoman Materialists on Science, Religion and Art', 67.

the Early Republican Era.⁴⁷⁷ Baha Tevfik was not a pioneer figure like Abdullah Cevdet for the early Republican period's policies. However, because of their approach to the Western World, Late Ottoman intellectuals like Baha Tevfik became important figures in Westernising the institutions of the Late Ottoman Empire and Early Republican Turkey.

Baha Tevfik and his friends brought a new approach to vulgar materialism based on Ernst Haeckel's monistic thought and the Lamarckian approach to Darwinist evolution. It is important that Baha Tevfik tried to harmonise 'idealistic' monism with the mechanical evolutionism of Lamarck and Darwin. Baha Tevfik also claimed that one of the major successes of Baha Tevfik and his friends, especially Ahmed Nebil, was avoiding using the ideas of mechanical materialism and evolutionism. Baha Tevfik, Ahmed Nebil, Abdullah Cevdet and other Ottoman intellectuals in this thesis tried to use local values or concepts that may fit into local values or Islamic arguments. This makes Baha Tevfik and his friends, pragmatic figures like Abdullah Cevdet, fit the ideas for society to be more acceptable and suitable for their sensitivities. This made Baha Tevfik and his friends important and crucial figures not only for the last generation of Ottoman vulgar materialists but also for Ottoman/Turkish intellectual history.

Baha Tevfik, with the influences of Ludwig Büchner, believed and emphasised that non-scientists should not make philosophy. Büchner considered the philosophy of non-scientists as the 'philosophy of empty words'. Büchner also called this philosophy as 'des gelehrten Maulheldenthums' (learned mouth heroism) and 'philosophischen Charlatanismus' (Philosophical Charlatanism). This philosophy should live no more, according to Büchner and, Baha Tevfik. Actually, that approach is not unique to Ludwig Büchner, the general idea of vulgar materialist intellectuals. Vulgar materialist intellectuals like Büchner and Baha Tevfik believed that philosophy should be based on scientific, materialistic and empirical values.⁴⁷⁸ Baha Tevfik

⁴⁷⁷ Poyraz, 'Science versus Religion: The Influence of European Materialism on Turkish Thought, 1860-1960', 105.

⁴⁷⁸ Hanioğlu, 'Blueprints for a Future Society: Late Ottoman Materialists on Science, Religion and Art', 66.

claimed that philosophy opens the way for science, so Baha Tevfik's understanding of philosophy is scientific philosophy. This also shows the view of Baha Tevfik, like Beşir Fuad and other vulgar materialists in the Ottoman Empire, on the superiority of science among all the knowledge. This idea outdoes the power of religious authority and knowledge in the intellectual view.

Baha Tevfik and Ahmed Nebil emphasised that in the translation of *Kraft und Stoff*, force and matter affect every notion and concept in the universe, even natural phenomena. For instance, while mentioning the adaptation of humans and other living creatures, Büchner, Baha Tevfik, and Ahmed Nebil explain this notion with the relationship between force and matter. Even natural selection was the product of force and matter. In that argument, Büchner also quoted Ernest Haeckel. In that quotation, Haeckel emphasised that natural phenomena show that the natural phenomenon and balance between nature and living creatures is not the product of a creator but the product of natural selection. Büchner told that: “.... Science and physiology completely refused simple and punky religious ideas....”⁴⁷⁹ Rather than the notion and ideas of a creator who decides every action in the universe and controls every notion and thing in the universe, force and matter control every action in the universe; even evolution is based on the relationship between these two inseparable concepts. The concept of force and matter replaces God's position in the thoughts of Ludwig Büchner, Ernest Haeckel, Baha Tevfik, Ahmed Nebil, and other vulgar materialist intellectuals.

As Abdullah Cevdet mentioned in his translation *Tarih-i İslamiyet, Madde ve Kuvvet* was a topic not only for religious discussions but also philosophical and intellectual discussions, and this makes it one of the most important books of Turkish intellectual history and shows that discussions about philosophy, history and science mostly face against religion and religious arguments to spread in the intellectual area. Baha Tevfik and Ahmed Nebil touched on science, philosophy, religion, and science. They hit three birds with one stone, touching these topics and combining them in their

⁴⁷⁹ Büchner, *Kraft Und Stoff: Oder, Grundzüge Der Natürlichen Weltordnung, Nebst Einer Darauf Gebauten Moral Oder Sittenlehre, in Allgemein Verständlicher Darstellung*, 211–16; Büchner, *Madde ve Kuvvet*, 315–23.

work. Thanks to this, they aimed to create harmony between these three important topics and attract the public's attention. Ottoman intellectuals wanted to popularise these religious, intellectual and scientific topics to 'enlighten' Ottoman society. Although some intellectuals like Abdullah Cevdet also had political and social aims like creating a new society, Baha Tevfik and his friends had no aim like creating a new society.

Baha Tevfik, along with other Ottoman intellectuals, advocated for a form of materialism that was characterised by its focus on biological and evolutionary aspects, rather than mechanical materialism. The concept of materialism in question diverges from the mechanistic materialism espoused by Descartes, Cabanis, d'Holbach, Helvetius, La Metrie, d'Alembert, and Diderot. Contrary to this, Baha Tevfik, along with other intellectuals examined in this thesis, adopted the evolutionary ideas of Lamarck and Darwin and merged them with the vulgar materialistic beliefs of Karl Vogt, Moleschott, Ludwig Büchner, Ernest Haeckel, and Müller. In his thesis, Baha Tevfik, along with vulgar materialists and Ottoman intellectuals, placed great importance on the concept of 'transformation'.⁴⁸⁰ That idea is like Ahmed Midhat's, which he mentioned in his article "Duvarın bir Sade" in his journal *Dağarcık*. That idea reflects materialism and accepts all things in the universe, even humans, as material things and rejects the death of material. Instead of death, materials transformed in this concept. This idea and concept conflict with the idea of religions, especially Islam, which attributes an important position to spirit.

Although Baha Tevfik did not aim to become a muftahid like Abdullah Cevdet, he cared about society's sensitivities and specified the essential points to attract and influence society. Thanks to this, he wanted to prevent possible reactions, especially from Islamic and conservative Muslim scholars and gave 'non-Islamic' ways so he would get closer to finding supporters for his thoughts in Ottoman society. The important point is that they tried to gain a scientific base for philosophy and religion in this work. Although Baha Tevfik and Ahmed Nebil believed in the superiority of science like Beşir Fuad, they hesitated to criticise Islam like Beşir Fuad. They also praised Islam like Beşir Fuad and said Islam is suitable for science in *Vahdet-i*

⁴⁸⁰ Ülken, *Türkiye'de çağdaş düşünce tarihi*, 341–42.

Mevcut. I think that, like Beşir Fuad, Baha Tevfik did not believe in this idea and was an enthusiastic atheist; because of the possible reactions from Islamic society, Baha Tevfik and Ahmed Nebil praised Islam and criticised Christianity, ‘corrupted Christianity’.

The other important factor which affected the writing policy of Baha Tevfik and Ahmed Nebil was their pragmatic stand. For this reason, they determined their writing policy according to the sensitivities of the Muslim Ottoman society. Baha Tevfik praised Islam in these writings and sometimes he had an aim to reconcile Islam with vulgar materialism, and science in his words. According to Baha Tevfik, scientists and religious classes have different world views and aims, so they should not intervene in each other’s sphere. Even though he considered himself as a guide for a society like other vulgar materialists like Beşir Fuad and Abdullah Cevdet. He, like Beşir Fuad, only praised Islam and did not adopt and interpret Islam like Abdullah Cevdet. Although Baha Tevfik and his friends did not directly attack Islam, Islamic scholars attacked and wrote refutations to the works of Baha Tevfik and Ahmed Nebil. Baha Tevfik and Ahmed Nebil ignored these scholars and their refutations. The main reason for that ignorance is that Baha Tevfik and Ahmed Nebil did not give importance to most of these refutations.⁴⁸¹

Although they did not care about some of the refutations, sometimes they gave answers to them. Ahmed Nebil, for example, wrote a piece about Harputizade's

⁴⁸¹ There are a lot of refutations to Ludwig Büchner’s masterpiece work *Kraft und Stoff* in the Ottoman Empire. The first refutation was made before the complete translation of the book by İsmail Ferid as *İbtâl-i Mezheb-i Mâddiyyun (Annulment of the Profession of Materialism)* in 1895. After the translation of this book by Baha Tevfik and Ahmed Nebil, the number of refutations against this book increased. The first refutation after the translation is *Red ve İsbat (Refusal and Proof)* in 1914 by Harputizade Hacı Mustafa Efendi. Also, Şehbenderzade Filibeli Ahmed Hilmi wrote a refutation to materialism of Büchner, with critiques to Westernist intellectual Celal Nuri Bey named *Huzûr-ı Akl ü Fende Maddiyyûn Meslek-i Dalâleti (Perversion of the Profession of Materialism in the presence of Wisdom and Science)*. In the Early Republican Period, Emin Feyzi wrote a refutation to materialism and evolutionism and heavily includes Büchner’s ideas and Darwinian and Lamarckian Evolution, named *İlim ve İrade (Science and Will)* in 1924. The last refutation against *Madde ve Kuvvet*, was written by İsmail Fenni Ertuğrul as *Maddiyyun Mezhebinin İzmihlali (Collapse of the Profession of Materialism)*. Even, Emin Feyzi and İsmail Fenni Ertuğrul did not mention Baha Tevfik and Ahmed Nebil, most probably, they learnt this book from the translation of Baha Tevfik and Ahmed Nebil. Baha Tevfik and Ahmed Nebil affected discussions on materialism until Early Republican period. The masterpiece of Ludwig Büchner became one of the most important works for the discussions of scientism and religion, (vulgar/scientific) materialism and evolutionism topics for almost 30-40 years of period from both opposite intellectual sides.

debunking. He criticised the idea of Harputizade, which considers an act of reason rather than an object for action in everything in the universe. According to Ahmed Nebil, in Classical Islamic thought, everything comes from God and will go and merge with him. After providing this information, he claimed that Harputizade did not know this basic philosophical and Islamic information, so he should not have published books like this. Ahmed Nebil adds that this book cannot be accepted as a refutation of the work *Kraft und Stoff* of Ludwig Büchner and does not include any information about science.⁴⁸² This shows that although Baha Tevfik and his friends did not give importance to Islamic sciences and information, they sometimes used this information to reply to refutations written against them. They were also informed about Islam and Islamic philosophy.

One of the refutations which Baha Tevfik answered is Ali Kemal's comment on Baha Tevfik and Ahmed Nebil's translation of *Madde ve Kuvvet*. Baha Tevfik shared Ali Kemal's comments to readers. According to that, Ali Kemal claimed that *Madde ve Kuvvet* is not suitable for recent scientific developments. He said that this book is nonsense. Baha Tevfik considered that, this work may be criticised, and in Europe, some intellectuals like Lange criticised this book, but Büchner tried to improve its arguments. Baha Tevfik also claimed that if *Madde ve Kuvvet* is unsuitable for recent scientific developments, as Ali Kemal claimed, he should also prove it.⁴⁸³

Baha Tevfik also mentioned human existence in the world via translations from Ernst Haeckel. The effect of monistic evolutionism and vulgar materialism in this article series is certain. Baha Tevfik and Ernest Haeckel claimed that there is no matter without force and no force without matter. This argument is also the exact thought of Ludwig Büchner's *Kraft und Stoff*. Baha Tevfik also translated the work of Ernst Haeckel *Die Welträthsel* as *Kainatın Muammaları* (The Riddle of the Universe). He stated that the developments in the last century have contributed significantly to the life of science and thought. Although people developed in science and intellectuality, in the field of morality, people are behind in the past centuries, according to Baha

⁴⁸² Ahmed Nebil, 'Bir İzah', *20. Asırda Zeka*, no. 8 (24 June 1912): 21–22.

⁴⁸³ Baha Tevfik, 'Tenkîd-i Felsefi', *Felsefe Mecmuâsı*, no. 5 (10 July 1913): 66–68.

Tevfik. He tried to establish these developments in the Ottoman Empire. With the developments in this century, microscopic creatures began to be studied. It has been revealed that even multicellular organisms are descended from single-celled creatures thanks to embryology. This thought is related to evolutionary thought. In addition, thanks to pathology, the causes of diseases have begun to be investigated. Haeckel and Baha Tevfik claimed that the notion of spirit and metaphysics lost their position thanks to embryology.⁴⁸⁴ Every concept in the universe is correlated with scientific thought and non-empirical concepts are outdone, according to Baha Tevfik. Baha Tevfik correlated the process of thinking with non-material things rather than material things.⁴⁸⁵ Although Baha Tevfik explained all process in the universe with material concepts, he sometimes proposed idealistic arguments, like Haeckel did.

Baha Tevfik asserted that the application of the theory of evolution to all aspects is a significant outcome of the 19th century. The notion was initially offered by Goethe in 1799, followed by Lamarck in 1809, and finally by Darwin in 1859. In addition, Haeckel asserted that in 1859, Darwin refuted the notion that 'The world exists solely for the benefit of humans.' This reasoning is also in contradiction with religious beliefs, particularly Islamic views. Islam emphasises the value of all living beings, as stated in the Quran, which teaches that everything is created for the benefit of people. Baha Tevfik establishes a connection between monism and evolution in this article.⁴⁸⁶

Baha Tevfik also mentioned monism, which was reinterpreted with the developments in the 19th-century Philosophy of Nature, mainly with the works of German intellectual and biologist Ernst Haeckel. Baha Tevfik used the word 'philosophy' with his views about seeing philosophy as the processor of science. Looking at this understanding, Baha Tevfik and Ahmed Nebil's views reflect their ideas about

⁴⁸⁴ Ernst Haeckel, 'Kainatın Muammaları', trans. Baha Tevfik, *Felsefe Mecmuâsı*, no. 1 (8 May 1913): 9–13.

⁴⁸⁵ Baha Tevfik, 'Mekteb Dersleri', 2.

⁴⁸⁶ Haeckel, *Vahdet-i Mevcud Bir Tabiat Aliminin Dini*, 18; Ernst Haeckel, 'Kainatın Muammaları', trans. Baha Tevfik, *Felsefe Mecmuâsı*, no. 2 (19 May 1913): 24–25. In translation Baha Tevfik and Ahmed Nebil wrote that in 1859, Spencer demolished the view of 'The world is for humans.' The reason of this mistake maybe connected with Spencer's popularity in the Ottoman intellectual world and Ottoman intellectuals intimacy to Spencer's Social Darwinistic and sociological arguments.

positivistic science. Positivism wants to make everything positive and accuse everything that is not empirical as unfavourable and underestimate these. Baha Tevfik and his friend Ahmed Nebil explained the philosophy of monism, Vahdet-i Mevcut, in Turkish and say the difference between this notion from Vahdet-i Vücut as In the thought of ‘Vahdet-i Vücut’ it is certain that all created things as ruined and extinct in the creator but in ‘Vahdet-i Mevcut’ the creator as existing in all created things. According to Baha Tevfik and Ahmed Nebil, the second one is more scientific. The first methos is deduction; the second one is induction. Baha Tevfik and Ahmed Nebil claim that monism also exists in Islamic thought. They gave Bektashis, an Islamic heterodox cult, as an example for their argument. They say that they translated this work to present this view scientifically to the public.⁴⁸⁷ That shows the pragmatic way of Baha Tevfik and Ahmed Nebil and their effort to transform society into a modern and intellectual society.

In their translation of *Der Monismus* by Ernst Haeckel, Baha Tevfik and Ahmed Nebil stated that the universe comprises both organic and inorganic beings, all part of an evolutionary process. According to this view, it is impossible to separate God from nature; matter and force are inseparable. Once this principle is accepted, all forms of knowledge should be regarded on an equal footing. While knowledge concerning the soul is also significant, it may be considered a sub-branch of knowledge related to matter. The distinction between monism and the Islamic concept of Vahdet-i Vücut is clear in this example. Haeckel, along with Baha Tevfik and Ahmed Nebil, reiterated that matter cannot be separated from force, the spirit from the body, or God from nature. To support his view, Haeckel cited Goethe’s poem *Gott und Welt* (God and World), while Baha Tevfik and Ahmed Nebil also drew upon verses from Rumi to reinforce their interpretation of this unistic conception of the material world. They further argued that evolution is a central point of monism, asserting that human beings, like all other creatures in the universe, are part of the evolutionary cycle.⁴⁸⁸

⁴⁸⁷ Haeckel, *Vahdet-i Mevcud Bir Tabiat Aliminin Dini*, 3–5.

⁴⁸⁸ Haeckel, 9–10.

While mentioning evolution, Baha Tevfik emphasised the effect of nature on organisms and evolution. That is closer to Lamarckian evolution rather than Darwin's natural selection. It is also like Ahmed Midhat's thoughts on evolution. Baha Tevfik had an important interest in evolution. Understandably, writings, books, and translations are not only wholly associated with evolution but also with works about vulgar materialism. For instance, *Madde ve Kuvvet* has a chapter about evolution, written after Darwin's *Origin of the Species* in 1859, and Büchner added a chapter about evolution. Vulgar materialism has a strong connection with evolutionism not only in Europe but also in the Ottoman context. At the same time, Baha Tevfik also tried to combine Darwin's evolution with Ernst Haeckel's monism. The important thing they miss is their understanding of unity and monism based on material things. If there is a spiritual world, it is considered part of the material world; however, in Islamic and metaphysical unity, the spiritual world transcends the material. They are partially correct, as *Vahdet-i Vücut* in Islamic philosophy bears a resemblance to monism, albeit with a different perspective. In *Vahdet-i Vücut*, everything in the universe is part of the creator. It is also like pantheism and panentheism in Western philosophy. This indicates that Baha Tevfik, along with other Ottoman intellectuals, attempted to demonstrate how these intellectual and scientific arguments bear similarities to Islamic arguments in philosophy.

Ludwig Büchner, Baha Tevfik, and Ahmed Nebil rejected the idea that there is causation in the universe that a creator decided. The causation idea of Büchner, Baha Tevfik, and Ahmed Nebil holds that everything in the universe exists for a purpose. For instance, they created the world for humans, who find beauty in some flowers. On the contrary, Büchner expressed that if the world was created for humans, why are there uninhabited lands in it? Furthermore, Büchner questioned why flowers, designed for beauty, are fading away. Büchner added that if the world was created for humans, why do humans not have strong eyes or legs like other animals and become weak in nature? Büchner also says that if there is causation in the universe and humans are the most precious creatures in the universe, why are ill and deformed people born? Furthermore, Büchner said that if there is a balance and causation in the world, why do animals and humans struggle? Is selection a natural phenomenon in the universe? Büchner said that the universe will end because there are no specialities

or causes like other planets and stars, but it won't be like religious destruction; the universe will become force and matter.⁴⁸⁹ That brings us to the problem of evil. With this argument, Baha Tevfik aimed to break the fatalism in Ottoman society. Thanks to this, he also wanted to break the laziness of society and drive them to work and show interest in science and philosophy.

Arguments of Baha Tevfik can be seen as a kind of pantheism, maybe pan-naturism, but there it is the reverse form of it. Ülken claims that it may be called as atheistic pantheism.⁴⁹⁰ However, Haeckel specifically associated monism with God, and Baha Tevfik employed a similar approach. Perhaps Baha Tevfik and his companions employed monism as a means of successfully spreading their beliefs. In addition, people may believe that by aligning their thoughts with Vahdet-i Vücud, a concept within Islamic thinking and especially Islamic mysticism, they might safeguard themselves against potential criticism or attacks from Islamic scholars and Muslims. Therefore, it may be said that Baha Tevfik and his colleagues, similar to other intellectuals of the Ottoman Empire discussed in this thesis, adopted a pragmatic approach. Put simply, they refrained from directly targeting society's sensitivity and instead expressed their criticisms indirectly through allusions. This is the prevailing disposition of the Ottoman intelligentsia during that time, without any exceptions.

Although some philosophers and intellectuals supported biological evolution in Islamic philosophy, there is no species evolution in Classical Islamic theology. There is no such concept as biological evolution. In addition, although all creatures belong to the same essence, God, they are all unique creatures with no common ancestor. Even though Baha Tevfik and Ahmed Nebil tried to explain monism in the Islamic context, not to miss these important points and transferred their ideas with the arguments of philosophical Islam. Ludwig Büchner quoted from William Shakespeare's verses from one of the famous plays Hamlet: "Imperious Caesar, dead and turn'd to clay, Might stop a hole to keep the wind away: O! that that earth, which

⁴⁸⁹ Büchner, *Kraft Und Stoff: Oder, Grundzüge Der Natürlichen Weltordnung, Nebst Einer Darauf Gebauten Moral Oder Sittenlehre, in Allgemein Verständlicher Darstellung*, 211–38; Büchner, *Madde ve Kuvvet*, 314–55.

⁴⁹⁰ Ülken, *Türkiye'de çağdaş düşünce tarihi*, 350.

kept the world in awe, Should patch a wall to expel the winter's flaw.”⁴⁹¹ Similar to that, Baha Tevfik and Ahmed Nebil used quote from Mevlana referred to the transformation of a human from a non-living thing to a plant and from it to an animal and then a human.⁴⁹² Baha Tevfik wanted to put vulgar materialistic and monistic thought into an Islamic perspective.

Again, with translation from Büchner, the matter is immortal; according to the science of chemistry, even a grain of dust cannot be added to the world. For example, burning wood does not lose anything from its mass, although it is ash. Here, he conveyed similar sentences from Vogt's mouth. Some people say the body is mortal; the soul is immortal. The body is mortal, but since the matter is immortal, it transforms into other forms. Force cannot be created and destroyed, just like matter. Force neither arises nor dies.⁴⁹³

Baha Tevfik and Ahmed Nebil had similar arguments with Beşir Fuad about the influence of Ludwig Büchner on spirit, mind and brain. According to that thought, without the brain and its functions, there would be no thought or action. Büchner, Baha Tevfik, and Ahmed Nebil explain this function as a scientific action. This idea bears a similarity to the idea of Claude Bernard. These intellectuals used physiology's ideas and combined this scientific view with vulgar materialist philosophy. They create an idea which includes both scientific and philosophical thought. That also reflects the general ideas of Baha Tevfik, science, and philosophy. Büchner, with a quotation from some intellectuals, philosophers and scientists, claimed that spirit and body are born simultaneously and live and die simultaneously.⁴⁹⁴ That idea is like Beşir Fuad's idea, which supports the idea that “There is no spirit; there are spiritual actions.” That idea rejects the position of spirit

⁴⁹¹ Büchner, *Madde ve Kuvvet*, 37; William Shakespeare, Sidney Lamb, and Terri Mategrano, *Cliffscomplete Shakespeare's Hamlet: Complete Text, Commentary, Glossary* (Foster City, Calif.: IDG Books, 2000), 179.

⁴⁹² Haeckel, *Vahdet-i Mevcud Bir Tabiat Aliminin Dini*, 54.

⁴⁹³ Büchner, *Madde ve Kuvvet*, 37–38, 49–52.

⁴⁹⁴ Büchner, *Kraft Und Stoff: Oder, Grundzüge Der Natürlichen Weltordnung, Nebst Einer Darauf Gebauten Moral Oder Sittenlehre, in Allgemein Verständlicher Darstellung*, 254–62; Büchner, *Madde ve Kuvvet*, 379–92.

and its role in brain functions like thinking or its effect on human actions, but Baha Tevfik thought differently about the process of thinking. He claimed that concepts about thinking and that process are about non-material things rather than material things. This indicates that Baha Tevfik occasionally employed idealistic viewpoints when advocating for vulgar materialism and monism, a practice also occasionally adopted by Haeckel.

7.4. Baha Tevfik's Philosophical and Literary Position

Baha Tevfik wanted to bring philosophy to a scientific base. His articles about Immanuel Kant in *Felsefe Mecmuası* are good examples of that. Because of his groundbreaking thesis about Copernican heliocentrism, it suggests a more modern and scientific view based on Newtonian physics. Kant's influential ideas on the Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment philosophers affected 19th-century and ongoing intellectual history and philosophy. Baha Tevfik is also interested in Kant, most probably his criticisms of metaphysics, which Baha Tevfik could easily adopt for criticizing the concept of religion. Baha Tevfik praised Kant for his iconoclastic thoughts and for destroying the old system but criticized Kant and claimed that some of his arguments are non-scientific.⁴⁹⁵

Baha Tevfik regarded religions as social constructions. From this perspective, Baha Tevfik brings a modern and sociological perspective to religion. With this approach, Baha Tevfik makes religion a materialistic phenomenon rather than a divine concept. Although there is a similarity in the materialisation of religion between Abdullah Cevdet and Baha Tevfik, Baha Tevfik had no aim to use this materialistic understanding of religion as a tool for his political view like Abdullah Cevdet. Also, Kant's empiricist approach opened the way for positivism, which vulgar materialists heavily used to apply scientific knowledge and materialist science.

In *Felsefe Mecmuası*, Baha Tevfik mentioned Immanuel Kant and employed Kant's ideas to support his own arguments concerning reason and the empiricist path to

⁴⁹⁵ Hanioğlu, 'Blueprints for a Future Society: Late Ottoman Materialists on Science, Religion and Art', 68.

knowledge. It is evident that Kant's concepts of reason, particularly in his works *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (Critique of Pure Reason) and *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft* (Critique of Practical Reason), had a significant and crucial influence on positivism. According to Baha Tevfik, citing Immanuel Kant, just as Victor Hugo stands between Romantic and Realist literature, and between Spiritualism and Materialism, so too do philosophers such as Descartes, Bacon, Spinoza, and Leibniz stand between major philosophical currents. There existed two domains: 'İ'tikadiye' and 'Teybiyye' (Dogmatism and Scepticism). These domains hindered progress in theoretical fields, despite advances in the practical and empirical branches of philosophy, such as psychology and, more broadly, the scientific study of humanity. Kant asserts that nothing can be achieved through these two approaches alone. Dogmatism attributes limitless power to the mind, while scepticism entirely denies it. Therefore, it becomes necessary to define the boundaries of reason. This is precisely the purpose of Critique of Pure Reason. Kant states that the mind produces both assumptions and theories (hypotheses and theoretical frameworks), as well as actions and experiences, that is, practical and empirical outcomes. In the former, the emphasis lies on the observer; in the latter, on the agent.⁴⁹⁶

In this way, reason gained significance and became one of the most important tools for attaining knowledge. According to Baha Tevfik, Immanuel Kant paved the way for positivism as a means of acquiring and understanding knowledge. From this perspective, any idea or belief that stands in opposition to human reason and science is regarded as an obstacle that must be eliminated. While discussing Kant's conception of time and space, Baha Tevfik highlighted the significance of Leibniz's theorem of general laws in relation to this concept. Every event, he argued, has a cause for its occurrence; events exist in mutual harmony, and each action contains the same amount of matter and force. The sensible realm and its components are formed through the application of these three laws to all actions. This totality forms a whole upon which all parts necessarily depend in some way. Subsequently, the determination of actions and their interconnectedness constitutes determinism. The positive sciences are founded upon this principle of determinism.

⁴⁹⁶ Baha Tevfik, 'Felsefe-i Hâzıra Kant', *Felsefe Mecmuâsı*, no. 1 (8 May 1913): 6–8.

The property of inertia, succession proportion and harmony in all parts. This situation is the basis of Positivism.⁴⁹⁷ Baha Tevfik clarified the emergence of the first phases of positivism through his philosophical analysis of Kant's writings on reason, methods of acquiring information, and types of knowledge. This concept demonstrates a firm conviction in scientific evidence rather than abstract ideas such as the existence of God. Therefore, the adherence to strong positivism and empiricism would pave the path for the emergence of scientism and vulgar materialism. Once again, Baha Tevfik referred to and borrowed from Kant in his exploration of whether metaphysics may be pursued. People are drawn to metaphysics by their mind's aspiration to understand the initial cause of occurrences. The fundamental principle and prerequisite for all occurrences in metaphysics is the spirit. The initial prerequisite for events occurring in the external world, namely, our surroundings, encompasses all the material and elemental constituents of the experiential realm, commonly referred to as the universe. As for the most fundamental requirement for the existence of consciousness and conscious beings, it is attributed to the divine entity known as God. Pre-Kantian philosophers regarded metaphysics as a scientific discipline, but Kant revolutionised this perspective. According to Kant, determining the presence of God within human reason is an insurmountable task.⁴⁹⁸ Most probably, the reason why Baha Tevfik cited this part from Kant is his view about the concept of God and his atheistic thoughts. He shared this thought with his readers and tried to support his thoughts about the problem of God's existence, referring to Kant and his writings.

Baha Tevfik quoted Büchner and considered that they are, as Büchner did, against the thoughts of Plato and Descartes, who claim that the idea of God is innate. From that point, Baha Tevfik, Ahmed Nebil, and Ludwig Büchner shared the same idea with Thomas Hobbes and John Locke to see the human mind as a 'Tabula Rasa' and accept only knowledge as empirical knowledge.⁴⁹⁹ In addition, Baha Tevfik

⁴⁹⁷ Baha Tevfik, 'Felsefe-i Hâzıra Kant', *Felsefe Mecmuâsı*, no. 2 (19 May 1913): 23.

⁴⁹⁸ Baha Tevfik, 'Felsefe-i Hâzıra Kant', *Felsefe Mecmuâsı*, no. 3 (1913): 34–36.

⁴⁹⁹ Büchner, *Madde ve Kuvvet*, 524–26; Büchner, *Kraft Und Stoff: Oder, Grundzüge Der Natürlichen Weltordnung, Nebst Einer Darauf Gebauten Moral Oder Sittenlehre, in Allgemein Verständlicher Darstellung*, 343–44. "Cibilli fikirlerin mevcut olmadığını tasdik ettikten sonra Allah fikrinin de bir

emphasised that all spiritual actions are related to the material part of humans. In other words, it is related to the structure of human protoplasm. Baha Tevfik added that because of this material structure, the spirit of a human. Baha Tevfik mentioned nature with the word spirit, which varies from human to human. He also added that humans, animals, and plants have this notion of spirit. Because this notion of the spirit of Baha Tevfik has a material structure, after the death of humans, animals, like their bodies and spirits, also die.⁵⁰⁰ According to him, there is no immortality for spirit or anything else. Ludwig Büchner influenced Baha Tevfik on the concept of spirit and its relationship with the body, brain and material structure of living creatures. It is entirely related to the body of a human and its relationship with actions rather than any metaphysical action. That empirical and scientific approach reflects the vulgar materialist view.

Because of its nature and accepting empirical knowledge as the only knowledge, Ludwig Büchner, Baha Tevfik and Ahmed Nebil rejected knowledge and the idea and concept of God with the words ““After affirming that innate thoughts do not exist, it becomes self-evident that the concept of God is also nothing but an error. In other words, the idea of a personal, supremely powerful God as the creator, manager, and guardian of nature is nothing more than a great error.” To emphasise his claims, Büchner quoted some intellectuals, scientists and philosophers. Baha Tevfik and Ahmed Nebil used these arguments without hesitation in their translation. To support his ideas, Büchner used the words of Pierre Paul Broca, French anatomist, anthropologist, and physician, Pierre Henri Stanislas d'Escayrac de Lauture, French explorer Sir John Lubbock, an English politician, and Charles Darwin. From the point of view of Büchner, all these figures claimed that none of the primitive tribes had the concept of God. They also underline that it is so easy to prove the lack of God in the universe.⁵⁰¹ As is known, Ludwig Büchner, Baha Tevfik and Ahmed Nebil used the arguments of scientists and intellectuals to support their ideas. Thanks

hatadan ibaret olduğu kendi kendine tecelli eder. Yani şahsi, fevkalade muktedir, tabiatın halikı, müdürü ve muhafızı olmak üzere bir Allah'ın vücudu fikri büyük bir hatadan başka bir şey değildir.”

⁵⁰⁰ Baha Tevfik, ‘Mukayese-i Ruh’, *Düşünüyorum*, no. 21 (1911): 266–68.

⁵⁰¹ Büchner, *Kraft Und Stoff: Oder, Grundzüge Der Natürlichen Weltordnung, Nebst Einer Darauf Gebauten Moral Oder Sittenlehre, in Allgemein Verständlicher Darstellung*, 379–81; Büchner, *Madde ve Kuvvet*, 578–80.

to this, they aimed to find a scientific base for their arguments. They aimed to prove the lack of God from a scientific and intellectual perspective. That makes it easier to prove their ideas and claims from their perspective.

According to the perspectives of Ludwig Büchner, Baha Tevfik, and Ahmed Nebil, it can be argued that humanity originated the notion and understanding of God. Therefore, it might be classified as a sociocultural idea rather than an empirical concept. Therefore, it may be stated that Büchner, Baha Tevfik, and Ahmed Nebil embraced the notion and understanding of God as non-scientific conceptions. The concept of God is formed as an anthropomorphic idea due to its envisioned structure. Büchner, Baha Tevfik, and Ahmed Nebil asserted that the notion and conception of God arise from contemplation of human beings themselves. Moreover, if God is inherent in both the entire cosmos and human beings, it follows that he is also actively involved in the conduct of all people. Additionally, he experiences all the emotions that people do. It shows us that God has no speciality from other humans and creatures in the universe. That also proves that God's idea is a non-scientific concept and idea that humans create.⁵⁰²

Baha Tevfik was also interested in literature like other vulgar materialists in the Ottoman Empire, such as Beşir Fuad and Abdullah Cevdet. Both in his life in İzmir and İstanbul, Baha Tevfik made translations and some translation sketches. The interesting point is that Baha Tevfik, like Beşir Fuad, translated only naturalist and realist authors. These authors are Flaubert, Tolstoy, Maupassant, Zola. Like Beşir Fuad, Baha Tevfik also reflected his intellectual view on his life of literature. The crucial difference between Baha Tevfik and Beşir Fuad is that Baha Tevfik claimed that literature is a detriment; instead, the idea of Beşir Fuad gives a scientific base to literature. According to Baha Tevfik, literature does not give happiness, even literature ravages people and society. According to the perspective of Baha Tevfik, literature is an unnecessary thing. He also rejects the idea of 'ars artis gratia' and art should be beneficial. This view differs from Beşir Fuad and Abdullah Cevdet for using

⁵⁰² Büchner, *Kraft Und Stoff: Oder, Grundzüge Der Natürlichen Weltordnung, Nebst Einer Darauf Gebauten Moral Oder Sittenlehre, in Allgemein Verständlicher Darstellung*, 389–90; Büchner, *Madde ve Kuvvet*, 603–4.

society's sake.⁵⁰³ Baha Tevfik aimed to make every concept scientific and dismiss all 'non-scientific' concepts.

In his article, 'Edebiyat Kesinlikle Muzırdır' (Literature is Definitely Detriment) Baha Tevfik strongly criticised literature. He claimed that poetry is only created during times of happiness and sadness, and written things in natural conditions cannot be accepted as poetry. He had strongly negative thoughts on literature and claimed that literature is a mental disorder. He also considered the reason for moral corruption as poetry. According to his thought, poetry does not benefit society and poisons people.⁵⁰⁴ Because of the connection between religion and literature, Baha Tevfik exaggerated his criticisms of literature. He reflected his ideas about religion in literature because he criticised religion, except Islam. One of the reasons is Baha Tevfik's pragmatic policy and the prevention of possible reactions. Despite his wary attitude, he sometimes criticised religion, even if indirectly. In another writing, Baha Tevfik claimed that, while a country lacks science, philosophy, and development, writing and creating literary works is absurd. He further stated that literature, particularly poetry, is a product of social creation, shaped by the influence of love and religion. He also criticised religion between the lines in this article, like most of his writings. Because religion is one of the sources of poetry, Baha Tevfik criticised its source, too, while criticising the poetry. Like poetry and literature, religion relates to feelings; for this reason, it is not wrong to say that Baha Tevfik also had similar feelings about religion, which he felt in poetry. Even though he did not say it directly, he probably thought religion was like poetry. Beşir Fuad had similar ideas to Baha Tevfik on this topic. He thought that literature misguides people's ideas.⁵⁰⁵

In his work, *Felsefe-i Edebiyat ve Şa'ir Celis* Baha Tevfik claimed that philosophy is more harmful than literature because, in philosophy, while chasing the truth, it always runs away. For this reason, it is almost impossible to reach the truth in

⁵⁰³ Bağcı, *Baha Tevfik'in Hayatı, Edebî ve Felsefî Eserleri Üzerinde Bir Araştırma*, 70–73.

⁵⁰⁴ Baha Tevfik, 'Edebiyat Kesinlikle Muzırdır', in *Teceddüd-i İlmi ve Edebi* (İstanbul: Dersaadet Kütüphanesi, 1911), 113–15, 123–25.

⁵⁰⁵ Okay, *Beşir Fuad: ilk Türk pozitivist ve natüralisti*, 98.

philosophy.⁵⁰⁶ Maybe the main reason why Baha Tevfik named his vulgar ideas philosophy is to give philosophy a scientific base and change the structure of philosophy by giving it a particular ground. Thanks to this, he aimed to use philosophy in a scientific base and give it a higher position. Although Baha Tevfik was not a follower of Beşir Fuad ultimately, Baha Tevfik was the reflection of Beşir Fuad in almost all areas, philosophical, intellectual, literary and scientific views and thoughts in the Second Constitutional Era. The political and intellectual atmosphere was more liberal during the Second Constitutional Era; for this reason, Baha Tevfik had fewer things to be afraid of and beware of. Another important topic that Baha Tevfik mentioned in his writings is ethics. Baha Tevfik also gave so much importance to ethics, and he argued that people cannot use the ethics of religions in societies with more than one religion. He proposed a new concept of ethics, combined Kantian ethics with the views of Darwin, and used the terms of psychology. In this respect, he tried to create a scientific concept of ethics. The journal *Piyano* described Baha Tevfik as an intellectual who consistently adhered to logic and ethics.⁵⁰⁷ With the influence of Nietzsche, Baha Tevfik and his friends considered that religion harms evolution and ethics. Because of religion, the number of immoral people increases. Religious mercy contributed to the increase in the number of miserable people. They also claim that, in a scientific way by using religion, people are suffering, punishments are decreasing, and these situations create social problems.⁵⁰⁸ Baha Tevfik and his friends criticised religion in a social and scientific context.

Undoubtedly, Baha Tevfik's conception of ethics diverges from the Islamic conception of ethics. Baha Tevfik dismissed any notion of ethics that sought to derive from a theology of obligations. According to him, ethics does not involve making correct or incorrect judgements as a science of obligations. Rather, ethics should teach individuals how to regulate themselves, a skill that psychology alone can master. Upon further examination, it can be observed that morality, which is

⁵⁰⁶ Baha Tevfik, *Felsefe-i Edebiyat ve Şa'ir Celis* (İstanbul: Marifet Kütüphanesi, 1914), 3–6.

⁵⁰⁷ Anonymus, 'Muhterem Simalar: Baha Tevfik', *Piyano*, no. 17 (1911): 212.

⁵⁰⁸ Baha Tevfik, Ahmed Nebil, and Memduh Süleyman, *Niçe Hayatı ve Felsefesi* (İstanbul: Gayret Kütüphanesi, 1912), 103–4.

dependent on people's self-discipline, aligns with Baha Tevfik's elitist perspective on society.⁵⁰⁹ Baha Tevfik also added that the Islamic understanding of ethics became bankrupt in the modern world.⁵¹⁰ Baha Tevfik wanted to make his philosophical, scientific and other approaches, like ethics, suitable for the needs of the modern world.

In his article 'Tenkid-i Felsefî – İlm-i Ahlâk' (Philosophical Critique of Moral Knowledge), Baha Tevfik criticised Ali Kemal's book *İlm-i Ahlâk*. One of the key points Baha Tevfik emphasised in this article was the proposal to adopt France's secular institutions, education system, and moral values within Ottoman society, particularly among the youth. He also rejected the concept of religious ethics. He justified his critique by referring to the problems posed by multicultural and religious states. According to Baha Tevfik, the source and aim of ethics should be rooted in humanity. This idea closely aligns with Auguste Comte's notion of a 'religion of humanity' and his positivist philosophy. Baha Tevfik further argued that anyone writing about ethics and morality must have knowledge of psychology and physiology. He was influenced by Beşir Fuad in this regard, who, drawing on the work of Claude Bernard, assigned a central role to psychology and physiology in understanding human behaviour. This suggests that Baha Tevfik sought to ground ethics in scientific principles. In this essay, he described every action and behaviour as natural evidence, thus, these actions ought to be analysed using scientific methods. Moreover, Baha Tevfik criticised Kant's ethics of duty through his critique of Ali Kemal's text and rejected the belief that ethical principles are divinely bestowed. He illustrated this argument with a provocative example: if killing and eating one's father is considered ethical in Sudan, how can such a moral feeling be said to come from God? He therefore maintained that ethics should be scientific and rational, as feelings often contradict reason. For this reason, he praised psychology as an essential tool for understanding human and societal behaviour. Baha Tevfik also insisted that the concept of ethics must be separated from metaphysics. Although his conception of ethics bears some similarity to that of Kant, Baha Tevfik did not adopt Kant's specific framework. For him, metaphysics was tied to religion, and in this

⁵⁰⁹ Imeri, 'Baha Tevfik's Vision Einer Religionsfreien Gesellschaft', 289–90.

⁵¹⁰ Poyraz, 'Science versus Religion: The Influence of European Materialism on Turkish Thought, 1860-1960', 92.

work, he sought to detach ethics from religious thought and establish it on scientific foundations.⁵¹¹ In addition, Baha Tevfik claimed and emphasises that intellectuals and authors who wrote on ethics should have a high level of knowledge of science, they should be philosophers or scientists.⁵¹²

In his work *Hassasiyet Bahsi, ve Yeni Ahlak* (Sensibility Article and the New Moral), Baha Tevfik criticised the theoretical morals and grouped them into two sections as rationalist ethics came from Aristo and ethics of Islamic mysticism, which came from Gazali. In rejecting the moral framework of traditional philosophy, Baha Tevfik also dismissed the ethical understanding of classical Islamic thought. He supported the notion that there is no such thing as an independent moral system. By this, he meant that ‘ethics’ as a distinct field does not exist, and that all human actions are instead rooted in psychology. He connected all human behaviour to a scientific understanding of the human mind. Baha Tevfik also criticised Kant’s ethical philosophy, likely influenced by his readings of Nietzsche, which may have led to a biased and possibly misinterpreted view of Kant’s arguments. Another reason for his critique was his own inclination to disregard abstract ethical theorising in favour of grounding moral understanding in psychology and physiology. In contrast, Kant placed great importance on ethics derived from human reason and behaviour, without relying on scientific or empirical methods. Baha Tevfik’s ethical thought was based on contemporary scientific approaches, rather than on religious or traditional philosophical systems, both of which he considered outdated.⁵¹³ He believed that this new, science-based ethical model should become a fundamental component of the emerging modern society. This view was shared by other Ottoman intellectuals of the period, including members of the Young Turks such as Abdullah Cevdet.

Baha Tevfik also argued that ethical and moral teachings of religions should not collapse with the understanding of scientific truth.⁵¹⁴ This new understanding of

⁵¹¹ Baha Tevfik, ‘Tenkid-i Felsefi İlm-i Ahlak’, *Felsefe Mecmuası*, no. 4 (19 June 1913): 49–55.

⁵¹² Imeri, ‘Baha Tevfiks Vision Einer Religionsfreien Gesellschaft’, 293.

⁵¹³ Baha Tevfik, *Hassasiyet Bahsi ve Yeni Ahlak* (İstanbul: Sühulet Kütüphanesi, 1913), 12–32.

⁵¹⁴ Poyraz, ‘Science versus Religion: The Influence of European Materialism on Turkish Thought, 1860-1960’, 99.

religion is like a scientific, philosophical and ethical religion like the positivism of August Comte. Ernest Haeckel, Baha Tevfik and Ahmed Nebil also aimed to find a new trinity for this new understanding of religion. According to that trinity, 'truth, good and beautiful' would replace 'Father, Son, and Holy Spirit'. Haeckel says that this new understanding of the trinity would teach God to people and create religion. In addition, this new understanding would create the religion of the 20th century, and people would open new churches for that religion.⁵¹⁵ Although Baha Tevfik and Ahmed Nebil proposed the ideas and arguments of Ernest Haeckel about this new religion, they did not have the aim to become the leader of this religion like Abdullah Cevdet.

Baha Tevfik's rejection of all ethical concepts that seek to evaluate actions from an external source of knowledge and thus give ethics its epistemology hits a core aspect of the religiously motivated worldview. He questions the establishment of a religiously based, autonomous area of knowledge for moral, personal and social action. However, Baha Tevfik's criticism went further since it excludes any ethical conception that grants ethics an autonomous area in which it can act as a truth-producing science. Also, he did not give up the action qualities of good or "bad", but rather links them with the results of the positive sciences.⁵¹⁶ That shows that Baha Tevfik also wanted to drive the Ottoman society in his direction at some points, although that aim is not like Abdullah Cevdet's or Young Turks'.

7.5. Fellows of Baha Tevfik

Ahmed Nebil was one of Baha Tevfik's most important intellectual friends. Like his fellow and master Baha Tevfik, he was an essential figure for Ottoman socialist thought and Osmanlı Sosyalist Fırkası (Ottoman Socialist Party). Ahmed Nebil returned to his country, Albania, during World War I. However, some sources claimed that Ahmed Nebil might be a pen name of Baha Tevfik, but Yakup Kadri

⁵¹⁵ Haeckel, *Der Monismus Als Band Zwischen Religion Und Wissenschaft*, 36; Haeckel, *Vahdet-i Mevcud Bir Tabiat Aliminin Dini*, 84–85.

⁵¹⁶ Imeri, 'Baha Tevfiks Vision Einer Religionsfreien Gesellschaft', 295.

Karaosmanoğlu, in his book *Zoraki Diplomat (Forced Envoy)*, says that he met Ahmed Nebil, Nebil Çıka, during his mission in Tirana.⁵¹⁷

Ahmed Nebil wrote most of his books and articles with Baha Tevfik, but he wrote some of his books and articles alone. For instance, he translated *Über unsere gegenwärtige Kenntnis vom Ursprung des Menschen* (On Our Current Understanding of the Origin of Man)⁵¹⁸ as *İnsanın Menşei Nesli- Beşer* (The Origin of Human, Descendants of Humanity). That book can be accepted as one of the first books on anthropology in the Ottoman Empire. Like in his other translations, Ahmed Nebil again used the argument of Ernest Haeckel that accepted monistic evolutionist and vulgar materialist thought as the scientific truth. That book is essential for its arguments on evolution and social anthropology. There were some books and articles on evolution before that book, but Ahmed Nebil and Ernest Haeckel harmonised evolution with anthropology and created a social base for evolution.

In addition, Ahmed Nebil added that the spirit, like Beşir Fuad claimed, is a material concept. Also, other primates have it and it is not unique to humans. With that argument, he criticised religious and spiritualist arguments. Ahmed Nebil and Ernest Haeckel rejected the idea that the human spirit is different from the body.⁵¹⁹ That argument reflects a monistic idea which accepts a single core and a vulgar materialist view that considers matter and force as the only core of the universe and emphasises that these two notions are one notion, and that this oneness cannot be separated and destroyed. At the end of that book, Ahmed Nebil and Ernest Haeckel claimed that the 20th century would be the age of the theory of evolution, beat all bigotry ideas, and bring progressive ideas.⁵²⁰ That idea shows that like vulgar materialist European intellectuals, Ottoman vulgar materialist intellectuals claim that their intellectual and philosophical thoughts and ‘Weltanschauung’ are the keys to progressive thought,

⁵¹⁷ Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu, *Zoraki Diplomat* (İs: Bilgi Yayınevi, 1967), 57–58.

⁵¹⁸ Ernst Haeckel, *Über Unsere Gegenwärtige Kenntnis Vom Ursprung Des Menschen* (Bonn: Verlag von Emil Strauss, 1898).

⁵¹⁹ Ernst Haeckel, *İnsanın Menşei, Nesli- Beşer*, trans. Ahmed Nebil (İstanbul: Matbaa-i Nefaset, 1911), 38–39.

⁵²⁰ Haeckel, 78.

and any idea that opposes this ‘progressive’ way can be seen as a bigot. They are obstacles in the way of development.

Both *Dağarcık* of Ahmed Midhat and *Felsefe Mecmuası* of Baha Tevfik mention Lamarckian evolutionism. However, the difference is that while *Dağarcık* mentioned Lamarckian evolutionism, *Felsefe Mecmuası* mentioned the philosophy of Lamarckian evolutionism in addition to a scientific approach. In *Felsefe Mecmuası*, the writings about Lamarck and Lamarckian evolutionism are written by Subhi Edhem, one of the friends of Baha Tevfik. Subhi Edhem considered Lamarck as August Comte of natural sciences.⁵²¹ That shows the importance of Lamarck for the vulgar materialist Ottoman intellectuals. Subhi Edhem also published books on Darwin and Bergson, zoology, and plants. He was not only interested in evolution but also in philosophy and science. Like other Ottoman intellectuals in this thesis, he was a sophisticated intellectual in his works and intellectual world. Subhi Edhem, like Baha Tevfik and Ahmed Nebil, was an important figure for Ottoman socialist thought. Subhi Edhem also harmonised Marxist thought with evolutionism.⁵²²

Like other intellectuals in this thesis, Subhi Edhem hesitated to criticise İslam. He said that “We have no work with religion. It is about the morality of humans. By knowing natural sciences nobody becomes irreligious. Some scientists approved the greatness of God thanks to natural sciences.”⁵²³ Like other intellectuals in this thesis Subhi Edhem regarded science and religion as two different concepts and do not reduce the power of each other. Even, science sometimes became a motivator for religion. Subhi Edhem emphasised that Lamarck claimed that everything in the universe comes into being by itself, this idea is almost the same in vulgar materialism. That idea is entirely against the claims of religions. He also claimed that Lamarck supported the ideas of the inseparableness of ‘force’ and ‘matter’.⁵²⁴

⁵²¹ Subhi Edhem, *Lamarkizm* (İstanbul: Nefaset Matbaası, 1914), 21.

⁵²² Ülken, *Türkiye’de çağdaş düşünce tarihi*, 242, 288–89.

⁵²³ Mehmet Ö Alkan, ‘II. Meşrutiyet’te Doğa Felsefesi Ya Da Subhi Edhem Üzerine Notlar’, *Felsefe Dergisi*, no. 3 (1989): 54.

⁵²⁴ Subhi Edhem, *Lamarkizm*, 40–41.

In addition, since Ottoman intellectuals assigned a crucial role to science and scientism in explaining all the questions and problems of the world, science came to be treated almost as a new religion—as Abdullah Cevdet once remarked. Rather than attempting to reform religion in light of scientific developments, Baha Tevfik and Ahmed Nebil advocated for cutting religion out of society entirely, likening it to a gangrenous organ that must be removed in order to save the body as a whole.

Subhi Edhem wrote two books on evolutionism, one on Lamarckism and the other on Darwinism. He first published a book on Darwinism in 1909 and later released a series of articles on Lamarck in *Felsefe Mecmuası*, which he subsequently compiled into a book. This may reflect Lamarck’s influence on Subhi Edhem, as was the case with several other Ottoman intellectuals discussed in this thesis. In his discussion of Darwinism, he also linked his evolutionary views with materialism and the ideas of Ludwig Büchner, particularly his concept of Force and Matter, while criticising the notion of divine creation. Subhi Edhem attempted to construct a mechanical evolutionist framework that sought to elevate materialism within the discourse of evolution. Furthermore, he tried to connect Darwinian evolution with Ernst Haeckel’s monism, using it as a foundation for evolutionary thought. It is likely that he made this connection to appeal to a Muslim audience, by drawing parallels between Haeckel’s monism and Vahdet-i Vücut, a concept within Islamic philosophy.⁵²⁵

Subhi Edhem, again in his work *Darwinizm, while criticising Cuvier on his thoughts* on evolution, considered that Cuvier had bigotry thoughts on the idea of evolution and scientific thought according to that perspective, and that prevents progress.⁵²⁶ Subhi Edhem not only criticised Cuvier, but also people who hold bigoted views and harbour ideas of intolerance. Subhi Edhem, like other academics, regarded intolerance as a hindrance to progressive thinking. Subhi Edhem further asserted that Ottoman civilisation was characterised by a lack of advancement, therefore emphasising the need for knowledge and progress to lead the nation towards

⁵²⁵ Subhi Edhem, *Darwinizm* (Manastır: Ulum-ı Tabiiyye ve İctimaiyye Kütüphanesi, 1909), 182–87.

⁵²⁶ Subhi Edhem, 11.

development. The Ottoman society must exert significant effort to bridge the gap with modern progress and transform into a sophisticated and cultured society.⁵²⁷ That shows the progressive way of Subhi Edhem, like other Ottoman intellectuals in this thesis. That approach accepts science and intellectual thought as a guide rather than religion or religious thought. With this approach, Subhi Edhem supported the idea that the Ottoman Empire and society only reached civilisation and development with the tools of Western thought.

In addition, while mentioning the idea of evolution, Subhi Edhem gave an example of the Second Constitution. He says that before the declaration of the Second Constitution, people could not clearly express their negative thoughts about Abdülhamid II in public. Still, after the Second Constitution, people began freely expressing their ideas. He also correlated that approach to evolution with the progressive-reactionary approach. If the number of supporters of evolution increases, people will express their ideas freely. Subhi Edhem says that people reject the idea of a common ancestor but support creation from a piece of soil and criticise that ‘non-scientific’ idea.⁵²⁸ In the thought of Subhi Edhem, if the number of supporters of evolutionary theory and scientific ‘truth’ free thinking was more extensive, there would be more free space in the Ottoman Empire. Free thinking is correlated with scientific thought from the perspective of Subhi Edhem and other vulgar materialist Ottoman intellectuals. That shows the importance of science and its liberating role for Ottoman intellectuals in that era. Also, the perception of science can easily be seen in this argument from the perspective of Subhi Edhem and his friends.

In addition, Subhi Edhem shared and emphasised his vulgar materialist, positivist and evolutionist thoughts in his other work, *Hayat ve Mevt* (Life and Death). He claimed this book is a scientific work, but his views reflected vulgar materialist, and evolutionist approaches rather than scientific ones. He usually quotes from there Büchner and Haeckel. That shows that, like Beşir Fuad, Abdullah Cevdet, and Baha Tevfik, Subhi Edhem had a perspective that accepted vulgar materialist, positivist,

⁵²⁷ Subhi Edhem, 3.

⁵²⁸ Subhi Edhem, 59–60.

and evolutionary thought as scientific thought.⁵²⁹ That approach became a ‘Weltanschauung’ for the vulgar materialist Ottoman intellectuals rather than an intellectual view in that era. Ottoman intellectuals also wanted to use Weltanschauung to explain the modernisation of the Ottoman Empire and society.

Like Subhi Edhem, Baha Tevfik’s other friend Ethem Necdet wrote books on evolution, both are on Lamarckism and Darwinism, in his work *Tekamül ve Kanunları* (*Evolution and Its Laws*). Some academicians mistakenly confuse the names Ethem Necdet and Ethem Nejat. Both were important figures for late Ottoman intellectual thought and late Ottoman Socialist thought. Baha Tevfik and his friends are also important figures in Ottoman socialist thought. He analysed and discussed evolution in two ways. In the first part of this book, he discussed biological evolution; in the second part, he discussed social evolution. Like another intellectual who wrote about evolution, He considered evolution as a biological, social, and cultural phenomenon. In this work, he explained evolution with the mainline and criticised the view of religions and reverends' ideas about the creation of all creatures personally. In the preface section, He touched on the existence of the theories of evolution in the modern era. He claimed that in this section, the Ottoman Empire and the society could not understand evolution and could not develop. The countries that understand the core of evolution developed and built factories and businesses. According to Ethem Necdet, nations that understand the core of evolution become the winners of the struggle of life. He reflected a Social Darwinist thought prevalent among the vulgar materialist Ottoman intellectuals during the Second Constitutional Era. They use this argument as the motivation for modernisation progress.⁵³⁰

In his work, Ethem Necdet mentioned the idea of Lamarckian evolution from basic organisms to extensive and sophisticated organisms and the environment's effect on organisms' evolution.⁵³¹ He also mentioned Darwin's natural selection theory. Ethem Necdet also mentioned Darwin’s ‘Struggle for existence theory’ and its effect on the

⁵²⁹ Subhi Edhem, *Hayat ve Mevt* (İstanbul: Nefaset Matbaası, 1913).

⁵³⁰ Ethem Necdet, *Tekamül ve Kanunları* (İstanbul: Kütübhan-e İctihad, 1913), 3–5.

⁵³¹ Ethem Necdet, 15–16.

population.⁵³² That also shows that Ethem Necdet wanted to use evolutionary theory for society and create a sociological base for that theory. Ethem Necdet, wanted to use a Social Darwinist approach and transform Ottoman society into a modern society. He used the theory of evolution of both Lamarck and Darwin for biological and social aspects.

While mentioning his critiques about Lamarck's and Darwin's evolutionary theories, Ethem Necdet considered that he did not wholly accept Lamarck's and Darwin's thoughts and their evolution theories. According to Ethem Necdet, neither Lamarck nor Darwin could explain the reason for evolution and explain it with coincidence. While mentioning natural selection, he did not reference the evolution of the species. Ethem Necdet claimed that there is a law in nature that determines all things and, the evolution of the species.⁵³³ Strong scientific and vulgar materialist view of Ethem Necdet is influential in his thought and gave him deterministic thinking about this topic. Ethem Necdet's work represents the view of positivistic understanding, which accepted physical anthropology as a positive science.⁵³⁴

7.6. Conclusion of the Chapter

Baha Tevfik is the most outsider figure in this thesis. He is one of the most contrarian figures in Ottoman and Turkish intellectual history. Although in some of his writings, he praised Islam and tried to harmonise vulgar materialist writings and concepts with Islam and some Islamic concepts, he harshly criticised the concept of religion most of the time. Although Beşir Fuad and Abdullah Cevdet were probably atheists, they praised Islam for political and social reasons. Baha Tevfik did not praise Islam as many times as Beşir Fuad or Abdullah Cevdet, but he did not attack on Islam directly. Sometimes, Baha Tevfik even praised Islam and defended it in his writings. I think the real reason behind that is to touch on society and flinch from the reactions. That shows that Baha Tevfik had approaches like those of other intellectuals in this thesis.

⁵³² Ethem Necdet, 28–29.

⁵³³ Ethem Necdet, 125.

⁵³⁴ Toprak, *Cumhuriyet ve Antropoloji*, 75.

Baha Tevfik sometimes harmonised 'science' and 'religion' or tried to bend these concepts for his vulgar materialistic scientific, intellectual, and philosophical understanding and his worldview; he was against the concept of religion. Although he wanted to popularise scientific thought and make it acceptable to society, he did not have such an aim as Abdullah Cevdet to become a political leader. He had an intellectual and scientific approach to this topic. For this reason, his approach is more like Beşir Fuad's approach. However, Baha Tevfik had no enemies as Christianity or Orientalist intellectuals or 'despot' Sultan Abdulhamid II like other intellectuals in this thesis had. For this reason, his only audience was Muslim Ottoman society.

Baha Tevfik also argued for the notion of religion. Baha Tevfik and other Ottoman intellectuals strongly opposed religious intolerance, particularly people lacking scientific education who espoused bigoted views. They primarily targeted religious intolerance rather than the notion of religion itself. For this reason, they wanted to change and destroy the bigotry view with a scientific approach. Additionally, their objective was to incorporate a scientific and philosophical approach into Islam. These intellectuals opposed the rejection of science and the acquisition of information or knowledge without scientific evidence. This also contributes to the thesis and transforms the distinction or conflict between 'science' and 'religion' into an epistemic conflict rather than an ontological conflict.

As Baha Tevfik and his friends stand-off religion, they mostly did not mention religion so much in their works. Baha Tevfik also did not mention religion on topics on which religion had arguments on them. That is mainly related to Baha Tevfik's scientific worldview. However, Baha Tevfik had a scientific worldview that perspective was not more than the idea of the scientific intellectuals of Europe in the second half of the 19th century.⁵³⁵ Although he did not mention religion so much, while mentioning it, he wanted to use science and scientific thought for Islam. He wanted to reverse Vahdet-i Vücut to Vahdet-I Mevcut, how Marx reversed the dialectic of Hegel. Baha Tevfik wanted to use this concept more material and scientific. Baha Tevfik believed that science entered the area of religion, and these

⁵³⁵ Alkan, 'Türkiye'nin İlk Felsefe Dergisi: Felsefe Mecmuası', 52.

two notions could not covenant at any time.⁵³⁶ The main argument of this thought is that science can answer all the questions that religions try to answer or are interested in. Thus, with the effect of Büchner, Baha Tevfik and Ahmed Nebil gave science a role in answering all questions about the universe. Shortly, there is no place for religion according to this thought.

Like Beşir Fuad, Baha Tevfik's writing life is too short, and he died at an early age. However, he was a very influential figure like Beşir Fuad and had many followers in his era. His unorthodox approach to many topics. In addition, Baha Tevfik, because of his secular education background, did not take any religious education although he took religious courses. For this reason, he had almost no information on Islamic thought. He constructed almost all his thoughts and arguments on Western sources, philosophy and science. Because of this, he uses less Islamic sources and most of them are not the sources of Orthodox Islam. Although Beşir Fuad also constructed almost all his arguments on Western philosophy, science and thought, he also took Islamic education and read some Islamic sources, even reading them from French translations.

Baha Tevfik, like other intellectuals in this thesis, wanted to educate and touch on society. He also published chapters in *Felsefe Mecmuası* named 'Mekteb Dersleri' (School Lessons). With these chapters, Baha Tevfik aimed to educate Ottoman society. More importantly, Baha Tevfik and his friends in *Felsefe Mecmuası* wanted to educate, especially students. Baha Tevfik and his friends wanted to intervene in the schools' curriculum. By doing so, they aimed to introduce Western scientific and intellectual thought to Ottoman society at young ages. While doing this, they also wanted to impose on education and spread their thoughts. Baha Tevfik and friends aimed to make *Felsefe Mecmuası* a journal like *Mecmua-i Fünun* philosophically and had the aim to educate and transform Ottoman society into a scientific and philosophical society. Although they had this aim, they did not want to become a guide, pioneers of leading figures of this transformation like Abdullah Cevdet.

To conclude this chapter, Baha Tevfik is this thesis's latest and most different figure. Like other intellectuals in this thesis, he used scientific, philosophical, especially

⁵³⁶ Büchner, *Madde ve Kuvvet*, 167.

vulgar/materialistic, positivistic and evolutionistic knowledge to prove his arguments. He tried to show their harmony with Islam and the importance of these concepts for society. Contrary to other intellectuals, Baha Tevfik's language was very harsh and extreme. That may also be an argument for the change in the language of Ottoman and Turkish intellectuals on the topic of 'science' and 'religion'.



CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I asserted that Late Ottoman intellectuals were hesitant on most topics. They were ambivalent on the topic of discussion of ‘science’ and ‘religion’. They also had knowledge of materialism, especially vulgar materialism, positivism, evolutionism and sometimes Social Darwinism. While analysing these five intellectuals, I aimed to demonstrate that they all expressed significant sympathy towards modern science and scientific thought, as well as philosophy and Western intellectual traditions. They followed scientific, philosophical, and intellectual developments in the West, especially in Europe, with great interest. Moreover, they were engaged with Western philosophical discourse, intellectual trends, and the sociocultural and economic structures and transformations occurring in the Western world. Their objective was to introduce these values into the Ottoman Empire and society to foster progress and development. In doing so, they remained sensitive to the cultural and religious sentiments of Ottoman society. I sought to highlight the local specificity and uniqueness of these debates within the Ottoman context. Rather than replicating Western debates, Ottoman intellectuals attempted to harmonise elements of Western vulgar materialist science, positivist thought, and evolutionism with their own context. Their intention was to preserve the essence of Islam while integrating certain Western values into a renewed understanding of Islam, one that occasionally gestured towards an ‘imagined’ Muslim Ottoman society.

While the Ottoman bureaucracy and Tanzimat intellectuals sought to confront the West in political and social terms, these five intellectuals, like several other thinkers of the period, engaged with the scientific, philosophical, and intellectual knowledge of the West. Like the Tanzimat reformers, they also regarded such knowledge as useful, employing it as a tool to liberate the Ottoman Empire and society from the

burdens that, in their view, were largely imposed by the West. I argue that these intellectuals should be regarded as pragmatic rather than idealistic in their approach to modernisation and in their efforts to transform the nature and centre of intellectual knowledge in the late Ottoman Empire. They succeeded in initiating a change in the mentality of Ottoman society, striving to cultivate a modern and Western-oriented mindset capable of adapting to the intellectual conditions of the modern world. In doing so, they aimed to prepare both the Ottoman Empire and its society to engage with modernity on their own terms, and to free themselves from the ideological and cultural influence of Orientalism.

From a different perspective, the efforts of these intellectuals can be called as ‘religion-making’⁵³⁷ as Alper Yalçınkaya claims. Just as their efforts can be seen as contributions to science-making, culture-making, or society-making, these intellectuals also aspired to become religion-makers during this transformative period. Among the five figures discussed, Abdullah Cevdet can readily be included in this group of ‘religion-makers’. In addition to shaping religious thought, they also aimed to influence society, science, and mentality, seeking to embed these ideas within the fabric of Ottoman society. To varying degrees, all these intellectuals attempted to reinterpret Islam to harmonise it with science, vulgar materialism, positivism, and evolutionism. I argue that the most enthusiastic figure in this regard was Abdullah Cevdet, owing to his ambition to become a socio-political leader and his strong political background. Conversely, the least enthusiastic was Baha Tevfik, due to his intellectual and religious stance. This contrast also highlights the significant difference between Abdullah Cevdet and Ahmed Midhat. While Beşir Fuad, as a non-religious figure, intellectually supported the idea of harmony between Islam and modern scientific thought, Ahmed Midhat, as a religious figure, took a more cautious approach. Münif Paşa cannot be considered a full member of this group, as his writings do not clearly express support for vulgar materialism. However, his importance lies in his pioneering work on the subject. This variety reveals the differing levels and perspectives of interpretation these intellectuals held.

⁵³⁷ M. Alper Yalçınkaya, “‘Science,’ ‘Religion,’ and ‘Science-and-Religion’ in the Late Ottoman Empire”, *Zygon*® 54, no. 4 (2019): 1063.

It also helps us to better understand their individual positions on a range of issues, despite certain similarities or overlaps in their broader goals.

When the general perspective of Ottoman intellectuals is drawn, as Alper Yalçinkaya claims, they wanted to evolve Islam into a religion more than a combination of customs and cultural practices. By doing so, modern Turkish Islam became like British Christianity, taking the Qur'an into the centre and harmonising it with modern science's essence.⁵³⁸ The intellectuals in this thesis, except Münif Paşa, added vulgar materialism, positivism and evolutionism to this understanding. These intellectuals wanted to bring a new perspective to Islam, especially Abdullah Cevdet, who aimed to create Ottoman/ Turkish Islam based on scientific and philosophical thought, mainly having vulgar materialistic thought. These intellectuals followed similar ways to most Tanzimat intellectuals and *zeitgeists* of progressive Ottoman intellectuals, adding philosophical and modern approaches to religion and science. Their patriotic and pragmatic approach makes their efforts political, too, in addition to intellectual efforts. However, Abdullah Cevdet and in some points, Baha Tevfik wanted to put science into the centre and transform Islam around it. Beşir Fuad had no such a strict centring or transforming aim for Islam, his main aim is science while having sympathy on Islam against Christianity. Ahmed Midhat had two eras and Islam and science always important for him. Münif Paşa, also put Islam and science to important positions while separating them into distinct positions and not having vulgar materialist perspective as other four intellectuals had.

In this thesis, I tried to show the main similarities of these five intellectuals during a long-term period. I think that all these five intellectuals thought that Islam, although they had different thoughts on Islam, has a adaptability and it's like a cement for Ottoman society. They showed and aimed to use Islam as a tool. With this approach, they easily harmonised Islam with science, vulgar materialism, positivism, and evolutionism. I tried to show this approach and their efforts to harmonise these

⁵³⁸ Jaume Navarro and Kostas Tampakis, 'Science and Religion in Nineteenth-Century Europe: Non-Anglo-American Perspectives', *Zygon*® 54, no. 4 (2019): 1047; Yalçinkaya, *Learned Patriots*, 2015, 17; Yalçinkaya, "'Science,'" "Religion," and "Science-and-Religion" in the Late Ottoman Empire', 1063.

concepts in this thesis from the perspective of modernisation and Westernisation while protecting the essence of Islam and Ottoman society. They wanted to adapt to the needs and demands of the modern world to sustain the life of Islam and the Ottoman Empire. They also wanted to break the hegemony of the West in these areas of the Ottoman Empire. Their efforts in this area were perceived as alarmist. While they were harmonising the concepts of the West with the essence of Ottoman society and Islam, they also cautiously approached the political way of the West. By preserving local values and Islam, they wanted to make this modernisation and transformation unique.

The main argument of this thesis is that, regardless of whether these intellectuals employed scientific or pseudo-scientific arguments and wrote from such perspectives, their primary aims were not directly related to these topics. Rather, their main objectives and arguments concerned modernisation, transformation, Westernisation, and resistance to Orientalism and despotism. In the process of reinterpreting science, religion, and the understanding of these concepts, these intellectuals also sought to reshape and transform the mentality of Ottoman society. They adopted a pragmatic perspective, using these concepts as instruments or tools rather than as ends in themselves. Although I primarily focused on their scientific arguments and texts, I also interpreted their broader perspective and highlighted that they employed such concepts to influence and transform societal mentality and outlook. This approach can be observed across various fields in that era. Ottoman intellectuals wrote on numerous subjects, such as beauty, women, and literature, but these discussions often served the broader goal of addressing the challenges of modernisation and Westernisation. I applied this framework in my analysis throughout the thesis, arguing that the intellectuals examined here shared a common standpoint in this regard.

Nevertheless, this thesis highlights certain distinctions among these five intellectuals. Ultimately, I shall provide a concise portrayal of these intellectuals. Firstly, it is important to note that Münif Paşa did not belong to this group due to his lack of association with vulgar materialism, although he had some positivistic perspectives. However, he can be considered a pioneer in reconciling modern Western science and

thought with Islamic comprehension, particularly in the realms of 'science' and 'religion'. He was also a trailblazer in promoting the dissemination of scientific knowledge, intellectual discourse, and philosophical ideas throughout the Ottoman Empire. In addition, he started the culture of scientific publication in the Ottoman Empire. Instead of adopting a vulgar materialistic viewpoint, Münif Paşa embraced a scientific approach.

Ahmed Midhat holds a unique position in this thesis. I highlighted the attempt to reconcile vulgar materialist science with Islam in his early years. Following his exile to Rhodes, his viewpoint underwent a transformation, and due to political circumstances and the tragic suicide of Beşir Fuad, he adopted an anti-materialist stance. He criticised materialism and materialists as unscientific, fanatical and even atheistic. Nevertheless, his apprehensive ideas persisted throughout both his periods of materialism and anti-materialism. His approach encompassed both intellectual and political perspectives. During his early years, he predominantly exhibited an intellectual disposition; however, in his later years, he adopted a political stance. Although he had a transformation in his intellectual perspective, he did not change his opinion on science. He always put science in an important position and harmonised it with Islam.

Beşir Fuad holds the distinction of being the first scientific positivist and scientist under the Ottoman Empire. Despite its brevity of barely three years, his writing career had a profound impact on Ottoman and Turkish intellectuals, defining an age. Despite not being a devout or practicing Muslim, he introduced acceptable scientific and Western ideas to Ottoman Muslim society. He also emerged as a trailblazer in scientific thinking across all domains of existence. Additionally, he desired to position positivistic ideology at the core of existence. By doing so, he established himself as the pioneer of the positivistic worldview embraced by Ottoman and Turkish academics. He commended Islam out of a sense of patriotism and attacked Christianity for both patriotic and personal motives. For this reason he became an important intellectual with his aim to use science as an important tool and make some interpretations on Islam and its relationship with science. Beşir Fuad employed science as a weapon against the West and Christianity.

Abdullah Cevdet holds the highest level of political significance within this concept. Although Abdullah Cevdet's political and patriotic beliefs may have been characterised as naive, he is a prominent political figure and one of the leaders of the Young Turks, or the Ottoman opposition. Although he wrote with intellectual motivation, his primary objective was to establish a new society grounded in vulgar materialistic and social Darwinist principles. He sought to create a new Islamic understanding based on these concepts in addition to bringing vulgar materialist thought into harmony with Islam. He perceived this as the sole means to ensure the survival of the society by interpreting Islam in a scientific way. In this concept, which encompasses both scientific and religious viewpoints, Abdullah Cevdet is considered the most prominent and pragmatic character.

Lastly, Baha Tevfik is the most controversial figure in this concept. Due to the progressive climate of his time and his intellectual and political stance, he was reluctant to reconcile science and religion, both for political and intellectual motives. He consistently questioned the concept of religion, including Islam in some cases. He inherited the intellectual ideas of Beşir Fuad and aspired to elevate science as the ultimate notion. Nevertheless, in his writings, he drew comparisons between vulgar materialistic and monistic evolutionistic theories and Islam. Sometimes he mentioned some Islamic notions of Ottoman society in his scientific and philosophical writings to attract the attention of Muslim Ottoman society. His intention was to bridge the gap between Islamic philosophy and current scientific and philosophical notions by making them mutually comprehensible or by providing an Islamic perspective on modern scientific and philosophical ideas. Ottoman intellectuals showed both similarities and variations in their approaches to this topic. Populism served as their common ground despite their differences.

While Baha Tevfik regarded himself as the theoretician of materialism, he considered Abdullah Cevdet as the practitioner of materialism in the Ottoman Empire.⁵³⁹ That shows us the main difference between Abdullah Cevdet and Baha Tevfik. While Abdullah Cevdet was a pragmatic intellectual and had some sensitivity

⁵³⁹ Hanioğlu, 'Blueprints for a Future Society: Late Ottoman Materialists on Science, Religion and Art', 65.

about society, the primary motivation of Baha Tevfik was intellectual and scientific thought and development. He had some pragmatic motivation, but this motivation was not as high as Abdullah Cevdet's.

My point in this thesis is that these intellectuals aimed to create an Islamic understanding based on reason and intellectual and scientific thought. I also tried to draw a portrait of Ottoman intellectuals who aimed to break the image of "other" that Orientalist and Western intellectuals drew. The other reason is to prove Ottoman thought and Islam as a pair for the West to Islamic scholars and the public. In addition, these Ottoman intellectuals had an Orientalist perspective called 'Ottoman orientalism'; they adopted a civilising mission on Ottoman society like the ruling elite adopted the same mission to civilise the Arab periphery.⁵⁴⁰ They wanted to create a role for the Ottoman Empire both for the West and the East in intellectual areas.

Like most intellectuals of the period, the thinkers examined in this thesis sought to refute the arguments put forward by Orientalist and Western intellectuals. What distinguishes them is their use of Western scientific, intellectual, and philosophical thought in doing so. In effect, Ottoman intellectuals responded to Orientalist critiques by employing the West's own intellectual tools, a case of giving the Orientalists a dose of their own medicine. They chose this approach largely out of patriotic motives, given the close interconnection between Islam and the Ottoman Empire. Some of these intellectuals even defended Islam and sought to reconcile it with modern thought primarily for patriotic reasons. In this thesis, I have highlighted this underlying motivation for each of the figures discussed. My main argument is that, alongside the material values which had been imported from the West for nearly a century, these intellectuals also aimed to introduce the West's non-material values, such as rationalism, scientific thinking, and secular ethics, and sought to harmonise them with Islam and Ottoman culture. They endeavoured to demonstrate that there were no insurmountable religious obstacles to such a synthesis.

⁵⁴⁰ Özgür Türesay, 'L'Empire Ottoman Sous Le Prisme Des Études Postcoloniales. À Propos d'un Tournant Historiographique Récent', *Revue d'histoire Moderne et Contemporaine (1954-)* 60, no. 2 (2013): 128–29.

In Ottoman and Turkish historiography, topics like modernisation, science, religion or perception of the West are analysed mainly in the political area or as political or military content because the meeting with these concepts occurred thanks to the political and military elites in the Late Ottoman Empire. In this thesis, I contributed to this topic from the perspectives of intellectuals and showed how they approached this topic with different topics like science, literature, philosophy, sometimes religion and even some topics that seem very different and controversial for Muslim Ottoman society. Because non-material interaction occurred in a nonmaterial context and aimed to shape the structure and mindset of the society, these intellectuals sweated while translating and localising these concepts, and they were even blamed.

Although these intellectuals did not always express their intentions directly, and sometimes did so only indirectly, I discussed the possible reasons behind their choices by analysing their arguments and the subtexts within their works. I applied this approach to each intellectual and each work to summarise their key points and clarify their perspectives. Given that these intellectuals often displayed ambiguity or confusion on certain topics, this summarising strategy helps make their positions more comprehensible. Through this method, I have aimed to identify the possible foundations for why they selected works and the rationale behind their approaches. I also examined their perceptions and methods of interpretation. While this is not the central focus or main argument of the thesis, this approach allowed me to shed light on the mindset and intellectual framework of these figures.

Religion is not a lone concept; it brings along cultural, political, and social values. Ottoman intellectuals that I analysed in this topic also paid regard to these values, mainly because of pragmatic reasons. The reason why they bend these concepts, ‘science’ and ‘religion, includes some important reasons. The first reason is their effort to adjust society's sensitivity. They approached this topic almost completely differently from the Western intellectuals. In the West, intellectuals challenged the concept of religion, particularly Christianity, and incorporated it into intellectual, philosophical, and scientific frameworks. However, while criticising or blaming Islam on this topic, some intellectuals had political aims. Even atheist Ottoman

intellectuals felt that they should defend Islam. This is a political manoeuvre, in addition to an intellectual attitude.

I also showed the arguments of Ottoman intellectuals against Christian intellectuals. They made that because of the increase in the number of Christian missionaries in the Ottoman Empire. Christian missionaries were associated with the great powers of the West, especially the British Empire, France, the German Empire, and later the United States. Ottoman intellectuals, like Beşir Fuad in his works, chose to praise Islam over Christianity to reduce the influence of Christianity and the great powers in the Ottoman Empire. Intellectuals like Abdullah Cevdet aimed to bring a new comment and perspective to Islam to make it coherent with the needs and style of the modern West from a scientific perspective. That effort includes modernising the Ottoman Empire not only in material conditions but also in other areas like lifestyle, human affairs, work life, and many other topics. In this way, they also aimed to demolish the inferiority complex of the Ottoman Empire and society from a Social Darwinistic perspective. They positioned themselves as guides in addition to intellectuals. While these intellectuals tried to harmonise Western values with Islamic concepts, their understanding can be regarded as “nevertheless not Western”, as Carter Findley proposed this concept for Ahmed Midhat.⁵⁴¹ While the Ottoman Empire was transforming, Ottoman intellectuals aimed to transform both Islam and Ottoman society in a scientific and intellectual way.

Although the context of this thesis is limited to a few topics and five intellectuals from a limited time and does not cover the whole intellectual history of the Late Ottoman Empire, it can be seen from the content of this thesis that the influence of Ottoman intellectuals widened and moved from French intellectuals of the Enlightenment Era to German vulgar materialist intellectuals of the 19th century in the topic of science and intellectual thought. One of the main reasons for that change is about the change in the mentality of Ottoman intellectuals. The other reason is the change of influence centre from France to Germany in almost all areas of the Ottoman Empire. That relates to the political relationship between the Ottoman and

⁵⁴¹ Carter Vaughn Findley, ‘An Ottoman Occidental in Europe: Ahmed Midhat Meets Madame Gülnar, 1889’, *The American Historical Association*, no. 103 (February 1998): 19.

German Empires. Intellectual and scientific thought cannot be separated from the political dimension. Throughout this discussion, I have demonstrated the tight connection between intellectual and scientific thought and political and social issues. That example also strengthens this approach. Their address changed, and they wrote their works for the public rather than a limited circle.

Because Young Turks and Ottoman intellectuals did not have a structured ideology, rather they shaped their ideas and policies according to the needs of the time and society. they aimed to use Social Darwinism as a tool to drive society in a modern way.⁵⁴² They regarded it as the only way to continue the life of the Ottoman Empire and Ottoman society. For this reason, they harmonised Social Darwinistic thought, modern science, philosophy and Islamic thought to sustain the life of the Muslim society of the Ottoman Empire. As I mentioned in this thesis, rather than a conflict between science and religion in the Ottoman Empire, these notions were used for the sake of the Ottoman Empire and Ottoman society.

While trying to respond to Western intellectuals' arguments, they also challenge local situations. They sometimes defended themselves against intellectuals and Islamic scholars who blamed them for irreligiosity. In addition, they struggled with the Hamidian Regime, which controlled every aspect of the Ottoman Empire in that era. Consequently, they found themselves in a precarious position. While publishing their works, they considered this situation usually and maybe made a blue pencil in their works to protect them from exile or trials. The Hamidian Regime may have contributed to the ambiguity surrounding this topic in the Ottoman Empire. During the Constitutional Era, this political and religious oppression persisted, stifling the voices of intellectuals. This oppression also reduced the power of intellectuals in society and protected the supreme position of the ruling elite, even in the intellectual realm. This situation has continued even in Turkey. With the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of the Turkish Republic, the ruling elite also made other changes. That brought some other changes with it.

⁵⁴² Hanioğlu, *Bir Siyasal Örgüt Olarak Osmanlı İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti ve Jön Türklük (1889-1902)*, 51–52.

These intellectuals tried to harmonise the local values of the Ottoman Empire with Western scientific, intellectual and philosophical thought. That project was the general attitude of Ottoman intellectuals, especially Westernist intellectuals, in that era in politics, intellectuals, and almost all other areas. Ottoman intellectuals followed that way to catch the West in the race of modernisation without losing local values. On the contrary to other fields, Ottoman intellectuals failed to harmonise these concepts. In addition, in some cases, while trying to harmonise these thoughts with Islam, scientism, in the words of Hegel, ‘suffered at its own hands’⁵⁴³ in society’s eyes. From my perspective, one of the main reasons was mostly related to inconsistencies between classical Islamic thought and modern scientific, intellectual and philosophical thought.

Positivism, along with intellectual movement, was a political movement in that era. CUP used the motto of positivism as the motto of their party with a bit of change and made it union and progress. Political positivism became influential in the Early Republican Era, too. The political face of positivism in the Late Ottoman and Early Republican eras shows that discussions of ‘science and religion’ were not only intellectual topics but also political topics and became a tool during the political discussions of that era. In addition to positivism, materialism became a political and social tool for these intellectuals. They used materialism as a civilisation tool, as Şükrü Hanioğlu claims.⁵⁴⁴

In addition to the influence of intellectual thought on the embodiment of political structure, as Şerif Mardin claims,⁵⁴⁵ political structure and politics had influences on ideas and intellectual thought in the Late Ottoman Empire and Early Republican Era. This mutual interaction gives Ottoman and Turkish intellectual thought a special place. For this reason, most of the Ottoman and Turkish intellectuals had political and social bases in their intellectual thought. For this reason, they used Islam as a

⁵⁴³ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, Suhrkamp Taschenbuch Wissenschaft (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1989), 74.

⁵⁴⁴ Hanioğlu, ‘Blueprints for a Future Society: Late Ottoman Materialists on Science, Religion and Art’, 81.

⁵⁴⁵ Mardin, *Jön Türklerin Siyasî Fikirleri: 1895 - 1908*, 9.

tool; in addition, they mostly considered science and philosophy as tools in the way of modernisation. Moreover, they used these tools as a barrier to preventing the West's cultural, political, religious, and social hegemony. Because of these reasons, like the intellectual concepts in this thesis, Ottoman and Turkish intellectuality relates to political and pragmatic aims.

That period was transformational in terms of intellectual life. The new understanding of science led to three critical outcomes. The first was the influence of biological materialism, which contributed to the rise of Social Darwinism. With the spread of Social Darwinist thought, theories of biological superiority and elitism gained prominence. The second was the increasingly central role of science in legitimising actions and driving the transformation of society. The third outcome was the emergence of a growing tension between conservative and progressive factions, fuelled by these scientific and ideological shifts.⁵⁴⁶ That transformation process continued until the Republic and some of the aspects remained the same, but some drastically changed with the intervention of the ruling elite.

With the Turkish Republic's foundation, the ruling elite's perspective changed. This led to significant shifts in nearly every aspect of society, including the way the ruling elites viewed science and religion. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk claimed that, unlike Ottoman intellectuals who tried to blend materialistic views with Islam in Ottoman society, the new republic should draw inspiration from life itself rather than from religion or 'heavenly sources'. "In this new utopian state, it was nationalism sanctified by science that would reign supreme as the new religion." This perspective on Atatürk is one step further from the arguments of the Westernisers of the Second Constitutional Era. This shows the change in the mentality; Atatürk took Abdullah Cevdet's idea, 'Science is the religion of the elites, and religion is the science of the masses,' and wanted science to be the religion of all citizens. That shows the change in mentality with the birth of the Turkish Republic and the transformation of the perspective of science and religion. Atatürk's speech shows that science nearly

⁵⁴⁶ M. Şükrü Hanioglu, 'Transformation of the Ottoman Intelligentsia and the Idea of Science' (Anuarul Institutului de Istorie si Arheologie A.D, Xenopol, 1987), 5-6 (33-34).

became the state religion, overthrew religion's supreme position, and took its place.⁵⁴⁷ Like Büşra Ersanlı's claim for the effect of romanticism, positivism and German historicism on national history writing⁵⁴⁸ this effect showed its impact on the understating of science and religion. In the end, there is a change in paradigm and an epistemological break in the discussions of 'science' and 'religion' with the establishment of Turkey.

⁵⁴⁷ M. Şükrü Hanioğlu, *Atatürk: An Intellectual Biography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 230.

⁵⁴⁸ Büşra Ersanlı, *İktidar ve Tarih: Türkiye'de 'Resmî Tarih' Tezinin Oluşumu: (1929-1937)* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2009), 26.

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APPENDICES

A. CURRICULUM VITAE

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Surname, Name: ERTAN, İrfan

Nationality: Turkish (TC)

Date and Place of Birth:

Phone:

e-mail:

EDUCATION

2025 **PhD**, Department of History, Middle East Technical University.
Thesis Title: The Relationship between Science and Religion in the Late Ottoman Empire. Supervisor: Assist. Prof. Dr. Şefika Akile ZORLU DURUKAN.

2018 **M.A.**, Department of History, Middle East Technical University.
Thesis Title: The Orient Journey of Kaiser Wilhelm II (1898). Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Ömer TURAN.

2016 **B. A.**, Department of History, Middle East Technical University

WORK EXPERIENCE

Since 2024 **Part-Time Instructor**, Department of History, İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University.

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Late Ottoman Modernisation

Intellectual History of the Late Ottoman

Opposition in the Late Ottoman Empire

Intellectual History of Europe

Ottoman – German Relations

LANGUAGES

Turkish (Native)

English (Advanced)

Ottoman Turkish (Advanced)

German (Intermediate)

TEACHING EXPERIENCES

Part Time Instructor, İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University, Department of History

2024- ongoing

HIST 200: History of Turkey

PUBLICATIONS

Book Chapters

“Kronoloji”, İsmet İnönü, ed. Mehmet Ö. Alkan, İstanbul: İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi, December 2021, ss. 784-809

“Kaynakça” İsmet İnönü, ed. Mehmet Ö. Alkan, İstanbul: İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi, December 2021, ss. 810-827.

Articles

‘A Soft Crusade’ by The German Empire: The Second Orient Journey Of Wilhelm II (1898) . Tarihyazımı , 4 (1) (2022 Spring), 19-40.

Osmanlı Materyalist Felsefe Neşriyatında İki Örnek: Dağarcık ve Felsefe Mecmuası,
Çağdaş Türkiye Araştırmaları Dergisi, XXI/43 (2021 Fall) 607-632

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Tevfik 140 Yaşında, 16 March 2024

“Reflection of Bergsonism in Turkish Intellectual History: Dergâh Journal”

Turkologentag 2023, *The Fourth European Convention on Turkic, Ottoman and
Turkish Studies*, 21-23 September 2023, Vienna, Austria.

The notion of Tradition According to Westernist and Modernist-Islamist Intellectuals
of the Second Constitutional Era: Abdullah Cevdet and Mehmed Akif, Change and
Exchange, International Society for Intellectual History, 27 – 29 Mayıs 2020,
European University Institute (Accepted but congress was cancelled because of
COVID-19)

2.Meşruiyet Dönemi Garpcı ve Modernist İslamcı Aydınla Gelenek Algısı Abdullah
Cevdet ve Mehmed Akif Örneği, 16. Ulusal Sosyal Bilimler Kongresi, Türk Sosyal
Bilimler Derneği, 26- 28 November 2019, Ankara

Osmanlı Fikir Hayatında Batı Algısı, “Tanzimattan Cumhuriyete” Yeni Sorunsallar
Yeni Yaklaşımlar, II. Lisans & Lisansüstü Öğrenci Kongresi, 16 Mayıs 2018,
ODTÜ, Ankara

PROJECTS

2024-2025 Anadolu Sigorta Tarihi (Project Assistant) - Project Supervisor: Prof. Dr.
Mehmet Ö. Alkan

2022-ongoing “Osmanlı-Türk Modernitesini Kavram, Kelime ve Terimler Üzerinden
Okumak (OT2KT) (TÜBİTAK: 121K982) (Project Assistant) - Project Supervisor:
Prof. Dr. İbrahim Şirin

B. TURKISH SUMMARY / TRKE ZET

GE OSMANLI İMPARATORLUĐU'NDA DİN BİLİM İLİŐKİSİ

'Din' ve 'Bilim' tartıřmalarının modern dnemdeki temellerine baktıĐımız zaman Kopernik'in 1543 yılında yayımlamıř olduĐu *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium* (Gksel Krelerin Devinimi zerine) isimli eserine gitmek mmkndr. Aydınlanma Devri ile birlikte bu tartıřma daha da belirginleřmiřtir. Kant'ın 1784 yılında yayımlamıř olduĐu *Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklrung?* (Aydınlanma Nedir?) isimli kısa yazısı bilimsel dřnce aısından kırılma noktalarından biri olarak kabul edilmelidir.

Avrupa'da din ve bilim tartıřmalarının kesin olarak duyurulduĐu eserler ise Draper'in 1874 yılında yayımladıĐı *History of the Conflict Between Religion and Science* (Din ve Bilim Arasındaki atıřmanın Tarihi) ve Andrew Dickson White'ın 1896 yılında yayımladıĐı *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom* (Hristiyan Aleminde Bilimin Hristiyan Teolojisiyle Savařı) isimli eserleridir.

Osmanlı İmparatorluĐu'na modern bilimsel bilginin girdiĐi kanal genel olarak askeri kanaldır. zellikle Mhendishane-i Bahri Hmayun ve Mhendishane-i Berri Hmayun'un aılmasıyla birlikte Osmanlı İmparatorluĐu, bilimsel bilgiyi Berrak Burak'ın deyimiyle 'kullanıřlı bilgi' olarak almıřtır. Bu da Oamanlı'da bilime ve bilimsel bilgiye olan bakıřın 18. Yzyılın sonları ve 19. Yzyılın bařlarında nasıl ortaya ıktıĐını ve nasıl řekillendiĐini gstermektedir.

Osmanlı'da bilimin bir diĐer kanal ise batı dillerinden zellikle Fransızca'dan yapılan evirilerdir. Bu eviriler sayesinde Osmanlı entelekteli, Batı'daki bilim ve bilim algısını Osmanlı'ya yaymaya bařlamıřlardır. Ayrıca Osmanlı entelektelleri bu kavramları ve batıdan aldıkları fikirleri ve bilim yaklařımını eĐip bkerek ve yerel

içerikler ekleyerek Osmanlı'ya özgü bir bilim düşüncesi de ortaya çıkarmaya çalışmışlardır.

Osmanlı aydınları, Batı'nın bilimsel ve felsefî kavramları da içeren yeni epistemolojisini, kültürel ve dini kavramlar gibi eski epistemolojiyle harmanlayarak yeni bir epistemoloji biçimi oluşturmak için kullandılar. Buna ek olarak, ontolojik bir değişim gerçekleştirmeyi de amaçladılar. Sonuçta, bu epistemolojik ve ontolojik dönüşümler sayesinde Osmanlı toplumu Batı Birliği'ne katılacak ve modernleşme açısından önemli başarılar elde edecekti. İki önemli şeyi başarmayı hedefliyorlardı. Birincisi zihniyetin modernleştirilmesi, ikincisi ise yerliliğin, özellikle de İslam'ın ve Osmanlı kimliğinin korunması. 'Avrupalılık' ve 'Doğululuk' Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve Osmanlı aydınları için bir tartışma konusu haline geldi. Osmanlı aydınları 'Müslüman olarak Avrupalı olmak' terimini uygulamak istediler. Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Tanzimat döneminden beri bu modernleşme biçimini gerçekleştirmeye çalışıyordu.

Osmanlı aydınları Hristiyanlığı bilimle bağdaşmaz olarak görürken, bilim ve İslam'ı uzlaştırmaya çalışmıştır. Bu konuyu incelerken, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun entelektüel alanına Batı ülkelerinden, özellikle de Avrupa'dan girdiğini belirtmek önemlidir. Dolayısıyla Osmanlı aydınlarının Ernest Renan ve William Draper gibi Batılı aydın ve filozofların ortaya koyduğu fikirlere zaman zaman cevap verdikleri görülmektedir. Osmanlı aydınları bu konuyu analiz ederken çoğunlukla bir 'medeniyet' ve 'modernleşme' sorunu olarak ele almışlardır. Bu sorunlara cevap ararken 'bilim' ve 'din' önemli araçlar haline gelmiştir. Batı tarzı bu sorunları çözmek için Osmanlı aydınları da bu 'Batı tarzı icat edilmiş kavramları' kullandılar.

Bilim ve bilimcilik, Osmanlı'nın son dönemlerinde, özellikle Jön Türkler arasında, bilimsel ilkelere dayalı yeni ve kavramsal bir toplum inşa etmek için bazı entelektüeller tarafından ideolojik araçlar olarak kullanılmıştır. Bu konuda dikkate alınması gereken bir diğer önemli husus da İslam'ın önemidir. Bu dönüşüm tartışmaları sırasında din kavramı da gündeme gelmiş ve zaman zaman Batı'nın gerisinde kalmakla suçlanmıştır. Bu aydınlar, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun da uzun

süre birçok alanda kullandığı ‘Osmanlı pragmatizmi’ sayesinde bu kavramları kolayca eğip bükmüşlerdir.

Bu tez 5 entelektüel ve onların eserleri üzerine şekillenmektedir. Bu tezdeki her bir entelektüel konuyu kendi bakış açısıyla değerlendirmiştir ve bu çalışma onların bilim ve din yorumlarını analiz ederek bu bakış açılarını ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır. Onların bilim, materyalizm, evrimcilik, pozitivizm ve din anlayışları, konuya bakış açılarının ve yöntemlerinin yeniden inşasına katkıda bulunmaktadır. Öncelikli amaç, bilim ve dine ilişkin vulgar materyalist bakış açılarının bir temsilini tasvir etmektir. Bu entelektüeller her zaman dini tartışmasalar da, bazı yazıları onların görüşlerini göstermektedir. Ayrıca, bu yayınlar bilimsel unsurlar içerirken din hakkında farklı bakış açıları da sunmaktadır. Entelektüeller dini, bilimin rolüne uygun olarak konumlandırmaktadır. Yorumları formüle etmek için dini bilgi ve bağlamı kullanarak bu entelektüellerin yazılarındaki ipuçlarını ve gizli anlayışları ortaya çıkarmaya çalışacağım. Nihai hedefim, 1860'lar ile 1910'lar arasında yaşamış Osmanlı entelektüellerinin bir portresini oluşturmak. Bu resim, onların bilimsel, dini ve felsefi konulardaki katkılarına odaklanacak ve yazılı eserlerine referanslar içerecektir. Ayrıca dönemin bu entelektüelleri arasındaki zihniyet değişimini de göstermeyi hedeflemektedir. Ayrıca bu tezde bu entelektüellerin her ne kadar farklı olsalar da temel benzerliklerini göstermek hedeflenmiştir. Bu beş entelektüel, içlerinde ayrışmalar yaşasalar ve bazı İslam anlayışlarını eleştirseler de, İslam'ı Osmanlı toplumu için bir çimento olarak görmüşlerdir. Elbette bu İslam anlayışı hepsi için farklı bir noktada olabilir veya İslam'ı popüler veya pragmatic amaçlarla kullanmış veya bu düşünceyi yine bu amaçlarla savunmuş olabilirler.

Bu konuyu incelerken, bu bakış açısını benimsenmiş ve Osmanlı entelektüellerinin çoğunluğunun Batı yönelimli olmakla birlikte, İslam ve diğer toplumsal eğilimler gibi yerel değerleri de Batı fikirleriyle uzlaştırma çabası içinde olduklarını göstermeyi amaçlanmıştır. Bu nedenle, Batı modernizmine karşı Osmanlı toplumunun ihtiyaçlarına daha iyi hizmet edecek bir alternatif yaratmayı amaçlamışlardır. Bu tez, söz konusu aydınların İslam'ı bilimsel ve zaman zaman İslam dışı felsefi ilkelerle bütünleştirme yönündeki bilinçli çabalarını ve bu sentezi halka yayma girişimlerini vurgulamayı amaçlamaktadır. Osmanlı entelektüelleri,

'bilim' ve 'din' etrafındaki tartışmalar üzerinde önemli bir etkiye sahip olan farklı bir modernleşme biçimi ve alternatif bir İslam ve dünya görüşü ortaya koydular.

Batılı entelektüeller bu konuyu tartışırken, Osmanlı entelektüelleri de özellikle çeviriler ve kendi eserleri aracılığıyla konuya ilgi göstermişlerdir. Tezime göre bu konudaki tartışmalar 1860'larda Münif Paşa ve onun Mecmua-i Fünun dergisiyle başlamıştır. Bu konudaki tartışmayı 1910'larda sonlandırdım, çünkü Baha Tevfik'in ölümünden sonra bence daha önemli bir tartışma olmadı. 1932'ye kadar yaşamasına rağmen Abdullah Cevdet'in bu konudaki araştırmaları 1910'lardan sonra azaldı. Bunun yerine, İslam'ın yeni bir yorumuna dayanan yeni bir toplum kurma arayışında sosyal bir literatür üretmeye odaklandı. Bununla birlikte, Abdullah Cevdet'in 1920'lerdeki yazılarından belirli bölümlerde bazı alıntılar kullanılmıştır. Bu konuyu incelerken amacım, bu aydınların bilime ve bazen de dine bakış açılarını ve modernleşmeye yönelik sosyo-politik hedeflerine odaklanarak bu kavramlara yönelik tutumlarını ortaya koymaktır. Bu entelektüeller arasında kesin ve katı bir mutabakatın olmaması nedeniyle. Entelektüel önemin yanı sıra, bu söylemin Osmanlı İmparatorluğu içinde siyasi sonuçları da olmuştur. Ahmed Midhat zaman zaman bu söylemi Batı'ya ve Oryantalistlere karşı kullanmaktaydı. Yazılarının bazı yönleri dolaylı da olsa İslam'a yönelik eleştiriler içerse de, eserlerinin çoğu İslam'ı anlayış biçimlerini gösteriyordu. Münif Paşa, Ahmed Midhat ve Abdullah Cevdet, inançlarının çoğunun Klasik İslam doktriniyle çelişmesine rağmen İslam anlayışları üzerine düşünmüşlerdir.

Münif Paşa'nın analizinde, çağdaş bilimsel ve entelektüel fikirlerin Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'na girişini ve bilim ve felsefenin öneminin benimsenmesini gösterilmiştir. Ayrıca Münif Paşa'nın bilim ve din alanlarını ayırma çabalarını da açıklanmıştır. Bunu yaparken, basının bilimin ve entelektüel bilginin popülerleşmesine nasıl katkıda bulunduğunu da vurgulanmıştır. Bu nedenle Münif Paşa tezimin öncü figürlerinden biri olarak Osmanlı modern ve popüler bilim neşriyatında tezim için önemli bir yerde durmaktadır.

İkinci figür Ahmed Midhat'tır ve Ahmed Midhat'ın iki zıt yönüne değinilmiştir. Bölümün ilk yarısında Ahmed Midhat'ın bir evrimci ve materyalist olarak bakış

açısını tartışılmıştır. Ancak, ikinci bölümde onun anti-materyalist duruşunu vurgulanmıştır. Ayrıca Ahmed Midhat için İslam'ın her iki dönemi için de önemini vurgulanmıştır. Ahmed Midhat'ın entelektüel perspektifindeki değişimi tartışırken, siyasi duruşunu ve kendisini Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun idealleriyle uyumlu hale getirme çabalarını da incelemek çok önemlidir.

Beşir Fuad üçüncü figürdür. Beşir Fuad'ı tartışırken, özellikle fizyoloji ve psikoloji alanlarında bilimin önemini vurgulamak önemlidir. Beşir Fuad'ı incelerken ele alacağım bir diğer konu da ruhun varlığının araştırılmasıdır. Buna ek olarak, edebiyat ve Romantizm ile Realizm/Natüralizm'in analizi konuları da değinilmesi gereken konulardandır. Beşir Fuad, aşırı bilimcilik sorununu tartışmak için çok önemlidir. Ancak zaman zaman bilimle olan ilişkisi nedeniyle İslam'ı Hristiyanlıktan üstün tutmaktadır. Beşir Fuad'ın vatanseverliği ile tez arasında bir ilişki kurmak da kendisinin Hristiyanlık'a olan antipatisini açıklamaktadır.

Abdullah Cevdet dördüncü figürdür. Ana odak noktası Abdullah Cevdet'in bilimsel fikirlere yer vermesi ve materyalist, evrimci ve bilimsel kavramları İslam'la bağdaştırmaya çalışması, materyalist bir İslami bakış açısı oluşturmayı hedeflemesidir. Kuşkusuz onun bu çabası siyasi duruşuyla doğrudan bağlantılıdır. Abdullah Cevdet'i bilimsel, entelektüel, sosyal, siyasi ve dini açılardan katkılarını ve etkisini inceleyerek tartışılmıştır. Abdullah Cevdet, siyasi, sosyal, dini ve bilimsel yazılarında bir rehber olarak etkili konumunu vurgulayarak kendisini diğer entelektüellerden ayırır. Abdullah Cevdet'in ölümüne kadar olan yazılarının kullanılmama sebebi 1920'lerden sonra Abdullah Cevdet'in İslam'ı bir araç olarak kullanma yöntemini azaltmasıdır.

Bu tezin son figürü Baha Tevfik olacaktır. Baha Tevfik, söz konusu grup içinde bilimciliği en üst düzeyde temsil etmektedir. Bazı bakış açılarına göre Beşir Fuad ve Abdullah Cevdet'in bir birleşimi olarak görülebilir. Baha Tevfik, siyasi, sosyal ya da dini bir lider olma gibi bir amacı neredeyse hiç olmayan tek figürdür. Ayrıca Oryantalist entelektüellere ya da Hristiyan misyonerlere cevap vermek gibi bir niyeti de yoktu. İslam'ı överken sadece toplumun İslam alimleri arasındaki tepkilere dikkat etmiştir. Sonuç olarak, diğer insanlara kıyasla daha büyük bir özgürleşme duygusu

yaşadı. Onun sınırlandırılmamış yaklaşımına katkıda bulunan bir başka faktör de İkinci Meşrutiyet döneminin müsamahakâr ortamıyla bağlantılıdır.

Bu beş figürü inceleyerek, Osmanlı entelektüellerinin kapsamlı bir portresini oluşturmayı amaçladım. 'Bilim' ve 'din' konularındaki farklı bakış açılarına ve tartışmalarına rağmen, bu konuları araştırırken ortak hedefleri paylaşmışlardır. Ayrıca 'bilim' ve 'din' kavramlarına ilişkin duruşlarını ve bunların toplumu şekillendirirken Batı dünyasının ve Oryantalistlerin tecavüzkar etkisinden korumadaki rollerini göstermeye çalıştım. Buna ek olarak, Türk tarih yazımında Osmanlı materyalizminin modernleşme bağlamında kendisini din ve geleneğin karşısında konumlandığı yönündeki hakim bakış açısına da meydan okudum.

Münif Paşa ve Ahmed Midhat, gazete ve dergileri kullanarak bilimsel bilginin yayılmasını teşvik etmeye çalıştılar. Münif Paşa, toplumun eğitiminin önünü açan açık derslerin kurulmasına önemli katkılarda bulundu. Ahmed Midhat, özellikle 1880'lerde Osmanlıcılık akımının önde gelen isimlerinden biri olarak ortaya çıktı. Onun amacı, Batı bilimini ve entelektüalizmini Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve toplumu için pratik bilgi kaynağı olarak kullanmaktı. Beşir Fuad, bilimi din de dahil olmak üzere diğer tüm kavramların üzerine çıkarmayı ve Hıristiyanlığı eleştirmeyi amaçlamıştır. Edebiyat da dahil olmak üzere her kavramı bilimsel anlayışın merceğinden geçirerek yorumlamayı hedeflemiştir. Abdullah Cevdet, vulgar materyalizm ve Sosyal Darwinizm ilkelerini içeren yenilikçi bir İslam ve Osmanlı Toplumu biçimi kurmayı amaçladı. Son olarak Baha Tevfik modern felsefe ile bilimciliği uzlaştırarak bilimsel bir felsefe anlayışı kurmaya çalışmış, bilimsel sorgulama ve ilerlemenin önünü açmıştır. Bu açıdan bakıldığında, farklı yollardan gitmelerine rağmen bu entelektüellerin ortak bir hedefi paylaştıkları söylenebilir: bilimi, özellikle de popülerleştirilmiş materyalist bir bilimsel anlayışı Osmanlı toplumunda önemli bir güç olarak yerleştirmek.

Ayrıca, inceleyeceğim entelektüeller bilim anlayışlarını nadiren din ile karşılaştırmışlardır; bunun yerine, bunu dolaylı olarak yapmışlardır. Bu fikirlerin farklı yorumları ve zaman zaman halkın ilgisini çekmek için bunları uzlaştırmanın yollarını bulma yoluna gitmişlerdir. Bu entelektüeller tarafından kullanılan popülist

stratejiler nedeniyle, İslam'a doğrudan bir saldırı olduğunu fark etmek zordur. Bu bakış açısı, konuya alternatif bir bakış açısı sunması açısından önemlidir. Buna ek olarak, amaçları bilimsel ve entelektüel anlayışı Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve medeniyetindeki Batı etkisi ve sömürgeci yayılmaya karşı bir koruma olarak kullanmaktı. Bu nedenle, konuyu sosyal ve siyasi bakış açılarının merceğinden inceleyeceğim. Osmanlı entelektüelleri kendilerini 'daha yüksek' bir medeniyete bağlama fikrini benimsemişlerdir. Amaçları kendilerini diğer 'yüksek' medeniyetlerin etkisinden ve Oryantalist tutumlarından ayırmaktı. Osmanlı entelektüellerinin bakış açısı, sömürge karşıtı milliyetçi bakış açısıyla benzerlik göstermektedir. Osmanlı toplumunda İslam temel ve yüksek değer verilen bir unsur olarak kabul edilir.

Bu isimlerin hemen hepsi İslam'ı ve Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nu bir bütünün ayrılmaz parçaları olarak görmüşlerdir. Bu nedenle çoğu ateist olsa da İslam'ı korumayı amaçlamışlar, İslam'ı bilime uygun ve uyumlu görürken, bu konuda Hristiyanlığı ve Oryantalist aydınları eleştirmişlerdir. Bu aydınlar Hristiyanlığı eleştirirken aynı zamanda Batı'yı ve Oryantalist aydınları da eleştirmişlerdir. Bu çaba sırasında amaçları iki yönlüdür: Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nu korumak ve 19. yüzyıl boyunca Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda önemli bir nüfuz kazanan Hristiyan misyonerlerin artan etkisine karşı koymak. Ancak, hepsinin dindar Müslümanlar olmadığını belirtmek önemlidir. Abdullah Cevdet, Beşir Fuad ve Baha Tevfik gibi kişilerin kendilerini ateist olarak tanımladıklarına inanılmaktadır. Bu kişiler öncelikle din fikrine karşı olduklarını ifade etmişlerdir. Bununla birlikte, ilerleyen bölümlerde İslam'ı Hristiyanlık karşısında neden savunduklarını ve övdüklerini ayrıntılı olarak ele alacağım. Buna ek olarak, bilimi ve bilimin İslam'la olan bağlantısını yüceltmek için zaman zaman İslami argümanlar kullanmışlardır. Bu kişiler aynı zamanda geleneksel Türk kültürü ile Batı etkisi arasındaki ayrıma da meydan okumayı amaçlıyorlardı. Niyetleri, Batı'nın maddi ve manevi değerlerini Osmanlı kültürüne dahil etmektir. Amaçları çağdaş, Batılılaşmış bir Osmanlı ve İslam kültürünü sürdürmektir.

Osmanlı aydınlarının eserlerini ve argümanlarını incelerken, konunun Batı ideallerine karşı modernleşme tartışmaları ve Oryantalist aydınların Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve İslam'a bakış açılarıyla ilgili olduğunu unutmamak gerekir. Osmanlı aydınları bir yandan İslam'ın temel ilkelerini benimseyip korumaya

çalışırken, bir yandan da bilimsel ve felsefi arayışları benimseyerek Batı dünyasınıninkine benzer bir zihniyete sahip olmaya çalışmışlardır. Bazı Osmanlı aydınlarının bürokraside görev almayı ya da Osmanlı muhalefetine liderlik etmek gibi diğer etkili rolleri üstlenmeyi arzuladıkları söylenebilir. Benim temel argümanım, çalışmalarında farklı yaklaşımlar ve perspektifler kullanmalarına ve vulgar materyalizm, pozitivizm ve evrimciliği kullanmalarındaki benzerliklere rağmen, temel amaçlarının Müslüman Osmanlı toplumunu modernleştirmek ve onu Oryantalist perspektiflerin ve Hristiyan misyonerlerin etkisinden korumak için İslam ve bilimi uyumlaştırmak olduğudur.

Tezde işlenen entelektüelleri sırayla inceleyecek olursak: Münif Paşa, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda 'aydınlanma' düşüncesinin öncülerinden biriydi. Ayrıca, bilimin din ve devlet kontrolünden bağımsızlaşmasına önemli katkılarda bulunmuştur. Bununla birlikte, kendisini bilim ya da din ile aynı hizaya getirdiğini söylemek doğru olmaz; bunun yerine, bu kavramlar arasındaki ayrımların altını çizmiştir. Bilimin önemini ve statüsünü din veya İslam ile uzlaştırmadan kabul etmiş ve vurgulamıştır. Bu bakış açısı onu aynı zamanda Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda modern ve Batılı bilimsel düşüncenin öncüsü olarak konumlandırmaktadır. Bu süreçte argümanlarını ağırlıklı olarak Mecmua-i Fünun adlı yayınında kullanmıştır. Mecmua-i Fünun, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Batılı ilkeleri takip eden ilk bilimsel yayındır. Münif Paşa, modern Batı eğitimi ve biliminin Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'na girmeye başladığı dönemin en önemli isimlerinden biridir. İlk bilimsel dernek olan Cemiyet-i İlmiye-i Osmaniye'nin kurucu üyelerinden olan ve ilk Osmanlı bilimsel dergisini kuran Münif Paşa, Encümen-i Daniş'in kaldırılmasının ardından Cemiyet-i İlmiye-i Osmaniye ve Münif Paşa giderek daha fazla önem kazandı. Bu değişim aynı zamanda entelektüel düşünce ve zihniyette geleneksel anlayıştan daha modern bir yaklaşıma doğru yaşanan dönüşümü de yansıtmaktadır. Ahmed Cevdet Paşa ve onun entelektüel perspektifi bu geçişte zemin kaybetmeye başlarken, Münif Paşa ve onun fikirleri güç kazanmıştır. Bu değişim, Münif Paşa'nın modern Batı bilimsel düşüncesine ve Fransız materyalizmine olan ilgisiyle pekişen İslami ilim geleneğinin düşüşünü ve Batı biliminin yükselişini simgeler. Tanzimat döneminin güçlü bürokratları Fuad ve Ali Paşalar, Münif Paşa'yı bu çabasında desteklemişlerdir. Bu durum, dönüşümün entelektüel alanla sınırlı kalmadığını, aksine devletin kendisinin de evrilerek bu yeni

Batılı bilimsel perspektifi giderek daha fazla benimsediğini ve onayladığını göstermektedir. Münif Paşa, modern bilimin yolunu basına ve entelektüel alana açmış, bu sayede halkın zihnine nüfuz etmeyi hedeflemiştir.

Münif Paşa'nın bilimsel bilgi anlayışı ile bu tezdeki diğer aydınlar arasında bazı farklılıklar olsa da, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda modern bilimsel yayıncılığın ve bilimin popülerleşmesinin başlangıç noktası olması nedeniyle kendisinden sonraki hemen hemen tüm Osmanlı aydınları üzerinde etkili olduğunu söyleyebilirim. Bilimi halka ve sıradan insanlara tanıtmış ve kendisinden sonra gelen entelektüellerin toplumda seslerini duyurabilmeleri için bir yol açmıştır. Ayrıca bilimi ayrı bir bilgi dalı haline getirmiştir. Ayrıca Münif Paşa'yı bilim ve din algısında on dokuzuncu yüzyılın Avrupalı materyalistlerinden ziyade on yedinci ve on sekizinci yüzyılın deistlerine benzetmek daha doğrudur.

Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda 19. yüzyılın sonlarında 'bilim' ve 'din' konularında tartışmaların başlatılmasında önemli bir rol oynamıştır. Bununla birlikte, sonraki entelektüellerin aksine tartışmalara katılmaktan kaçındı. Mecmua-i Fünun'un yayımlandığı dönemde ne William Draper'ın ne de Andrew Dickson White'ın yazıları yayımlanmıştır. Ayrıca, Ernest Renan, L'islamisme et la Science başlıklı konferansını vermemiş ve İslam'ı bilim dışı bir kavram olarak eleştirmemişti. Hem Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'ndaki hem de Batı'daki modern bakış açısı 'bilim ve din arasındaki çatışmayı' açıkça ele almazken, yazıların yazarı ikisi arasında bir ayrım yapmış ve herhangi bir çatışmadan ve toplumdan ve yönetici elitlerden gelebilecek olumsuz tepkilerden kaçınmayı amaçlamıştır.

Münif Paşa, bu tezin ve Osmanlı ve Türk entelektüel tarihinin bilimi vulgarize eden, ona din kadar önem atfeden, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve Osmanlı toplumu adına bilime siyasi ve toplumsal bir konum veren ilk noktalarından biri olmuştur. Bakış açısı vulgar materyalist bir bakış açısı olmasa da pozitivist dünya ve bilim görüşü onu bilim ve din tartışmaları için önemli bir aktör haline getirmiştir.

Ahmed Midhat Efendi, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve Türkiye'nin entelektüel tarihinde önemli ve eşsiz bir konuma sahiptir. Asıl şöhretini edebi eserlerinden alan Ahmed

Midhat Efendi, bilim, felsefe gibi farklı alanlarla da ilgilenmiştir. Ahmed Midhat Efendi yaygın olarak muhafazakâr bir kişi olarak tanınmış, entelektüeller bile onu tüm yazarlık kariyeri boyunca muhafazakâr ve koyu dindar bir adam olarak algılamıştır. Bu ifade kısmen yanlıştır. Ahmed Midhat, 1870'lerin başlarında Dağarcık dergisinde İslami ideolojiden uzaklaşan makale ve denemeler kaleme almıştır. Rodos'a sürgün edilmesinin ardından, entelektüel perspektifi derin bir dönüşüm geçirdi ve İslami retoriği kullanımında önemli bir artışa yol açtı. Bunun olası bir açıklaması, kendisini bürokrasi ile uyumlu hale getirme niyetidir. Ayrıca, hem sürgünden önce hem de sürgünden sonra İslam'ın bilimsel ilkelerden yoksun olduğunu iddia ederek İslam'ı Oryantalist ve Batılı entelektüellerin fikirlerine karşı kullanmayı amaçlamıştır. Onun bu dönüşümü tam olarak 1876 yılında, büyük olasılıkla sürgünden döndükten sonra Abdülhamid ile iyi ilişkiler kurmak için gerçekleşmiştir. Ahmed Midhat Efendi, birçok Osmanlı aydını gibi, İslam'ı bilimsel bilgiyi kullanmak, korumak ve aydınlatmak için bir araç olarak görüyordu.

Dahası, bu bakış açısına göre İslam, Hristiyanlık ve diğer dinlerin aksine bilimle uyumludur ve onu destekler. Ahmed Midhat'ın asıl itirazı Avrupalı entelektüellerin Doğu tasvirine değil, Osmanlı toplumunda önyargılı olduğuna inandığı Batı tasvirine yöneliktir. Ancak Ahmed Midhat, Batı'nın maddi unsurları ile Doğu'nun manevi unsurlarının bir bileşimini önermektedir. Dağarcık'ta Ahmed Midhat bilim ve din arasındaki çatışmadan ziyade uyumu desteklemiştir.

Ahmed Midhat'ın entelektüel değişimi aynı zamanda Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'ndaki siyasi atmosferi de göstermektedir. Abdülhamid'in otokrasisinin ve muhafazakâr politikalarının yükselişiyle birlikte Ahmed Midhat da toplumla ilişkilerini artırmıştır. Vulgar materyalist bilim anlayışından vazgeçmiş ve bu anlayışı sert bir şekilde eleştirmiştir. Bilimi ve bilimsel anlayışı desteklemeye devam etti. Yazılarının siyasi tonunu da yükseltti ve Osmanlı'da temkinli Batıcılığın sesi oldu.

Dağarcık yıllarında bilim anlayışı materyalizm, pozitivizm ve Lamarckçı evrimcilik tarafından şekillendirilmiştir. Doğa bilimlerinden tam anlamıyla söz etmemiş, bu felsefi düşünceleri bilim olarak kabul etmiştir. Dahası, din veya İslam'ı nadiren tartıştı ve birincil amacı bu kavramların İslam'la zorunlu olarak çatışmadığını

göstermek gibi görünüyordu. Sürgünden döndükten sonra, materyalizm, pozitivizm ve evrimciliğin İslam'la bağdaşmadığını ileri sürerek bakış açısında bir değişim geçirdi. Bu fikirleri savunan entelektüelleri küfür sayarak eleştirdi. O andan itibaren ölümüne kadar sürekli olarak bilim ve inanç arasındaki uyumu savundu. Ahmed Midhat aynı zamanda hem felsefenin hem de dinin hakikati aradığını savunmuştur. Ayrıca, bilim ve din arasındaki uyum fikrini Hristiyanlığa ve Oryantalist anlatılara karşı çıkmak için bir araç olarak kullanmıştır. Entelektüel duruşundaki bu dönüşüme rağmen, bilim ve din arasında temel bir bağ olduğuna dair inancı değişmedi.

Ahmed Midhat, vulgar materyalizm, bilim ve din tartışmasının en önemli figürlerinden biri olarak kabul edilmelidir. Ahmed Midhat, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun ilk vulgar materyalisti olarak kabul edilebilir. Dine karşı saygılı bir tutum takınırken, bilime karşı vulgar materyalist, pozitivist ve evrimci bakış açılarını benimsemiştir. Din adamları ve dindar entelektüeller tarafından kâfirlikle suçlanırken, anti-materyalizme entelektüel dönüşümünden sonra neredeyse aynı perspektifi kullanmıştır. Bu nedenle Ahmed Midhat örneği önemlidir, çünkü özellikle bu tezde vulgar materyalist aydınlar İslam'a saldırmadıkları ya da desteklemedikleri halde kâfirlikle suçlanmışlardır. Ahmed Midhat aynı zamanda materyalist bir bakış açısını İslami destekle bütünleştiren bir öncü olmuştur.

Ahmed Midhat, İslami ideolojiyi bilimsel bir bakış açısıyla uzlaştırmaya çalışan ilk entelektüellerden biriydi. Ayrıca, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu döneminde popüler bir bilim ve felsefe dergisine katkıda bulunmuştur. Buna ek olarak, onun dini ve anti-bilimsel bakış açısını, yerleşik iktidar yapılarıyla uyum sağlama girişimlerini ve entelektüel akıl yürütmüştür. Ahmed Midhat, modernleşme sürecinde ve medeniyet söyleminde kilit bir entelektüeldir. Entelektüel ve teolojik inançlarını İslam vizyonunu ifade etmek ve hem Osmanlı İmparatorluğu hem de Batı dünyasında kendi duruşunu oluşturmak için kullanmıştır.

Erken dönem yazılarıyla geç dönem Osmanlı vulgar materyalist aydınlarına, geç dönem yazılarıyla da geç dönem Osmanlı ve Cumhuriyet aydınlarının anti-materyalist aydınlarına ve kamuoyuna öncülük etmiştir. Hem vulgar materyalist hem de anti-materyalist Osmanlı entelektüelleri için önemli bir figürdür. Ayrıca Ahmed

Midhat, ilk eserleriyle bilimciliğin, sonraki eserleriyle de anti-materyalist Osmanlı aydınlarının öncülerinden biri olmuştur. Münif Paşa nasıl Osmanlı'da modern bilimsel ve entelektüel düşüncenin öncülerinden biri olmuşsa, Ahmed Midhat da Osmanlı'da vulgar materyalist düşüncenin öncülerinden biri olmuş ve daha sonra anti-materyalist düşüncenin öncüsü haline gelmiştir.

Ahmed Midhat Efendi hayatı boyunca dindar bir entelektüel olmuştur. Dağarcık'ı yayınlarak vulgar materyalist, pozitivist ve Lamarckçı evrimciliği Osmanlı toplumuna tanıtırken, bu felsefi ve entelektüel düşünceleri İslami anlayışla analiz etti. Aynı şeyi bilimsel anlayış için de yapmıştır. İlerleyen bölümlerde bahsedeceğimiz Beşir Fuad, Abdullah Cevdet ve Baha Tevfik gibi aydınlardan farklı olarak Ahmed Midhat bunu siyasi ve pragmatik bir yaklaşımla değil, İslam'a olan bağlılığıyla yapmıştır.

Ahmed Midhat, hem materyalist/bilimci hem de anti-materyalist/muhafazakâr Osmanlı aydınlarından kendi kuşağı ve sonraki kuşaklar için önemli bir figürdür. Hatta etkisi Cumhuriyet'in ilk yıllarına kadar devam etmiştir. Ahmed Midhat, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun son yıllarının en önemli entelektüel figürlerinden biri olmuş ve uzun yıllar devam eden entelektüel tartışmaların neredeyse tüm farklı yaklaşım ve cephelerine yeni bakış açıları getirmiştir. Bu da Ahmed Midhat'ı hem bu tez hem de Osmanlı entelektüel tarihi açısından kritik bir figür haline getirmektedir.

Beşir Fuad, Osmanlı ve Türk düşünce tarihinin en etkili isimlerinden biridir. Osmanlı ve Türk düşünce tarihinde entelektüel ve bilimsel düşünce için bir kırılma noktası olarak da kabul edilebilir. Dini düşünceye karşı bilimsel ve felsefi düşüncenin üstünlüğünü Türk düşünce tarihine sokmuştur. Bu yaklaşımıyla sonraki kuşak Osmanlı aydınlarını etkilemiştir. Onun yaklaşımı bazı erken dönem Cumhuriyet aydınlarını bile etkilemiştir. Doğrudan İslam'a saldırmasa da Osmanlı'da din kavramına karşı savaş açan ilk aydın olarak kabul edilebilir. Beşir Fuad aynı zamanda Hristiyanlığa karşı pozisyon alan ilk Osmanlı aydınlarından biridir. Bu, entelektüel tabanda Batı'ya karşı tepkisel, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'na karşı ise korumacı bir pozisyon olarak değerlendirilebilir. Beşir Fuad'ın vatansever düşüncesi bu duruşu açıklamaktadır. İslam ve Osmanlı İmparatorluğu bir bütün olarak

görüldüğü için Beşir Fuad, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nu korumak adına yazılarında Hristiyanlığa karşı İslam'ı korumuş ve hatta övmüştür. Her ne kadar bazı aydınlar ve akademisyenler Beşir Fuad'ın ilk Osmanlı pozitivist ve materyalisti olduğunu iddia etseler de bu yanlıştır. Beşir Fuad ilk Osmanlı ve Türk materyalist ve pozitivist aydını olmasa da, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda bu terimleri entelektüel bir araç olarak kullanan ilk aydındır.

Bir diğer önemi ise bilimsel, materyalist ve pozitivist görüşlerini edebiyat aracılığıyla açıklamasıdır. Romantizm ve klasisizme karşı realizm ve natüralizmi yüceltir. Böylece bilime ve bilimsel düşünceye edebi alanda da katkıda bulunmuştur. Bu sayede edebi alanda fizyoloji ve psikoloji önem kazanmış, duygular ve din (bazı açılardan) önemini yitirmiştir. Beşir Fuad, edebi yaklaşımıyla bilimsel düşünce anlayışını geliştirmiş ve toplumsal kabul görmesinde önemli bir rol oynamıştır.

Tez için Beşir Fuad'ın seçilmesinin bir diğer nedeni ise intiharıdır; Beşir Fuad'ın intiharı Türk düşünce tarihinde oldukça spekülâtif bir konudur. Bazı akademisyenler, özellikle İslamcı ve muhafazakâr olanlar, Beşir Fuad'ın intiharının ruhun yokluğunu kanıtlamak için olduğunu iddia ettiler. Bu argümanı pozitivist, materyalizme ve bilimsel düşünceye saldırmak için kullandılar.

Beşir Fuad'ın ilmî ve dinî anlayışı incelendiğinde Münif Paşa ve Ahmed Midhat gibi kendisinden önceki aydınlarla arasında bir fark olduğu görülür. Çocukluk yıllarında dinî eğitim almıştır. Osmanlı Suriyesi'ndeki Cizvit okullarında aldığı eğitim nedeniyle Hristiyanlığa sıcak bakmamıştır. Hristiyanlığı sevmemesinin yanı sıra, genellikle din kavramına karşı çıkmış, ancak İslam'ı tercih etmiştir. Onun bilim anlayışı, kendisinden sonra gelen Abdullah Cevdet ve Baha Tevfik gibi aydınlarınkine benzer. Katı bilimden ziyade, Ludwig Büchner gibi vulgar materyalist Alman entelektüelleriyle hemen hemen aynı yaklaşımı kullanmıştır. Pozitivizmden etkilenerek hemen her kavrama bu perspektiften yaklaştı. Her ne kadar İslam'dan ve İslami kaynaklardan bahsetmese de İslam'ı övmüş ve bilim ile İslam'ın uyumuna vurgu yapmıştır. Beşir Fuad, kendisinden sonraki kuşaklar üzerindeki etkisi nedeniyle Osmanlı düşünce tarihi için bir dönüm noktası olmuştur. Ayrıca, Osmanlı ve Türk düşünce tarihinde bilimsel düşüncenin en önemli isimlerinden ve

öncülerinden biri olmuştur. Osmanlı düşünce tarihinde, özellikle 'bilim' ve 'din' tartışmalarında bilimden ziyade bilimcilik ve vulgar materyalist bir yaklaşım hâkim olmuştur. Blime yaklaşımından dolayı 'aşırı bilimci' olarak adlandırılabilir. Onun bilimci yaklaşımı Osmanlı aydınlarının önünü açmış ve Osmanlı entelektüel hayatını fiziksel zemine oturtmuştur. Onun soyut ve somut kavramları bir araya getirmesi, Osmanlı modernleşmesinin ve yaşam tarzlarında, düşüncelerinde ve davranışlarında yeni bir modern toplum yaratmanın anahtarı olarak da görülebilir.

Geç Osmanlı ve Erken Cumhuriyet düşünce tarihini etkileyen Abdullah Cevdet gibi bir entelektüel neredeyse yok gibidir. Yazıları edebiyat, felsefe, tarih, bilim, gündelik meseleler ve siyaset gibi geniş alanlara yayılmıştır. Abdullah Cevdet aynı zamanda İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti'nin öncüsü olan İttihad-ı Osmani Cemiyeti'nin kurucularındandır. Abdullah Cevdet aynı zamanda Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun son döneminin hem entelektüel hem de siyasi hayatına katkıda bulunan ve özellikle Batılılaşma ve modernleşme reformları sırasında Erken Cumhuriyet Türkiye'sinin entelektüel hayatı üzerinde önemli bir etkiye sahip olan önemli bir siyasi ve önemli bir muhalif figürdür. Siyasi yaşamı ve Osmanlı toplumunu etkileme çabaları, amacını entelektüel, bilimsel, siyasi ve sosyal yazılarına yansıtmıştır. Ateist bir entelektüel olmasına rağmen, İslam'ın ve İslam düşüncesinin bazı yönlerini yeni bir bilimsel 'hayal' toplum yaratmak için bir araç olarak kullanmak istemiştir. Bu, İslam'ı sadece bir araç olarak kullandığı anlamına gelmez. Yazıları onun İslam anlayışını gösteriyordu ve düşünceleri bir araç haline gelmişti. İslam'ın özünü bilimsel ve materyalist, pozitivist ve evrimci entelektüel düşünceyle uyumlu hale getirmek istedi.

Abdullah Cevdet bu uyumu sağlamaya çalışırken hem Doğu hem de Batı kaynaklarını kullanmıştır. Örneğin Herbert Spencer, William Shakespeare, Charles Darwin ve Gustave Le Bon'un eserlerinin yanı sıra Gazali, Ömer Hayyam ve Kur'an'dan da alıntılar yapmıştır. Abdullah Cevdet sadece İslam ile modern düşünceyi değil, aynı zamanda Doğu ile Batı'yı da uyumlaştırmak istiyordu. Bu, onun hedefinin yalnızca aydınlanma ve gelişme 'sorununu' değil, aynı zamanda uygarlık 'sorununu' da kapsadığı anlamına geliyordu. Abdullah Cevdet, bilimsel olarak hayal edilmiş yeni bir toplum yaratma amacına ek olarak, hem Doğu'nun hem de Batı'nın değerlerine dayanan yeni bir bilimsel 'medeniyet' yaratmak istiyordu.

Abdullah Cevdet, İslam'ın dini ve toplumsal yapılarını birbirinden ayırmayı ve Osmanlı toplumunu ikincisini takip eder hale getirmeyi amaçlamıştır.

Abdullah Cevdet, öncelikle pragmatik nedenlerle, bilimsel olarak tahayyül edilmiş yeni bir toplum inşa etmeye ve bilimsel ve materyalist bir İslam anlayışını teşvik etmeye çalıştı. Amacı, Oryantalistler ve Hristiyan misyonerler de dahil olmak üzere Batı'nın Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda artan etkisini önlemek ve İmparatorluğu ve toplumunu modern bilim ve medeniyet anlayışlarıyla uyumlu hale getirmektir. Abdullah Cevdet bu pragmatik bakış açısının ötesinde daha derin bir felsefi görüşe sahipti. Onun anlayışına göre, canlı varlıklar, fikirler, sosyal kavramlar ve kurumlar, din, sosyal değerler ve toplum gibi varlıklar canlı organizmalardır. Dolayısıyla bu kavramlar bir evrim sürecine tabi olmalıdır. Hem iç hem de dış faktörlerin etkisi altında zaman içinde uyum sağlamalı ve dönüşmelidirler. Bu çerçevede Abdullah Cevdet'in evrim anlayışı, biyolojik organizmaların fiziksel özelliklerinin ötesine geçerek sosyal ve entelektüel yapıları da kapsar. Bu görüşe göre, sosyal kurumlar ve din, modern dünyanın taleplerini karşılamak için evrim geçirmelidir. Bu bakış açısı kimi zaman İslam'da reform çabalarıyla ilişkilendirilse de, kimi zaman da özellikle daha geniş kapsamlı sosyal reform hedefiyle bağlantılı olarak Sosyal Darwinist düşünceye yaslanmaktadır.

Abdullah Cevdet bu çabasıyla kendisini hem alternatif, Batı dışı bir modernizmin lideri hem de Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun ve İslam'ın ruhunu terk etmeden Batı bilimini ve entelektüel geleneklerini kullanacak bir reformcu, bir İslam müctehidi olarak konumlandırmayı amaçlamıştır. Yararlı bilgi olarak tanımladığı materyalist bilim anlayışı, hem toplumu yeniden şekillendirmek için bir araç hem de Hristiyan misyonerlere, Oryantalistlere ve Batı'nın daha geniş kültürel etkisine karşı bir savunma aracı olarak işlev gördü. Onun 'bilim' ve 'din' anlayışı karmaşık ve katmanlı bir portre olarak görülebilir.

Baha Tevfik bu tezde incelenen son entelektüeldir. Ele alınan isimler arasında sadece İkinci Meşrutiyet döneminde yazan tek isimdir. Beşir Fuad gibi onun da yazarlık kariyeri yaklaşık beş yıl sürmüştür, ancak önemli sayıda eser vermiştir. Yazıları hem bilimsel hem de felsefi olarak nitelendirilebilir. Baha Tevfik, dönemin Osmanlı

entelektüelleri arasında bilimsel ve felsefi düşüncenin gelişen doğasını yansıtarak felsefeyi bilimsel ve bilimi felsefi hale getirmeye çalışmıştır. Baha Tevfik'in yaklaşımı bazı açılardan Beşir Fuad'ınkiyle örtüşmektedir; ancak aralarında kayda değer farklılıklar da vardır. Beşir Fuad'ın aksine Baha Tevfik felsefeye daha fazla önem vermiş ve onu bilimin arkasındaki yol gösterici güç olarak konumlandırmıştır.

Bu nedenle, evrimin felsefi bir yorumunu, yani tekçi evrimciliği benimsemiş olsa bile, felsefe onun entelektüel çerçevesinde merkezi bir role sahiptir. İlerlemeci bir perspektiften bakıldığında Baha Tevfik, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'ndaki vulgar ve evrimci düşünce ekolünün son temsilcisi olarak görülebilir. Baha Tevfik, bu tezde ele alınan diğer birçok Osmanlı entelektüelinden farklı olarak, hem felsefi hem de materyalist perspektifleri genişletirken diğerlerinin neredeyse tamamını reddettiğinden, bu görüşün bazı geçerlilikleri vardır. Kişisel sloganı “Hakikat her zaman her yerde söylenmelidir. Bunun ne belirli bir zamanı ne de belirli bir yeri vardır.” sözü, kendi ‘hakikat’ anlayışını tereddüt etmeden yayma konusundaki kararlılığını göstermektedir. Bu tutumu hem yoğun entelektüel bağlılığına hem de İkinci Meşrutiyet döneminin özgürlükçü atmosferine bağlanabilir. Baha Tevfik'in İslam'ı sert bir şekilde eleştirmemesi ve yazılarında İslam'a geniş yer vermemesi, bunun yerine fikirlerini doğrudan ve özlü bir şekilde ifade etmesi dikkat çekicidir.

Baha Tevfik'in monistik evrimciliği, Ernest Haeckel'in monistik fikirlerine benzer bir düşüncedir. Aynı zamanda monizmin özünü de temsil eder. Monizm birliğe atıfta bulunur. Yani her şey 'bir'den gelir. Bu İslam'la, diğer dinlerle ve panteizm ve panentheizm gibi felsefi düşüncelerle ilişkilendirilebilir. Bence Baha Tevfik monizmi ve monistik evrimciliği Osmanlı toplumuna ve Müslümanlara evrim fikrini etkili bir şekilde sunmak için kullandı. Bu da Baha Tevfik'i diğer Osmanlı aydınları gibi pragmatik ve faydacı yapıyor. Baha Tevfik'in Abdullah Cevdet gibi topluma rehber olmak gibi bir amacı yoktu. Baha Tevfik o dönemde popüler bir figür olsa da böyle bir amacı yoktu.

Dinden çok fazla bahsetmese de bahsederken bilimi ve bilimsel düşüncüyü İslam için kullanmak istedi. Marx'ın Hegel'in diyalektiğini tersine çevirmesi gibi Vahdet-i Vücut'u Vahdet-i Mevcut'a çevirmek istedi. Baha Tevfik bu kavramı daha maddi ve

bilimsel kullanmak istiyordu. Baha Tevfik, bilimin dinin alanına girdiğine ve bu iki kavramın hiçbir zaman uzlaşamayacağına inanıyordu. Bu düşüncenin temel argümanı, dinlerin cevaplamaya çalıştığı ya da ilgilendiği tüm sorulara bilimin cevap verebileceğidir. Böylece Büchner'in de etkisiyle Baha Tevfik ve Ahmed Nebil bilime evrenle ilgili tüm soruların cevaplanmasında bir rol vermişlerdir. Kısacası bu düşünceye göre dine yer yoktur.

Beşir Fuad gibi Baha Tevfik'in de yazı hayatı çok kısadır ve erken yaşta vefat etmiştir. Ancak o da Beşir Fuad gibi çok etkili bir figürdü ve döneminde pek çok takipçisi vardı. Birçok konuya alışılmışın dışında yaklaşmıştır. Ayrıca Baha Tevfik, seküler eğitim geçmişi nedeniyle dini dersler almasına rağmen herhangi bir dini eğitim almamıştır. Bu nedenle İslam düşüncesi hakkında neredeyse hiç bilgisi yoktu. Neredeyse tüm düşünce ve argümanlarını Batılı kaynaklar, felsefe ve bilim üzerine inşa etmiştir.

Baha Tevfik bu tezin en farklı figürüdür. Bu tezdeki diğer entelektüeller gibi o da argümanlarını kanıtlamak için bilimsel, felsefi, özellikle de vulgar materyalist, pozitivist ve evrimci bilgiyi kullanmıştır. Bu kavramların İslam ile uyumunu ve toplum için önemini göstermeye çalışmıştır. Diğer aydınların aksine Baha Tevfik'in dili çok sert ve aşırıydı. Bu durum, Osmanlı ve Türk aydınlarının 'bilim' ve 'din' konusundaki dillerinin değiştiğine dair bir argüman olabilir.

Sonuç olarak, bu tezin temel argümanı, bu entelektüellerin bilimsel ya da sözde bilimsel argümanlar kullanıp kullanmadıklarına ve bu perspektiflerden yazıp yazmadıklarına bakılmaksızın, temel amaçlarının doğrudan bu konularla ilgili olmadığıdır. Aksine, temel amaçları ve argümanları modernleşme, dönüşüm, Batılılaşma ve Oryantalizm ve despotizme karşı direnişle ilgiliydi. Bu aydınlar bilimi, dini ve bu kavramların anlaşılmasını yeniden yorumlama sürecinde Osmanlı toplumunun zihniyetini de yeniden şekillendirmeye ve dönüştürmeye çalıştılar. Pragmatik bir bakış açısını benimsemişler, bu kavramları kendi başlarına amaçlar olarak değil, araçlar olarak kullanmışlardır. Öncelikle bilimsel argümanlarına ve metinlerine odaklansam da, daha geniş bir perspektiften bakarak bu kavramları toplumsal zihniyeti ve bakış açısını etkilemek ve dönüştürmek için kullandıklarını da

vurguladım. Bu yaklaşım o dönemde farklı alanlarda gözlemlenebilir. Osmanlı entelektüelleri g zellik, kadın ve edebiyat gibi pek  ok konuda yazmıřtır, ancak bu tartıřmalar genellikle modernleřme ve Batılılařmanın zorluklarını ele almak gibi daha geniř bir amaca hizmet etmiřtir. Tez boyunca analizlerimde bu  er eveyi uyguladım ve burada incelenen entelekt ellerin bu konuda ortak bir bakıř a ısını paylařtıklarını savundum.



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