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(Article begins on next page)

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# Competing Visions of Morality in Politics: A New Perspective on the Ideological Currents of the Late Ottoman Empire

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## Abstract

This article focuses on the debates about morality in the late Ottoman Empire and their lasting impact on modern Turkey. Studying different moral viewpoints offers the possibility of a new classification for the study of Ottoman intellectual history which, by relying on a political framework, has, to date, dealt only with certain ideological currents such as Ottomanism, Turkism, Islamism, and Westernism. Through a careful reading of the writings of Tevfik Fikret, Ziya Gökalp, Ahmed Naim, and Mehmet Akif, we focus on their different views of morality which can be classified as "universal morality", "national morality", and "Islamic morality". Differing, even competing moral visions of morality were decisive in shaping the intellectual, cultural, and political currents of the time.

## Keywords

morality – nationalism – Islamic morality – late Ottoman ideological currents

## 1. Introduction

Little attention has been paid to the ways in which the prominent intellectuals of the turn-of-the-twentieth-century Ottoman Empire approached issues involving morality.[1] In fact, the politicians and intellectuals of the time were preoccupied with morality to such a degree that they perceived its application as a solution for the problems of the Empire and as a means for raising the new generations. It was the emerging ideologies within the Empire, however, that attracted more interest among late Ottoman historians. But recent scholarship in the field of morality, particularly in Jonathan Haidt'swork,[2] compellingly demonstrates that moral values and attitudes often shape an individual's ideological orientations. Throughout history, long before the modern constitutions and ideologies that burgeoned predominantly after the French Revolution, societies have crafted their own moral values, deeming them fundamental pillars of their social contracts. By delving into the various interpretations of morality during the late Ottoman period, we aspire to introduce a fresh categorisation of Ottoman intellectual history. These distinct interpretations should offer new insights while recognising the existence of commonalities and similarities that various Ottoman intellectuals of differing ideological persuasions undeniably shared. This will enable us to clarify the fundamental role debates on morality play in setting ideological positions, as we can contextualise the views on reform, progress, and modernisation, and better understand issues relating to lifestyle and identity politics, all of which were also seen as outcomes of current debates on morality in Turkey.

In 1904, the eminent intellectual Yusuf Akçura published his famous book *Üç Tarz-ı Siyaset* (Three Types of Policies), identifying Islamism, Turkism, and Ottomanism as the main competing ideologies of the time. His classification became canonical, with the addition of the category of "Westernism". Although political and intellectual exchanges and commonalities and engagement often existed between these ideologies, a key aspect over which they differed significantly was the centrality of morality in shaping these currents. This theme has remained largely overlooked in the literature, long after Akçura developed his famous classification.[3] This paper will shed light on the central role of morality among Ottoman intellectuals, a perspective that can also be seen in other countries around the turn of the twentieth century.

Political criticism in the guise of moralism was not a novelty in Ottoman

[1] The authors would like to thank Boğaziçi University Research Fund (bap) for funding this research (project number 19ZP1). The supervisor of the project is Prof. M. Asım Karaömerlioğlu. The authors of the article would like to thank the project assistant Ayşe Nur Akdal for her contribution. The introduction is the work of both authors, Sections 2 and 5 of Prof. Karaömerlioğlu alone, and Sections 3 and 4 of Dr. Oğuz.

[2] See Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion* (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 2012).

[3] In a recent study, Seyhun added two new categories, the liberals and positivists, to this classification. See Ahmet Seyhun, *Competing Ideologies in the Late Ottoman Empire and Early Turkish Republic: Selected Writings of Islamist, Turkist, and Westernist Intellectuals* (London & New York, NY: I. B. Tauris, 2021).

politics. Distinguishing between "good" and "evil" and deploring moral decline in society and politics had long been avenues for expressing political discontent.[4] However, late Ottoman approaches to morality differed from classical perceptions. Late Ottoman writers placed greater emphasis on moral positioning as foundational to their ideologies, including their willingness to accept or reject specific societal norms propagated by the *Tanzimat* modernisation projects from 1839 onwards. While the reforms in the military, economic, and political realms were considered essential for progress, their social and cultural implications sparked heated debates. In the *Tanzimat* years of rapid political change, critical voices, such as that of the influential literary figure Namık Kemal, argued for preserving authentic Islamic morality as an antidote to the lack of representative legitimacy. This paper identifies and defines three types of moral vision in this period: the "universal", the "national", and the "Islamic". These differed over the extent to which Ottoman Muslim society should endorse Western norms and values and as to whether these values were "universal" rather than just "Western".

The historical context of the late Ottoman period had played a unique role in conceptualising morality as a fundamental source of ideological positions. The unprecedented pace of cultural value shifts accompanied by consecutive wars in the final decade of the Empire had an especially profound impact on the intellectual atmosphere and rising interest in morality. A new type of public opinion that favoured war and revenge arose due to the diplomatic isolation of the Ottoman Empire during the Italo-Turkish War of 1911. A year later, the Ottoman Empire lost almost all its European provinces during the Balkan Wars (1912–13) which resulted in an influx of Muslim refugees from war-torn regions. These wars led to a rise in Muslim nationalism within Ottoman public opinion, fed by the silence of Western powers towards the atrocities afflicted upon Balkan Muslims.[5] All this contributed to the emergence of morality as a factor differentiating Muslim from European society, as the latter was

[4] The genre called *nasîhatnâme*, which appeared in the second half of the sixteenth century, represent an example of such moralistic political statements: See Rifaat Abou-El-Haj, "The Ottoman Nasihatname as a Discourse over 'Morality'", in *Mélanges Professeur Robert Mantran*: *Études*, ed. Abdeljelil Temimi (Zaghouan: Publications du ceromdi, 1988), 17–30; Baki Tezcan, "Ethics as a Domain to Discuss the Political: Kınalızâde Ali Efendi's Ahlâk-ı Alâî", in *International Congress on Learning and Education in the Ottoman World: Istanbul, 12–15 April 1999*, ed. Ali Çaksu (Istanbul: IRCICA, 2001), 109–21.

[5] On the emergence of a vengeful public opinion during the Italo-Turkish War, see Mustafa Aksakal, "'Not by Those Old Books of International Law, but Only by War': Ottoman Intellectuals on the Eve of the Great War", *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 15:3 (2004), 507–44, https://doi.org/10.1080/09592290490498884; Mustafa Aksakal and Aimee Genell, "Salvation through War? The Ottoman Search for Sovereignty in 1914", in *The Justification of War and International Order: From Past to Present*, ed. Lothar Brock and Hendrik Simon (Oxford, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2021), 207–20; Stefan Hock, "'Waking Us from This Endless Slumber': The Ottoman–Italian War and North Africa in the Ottoman Twentieth Century", *War in History* 26:2 (2017), 1–23, https://doi.org/10.1177/0968344517706729; Çiğdem Oğuz, "Old Hostilities, New Propaganda: A Comparative Account of Public Opinion During the Italo-Turkish War of 1911", *Eurasian Studies* 19:2 (2022), 205–36, https://doi.org/10.1163/24685623-12340115. On public opinion during the Balkan Wars, see Doğan Y. Çetinkaya, *The Young Turks and the Boycott Movement: Nationalism, Protest and the Working Classes in the Formation of Modern Turkey* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2014).

increasingly perceived as a "Christian league" dominating Muslims all over the world and provoking bloodshed.

When wwi broke out, the Ottomans hoped to restore their territorial losses and imperial prestige with a victory from their alliance with Germany. The dramatic social changes triggered by wartime conditions led to an increasing emphasis on morality.[6] Political corruption, war profiteering, and the luxurious lifestyle of the *nouveau riche* stood in stark contrast to the privations of the poor. Deterioration in economic conditions led to a rise in prostitution, a phenomenon that was widely discussed as a moral problem among intellectuals of the time. The spread of venereal diseases (due also to the increased mobility of the military), rising crime, an increase in alcohol consumption, rapid urbanisation and the consequent problems brought on by it, and the chaotic situation in the provinces due to the raids of deserters and bandit gangs on villages and peasants all contributed to the sense of moral crisis,[7] rendering morality central to discussions of society's future. The issue of women's growing participation in social and economic life gained prominence and urgency due to mass male war recruitment, and generated wider debate on gender relations and patriarchal order, both of which came to be discussed as an aspect of a moral issue.[8]

Contesting visions of morality also increased due to the power struggles and political rivalry of the time. For centuries, moral reasoning and education had been dominated by religious scholarship and the *ulema*, the prime challenge to which came from a universalist understanding of morality expressed by Tevfik Fikret. However, it was only with the rise of Turkish nationalism and Ziya Gökalp's formulation of a new nationalist vision of morality that Islamic morality was subjected to scrutiny at a more popular and political level. As will be shown, the use of morality in the service of a nationalist scheme of reform resulted in secular interventions in the realms of the civil code, education, and public space. This eventually paved the way for "social reform" that could strengthen political reforms. We focus in this study on the "three types of morality" and the intellectuals associated with them as the backbone of the important intellectual and ideological currents of the late Ottoman period. The first among the intellectuals we examine is Tevfik Fikret, a man of symbolic importance who represents what can be called the "universal morality" approach. Neither political polemicist nor ideologue, Fikret was a literary figure

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[6] See Çiğdem Oğuz, *Moral Crisis in the Ottoman Empire: Society, Politics, and Gender during wwi* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2021).

[7] On the Ottoman home front and its social and economic situation, see Yiğit Akın, *When the War Came Home: The Ottomans' Great War and the Devastation of an Empire* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2018). On venereal diseases and how men's mobility impacted it, see Seçil Yılmaz, "Love in the Time of Syphilis: Medicine and Sex in the Ottoman Empire, 1860–1922" (PhD Thesis, City University of New York, 2016); Seçil Yılmaz, "Threats to Public Order and Health: Mobile Men as Syphilis Vectors in Late Ottoman Medical Discourse and Practice", *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 13:2 (2017), 222–43, https://doi.org/10.1215/15525864-3861301.

[8] Ottoman feminist women responded to these moralistic patriarchal claims in their publications drawing attention to the double standard of morality debate, see Çiğ dem Oğuz, "'The Homeland Will Not be Saved Merely by Chastity': Women's Agency, Nationalism, and Morality in the Late Ottoman Empire", *Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association* 6:2 (2019), 91–111, https://doi.org/10.2979/jottturstuass.6.2.08.

who often expressed his frank political opinions and even clearly chose his side on political debates through his poems and articles. As the most well-known poet of his time, his ideas were at the centre of these debates among the intellectual circles even decades after his death. We then turn to Ziya Gökalp and his formulation of a "national morality" or the "new morality", as he described it, an outlook that garnered significant attention among the intelligentsia in the 1910s. Finally, we focus on "Islamic morality" through two representative figures – Ahmed Naim (Babanzâde) and Mehmet Akif (Ersoy) – who consistently engaged in significant moral and political debates with both Fikret and Gökalp. Our epilogue is dedicated to the "controversies" among the figures mentioned above and the significant place that Fikret's moral viewpoint occupied in politics. This moral viewpoint's role in politics has been overlooked in the literature, despite the significant role it has played in the intellectual and ideological space both of Fikret's time and beyond.

## 2. "I Am a Poet/ My Thoughts are Free": Tevfik Fikret and his Idea of Universal Morality

No individual influenced the founding generations of the young Turkish Republic, among them Kemal Atatürk, as much as the outstanding poet Tevfik Fikret (1867–1915), the pioneering figure of modern poetry in Turkish literature. As an ardent supporter of science, reason, Enlightenment ideas, freedom of expression, and universal liberal values, as a role model of integrity for youth, and as a believer in humanism, Fikret has garnered quite exceptional prestige and influence. His criticism of the repressive Hamidian regime and his early enthusiasm for the Young Turk Revolution, followed by his later disappointment in it due to the increasingly corrupt and authoritarian rule of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), found an echo in his poems. His radical secular ideas, his distance from religious beliefs, and his incorruptible, often uncompromising personality made him a central figure of political polarisation of his time.

However, the fact that his new approach to morality, both in theory and in his personal life, constituted the basis for all his political and philosophical views often goes unnoticed. At first glance, his consistent emphasis on the centrality of morality seems incongruous for an ardent advocate of "science and reason" like him, given that it was the conservative intellectuals both in the Ottoman Empire and elsewhere who were purportedly so preoccupied with moral issues.[9] A secular formulation of morality was one of Fikret's highest political and social priorities. What we mean by the term "secular" here is that which seeks to gradually reduce the power of religion in laws and regulations governing personal life. The literature on ideological currents in general and Fikret in particular has not paid due attention to the ways in which Fikret and many like

[9] On Fikret's elaborations on ethics, Berkes writes: "His most striking trait, apparent to some degree in all the Westernists, was something that will appear quite paradoxical. This trait was a preoccupation with moral questions." See *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (London: Hurst & Company, 1998), 300.

him formulated a theory of secular morality as the basis for their ideological and political standpoints. Notably, this was not the case in the early accounts of him, such as those written by Fuad Köprülü, Ziya Gökalp, and, some decades later, by Ahmed Hamdi Tanpınar, a leading mid-twentieth- century literary figure. They all focused on Fikret's views on morality in their analyses. Köprülü even titled his article "Tevfik Fikret ve Ahlâkı" (Tevfik Fikret and His Ethics) while Gökalp considered Tevfik a person who had his own type of morality (*kendisine mahsus bir ahlâk mesleği olan*). Likewise, Tanpınar called Tevfik "an apostle of morality and civilisation" (*ahlâk ve medeniyet havarisi*).[10] Fikret's views on morality, though philosophically unsophisticated, were politically so influential that they inspired political radicalism in many of his contemporaries. At the heart of his views lies the idea that morality need not be based on religion. With universal and secular moral principles, an individual could live a self-determined moral life without the guidance of religion. In this sense, morality was perceived as a social byproduct of secular realms of life. Fikret's secular morality was characterised by humanism, objectivity, and (most particularly) universality. He was, therefore, concerned with the improvement of humanity as a whole rather than of just Muslim/Turkish communities. He emphasised the importance of pursuing knowledge, common sense, progress, and reason, all of which would enable individuals to reflect on their situation and address their moral concerns accordingly.

Given the limited communication systems in the nineteenth-century *fin de siècle*, the literati, with their high social status, exercised considerable power in matters of social and political critique. Fikret, like many of his contemporaries, used his literary fame to oppose first the autocratic Hamidian and then the Unionist regimes. All his social, political, and philosophical critiques were presented as moral issues. In his poems from the late 1880s onwards, he tends to address social reality in the form of moral contrast between good and evil, virtue and corruption. This is clear in his poems in the avant-garde literary journal *Servet-i Fünûn* (The Wealth of Sciences), of which he became chief editor in 1896.[11]11 His moral-political viewpoints are expressed extensively in his 1900 collection *Rübâb-ı Şikeste* (The Broken Lute), 1911 collection *Haluk'un Defteri* (Haluk's Notebook), and in his last poems criticising the cup and the government's decision to enter wwi in the 1910s.

An earlier example of his moral criticism was one of his most important poems entitled "Sis" (The Mist) which morally critiques the Hamidian regime. The poem was written in 1902 but, due to the censorship, could not be published until the Young Turk Revolution of 1908. In the poem, which was secretly circulated by the opponents of the regime, a moral filter is placed over the city

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[10] Mehmed Fuad Köprülüzâde, *Tevfik Fikret ve Ahlakı* (Istanbul: Kanaat Matbaası, 1918); Ahmed Hamdi Tanpınar, *Tevfik Fikret: Hayatı, Şahsiyeti, Şiir ve Eserlerinden Parçalar* (Istanbul: Kenan Matbaası, 1944). Gökalp's ideas on Tevfik Fikret are transliterated and discussed in Zafer Toprak, "Edebiyat ve Siyasal Duruş: Tevfik Fikret Ayıraçı", in *Bir Muhalif Kimlik Tevfik Fikret*, ed. Bengisu Rona and Zafer Toprak (Istanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2007), 1–24.

[11] We used the compilation of Fikret's poems by Asım Bezirci, who retained the chronology and original language, see Asım Bezirci, *Tevfik Fikret, Geçmişten Gelen Bütün Şiirleri*, 3 vols. (Istanbul: Can Yayınları, 1984).

of Istanbul and its inhabitants while Fikret draws attention to society's silence about the Hamidian autocratic regime's unlawful acts, the hypocrisy, corruption, and jealousy, and the patronage granted to those who were close to the Sultan. The city, covered by a mist over its vices, is portrayed as a prostitute. In light of the enthusiasm of the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 and the optimistic climate that it created, Fikret later expressed regret for what he had written in "Sis" and used the same allegory in an opposite sense, inviting Istanbul to expose itself to the sunshine and truth now that the mist had been dispersed by the freedom brought by the revolution. In his 1908 "Millet Şarkısı" (The Ballad of the Nation) he expresses optimism toward the revolution and details the deposed Hamidian regime's injustices and calamities. What is interesting in this poem is his ideal of a "moral state" applicable to all humanity, not just the Ottoman state. He also declares that no state or established body of law deserves respect unless it guarantees justice and welfare for the people. This point is a radical one, extending beyond the vision of the cup elite and the ideals of both the nationalist and Islamist circles, who would prioritise the survival of the state over anything else, including freedom, one of the foundations of the revolution.

Fikret's enthusiasm for the Young Turk Revolution did not last long, however. When the new rulers, the cup, began to exhibit authoritarian tendencies of their own, he condemned them as well. The poem, "Doksan Beşe Doğru" (Through the Ninety-Five), for example, attacks the cup's 1912 dissolution of the parliament, and Fikret draws a parallel between this event and Abdülhamid ii's suspension of the parliament in 1878 (corresponding to 1295 according to the Rumi calendar). In a similar vein, in "Rübâb'ın Cevabı" (The Response of the Lute), Fikret expresses pessimism even about the youth on whom he had pinned all his hopes. Likewise, the famous "Hân-ı Yağma" (The Pillage Meal), a profound critique of the widespread corruption in the cup, exemplifies Fikret's style of political expression based on moral ideals. During wwi, Fikret – who lived only to see the first year of the war – took an anti-war position, questioning not only the Ottoman leadership but also the European leaders who took the decision to join the conflict.[12]

Fikret's emphasis on morality in his poems reflects his dreams of a better world with more justice and freedom. He believed that expressing such thoughts in his works contributed toward the building of an enlightened society and good government. True, he was overwhelmingly pessimistic in his outlook, saddened as he was by the degeneration of society and the hypocrisy of politicians. Perhaps he had no hope for his own generation and sought it in the youth. His emphasis on youth was key to his views on morality, attributing to youth the basis for moral character and optimism. In his *Haluk'un Defteri* collection – a work dedicated to the youth as personified in his own son, Haluk – Fikret articulates a moral viewpoint explicitly consistent with the ideal of universal

[12] On Fikret's views on the war and his wartime poems, see Erol Köroğlu, "Propaganda or Culture War: Jihad, Islam, and Nationalism in Turkish Literature during World War I", in *Jihad and Islam in World War I: Studies on the Ottoman Jihad on the Centenary of Snouck Hurgronje's 'Holy War Made in Germany'*, ed. Erik J. Zürcher (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2016), 139–42.

morality, as manifested in the poem, "Haluk"un Amentüsü" (Haluk's Credo).[13] The word *âmentü* means the basics of the faith that must be accepted and endorsed by every Muslim, such as believing in God, the holy books, the Prophet, and the Day of Judgement. By including the word *âmentü* in the poem's title, he proclaims a radically secular view of the world as a credo.[14] Instead of divine commands, the values that Haluk should embrace are progress, freedom, and scientific knowledge. Although he does not deny the existence of a creator, he places man at the centre of the universe, writing: "We are the Satan, and jinn, there's no devil, no angels/Human beings will turn this world into paradise, so do I believe."[15] Fikret longs for fraternity among "the children of humanity", despite all the wars and blood shed by past civilisations. Another poem in the same anthology, "Promete" (Prometheus), aims to inspire the youth with the spirit of Prometheus, who, in Greek mythology, stole fire from the Gods and gave it to the humanity. In "Haluk'un Vedâı" (Haluk's Farewell), Fikret stresses the virtues of civilisation, progress, and science and advises Haluk to bring "light" into the country's darkness. He describes the country that Haluk is leaving behind as Byzantium and tells him not to regret his farewell to it because the city is as corrupt as Byzantium, corruption and degeneration believed to be the main reasons for the fall of the Byzantine Empire. As a leading figure also in the field of pedagogy, Fikret always attributed a special place for moral foundations for young people, particularly during his tenure as a director at the *Galatasaray Sultanîsi* (Galatasaray Imperial High School).[16] Indeed, the young generation he envisioned was to be a product of the new, secular morality he advocated.

## 3. "New Life", "New Morality": Ziya Gökalp and his Concept of National Morality

Known as the founding father of Turkish nationalist thought and the Young Turks' principal political ideologue, Mehmet Ziya Gökalp (1876–1924) was a sociologist and author of books, articles, and poems.[17] From day-to-day politics

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[13] A short contextualization and interpretation, together with an English translation of the poem, is available: See Tevfik Fikret, "Haluk's Credo", in *Modernism: Representations of National Culture: Discourses of Collective Identity in Central and Southeast Europe 1770– 1945: Texts and Commentaries, Vol. iii/2*, ed. Ahmet Ersoy, Maciej Górny, and Vangelis Kechriotis,(Budapest: Central European University Press, 2012), 309–12, http://books.openedition.org/ceup/1115. (accessed 8 January 2022)

[14] Mehmet Kaplan, *Tevfik Fikret ve Şiiri* (Istanbul: Türkiye Yayınevi, 1946), 145.

[15] The English translation is by Walter G. Andrews in Kemal Sılay, *An Anthology of Turkish Literature* (Bloomington, KY: Cem Publishing, 2006), 259–60.

[16] Fikret formulated a project of a "new school" (*yeni mekteb*) based on a certain type of "moral education" to improve children's self-discipline. He applied these ideas in the Imperial High School, although only very briefly due to a political disagreement with the Ministry of Education of the time: See Seyfi Kenan, "ii. Meşrutiyet'le Gelen Yeni Eğitim Arayışları: Tevfik Fikret'in 'Yeni Mekteb'i ve Eğitim Felsefesi'", in *100. Yılında ii. Meşrutiyet: Gelenek ve Değişim Ekseninde Türk Modernleşmesi Uluslararası Sempozyumu Bildiriler*, ed. Zekeriya Kurşun (Istanbul: Marmara Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2009), 275–87.

[17] Classical works on Gökalp include: Uriel Heyd, *Foundations of Turkish Nationalism: The Life and Teachings of Ziya Gökalp* (London: Luzac, 1950); Niyazi Berkes, *Turkish Nationalism and Western Civilization: Selected Essays of Ziya Gökalp* (Westport, Conn: Praeger, 1981); Taha Parla, *The Social*

to major ideological controversies, his intellectual influence on the Young Turks was second to none.[18] His core ideas centred around notions of a distinction between culture (*hars*) and civilisation (*medeniyet*),[19] the division of labour (*içtimâî iş bölümü*), and social solidarity (*tesânüd*). Berkes summarises civilisation as "modes of action composed of 'traditions' which are created by different ethnic groups and transmitted from one to another" and culture as "composed of the 'customs' of a particular nation and, consequently, is unique and *sui generis*."[20]20 While civilisation relates to universal human values such as religion and science, a culture is specific to a particular nation. Morality has a major role in connecting Gökalp's core ideas within his system of thought, since the traditions and customs he refers to constitute the essence of his approach to each distinct national morality. In Gökalp's view, civilisation must have a strong cultural basis in order not to be mere imitation. He believed the Ottoman adoption of Western civilisation during the *Tanzimat* era to be such a merely superficial imitation. His emphasis on tradition and customs, however, did not mean that his ideological references were confined to an idealised past. On the contrary, Gökalp believed that the Muslim dimension of the Empire needed a new soul injected into it, a dynamic and modern spirit that would foster progressive outlooks, inspire new generations, and liberate society from old and useless traditions. This new soul and spirit was primarily to be found in the customs and the institutional evolutions particular to the Turks.[21]

Gökalp developed his ideas on morality in line with his approach to sociology, viewing the latter as a remedy for what he saw as the moral decline of Turkish society. Like Fikret, the morality he envisioned had to be secular in a way that was compatible with Turkish nationalism. In other words, the sources of morality could be derived from the history of the Turks rather than from Islam. This is by no means to say that Islam does not play an extremely important role in his worldview.[22] In fact, he considered religious values to be of greater importance than moral ones, although he did view them as belonging to different realms of social and historical phenomena.[23] Gökalp saw this secular morality as a component of the basic notion of solidarity in society. The old notions of "ascetic and religious morality" that were primarily concerned with the "self" and individual salvation had to be replaced by a new collective morality in order to establish a modern social and political way of life. Accordingly, Gökalp condemned the materialist and individualistic foundations for morality that he believed were prevalent in countries such as France

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*and Political Thought of Ziya Gökalp: 1876–1924* (Leiden: Brill, 1985).

[18] Mehmet Emin Erişirgil, *Ziya Gökalp, Bir Fikir Adamının Romanı*, ed. Aykut Kazancıgil and Cem Alpar (Ankara: Nobel, 2007), 119.

[19] For a brief discussion of Gökalp's emphasis on the difference between culture and civilization, see Halil İnalcık, "Sosyal Değişme, Gökalp ve Toynbee", *Türk Kültürü* 31 (1965), 421–33.

[20] Berkes, *Turkish Nationalism and Western Civilization*, 23.

[21] Ziya Gökalp, *Türkleşmek, İslamlaşmak, Muasırlaşmak*, ed. İbrahim Kutluk (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı, 1976), 19.

[22] See the discussion in Markus Dressler, "Rereading Ziya Gökalp: Secularism and Reform of the Islamic State in the Late Young Turk Period", *ijmes* 47:3 (2015), 511–31.

[23] Hilmi Ziya Ülken, *Türkiye'de Çağdaş Düşünce Tarihi* (İstanbul: Ülken, 1994), 360.

(although he admired the British for what he saw as their moral superiority) because they encouraged a selfishness that prioritised individual interests over national prosperity.[24] In this sense, Gökalp saw morality as predicated only on the collective entity known as the nation, not the individual. In Gökalp's seminal work *Türkleşmek, İslamlaşmak, Muasırlaşmak* (Turkification, Islamization, Modernisation), the lack of proper moral values is the root cause of the Ottoman Empire's backwardness. In another of his popular works, *Türkçülüğün Esasları* (Principles of Turkism), a separate section entitled "Ahlâkî Türkçülük" (Moral Turkism) is dedicated to the place of moral issues in his nationalist programme.[25] Gökalp believed that moral issue for contemporary Turks could be found only within personal and familial boundaries. However, moral values such as self-sacrifice, solidarity, and a sense of honour never went beyond one's family, village, or town. For Gökalp, a different understanding of morality was required to create a new communal entity of the nation. He viewed the morality of the Turks as defined either too narrowly in individualistic terms or too broadly, as in the notion of the Islamic *ümmet* (*umma*). The reason for the dissolution of the economic, religious, and political institutions, he believed, was that the "Turkish spirit had remained indifferent to the sentiments of self-sacrifice (*fedâkârlık*) and renunciation (*ferâgat*) because the *umma* as an ideal was too broad while that of family was too narrow."[26]

Gökalp was an ardent supporter of French sociologist Émile Durkheim's views and one can find traces of Durkheim's concept of "*morale laïque*"[27] as an inspiration for his use of the concept of a "new morality". His conceptualisation of moralityrestedonthe Turkishand Ottomanpastratherthanon Islam. Heused historical examples from this past with regard to morality and urged the Turks to change the ways in which they approached it. Accordingly, he emphasised the evolution of moral systems time and again. In this sense, Gökalp's approach to morality was a secular one and was consistent with the dramatic, secular changes the Young Turks had initiated in laws affecting women and marriage during wwi. He sought a conceptual and cultural translation of *laïcité* that would have only a modest impact, if any, on the development of secularism in Turkey, since religion played an enduringly important role in his worldview.[28] In this sense, Gökalp's ideas were not merely adaptations of Durkheim's or other social theories from Europe either.[29] Moreover, Gökalp was an ideologue

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[24] Zafer Toprak, *Türkiye'de Popülizm: 1908–1923* (İstanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2013), 145.

[25] An English translation of Gökalp's work is available in Robert Devereaux, *The Principles of Turkism* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968).

[26] Gökalp, *Türkleşmek, İslamlaşmak, Muasırlaşmak*, 6–7.

[27] Phyllis Stock-Morton, *Moral Education for a Secular Society: The Development of* Morale Laïque *in Nineteenth-Century France*, suny Series in Philosophy of Education (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1988), 29.

[28] For instance, his articles in *İslam Mecmuası* aimed at strengthening the place of *örf* and *içtihad* (independent reasoning) in lawmaking in a way similar to that of Islamic reformist Cemaleddin Afgâni's ideas. Gökalp's intervention in these matters became part of the "inner-Islamic debate" of the time: See Markus Dressler, "Rereading Ziya Gökalp", 515–16.

[29] Alp Eren Topal points out that Gökalp's thought was product of the combination of Western social philosophy, the social and political crises of his time, and the Ottoman- Islamic intellectual tradition:

whose eclectic views had to be compatible with the practical necessities of day-to-day politics. One can see a sharp emphasis, for example, on the unifying role of Islam in his propagandistic speeches that aimed to broaden support for the Young Turks, especially during the war years.[30]30 He also studied Islamic sources, drew on Islamic jurisprudence (*fıkıh*) and theology (*kelâm*), and acknowledged custom (*örf*). Yet he thought that Turks should adopt the values of the Western civilisation because its core was no longer Christianity but science. In the same vein, his new understanding of morality meant first and foremost the complete transformation of the system of education. This new morality was also to play a role in radically reshaping the entire legal system as well as work and family life. To understand the broader framework of this new morality, we need to clarify two fundamental concepts that had long been the focus of his attention: *içtimâî inkılab* ("social revolution") and *ahlâk buhrânı* ("moral crisis").

### *3.1 Social Revolution and Moral Crisis*

"Social revolution" was Gökalp's term for fundamental institutional and spiritual reform that would affect not only higher state institutions, but also personal relationships with family, friends, and professional acquaintances. As early as 1911, in his article "Yeni Hayat Yeni Kıymetler" (New Life, New Values) in the journal *Genç Kalemler*, Gökalp wrote: "What does a social revolution mean? It simply means the creation of a New Life by discarding an older one."[31] Accordingly, a new way of life had to be created, though emphatically not on a European model. The idea of social revolution challenged the traditional understanding of communal and religious ties and highlighted the role and rights of the individual as a citizen equipped with a secular morality based on personal responsibilities to one's nation. In the same article, his arguments were predicated on a distinction between Muslims and others. While the non- Muslims of the Ottoman Empire had readily embraced the European

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see "Against Influence: Ziya Gökalp in Context and Tradition", *Journal of Islamic Studies* 28:3 (2017), 283–310, https://doi.org/10.1093/jis/etw059. M. Sait Özervarlı shows how Gökalp and his associates emphasised Ottoman heritage together with modern European sociology in their proposals for social reform: See "Transferring Traditional Islamic Disciplines into Modern Social Sciences in Late Ottoman Thought: The Attempts of Ziya Gokalp and Mehmed Şerafeddin", *mw* 97:2 (2007), 317–30, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1478-1913.2007.00175.x and "Reading Durkheim Through Ottoman Lenses: Interpretations of Customary Law, Religion, and Society by the School of Gökalp", *Modern Intellectual History* 14 (2017), 393–419. In a recent study, Hans-Lukas Kieser argues that Gökalp was "a seminal proto-fascist ideologue in Greater Europe", an argument based mostly on Gökalp's propagandist poetry and the totalitarian direction Turkish politics took later in post-Ottoman era: See "Europe's Seminal Proto- Fascist? Historically Approaching Ziya Gökalp, Mentor of Turkish Nationalism", *wi* 61:4 (2021), 411–47, https://doi.org/10.1163/15700607-61020008. Although a critical analysis of the literature on Gökalp is beyond the scope of this article, Kieser's reading of Gökalp is based on the reception of his works rather than a deep engagement with his thought.

[30] Erişirgil, *Ziya Gökalp, Bir Fikir Adamının Romanı*, 141. Taha Parla argues that religion played an important role in Gökalp's social theory as a way to react against the materialistic positivism that he considered a destructive ideology: See *The Social and Political Thought of Ziya Gökalp*, 41.

[31] Ziya Gökalp, "Yeni Hayat ve Yeni Kıymetler", *Genç Kalemler* 9 (1911). See Berkes's English translation in *Turkish Nationalism and Western Civilization*, 55–60 (here 56).

mode of life in the economic and social realms, Muslims had hesitated to do so, as they belonged to a different religious community and held different religious views. A new way of life meant creating a "genuine civilisation" through "a new form of family life, new aesthetic standards, a new philosophy, a new morality, a new understanding of law, and a new political organisation".[32] Whether this emphasis on the new in reality implies a revivalist ethos or not,[33] it was directly related to his critique of contemporary moral and political outlooks.

Gökalp presents the new morality as a solution to what he saw as the moral crisis in the Ottoman Muslim community. The claim that there was such a "moral crisis" was indeed the subject of some of the most important intellectual debates of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the Ottoman Empire and elsewhere.[34] Rapid changes in gender and family relations, and, more broadly, in the social fabric, as well as unprecedented political turbulence, induced people to search for the causes for these changes and focus their attention on issues of social values.[35] Many found themselves grappling with radical changes to the fundamentals of the social contract, the set of principles and/or values as to what is acceptable or unacceptable behaviour within a particular society: In other words, morality. Like Gökalp, many other Ottoman intellectuals believed that the Empire was passing through a turbulent age of transition *(intikal devresi*) towards the age of the division of labour (*içtimâî iş bölümü*) which had begun to shake the existing social and political structure. As in many other countries that underwent such deep transformations, with all their chaotic consequences, degradation and degeneration appeared to be natural results.[36] Now, in the national era (*millî devir*) characterised by "national concerns", this transformation had to occur in the Ottoman Empire as well, but the problem was that Ottoman Muslim society had not established a social morality (*içtimâî ahlak*). This resulted in a chaotic age of transition with an unprecedented and extreme moral crisis. In Gökalp's view, the main reason for this crisis was the absence of "great intellectuals" with Ottoman backgrounds to guide society into an understanding of collective morality. Interestingly, he

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[32] Berkes, *Turkish Nationalism*, 59.

[33] See Kieser, "Europe's Seminal Proto-Fascist?", 430.

[34] See K. W. Swart, *The Sense of Decadence in Nineteenth Century France* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1964); Robert A. Nye, *Crime, Madness and Politics in Modern France: The Medical Concept of National Decline* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014); Daniel Pick, *Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder, c.1848–c.1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). The Ottoman perception of moral crisis has also been evaluated as a crisis in family life, given the changes in traditional patriarchal society: See Alan Duben and Cem Behar, *Istanbul Households: Marriage, Family, and Fertility, 1880–1940* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Zafer Toprak, *Türkiye'de Kadın Özgürlüğü ve Feminizm (1908–1935)* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2015); Zafer Toprak, *Türkiye'de Yeni Hayat: İnkılap ve Travma, 1908–1928* (İstanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2017). wwi played a distinctive part in exacerbating this perception: See Oğuz, *Moral Crisis in the Ottoman Empire*.

[35] İnalcık, "Sosyal Değişme", 421.

[36] Gökalp wrote about the concept of transition in several articles, the most detailed being "Ahlâk Buhranı", *Yeni Mecmua* 7 (23 August 1917),122–44. Gökalp's associate, Necmeddin Sadak, also often wrote about moral crisis, morality, and moral education in the same journal and the concept of transition also appears in his works: See, for instance, "Umûmî Ahlâk, Meslekî Ahlâk", *Yeni Mecmua* 25 (27 December 1917), 496–98.

cited Tevfik Fikret as the only such intellectual.[37]

The new national morality would tackle pressing social issues, described by Gökalp as those affecting working life (especially war profiteering), women's social, economic, and political rights, and the education of young people. He urged, for example, the establishment of corporations – *groupements professionnels* in the French translation he inserted for the Turkish term *meslekî zümreler* – that would adopt work-based ethics and impose "social" punishments such as exclusion from vocational life as a remedy for the widespread profiteering going on, especially during wwi.[38] Similarly, women's participation in social life, a highly controversial issue, had to be achieved through a new understanding of morality based on mutual respect between the sexes.[39] Gökalp believed that issues of sexual morality deserved particular attention because the crisis of sexual morality in Ottoman society had reached an unacceptable level. Resolving this crisis was only possible if personal character was enshrined as sacred and the free will of both men and women were recognised and respected. The first step in this endeavour was to accept the equality of the sexes at the legal level. Repeating his claim that this was the age of the division of labour, he argued that old moral codes related to women wearing the veil and to the broader issue of gender segregation created obstacles to women's social participation that the era required and therefore they had to be eliminated. Conservatives had to accept the idea of *mânevî tesettür* ("spiritual hijab") rather than a material one. Defining himself a "feminist", Gökalp argued that feminism was a democratic movement to be pursued in order to achieve equality of sexes.[40] On equality between men and women, he often referred to the ancient Turkish community as exemplary with respect to women's status. The influence of the Iranian and Greek civilisations, he believed, had ended such equality, and this could be restored only through a national consciousness and return to a national culture.[41] Given the prevalent patriarchal views of his era, it was remarkable that his worldview encompassed women's liberation within the context of a secular morality and fundamentally differed from that of the defenders of Islamic morality, who saw morality as solely deriving from religious principles.

Gökalp argued that religious morality was *zühdî* (ascetic) and *ferdî* (individual) and that religiously based morality belonged to another age. "Both religion and law", he asserted, "may establish a specific order; however, they both derive their strength from morality."[42] This strikingly contrasts with Ahmed Naim's and other religiously-centred moral advocates' belief that religion was the source of both morality and law.

Gökalp's concept of law based on morality was no mere intellectual concern but had further repercussions. As with equality between the sexes, he argued that Islam could establish this equality in many areas except for the law, which

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[37] Gökalp, "Ahlâk Buhranı", 122.
[38] Ziya Gökalp, "İçtimaiyyat: Ṣahsî Ahlâk", *Yeni Mecmua* 8 (23 August 1917), 141.
[39] Ziya Gökalp, "İçtimaiyyat: Cinsî Ahlâk", *Yeni Mecmua* 9 (6 September 1914), 168.
[40] Ziya Gökalp, "Aile Ahlâkı: Şövalye Aşkı ve Feminizm", *Yeni Mecmua* 19 (15 November 1917), 391–94.
[41] In Berkes, *Turkish Nationalism*, 303.
[42] Gökalp, "Ahlâk Buhranı", 122.

first and foremost "adheres to social practices" and that the prevailing customs of the Arab society of that time prevented such equality from being realised.[43] These were practices that Gökalp considered *örf*, which he saw as equal in importance to classical sources of Islamic law if the law was to be widely accepted in society. Indeed, the idea of a family reform was introduced in 1917 within this framework. Gökalp thus advocated changing the basis of the civil code from the Islamic to the secular realm[44] and attempted to establish a scientific basis for religious studies. His solutions for what he saw as moral decline in Muslim society could be examined through both moral and religious sociology (*ahlâkî içtimaiyyat* and *dinî içtimaiyyat* respectively). He saw studying these two fields as a useful way to reconcile the positive sciences with religious/ moral values, since he believed that the gap between them was the real reason for the crises with which Muslim youth were then struggling. Gökalp's position on the controversy about national morality indeed challenged the supporters of Islamic morality, who saw religion as the genuine basis of institutions such as the family, education, and law.

## 4. Human and Divine Will: Ahmed Naim, Mehmed Akif, and Islamic Morality

One certainly must also take into account those who believed Islam was the sole source of morality in the contest of moral visions in the turn-of- the-century Ottoman Empire. As it was their voices that had traditionally dominated regarding such issues, they were criticised time and again by the advocates of national and universal values. In response to these criticisms, the supporters of Islamic morality developed a defensive approach. They were not concerned with creating original and genuine theory; instead, they advocated Islamic principles through interpretations of the Qurʾān and pointing to examples from Prophet Muhammed's life and *ḥadīth*s to address contemporary developments. Their main interest was in emphasising that Islam should be the only source of morality and that Islamic practices were the instruments for reaching higher moral standards. Without religion, an individual could not attain moral values. Although their views rested on ostensibly unchanging Islamic principles and sources, they were, in fact, subject to change due to the evolution of social and cultural realities. What is more important for understanding the contesting moral visions of the late Ottoman era is the impact of the historical and ideological context within which the advocates of the Islamic morality defended themselves.

Just like the nationalists and universalists, those advocating a religiously based approach perceived morality as a solution to the Empire's political and military decline. Within this framework, their main idea was that, because Islam had played a crucial role in the Ottoman state since its foundation, its marginalisation, even removal from the practices of the state through the secularisation of its institutions only further weakened its influence. The

[43] Gökalp, "İçtimaiyyat: Cinsî Ahlâk".
[44] Oğuz, *Moral Crisis*, 141–42.

separation of morality from religion would bring about social disorder, remove all barriers to European cultural influence, and leave society exposed to the materialistic ideas of the time. They also believed that Islamic morality provided the basis for Islam's institutional power in education, the law, and the family; consequently, any reduction of Islam's influence in these fields would also eventually mean the loss of political power.[45] The most voices of Islamic morality of the period in question gathered around the journal *Sebilürreşad* (The Straight Road).[46] The eminent intellectuals who dealt with such issues within the journal included Mehmet Akif ("Ersoy"), Ahmed Naim ("Babanzâde"), Said Halim Paşa, and Ahmed Hamdi ("Akseki"). Most commentaries and reviews on morality written in response to other journals and newspapers were penned by the editorial staff and signed as "Sebilürreşad". Here we will focus on two authors in this journal – Ahmed Naim and Mehmed Akif – as representatives of this current.

Mehmet Akif (1873–1936) wrote the Turkish national anthem[47] and is renowned as the "national poet" of Turkey.[48]48 An ardent supporter of the cup during wwi, he served in *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa*, its underground paramilitary wing. He then supported the Turkish War of Independence through his mosque sermons. He later became disillusioned by the secular reforms of the republican regime and left the country for Egypt.[49]

Ahmed Naim (1872–1934) was a scion of the notable Babanzâdes family in

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[45] On Islamic thought and its principal works and figures, see İsmail Kara, *Türkiye'de İslâmcılık Düşüncesi: Metinler, Kişiler*, 3 vols (Cağaloğlu, İstanbul: Risale, 1986). Ahmet Seyhun has translated excerpts into English and provided clear contextualization for the texts in *Islamist Thinkers in the Late Ottoman Empire and Early Turkish Republic* (Boston, MA and Leiden: Brill, 2014). On Islamic thought in the Ottoman Empire and elsewhere, see Charles Kurzman ed., *Modernist Islam, 1840–1940: A Sourcebook* (Oxford and New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2002).

[46] The journal began publishing under the title *Sırât-ı Müstakîm* (Straight Road) right after the declaration of the constitutional regime in 1908 by the Young Turks. In 1912, the name of the journal became *Sebilürreşad* (meaning the same as *Sırât-ı Müstakîm*) and its chief editors were Eşref Edib ("Fergan") and Mehmet Akif ("Ersoy"). The authors had strong ties to the ruling Young Turk party, the cup, and supported the constitutional regime, with some reservations, against absolute monarchy. They advocated a modernist Islam, showcasing several translations from some of its famous figures, such as Muhammed Abdûh and Cemaleddin Afgâni. On *Sırat-ı Müstakim* and *Sebilürreşad*, see Esther Debus, *Sebilürreşad: Kemalizm Öncesi ve Sonrası Dönemdeki İslamcı Muhalefete Dair Karşılaştırmalı Bir Araştırma* (Istanbul: Libra Yayınevi, 2012); Tarık Zafer Tunaya, *İslamcılık Akımı* (İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi, 2003); Zafer Toprak, "Türkiye'de Fikir Dergiciliğinin Yüz Yılı", in *Türkiye'de Dergiler Ansiklopediler (1849–1984)* (İstanbul: Gelişim Yayınları, 1984), 13–54; Ayşe Polat, "Sırat-ı Müstakim ve Okuyucu Mektupları: Sorulan, Tartışılan, İnşa Edilen İslam", in *İslam'ı Uyandırmak: Meşrutiyet'ten Cumhuriyet'e İslamcı Düşünce ve Dergiler*, ed. Lütfi Sunar (Istanbul: İlem Yayınları, 2018), 393–419.

[47] See also Günil Özlem Ayaydın-Cebe, "Smile of the Crescent: Constructing a Future Identity Out of Historical Ambiguity in İstiklal Marşı (with Translation)", *WI* 63:1 (2023), 76–106, https://doi.org/10.1163/15700607-61040001.

[48] Despite Akif's popularity in contemporary Turkey's cultural realm, there are few academic works on him. For a short biography and excerpts from his works translated into English, see Seyhun, *Islamist Thinkers*, 19–26. Andrew Hammond has recently written on how the reception of Akif's ideas has changed from rejection to glorification over time: See "Muslim Modernism in Turkish: Assessing the Thought of Late Ottoman Intellectual Mehmed Akif", *WI* 62:2 (2022), 188–219, https://doi.org/10.1163/15700607-61040012.

[49] Seyhun, *Islamist Thinkers*, 19–20.

Ottoman Iraq.[50] After obtaining degrees from the Galatasaray Imperial High School and the School of Civil Administration (*Mekteb-i Mülkiye*), he became an Ottoman bureaucrat, working in the Ministry of Education during the war years. He taught philosophy, logic, psychology, and ethics in the *Dârülfünûn* university until he was dismissed in 1933, when most opponents of the regime were purged from academic life. His famous work, *İslâm'da Davâ-yı Kavmiyet* (Nationalism in Islam), is a critique of ethnic nationalism and became a kind of political manifesto for those who defended the unity of the Muslim *umma* under the caliphate against Turkish nationalists.[51]

Both Mehmet Akif and Ahmed Naim became engaged in famous political polemics of their times, targeting mainly Tevfik Fikret, especially for his views on religion, and Turkish nationalists such as Ziya Gökalp and Necmeddin Sadak. They harshly criticised the concept of "national morality", which they considered contrary to God's commands due to its exclusively national rather than higher religious values. This viewpoint was central to Ahmed Naim's famous booklet *Ahlâk-ı İslâmiyye Esâsları* (The Fundamentals of Islamic Morality), in which he defended Islamic morality in its specific context rather than through generic, ahistorical statements, or by citing verses from the Qurʾān, as was common in *Sebilürreşad*. Mehmed Akif was also an important figure in those debates. Notably, the character "Âsım" that he created in his masterpiece, *Safahât* (Phases) became a symbol of virtue for advocates of Islamic morality. Âsım, the protagonist in Akif's poem, is important as a concrete example of what these Islamic advocates thought moral character should be.

### *4.1 Ahmed Naim's Ahlâk-I İslâmiyye Esâsları*

Ahmed Naim wrote *Ahlâk-I İslâmiyye Esâsları* at the request of Minister of Education Emrullah Efendi for presentation at the Second International Moral Education Congress in The Hague in 1912. The organisers requested that the Ottoman authorities send an official delegate to report on the sources of moral education in the Orient. Due to a change in the cabinet at the time, however, Naim was unable to attend, but published his work serially in *Sebilürreşad* and later as a booklet in 1923.[52] Naim's main arguments and concerns are

[50] For a short biography, see Osman Ergin, "Ahmed Naim Zâtı ve Eserleri", in *İslâm Ahlâkının Esasları*, ed. Ömer Rıza Doğrul (Istanbul: Yüksel Yayınevi, 1945), 7–22; Seyhun, *Islamist Thinkers,* 59–64. There is a growing interest in Naim and his works, including his translations from French and attempts to create a Turkish-Arabic glossary of philosophy: See İsmail Kara and M. Cüneyt Kara, *Babanzade Ahmed Naim, Hayatı, Eserleri, Fikirleri* (Istanbul: Zeytinburnu Belediyesi Kültür Yayınları, 2018); M. Cüneyt Kara and Cahid Şenel, *Felsefe Makaleleri* (Istanbul: Klasik Yayınları, 2014). His university ethics classes are examined in Melek Yıldız Güneş, *Darülfünunda Ahlâk Dersleri, Programlar, Ders Notları, Hocalar* (Istanbul: Ilem Yayınları, 2020).

[51] Ahmed Naim, *İslâm'da Dava-yı Kavmiyet* (Istanbul: Sebilürreşad Kütüphanesi Neşriyatı, 1916).

[52] Ahmed Naim's work was published in fourteen serial parts in *Sebilürreşad* between December 1912 and March 1913. The book version in Arabic script was published in 1924. In our study, we used a transliterated version published as part of the series Morality Classics (*Ahlâk Klasikleri*) by the publication house of the Religious Directorate of Turkey (*Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*) in 2014: See Ahmet Naim, *İslam Ahlakının Esasları*, ed. Recep Kılıç (Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 2014).

17mphasizes in sixteen chapters, as listed in the table of contents. Some of these are important because they reflect the author's concerns to defend Islamic morality against widely held ideas or prejudices. The first part, after a short introduction, is entitled "The Source of Islamic Morality is the Religion of Islam; Our Ideas about Morality Were Not Influenced by the Works of Philosophers Too Much".[53] Indeed, this statement expresses the opposite of nationalist morality. The nationalists claimed that Greek philosophy had had a deep impact on Islamic thought. Throughout the booklet, Naim cites Qurʾānic verses and *ḥadīth*s to explain the relationship between faith, good morals, free will, and responsibility. He also seeks to answer questions about ethics in Islam. While the title highlights a fundamental difference between Christianity and Islam, the section called "Faith in Divine Destiny" addresses a prevalent misconception that Islam suggests that everything is predestined regardless of individuals' efforts. The rest of the booklet attempts to answer questions regarding whether Islam is compatible with rationalism and whether the principle of responsibility conflicts with the source of morality being God's commandments. Naim raises three even more important concepts for the present context: responsibility (*mesûliyet*), predestination (*kader*), and the compatibility of Islamic morality with science and rationalism. It is no exaggeration to say that these constitute the key topics in related late Ottoman debates as well.

The theme of responsibility in Islam should be considered within the larger debate of the time. The central idea was that the primary responsibility of individuals was to God rather than to society, contrary to modern views on the matter. According to this approach, individual salvation is more important than social salvation. Thus, Naim asserts that moral philosophy cannot be as powerful as religion in inducing moral principles and responsibilities in people's hearts.[54] The principle of responsibility in philosophy can be applied at the level of the masses only through religion and through a pragmatic idea of ethics that included notions of heaven and hell. Naim believes that Islamic moral principles regarding individual responsibility do not conflict with rational ethical theories because people's acceptance of Islam itself is based on reason and evidence.[55] He argues that Islam does not contradict Kant's formula of universal law. Rather, the source of the universal law of ethics in Islam is God's commandments[56] and that religion also takes into account even the intention

[53] He began this part emphasizing that the East and the West had started to know each other better thanks to scholars who pursued scientific knowledge rather than cultural prejudices. As a result, widespread prejudices about the Muslims had been questioned and thus the Muslims then were more optimistic about the future of the relations between two civilizations. However, a footnote followed this statement highlighting his disappointment about the Europeans especially after their silence during the atrocities of the Balkan Wars and other calamities that fell upon the Muslims (probably meaning further colonization of the Muslim world by European powers). Yet, it is important to note how he embraced science and knowledge as universal values, Ahmet Naim, *İslam Ahlakının Esasları*, 37.

[54] Ibid., 67.
[55] Ibid., 115.
[56] Ibid., 117.

(*niyet*) of an act in judging whether it is good or bad.

Naim asserts that there are two distinct levels in the notion of responsibility in Islam that depend on a person's religious knowledge and status. The Prophet's moral responsibility, for example, was greater than that of any other believer. Moral obligation also has two levels: the lower one, of the virtues, involves being just to others and controlling oneself within the limits of permission (*ruhsat*); the higher level of responsibility encompasses benevolence, forgiveness, and steadfastness (*ʿazîmet*) in one's personal life.[57] According to Naim, *ruhsat* and *ʿazîmet* are comparable to the philosophical concepts of Kantian ethics, *devoirs stricts* (duties of narrow obligation) and *devoirs larges* (duties of wide obligation), translations from French made by Naim (here and in what follows).[58] An ordinary Muslim could act in accordance with *ruhsat* and still remain within the moral borders of Islam. In both cases of *ruhsat* and *ʿazîmet*, the principles of justice and benevolence encompass "*18mphasiz*"/"*îsâr*", with Islam unaccepting of "*égoïsme*"/ *hodgâmlık*.[59] He is evidently attempting here to reconcile moral philosophy and Islamic morality. In his view, while Kantian ethical formulations aligned with those of Islam, the latter was more successful in inculcating moral principles in society.

Naim begins his explanation of *kader* with the statement that Islam rejects a fatalistic view of human will as being negated[60] and argues that Islam views free will (*liberté personelle/cüzʿi irâde*) and divine will (*volonté divine/küllî irâde*") as the two fundamentals of moral law and responsibility.[61] Accordingly, responsibility for good and evil is a matter of the *cüzʿi irâde*. In order to refute negative contemporary ideas about Islam such as (in his words) "Muslims do not defend themselves against epidemic diseases because they believe it is destiny" or "laziness and idleness in the Muslim world is a result of Islamic faith in destiny", he lists many Qurʾānic verses and *ḥadīth*s that stress the importance of medicine and disease prevention measures along with many others urging hard work. In Naim's view, the misinterpretation of this matter derives from a misunderstanding of the Islamic concept of resigning oneself to fate (*tevekkül*), which entails resigning oneself to God's commandments only after doing as much as possible oneself.[62] Naim opposes the idea that predestination in Islam is a barrier to social progress, arguing that the Muslims of previous centuries created the most developed 18mphasizes18n of their times

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[57] *Ruhsat* means permission within a specific context. For example, stealing is forbidden in Islam but people who are starving may steal to remain alive, provided that they seek the blessings of the owner of the stolen item(s) later. *ʿAzimet* means strict adherence to the rituals under any condition and must be followed if there is no excuse not to do so: See Mustafa Baktır, "Azimet", *tdv İslam Ansiklopedisi*, https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/azimet (accessed 12 January 2022).

[58] Ahmet Naim, *İslam Ahlakının Esasları*, 151.

[59] Ibid., 161.

[60] Ibid., 85.

[61] For a discussion on individual human will, see Philipp Bruckmayr, "The Particular Will (*al-irādat al-juz'iyya*): Excavations Regarding a Latecomer in Kalām Terminology on Human Agency and its Position in Naqshbandi Discourse", *European Journal of Turkish Studies Online* 13 (2011), https://journals.openedition.org/ejts/4601 (accessed 16 February 2020).

[62] Ahmet Naim, *İslam Ahlakının Esasları*, 99.

while also strictly practicing Islam.[63]

On the compatibility of Islamic morality with science and rationalism, Naim argues that Islam was more aligned with rationalism than any other philosophy current in the early years of Islam. The notions of predestination and *tevekkül* are not contrary to scientific thinking as individual liberty is granted to all humans. In order to apply *tevekkül*, laws of nature (*kavânîn-I tabîiyye*) should always be considered first. Naim believed that these laws of nature were *sünnetullah*, comparable to divine law in Islam.[64] Muslims are obliged to understand divine law, meaning that Islam positively encourages scientific discovery rather seeing it as contradicting religion.

Naim's booklet aimed to present a general framework for Islamic morality to a non-Muslim audience and to correct what Naim believed to be common prejudices regarding Islam and the Muslim world. Throughout it, Naim 19mphasizes that moral and religious principles are the same and that religion encompasses all values. While the principles of the philosophy of ethics were difficult for the masses to practice, religion could help them do so through promoting a pragmatic understanding of reward and punishment. Predestination was misunderstood by Muslims and non-Muslims alike, leading them to think incorrectly that the Islamic conception of destiny left no room for free will. Underlying Naim's argument is an emphasis on divergence from rather than adherence to Islam being the true barrier to progress.

This theoretical framework and the defensive way in which Naim expresses himself are also evident in his debates with the nationalists on practical issues, such as the separation of religion and state, nationalism, polygyny, and women's wearing of the veil.[65] Alongside *ḥadīth*s and other Islamic texts, in many of his written works he refers to anti-materialist and anti-positivist French Catholic authors, including Paul Janet, Émile Picard, Victor Cousin, and Élie Rabier.[66] Yet, a perhaps more effective moral exemplar than all of these theoretical debates is "Âsım", the character that Naim's friend, Mehmet Akif, created.

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[63] Ibid., 106–07.

[64] Ibid., 99.

[65] Osman Ergin states that Naim was never one of those who came up with a topic to write about but that he was inspired to respond the attacks on Islam and to defend Islamic principles against all kinds of materialistic and positivistic interpretations: See "Ahmed Naim Zâtı ve Eserleri", 8.

[66] Naim translated a considerable amount of these authors' works from French into Turkish to be used as textbooks in his classes and to provide alternatives to the original French terms. These translations include Paul Janet's *Traité élémentaire de philosophie: à l'usage des classes* (Paris, Librairie Charles Delagrave, 1881) and George L. Fonsegrive's *Éléments de philosophie* (Paris, A. Picard et Kaan, 1890). He preferred not to use Turkish words (something that would be more in line with the official Turkish nationalist ideology of the second half of the 1920s and the 1930s), but to find "ancient" (*kadîm*) terms from Islamic literature as a way of emphasizing continuity with Islamic scholarship: See M. Cüneyt Kara, "Kadîmin Keşfi Yolunda: Babanzâde Ahmet Naim'in Felsefe Çalışmalarına Giriş", in *Babanzade Ahmed Naim, Hayatı, Eserleri, Fikirleri*, ed. İsmail Kara and M. Cüneyt Kara (Istanbul: Zeytinburnu Belediyesi Kültür Yayınları, 2018), 77–112.

### *4.2. Mehmet Akif's Âsım*

Akif's influential poem "Âsım" is a chapter in his *Safahât*.[67] Set during wwi, it is written in the format of a dialogue between four characters: Hocazâde (the son of the late Hoca Tahir Efendi – Akif himself), Köse İmam (based on Ali Şevki Hoca, a real-life student of Hoca Tahir Efendi), Âsım (the son of Köse İmam, a fictitious character), and Emin (the son of Hocazâde, Akif). A student when the Battle of Gallipoli begins in 1915, Âsım drops out of school to enlist, becoming a veteran after Gallipoli, a battle in which the Ottomans achieved great success at a huge cost in casualties. At the end of the poem, Hocazâde discusses Âsım's future with him and persuades Âsım to go to Europe to obtain a better education. After learning Western science and technology, Âsım could return as soon as possible to use his knowledge in the service of his country.

Akif refers to the young soldiers who fearlessly fought at Gallipoli for their country against "a so-called civilised world" – the true face of which is revealed in the atrocities it commits throughout the war – as "Âsım's generation".[68] The poem's primary message is that, despite all the technology the British and the French amassed against the Ottomans, they could not achieve their aims due to the Ottoman soldiers' faith in God. These patriotic youths are described as follows: "generation of Âsım: … I was telling you … It is real: Look, they did not [and] will not let their honour be trampled on." Âsım's heroism, however, is not simply that of a warrior. He represents a youth that is not alienated from its own culture. At one point, fuelled by rage, Âsım begins to behave like a moral policeman, beating up tavern drinkers, confiscating the oil that the gamblers consumed in their clubs and distributing it to the people, and disturbing the nightly entertainment of war profiteers. He justifies himself by referring to the inequality between rich and poor as well as the inequality between those who profit and those who suffer from the war. His father fears that Âsım will end up a murderer and convinces Âsım to fight his battles in a different, more effective way: to learn from the scientific developments in European countries through education while preserving one's own identity and using this knowledge for the advancement of one's own country.

Akif's Âsım character is often compared to Tevfik Fikret's Haluk, both models for youth, albeit ideologically divergent, with consequent political implications for the debate on which model could succeed. Indeed, this is known in the literature as the "Haluk/Âsım controversy".[69] Fikret's son Haluk later moved to Scotland to study, choosing to remain there and eventually converting to Christianity and becoming a cleric. Haluk's life has often been used to propagandise against Fikret's moral stance and ideas. This controversy merits close scrutiny due to its implications for the various moral and political postures of the late Ottoman and early republican periods.

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[67] In this article, we benefited from the followings edition, which includes the original version in Ottoman Turkish: D. Mehmet Doğan, *Mehmed Akif Ersoy, Safahat "Âsım"* (Ankara: Yazar Yayınları, 2014).

[68] Ibid., 98–99.

[69] Cited in, Tanyu, *Tevfik Fikret ve Din*, 91.

## 5. Epilogue: From Past to Present and the Struggle over Morality

Tevfik Fikret and his moral-political views were central to the intellectual currents we have discussed in this study. Both his personality and his political statements are key points of interest in these matters, and his supporters and detractors alike emphasised his personal characteristics to make their points for or against him. Ahmed Hamdi Tanpınar, one of the most important names in Turkish literature, described Fikret as *ahlâk ve medeniyet havârisi* ("an apostle of morality and civilisation") in the intellectual milieu of his day, who succeeded in translating his personal melancholy into societal concerns and becoming the voice of society's problems and aspirations. In this section, we reassess the role of Fikret in morally defining the intellectual climate of the time and show how his ideas were central in morality debates.

Fikret's critics accused him of being a pessimistic, quarrelsome, melancholic, and contentious poet. For many conservatives, these personality traits were related to the lack of religion in his worldview and his pessimism the result of his materialist perspectives. They thus not only denigrated his works and ideas but argued that a pessimistic figure such as he should not be a role model for the youth, let alone for the other intellectuals of the time.[70] Fikret's approach to morality was also different from that of the nationalists, yet he influenced both the nationalists and the Islamists, who compared their moral universes to that of Fikret. This was made possible in part by the extensive translation of his works in the 1928 post-language reform period. Even though he was not a nationalist, his secular, progressive, and universal ideals constituted "the governing ethos" of the Turkish Republic.[71] His ideals of youth, appreciation of science, and humanism underlay republican ideas and ideals. Mustafa Kemal, the founding father of modern Turkey, himself considered Fikret the greatest poet, conceding that Fikret was an inspiration.[72] Fikret's controversial poem "Tarih-i Kadim" (Ancient History) featured in high school textbooks between 1945 and 1949.[73] One of Turkey's most famous education reformers, Hasan Âli Yücel, who served as the Minister of Education between 1938 and 1946, transliterated Fikret's *Tarih-i Kadim* and *Doksan Beşe Doğru* into Latin script in 1928, immediately after the language reform, and praised their revolutionary opposition to tyranny in a both material and spiritual way.[74]

Fikret's famous dispute with Mehmet Akif is especially noteworthy, reflecting the extent to which difference, even polarisation, characterised the two literary and certainly also ideological camps of time, representing an ideological fault line and political polarisation that continued in Turkey many decades after their

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[70] Kaplan asserts that debates around Fikret's lifestyle, character, moral views, and personality was a phenomenon unprecedented in Turkish literature: See *Tevfik Fikret ve Şiiri*, 59.

[71] Fikret, "Haluk's Credo".

[72] Toprak, "Edebiyat ve Siyasal Duruş: Tevfik Fikret Ayıraçı", 5.

[73] Hikmet Tanyu, *Tevfik Fikret ve Din* (Istanbul: İrfan Yayınevi, 1972), 286–87.

[74] Tevfik Fikret, *Tarih-i Kadîm, Doksan Beşe Doğru*, ed. Hasan Ali (Yücel) (Istanbul: Nümûne Matbaası, 1928).

deaths.[75] The debate was triggered by Fikret's famous poem "Târih-i Kadîm" (Ancient History) and Akif's response to it. In the poem, Fikret presents his views on the history of humanity, which, for him, was all about war and bloodshed. He also rejected the idea of a creator who demanded that humans became "martyrs" for His sake. Fikret argued that emancipation from such a conception of God was a prerequisite to establishing a new society and future. Ten years after "Târih-i Kadîm's" publication, Akif wrote a 1915 response to Fikret's rejection of God and religion and lambasted the modernist intelligentsia as embodied in Fikret. Akif condemned Fikret's holding of a teaching position in the American Robert College missionary school, deeming it inherently hypocritical for a non-believer like Fikret. Akif ridiculed Fikret for seemingly abandoning blasphemy and becoming a *zangoç* ("bell ringer") in the employ of the Protestants of Robert College. For Akif, Fikret spoke like a moralist but denigrated the religion that Akif considered the well-spring and beating heart of Muslim morality.[76] Fikret responded to these accusations in a poem entitled "Târih-i Kadîme Zeyl" (Addendum to "Ancient History"), answering Akif's accusations of blasphemy by asserting that man makes his own idol and then worships it, adding that he proudly believed only in his own *vicdân* ("conscience"). In the poem, he also called Akif "Molla Sırat", referring to the Islamist journal *Sırât-ı Müstâkîm* (the previous name of *Sebilürreşad*) to which Akif was a contributor. "*Sırât*" also denotes the name of the bridge in Islamic belief that every human being had to cross on the Day of Judgement to enter paradise, likely a sarcastic barb towards Akif's judgmentalism.[77]

Controversy surrounding Fikret's legacy persisted for quite some time after his death. One illustrative salvo in this came in Ahmed Naim's 1918 very important article "Tevfik Fikret Hakkında" (Regarding Tevfik Fikret), a direct response to a conference convened by the *Türk Ocakları* (Turkish Hearths), a prominent nationalist club of that era, commemorating the third anniversary of Fikret's passing.[78] During this conference, Rıza Tevfik, a close confidant of Fikret, delivered a speech arguing that religious circles attacked Fikret as an atheist, though in truth he professed a belief in God. Reacting against Rıza Tevfik and defending both *Sebilürreşad* and Akif, Naim argued that Fikret was an ardent materialist and non-believer who harboured a deep-seated scepticism towards humanity and was a self-centred individual who continually offended those

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[75] Much has been written on this controversy. For a solid account of it, see Abdullah Uçman, "Tevfik Fikret – Mehmed Akif Münakaşası", in *Bir Muhalif Kimlik Tevfik Fikret*, ed. Bengisu Rona and Zafer Toprak (Istanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2007), 73–95.

[76] Hasan Basri Çantay, *Âkifname (Mehmed Âkif )* (İstanbul, 1966), 249, cited in Tanyu, *Tevfik Fikret ve Din*, 91.

[77] What is interesting in this debate was that Akif responded to Fikret only after ten years. Asım Bezirci plausibly explains this delay while also shedding some light on the real background to the controversy. According to Bezirci, Akif's grudge against Fikret was the result of the political disagreement between the two on the cup's policies. When Fikret started to criticise the Unionists in his poems, Akif, a strong cup supporter at the time, decided to discredit Fikret's political opinions by condemning his most materialist poem: See Bezirci, *Tevfik Fikret, Geçmişten Gelen Bütün Şiirleri*, 258.

[78] Ahmed Naim, *Feylesof Doktor Rıza Tevfik Beyefendiye, Tevfik Fikret'e Dair* (Istanbul: Sebilürreşad Kütüphanesi Neşriyatı, 1918).

with whom he came into contact. Naim's critique delved into Fikret's poetry that addresses religious themes, ultimately concluding that Fikret's devotion was not to God but to "*hakk*" ("the truth" that also encompasses God). The "Akif-Fikret" controversy resurfaced in the 1940s in a way that reflected the political polarisation of the time. An article in the newspaper *Yeni Sabah*, entitled "Fikret'in Eserlerini Yakmak Lazım" (We Should Burn the Works of Fikret), attacked Fikret's character and alleged that he was an atheist.[79] Sabiha Zekeriya Sertel, an eminent Turkish leftist, responded by calling the article the work of reactionaries. The debate was later the subject of litigation between *Yeni Sabah* and Sertel, the latter defending herself by claiming that Fikret's ideology was in line with the secularism of the contemporary Turkish state, unlike Akif's religious and counter-revolutionary ideas.[80] As the editor of *Sebilürreşad* and a close friend of Akif, Eşref Edib responded by emphasising Akif's role in the Turkish War of Independence and his fame as the author of the national anthem.[81]81 Scholars have evaluated the Akif-Fikret controversy as a conflict between political parties, but it should also be considered as a moral one that indeed shaped political and ideological viewpoints.

Some early accounts of Fikret were written in response to the Akif-Fikret controversy and its repercussions. In his booklet entitled *Tevfik Fikret ve Ahlâkı* written three years after Fikret's death, Köprülü explained that he had decided to write about Fikret's moral views in response to those he saw as defaming Fikret.[82] Köprülü emphasises that, contrary to claims that Fikret attacked people's religious sensibilities, Fikret never sought to destroy such feelings among the youth. Köprülü, embittered by both the attacks from conservative circles and the silence of Fikret's friends to them, wrote this short piece defining Fikret as a moralist. It is true that Fikret did not take the role of religious education into account in his attempt to improve the morality of the youth and neither did he think that materialism had negative impacts on morality. However, Köprülü wrote, "it would be misleading to expect more from a poet who was so much preoccupied with ideals pertaining to 'internationalism' and 'civilisation.'"[83] Köprülü criticises Fikret for neglecting nationalism in his dedication to universalist values, but he also points out that Fikret was one of the few moralists whose values were congruent with his behaviour.

Similar criticisms of Fikret's moral standpoint can be seen in the work of Ziya Gökalp.[84] A staunch nationalist, Gökalp rejected Fikret's universalism, internationalism, and faith in civilisation and humanity. However, he advised Turkish youth to regard Fikret as a great intellectual and the foremost pioneer of

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[79] Sabiha Zekeriya Sertel, *Tevfik Fikret – Mehmet Akif Kavgası Münasebetile: Sebilürreşatçıya Cevap* (Istanbul: Tan Matbaası, 1940), 3–4.

[80] Ibid.

[81] Eşref Edip Fergan, *İnkılâb Karşısında Akif-Fikret, Gençlik-Tancılar, Kurtuluş Harbinin İman Kaynağı İstiklal Marşı mı, Tarih-i Kadim mi?* (Istanbul: Asar-ı İlmiye Kütüphanesi Neşriyatı, 1940).

[82] Köprülüzâde, *Tevfik Fikret ve Ahlakı*, 5.

[83] Ibid., 39.

[84] On Gökalp's views on Fikret, see Toprak, "Edebiyat ve Siyasal Duruş: Tevfik Fikret Ayıraçı", 8–13.

the *Osmanlı Rönesansı* (Ottoman Renaissance). Without Fikret's contribution, Gökalp argued, the development of a contemporary modern literature and a worldview transcending the ideal *umma* would not have been possible. Gökalp deemed Fikret an *ahlâk müctehîdi* (judicial authority on moral issues) who sincerely followed his moral principles in his personal life. Nevertheless, his perspectives on morality were *muzır* (harmful) to the Turks since they revolved around the individual, not the nation or the community. Despite all his reservations, Gökalp still expressed appreciation of Fikret's perspectives on morality because of their secular nature.

As the Turkish case, among others, reveals, when societies undergo massive and rapid social and political changes, especially in times of crisis, issues of morality become central, since they constitute the basic building blocks of the social contract with regard to both public and private life. The contesting visions of morality embodied in the three prominent intellectual currents of the time that we have examined here did not arise out of mere coincidence. The rapid relative decline of the Ottoman Empire compared to Europe, the emerging nationalisms, the economic problems resulting from the spread of capitalism, the colossal migrations in and out of the Empire, the centralisation of the state, and last but not least, the massively destructive wars from 1911 onwards all gave rise to immense social and cultural turmoil in the late Ottoman Empire.

For centuries, Islam had ostensibly been the dominant source of moral codes for the Empire's Muslims. However, by the turn of the century, this dominance was challenged by various intellectuals' interpretations of morality, as exemplified by those of Tevfik Fikret and Ziya Gökalp. The advocates of Islamic morality retreated to defensive positions, while the challengers shared a secular understanding of the sources of morality, albeit conceived in different ways. These secular currents can be understood as part of the rising secularism already underway from the *Tanzimat* era onwards. While Fikret's moral vision was aimed the individual and universalistic, Gökalp's was communitarian and nationalistic. The views of the latter obviously resonated with the newly republican Turkey concerned with establishing a new Turkish nation. Fikret's secular understanding of morality, however, was also welcomed by many Kemalist elites of the time.

The debates on moral issues were directly related to the shaping of the younger generation. This is very apparent in the writings of the authors examined here. Their focus on morality as the basis for their ideological and political worldviews was aimed to guide the young generation in its public and private life.

Today's intellectual and political landscape seems similar in many respects to that of the turn of the twentieth century in that moral issues are still being vehemently discussed, in Turkey and elsewhere. The polarisations we witness today, especially due to the emergence of populist regimes, further define and widen the secular and religious fault lines over matters of morality. For instance, Akif's famous conceptualisation of youth as "the generation of Âsım" is highly praised by Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party and

"Âsım's Generation at the March of the Century" was a slogan for the centenary of the start of wwi in official commemorations.[85] In 2015, President Erdoğan gave a speech at an event in which he presented himself as "a member of Âsım's generation". During the event – called "A Grandmaster from Âsım's Generation: Recep Tayyip Erdoğan" – Erdoğan said that his party had struggled to raise and revive a generation of Âsım for the last 13 years[86] and contrasted the character of the 2013 Gezi Park protestors with that of Âsım, emphasising the difference as not only political but moral. As this example shows, the political and social implications of intellectual divisions on morality that we have looked at in this study remain alive in the present and only by looking into the past can we understand that there is a historical basis for the strong contemporary emphasis on morality.

[85] Nazan Maksudyan, "Centenary (Turkey)", *International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/centenary_turkey?version=1.0. (accessed 12 January 2022).
[86] Presidency of the Turkish Republic, "Asım'ın Neslini Ayağa Kaldırmanın Mücadelesini Veriyoruz", 26 December 2015, https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/37428/asimin-neslini-ayaga-kaldirmanin-mucadelesini-veriyoruz.html (accessed 10 April 2020).