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In Pursuit of Indigenous Turkish Philosophy of Education: The Educational Thought of Mehmet Akif Ersoy

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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

IN PURSUIT OF INDIGENOUS TURKISH PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION:
THE EDUCATIONAL THOUGHT OF MEHMET AKIF ERSOY

By

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ABSTRACT

The role of religion in modern education is a discussion that vexed scholars from the Western world as well as Muslim scholars. There are different approaches to the problem. Some scholars argue that religion does not have a space in public education while there are others who promote existence of religion in modern education systems. Ersoy positions himself among the second group. He offers an education system which promotes both religious knowledge and science in schools. His main concern to design an education promoting religious and scientific knowledge is to raise a generation to save Muslim world from ignorance, poverty, and clashes. By doing so, he intends to serve Islam as he believes it is under threat of misinformed or ignorant Muslim society. Ersoy calls this generation *Asım Generation* which functions to save Muslim world and builds bridges between the Western world and Muslims.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: HARMONIZING THE SACRED AND SECULAR IN TURKISH EDUCATIONAL THOUGHT

1.1 Religion and Education in the Modern World

One of the recurring dilemmas of modern education around the world is the question of the appropriate role of religion in government education systems. This has been a question, for instance, that has vexed American education for more than a century and continues to generate considerable controversy (Gaddy, Hall and Marzano 1996, Nussbaum 2008). While historically, for most Muslim societies, this has not been an issue—religious belief was commonly seen as the whole point of education, as Muslim countries transitioned into modern states and modern economies the question of whether the role of Islam is an impediment to the modernization of education or is compatible with the modern system of education is a question that has also vexed more and more Muslim societies. Thus the right balance of sacred and secular has become a question for education in the Muslim world as well (Hashim 2004, Hefner and Zaman 2007).

Historically, in the Muslim world and the West, the most common assumption was that religious formation was the whole point of education (Davis, 2009). According to Davis, Sumara, and Luce-Kapler (2015), formal schooling was under the influence of “deep, spiritual, wisdom-oriented knowledge” for much of its history (p.17). This influence existed through the Middle Ages when the Church controlled formal education throughout Europe. Education then was not an opportunity for everyone, but the Church offered free education where there was a church or cathedral in which church officials could serve as teachers. The purpose of these schools was to inculcate belief.

With the rise of modernity and science in the West, however, educational thinkers began to argue that religion should be excluded from government education in favor of science and reason. Max Weber and John Dewey are two of the most famous proponents of this secularization of education. Weber discusses his ideas about religion and science in a speech, "Science as a Vocation," that he gave at Munich University in 1918. In it he addresses fundamental differences between science and religion. Weber suggests that the nature of religious knowledge prevents us from examining it scientifically; it is considered a gift or revelation. Science, on the other hand, is a vocation which searches for knowledge of facts.

Science today is a 'vocation' organized in special disciplines in the service of self-clarification and knowledge of interrelated facts. It is not the gift of grace of seers and prophets dispensing sacred values and revelations, nor does it partake of the contemplation of sages and philosophers about the meaning of the universe. This, to be sure, is the inescapable condition of our historical situation.

No science is absolutely free from presuppositions, and no science can prove its fundamental value to the man who rejects these presuppositions. Every theology; however, adds a few specific presuppositions for its work and thus for the justification of its existence. As a rule, theologies, however, do not content themselves with this (essentially religious and philosophical) presupposition. They regularly proceed from the further presupposition that certain 'revelations' are facts relevant for salvation and as such make possible a meaningful conduct of life. Hence, these revelations must be believed in. For theology, these presuppositions as such lie beyond the limits of 'science.' They do not represent 'knowledge,' in the usual sense, but rather a 'possession.' Whoever does not

'possess' faith, or the other holy states, cannot have theology as a substitute for them, least of all any other science (Gerth & Mills, 1946).

Likewise John Dewey, widely regarded as the most important American philosopher of the first half of the 20th century, argued against teaching religion in public schools. He raised two main objections to the practice. First, Dewey (1908) argued that America's separation of church and state was a response to religious diversity and the existence of various denominations in the US. He expressed concern that "if any connection of state and church were permitted, some rival denomination would get an unfair advantage (p.800)". But the U.S., he argued, "was born under conditions which enabled it to share in and to appropriate the idea that the state life, the vitality of the social whole, is of more importance than the flourishing of any segment or class" (1908 p.800). Thus preference of one belief over another was contradictory to democratic values.

For Dewey, who deeply influenced educational thought in 20th century America (Westbrook 1991), it is not proper and pleasant to request regular teachers to teach religious subjects. Dewey (1908) further opposes an alternative plan, which was common at the time, of sending students to religious teachers based on their denominations. He underlines the benefits of separation of church and state in the education system because it promotes social unity.

Our schools, in bringing together those of different nationalities, languages, traditions, and creeds, in assimilating them together upon the basis of what is common and public in endeavor and achievement, are performing an infinitely significant religious work. They are promoting the social unity out of which in the end genuine religious unity must grow. Shall we interfere with this work? Shall we run the risk of undoing it by introducing into education a subject which can be taught only by segregating pupils and turning them over at special hours to separate representatives of rival faiths? This would be deliberately to

adopt a scheme which is predicated upon the maintenance of social divisions in just the matter, religion, which is empty and futile save as it expresses the basic unities of life (Dewey, 1908, p.807).

On the other hand, there have long been and are other groups of scholars who are in favor of including religious knowledge in public schools. For instance, Nord & Haynes (1998) argue that public schools should teach about religion. They analyze reasons for the absence of religion from the curriculum and provide their counter-argument for them. According to Nord & Haynes (1998), some educators promote excluding religion from the curriculum because they argue that “the constitutional separation of church and state means that the curriculum cannot include religion” (p.5). Although Nord & Haynes (1998) agree that the practice of religion and the indoctrination of students in public schools is unconstitutional, they argue that teaching about religion is not against the constitution if that process is done appropriately. They assert that “No Supreme Court justice has ever held that students can't study the Bible or be taught about religion. Of course, what it means to teach about religion properly is not always clear or uncontroversial” (p.6)

Moreover, there are many educators and textbook publishers who make the assumption that religion's existence in the curriculum is controversial, so they should avoid it. However, Nord & Haynes (1998) suggest that even if including religion in the curriculum is controversial, excluding it is controversial too. If the main concern is to not have controversial topics in the curriculum, then it should not include other controversial topics such as “sex education, multiculturalism, feminism, and evolution” (p.6).

Nel Noddings is another important contemporary philosopher of education who is in favor of teaching about religion in public schools. She argues that discussions about religious,

metaphysical, and existential problems should be as easy as the discussions about math or literature (Noddings, 1993). Furthermore, Noddings (1993) suggests that many people are born into religious communities which offer explanations of their existence in ways that define and organize all their experiences and realities. According to Noddings, this leads to different ways of perceiving realities, which are worthy of respect and understanding in the same way that we respect differences of race, ethnicity, gender and so on. Teaching about religion and its complex nature can, therefore, open many doors to different perspectives, which enable students to have a direct experience with them in order to deal with the complexity of the world around them (Milligan, 2002).

But the question of religion in the curriculum is not the only or most controversial issue when it comes to working out the most appropriate role of religion in government education. There are important questions about the right of access to religious education and who finances it. Walter Feinberg (2003), for instance, suggests that religious people should have the right to have religious schools and teach their beliefs to their children. However, many secular states do not support such schools in the belief that their only responsibility is to provide a secure environment for religious people to express themselves and teach others, but Feinberg (2003) argues that it is not undemocratic to request public support for religious education. “A number of liberal democratic states do support religious schools without seeming to compromise their liberal democratic character” (p.410). On the other hand, Feinberg (2003) points out the logical result of receiving state support for religious education, which is the state’s monitoring of them and inevitable curtailment of their freedom.

At this point, we need to remain open as to whether support for religious schools is a good idea in any particular situation. However, we can conclude that religious schools do

not have a right to such support but that, if it is granted, voluntary public monitoring should be a critical component of any such support (Feinberg, 2003, p.410).

Robert Kunzman (2015) also argues that there are several problems caused by the failure to address religion by teachers in educational institutions: It may give the impression to students that religion is a scary topic so they should stay away. Moreover, it may prevent students from expressing their religious motivations. It also removes the opportunity of sharing the different understandings of other students.

There are many reasons not to avoid putting religion squarely on the table. Teachers' failure to address religion in the classroom may teach students that religion is indeed a scary topic that should not be discussed. Teachers who avoid religion fail to provide students opportunities to reflect on how their religious understandings inform their thinking, and they give them little chance to learn how to engage respectfully with those whose understandings are different than their own. And so why are we surprised when at the slightest mention of a "hot topic," chaos ensues? Without opportunities to learn democratic living, students have few tools with which to navigate encounters with difference. Because religion constitutes one of the great points of division among people throughout time, it poses perhaps the greatest challenge to a people committed to democratic living. Avoiding it as a topic in schools is detrimental to society as a whole (Kunzman, 2015, p.93).

Jeffrey Ayala Milligan (2002) argues that the “social conflict over the relationship between religious belief and public education” is a threat to Dewey’s conception of the school as the nursery of democracy. He agrees with the proposition that students should learn about religion and religious differences as one important aspect of the diversity characterizing U.S.

society; however, that diversity, and the consequent heterogeneity of public schools, means that the role of the teacher in such settings must be reconceived. He offers a new conception of that role which he calls the “prophetic pragmatic teacher”. This conception of the teacher’s role, according to Milligan (2002), would “affirm diversity as one way of avoiding the indoctrination problem.” More importantly, it should enable actual teachers to understand and negotiate that diversity rather than construct some "unifying" conceptual superstructure designed to contain it.” (p.25) In order to overcome this conflict and provide a more inclusive plan of action, Milligan (2002), offers this re-conception of the teacher’s role as one element in the renegotiation of the relationship between religion and public education.

I have proposed that, in order to mitigate that conflict and respond to Dewey's call for more inclusive plans of operation, we begin to renegotiate the relationship between religion and public education by re-thinking the concept teacher in a way that is more sensitive to religious points of view without surrendering the Deweyan ideal of democratic education. I have suggested that Cornel West's prophetic pragmatism offers the most useful philosophical framework for this new concept, which I have named the prophetic pragmatist (Milligan, 2002, p. 27).

This brief review of only a fraction of the literature dealing with the appropriate place of religion in modern U.S. education, though not exhaustive, is nonetheless illustrative of an evolving philosophical debate over “what the known demands of us,” which is, according to Dewey (1916), the primary purpose of philosophy. There is no settled, final answer to the question. The question must be continually re-examined in the light of ever evolving social circumstances. In fact, final solutions to such controversies are to be feared as impediments to change in the light of changing social conditions.

1.2 Religion and Education in the Muslim World

In the Muslim world, the dominant assumption about the role of religion in education has long been that religion is the point of education. However, there is an equally long tradition in the Muslim world that although religion is the point of education, Islamic values do not prohibit welcoming what knowledge others provide about the world and human life. Thus these two traditional aspects of Islamic intellectual history raise the same question that has vexed Western educational thought: How best to harmonize sacred knowledge and secular in government education? Advocates of modernity and modernization argue for greater inclusion of secular subjects or even purely secular education. Others argue that inculcation of religious faith should remain the central purpose of education in Muslim societies. Consequently, current philosophers of education in the Muslim world are challenged to find a Deweyan “more inclusive plan of operations” that might reconcile the two positions.

The long and distinguished tradition of Islamic intellectual discourse includes a rich vein of educational thought. Abu Nasr al-Farabi (870-950), for instance—also known as Alfarabius or Avennasar—is one of the most well-known Turkish philosophers and probably the first famous logician among Muslim scholars (Dhanani, 2007). He has been referred to as the second teacher after Aristotle (Günter, 2006). In al-Farabi’s view, the goal of education is to lead the individual to perfection. He was among the first Islamic scholars who were supporting an integrated curriculum of “foreign” and “religious” sciences for higher learning and perfection (Günter, 2006). Al-Farabi proposed a curriculum of “sciences:” science of language, logic, mathematics, natural science, theology, political science, jurisprudence (fiqh) and academic theology (kalam) (Rauf et al., 2013).

Ibn Sina, (980-1037), also known as Avicenna, also thought that the goal of teaching and learning was to imbue the soul of a person with deep faith. He imagined a world rising on two pillars: Greek philosophy and Qur'anic revelation. In his curriculum, priority should be given to teaching the Qur'an and poetry because, while the Qur'an gives a person all the eloquence and explanation of the things they need to have at every stage age of life and develops the pupil's mental ability, poetry helps pupils to speak correctly with proper diction. Moreover, Ibn Sina supported the idea that recitation of poetry makes learning interesting and enjoyable for young pupils (Günter, 2006). On the other hand, Ibn Sina also believed teachers should have certain characteristics in order to realize the primary moral aim of education. "The teacher ought to be religious, honest, wise, fair, clean and dignified, know how to socialize and be familiar with children's training and educational methods and their moral edification" (Ibn Sina, 1985).

In the late 19th and early 20th century, provoked by the colonization of much of the Muslim world by the West, more and more Muslim scholars pointed to the lack of 'foreign' sciences such as medicine, astronomy, physics, and chemistry. in schools as an explanation of and antidote to the relative backwardness and weakness of much of the Muslim world in the face of Western imperialism (Kadı, 2006). Said Nursi (1877-1960) was one of these well-known Islamic scholars confronting this issue during the last decades of the Ottoman Empire. He supported the existence of Western education in madrasahs in order to resolve backwardness and corruption within the Empire. Nursi was a firm believer in science and modernization, but in the light of the Qur'an. His basic idea was that the combination of religious and modern sciences would result in strengthening the truth of religion. Nursi (2007) argues that

The light of conscience is religious sciences (ulumu-diniya). The light of mind is modern science (funun-u-medeniya). Reconciliation of both manifests the truth. The students'

skills develop further with these two sciences (ulum-u-diniya and funun-u-medenye), but when they are separated, superstition from the former and corruption and skepticism from the latter, are born (p. 507).

More recently, the contemporary Muslim scholar, Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas (1978), argues that the goal of education is to raise good people with universal values. So, it should infuse pupils with good behavior and a sense of justice. Contemporary Muslim education systems have focused on specialized and skilled workers rather than morally developed people. This resulted in ignorance of the knowledge which every Muslim has to learn, the main point of which is the concept of God. Therefore, the main goal of Islamic education is to recognize the purpose of human creation and the realization of his/her disposition so that people organize their life with knowledge, wisdom, justice, courage, and moderate behaviors. This makes them God's servant and representative in the world. Thus, an Islamic education benefits a person in order to recognize her body and spirit and God in their true sense. This recognition and consciousness is naturally the foundation of all religious and moral values (Al-Attas, 1978).

In addition, al-Attas (1978) suggests that Islamic education can be defined as acquiring manners ('adab). Education should be designed in order to acquire manners from elementary school to higher education. Contemporary moral erosion can be countered through Islamic education. The curriculum should reflect both the physical and spiritual side of human being. Natural sciences, which inquire into physical side of human being, is a necessity for some of people. However, an education which feeds the spiritual-moral side of human being is necessary for every single person. In other words, we can survive if only some people study natural sciences; however, without spiritual-moral development societies are in danger. Thus al-Attas (1991) argues that Islamic learning should be the primary focus of education from K-12 to higher

education and that all non-religious subjects should be “Islamicized” rather than being taught in the forms in which they have been inherited from the secular West.

Several Western scholars have studied empirically various efforts to integrate religious and secular learning as envisioned by al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, Nursi, and al-Attas in different Muslim societies. Helen Boyle (2004), for instance, has studied Yemeni, Moroccan and Nigerian education, particularly Qur’anic schools. Her research highlights key characteristics of education, such as a common focus on appropriate behavior, in selected Muslim countries. Boyle (2004) suggests that Qur’anic schools, which mainly focused on manners (‘adab), help Yemeni, Moroccan, and Nigerian Muslim societies to continue their authentic educational tradition.

However, preservation of tradition is not their only function. These schools successfully “embraced ‘modern’ educational trends, largely coming out of Western educational research. In Morocco, for instance, it has become increasingly popular as a preschool institution, transmitting traditional knowledge, but also preparing children for primary school” (p.138). Boyle (2004) further suggests that Qur’anic schools show strong signs of their capacity to adapt to times and conditions while they keep their traditional identity. “The fact that they have been able to blend the new and the old so well reflects a talent for reconciling tradition and modernity in ways that resonate in Islamic communities of practice as authentic and meaningful.” (p.138).

Jeffrey Ayala Milligan’s (2006) studies of the education of the Muslim minority in the southern Philippines highlights the ways in which education can be used to both marginalize and uplift the religious identity of students depending upon how it harmonizes the relation of religious and secular knowledge in schools. For much of modern Philippine history, he argues, educational policy was deployed as a tool to promote Muslim Filipinos’ integration and obedience into a Philippine nation-state administered by Christian Filipino elites (Milligan

2006). Successive governments concentrated to spread public education with a uniform, state-mandated curriculum intended to bring all the different kinds of religious and ethnic groups into a standardized monotype of national identity. However, that policy has not worked as expected. Rather, it enhanced the dichotomization of Muslim-Christian relations in the country and thus perpetuated a parallel system of Islamic education which was out of governmental control since Muslim Filipinos had a deep suspicion of government education as an effort to Christianize them. Because of that suspicion, many Muslim parents did not send their children to government schools (Osias, as cited in Milligan, 2006).

The century-long effort of colonial and postcolonial governments to assimilate Filipino Muslims into the mainstream of Philippine society—on terms defined by the Christian majority—has not worked. Muslim Filipinos have fought, literally and figuratively, to sustain and enhance their identity as Muslims. There is no reason to believe that that will change any time soon. Moderate Islamization, such as that envisioned in PME and the concept of the integrated madrasa, may succeed in convincing more Muslim Filipinos that... “This is their government” and that “it is going to preserve and defend our culture and faith.” There are, to be sure, risks in the Islamization of education in Mindanao. However, to assume the inevitability of the dangers and minimize the possibility of success would mean prejudging the results of a policy experiment, the hypothesis of which is the idea that, in this context, lowering the wall between mosque and state may be more effective than raising it. (p.430).

More recently, Muslim Filipino educators and scholars have argued for an altogether different mix of religious and secular subjects in the curriculum of government schools serving the minority Muslim community. The “integration” of religious and secular subjects, they argue,

will be more be more respectful of the religious identity and educational aspirations of Muslim Filipinos and thus better promote their participation as equal citizens in the broader society (Milligan 2006).

Again, this cursory review of a few key figures of Islamic intellectual history as well as selected empirical studies of education in Muslim societies, while not intended to be exhaustive, nevertheless demonstrates that the question of the role of religion in modern education has been and has recently re-emerged as a topic of debate in Muslim intellectual and educational discourse. It sets, as Dewey (1938) says a challenge for anyone seeking an intelligent theory of education for Muslim societies.

All social movements involve conflicts, which are reflected intellectually in controversies. It would not be a sign of health if such an important social interest as education were not also an arena of struggles, practical and theoretical. But for theory, at least for the theory that forms a philosophy of education, the practical conflicts and the controversies that are conducted upon the level of these conflicts, only set a problem. It is the business of an intelligent theory of education to ascertain the causes for the conflicts that exist and then, instead of taking one side or the other, to indicate a plan of operations proceeding from a level deeper and more inclusive that is represented by the practices and ideas of the contending parties” (p. 5).

However, it is clear that there has been and cannot be any lasting, settled answer to this debate in either the Western or the Muslim world; rather, the issues must be continually re-examined in the light of the relevant conditions and aspirations of particular societies and particular moments in their historical development. It is the goal of this dissertation to contribute to the search for an intelligent theory of education for modern Turkey by exploring the ideas of

one deeply influential Turkish intellectual—Mehmet Akif Ersoy (1873-1936)—at a key moment in Turkish history—the transition from the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic. I do so in the belief that any useful contribution to a conversation must first take into account what has been said previously in the conversation. Thus my elucidation of Ersoy’s ideas on modern education and the role of religion in it is the first step in a longer effort to reconstruct and analyze philosophically the discourse on education and religion in the Turkish context and, in this way, make some small contribution to the articulation of a distinctly Turkish philosophy of education reflective of the unique mix of Islamic belief and secularism in Turkish society.

According to Dewey (1916), “philosophy asks what the known demands of us” (326). It is, therefore, grounded in and has strong ties with the sciences and social sciences—history, sociology, anthropology, etc.—that describe what is known about a community, but it’s function is both critical and normative: to analyze and criticize where a community falls short of its implicit ideals and to propose new ideals or courses of action that might guide its conduct. A philosophy of education is a road map from what is to what ought to be.

When considering Turkish educational experience, however, it is very hard to identify a philosophy of education grounded in Turkish historical, cultural, or educational experience. It is no surprise that the European-American tradition in philosophy of education does not explicitly address Turkey, but Turkish philosophers have not systematically addressed education either.

Throughout Turkey’s history (which is about 100 years as a new country), few, if any, scholars studied or published in philosophy of education. Turkish philosophers mainly specialized in ontology, ethics, political philosophy, theology, epistemology, philosophy of Islam, and philosophy of science. Moreover, the vast majority of this work in philosophy by Turkish scholars focuses on the European and American philosophical canon rather than

describing or developing distinctively Turkish philosophies grounded in Turkish culture and experience.

For example, Sisman (2007) examines many aspects of education including social, political, economic, historical foundations of education, and dedicates a chapter for philosophy of education. Discussions about foundations of philosophy of education include the following titles: “main studies in philosophy”, “idealist, realist, pragmatist, existentialist, and analytic philosophies; and their theories about education”, “pennalism, essentialism, progressivism, existentialism, and reconstructionism”, “education and ideology”. Although it provides many Western philosophical schools and movements, Sisman (2007) does not refer to Turkish philosophy of education.

Furthermore, Veysel Sonmez (2011) aims to provide resources for philosophers of education in Turkey. However, similar to Sisman (2007), Sonmez (2011) examines Western philosophies of education and their discussions. Moreover, “Philosophy of Education” of Ergün (2014) points similar problems, subjects, solutions with the other two scholars. He discusses the relationship between education and different social sciences. He further analyzes Western philosophy of education movements. Cevizci (2011) discusses goals of education by referring Western philosophers including Plato, Aristotle, Rousseau, Dewey. He also discusses about many different educational philosophies such as realism, pragmatism, naturalism, spiritualism, etc. Similar to the other scholars, he does not refer to Turkish history and experience. The most respected books in the field philosophy of education in Turkey are mainly providing Western philosophers and the questions, discussions, and solutions. However, they show lack of reference on Turkish philosophy of education.

Philosophy of education, educational research, in general any study and discipline which focus on the targets, problems, and solutions of educational issues in Turkey have been affected by this tendency. The Western view is so popular and dominant in philosophical and educational studies in Turkey that it might be possible to question whether there is such a thing as a Turkish philosophy of education based upon Turkish culture, reasoning, tradition, experience and characteristics. But surely such inquiries are more likely to offer coherent educational policies as well as more effective solutions to the many social, economic and educational problems that Turkey has faced over the decades.

Ataturk and his allies who founded the Republic of Turkey imposed a top down pro-Western approach. In doing so they expected to create a society resembling the West in its bureaucracy, military, education, as well as government. As a result, the Turkish constitution has many rules that are adapted from various European states. For instance, the Turkish educational system imposed an assertive secularism similar to that in vogue in some Western countries, particularly France. This strongly pro-Western approach and its popularity among the educated elite tended to discourage studies based upon Turkish history and experience.

Thus it is fair to say that, even one century after claiming its independence, there is still no explicit Turkish educational philosophy rooted in the history, culture and experience of the Turkish people. However, when we look at the existing literature in educational philosophy, we find little or nothing on a philosophy of education which reflects Turkish culture, history, and experience. Thus these resources provide little insight into Turkish ideals of the educated person. Rather, they commonly include Western experience and discussions of Western philosophers of education. Although these are great resources, they do not share cultural, historical and empirical ground with Turkey. Therefore, I propose to begin to address this lack of indigenous Turkish

educational philosophy by analyzing and articulating the educational thought of a key cultural figure of the late-Ottoman/early Republican period of Turkish history, Mehmet Akif Ersoy.

1.3 Selection of Poetry as a Source

The selection of a poet and his works as the subject of an educational inquiry might seem odd or even illegitimate in an age obsessed with a “science” of educational research (Lagemann 2000). But there is both historical and contemporary precedent for such an approach. The Republic of Plato (1974), for instance, is written in the form of a dialogue among fictional characters, and Rousseau’s Emile (1767) is a work of fiction. And Dewey wrote in 1925 in *Experience and Nature*

Philosophic discourse partakes both of scientific and literary discourse. Like literature, it is a comment on nature and life in the interest of a more intense and just appreciation of the meanings present in experience. Its business is reportorial and transcriptive only in the sense in which the drama and poetry have that office. Its primary concern is to clarify, liberate and extend the goods which inhere in the naturally generated functions of experience...Its business is to accept and to utilize for a purpose the best available knowledge of its own time and place. And this purpose is criticism of beliefs, institutions, customs, and policies with respect to their bearing on good (pp.407-408).

Moreover, there are several contemporary philosophers of education who have used literary sources for philosophical inquiry in education. Jane Roland Martin (1985), for instance, discusses the fact that, historically, both political theory and educational theory largely ignored women’s experience and education, noting that when women are ignored in educational inquiry the family is ignored as well. She describes the problem as follows:

The analogy between political theory and educational thought is striking. Despite the fact that the reproductive processes of society, broadly understood, are largely devoted to child rearing and include the transmission of skills, beliefs, feelings, emotions, values, and even world views, they are not considered to belong to the educational realm. Thus education, like politics, is defined in relation to the productive processes of society, and the status of women and the family is every bit as "a-educational" as it is apolitical. If conversation about women's education is to be incorporated in the history of educational thought, the definition of that discipline's subject matter must be expanded to include the processes of society with which women's lives have historically been intertwined. If the conversational circle is to be enlarged and the discussion enriched, the methods of this field will also have to become more inclusive (pp. 178-179)

Academic books and journals are the traditional, mainstream sources of material for research in educational theory. However, as Martin (1985) points out, the particular experience of women was largely ignored in these traditional sources until the latter half of the 20th century. That is why Martin suggests "we will have to look to sources of data that the history of educational thought regards as far from standard: to personal letters, diaries, pamphlets, newsletters, pieces of fiction, and to oral sources as well" (p. 180). According to Martin (1985), "historians of educational thought are accustomed to having their philosophers and their sources handed to them ready-made so that the investigator's task is the relatively straightforward one of interpretation and evaluation" (p. 180). This approach results in the assumption that some resources are illegitimate as sources for educational research:

The general expectation that any educational theory worth recording is readily accessible in books or academic journals becomes unreasonable when the objects or the subjects of

educational thought are considered marginal. Marginal people do not normally have access to established channels of communication, and those channels rarely give equal time to topics concerning marginal people (p. 180).

With this justification, Martin turns to the work of women more commonly seen as literary figures rather than philosophers of education such as Mary Wollstonecraft.

Wollstonecraft (1792) argues that women's minds are not healthy because of variety of causes such as lack of education, expectations from them, etc. According to Wollstonecraft, women are;

...like the flowers that are planted in too rich a soil, strength and usefulness are sacrificed to beauty; and the flaunting leaves, after having pleased a fastidious eye, fade, disregarded on the stalk, long before the season when they ought to have arrived at maturity. One cause of this barren blooming I attribute to a false system of education, gathered from the books written on this subject by men, who, considering females rather as women than human creatures, have been more anxious to make them alluring mistresses than rational wives; and the understanding of the sex has been so bubbled by this specious homage, that the civilized women of the present century, with a few exceptions, are only anxious to inspire love, when they ought to cherish a nobler ambition, and by their abilities and virtues exact respect (p.6).

Wollstonecraft further criticizes the approach which offers women a role, rearing of children. She said that,

As the rearing of children, that is, the laying a foundation of sound health both of body and mind in the rising generation, has justly been insisted on as the peculiar destination of woman, the ignorance that incapacitates them must be contrary to the order of things.

And I contend, that their minds can take in much more, and ought to do so, or they will never become sensible mothers. (p.201).

Similarly, Milligan (2002) analyzes the place of religion in public education in search of a conception of the role of the teacher that might bridge the gap between the religious faith of many students and staff and the official secularism of public education in the U.S. Given the widespread assumption that religion has no place in secular education, it is unsurprising that the vast majority of the literature on the topic takes partisan pro-religious or pro-secular perspectives. Therefore, he, too, turns to literature, Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, to flesh out three conceptions of the role of teacher—as prophet, as technician and as pragmatist—which do not offer a suitable conceptual framework for an understanding of the teacher which might resolve some of the tension between religious faith and public education.” (p. 88).

Milligan (2002) further suggests that,

much of the traditional canon of educational discourse either ignores or is tainted by the racism and sexism which prophetic pragmatism aims to resist as well as by the widely-held assumption that religious faith has no legitimate formal place in public education. In the creation of a work of literary art which portrays educational figures and which educates in itself, the author is often engaged in the realistic reproduction of actually existing teachers or, more significantly, in the creative re-imagining of what it might mean to be an ideal or a terrible teacher. Thus, the author's characterization of teaching figures may be read as a thought experiment which articulates what the teacher ought and ought not to be. Though, perhaps, not a traditional or common approach to educational inquiry, the use of literary sources is nevertheless well established in the philosophy of education... Fiction has long been a mode of expressing educational ideas and should,

therefore, be a legitimate source for philosophical inquiry on education. Moreover, the use of literary sources is consistent with pragmatism's assertion of the social and historical contingency of knowledge claims: both fiction and knowledge are constructed (p. 90).

Martin's inquiry about women's education and Milligan's search for a conception of the role of the teacher that might mitigate the tense relationship between religion and public education have several similarities: They both face the relative silences of traditional philosophical sources on their topics of study, and their selection of non-philosophic resources open new ways for researchers to be able to apply any justifiable resources in similar cases. Therefore, this study of the educational thought of the Turkish poet, Mehmet Akif Ersoy, will be conducted along lines established by Martin (1985) and Milligan (2002). Similar to Martin and Milligan, I justify my selection of poetry as a source of philosophical inquiry because of the lack of resources in educational inquiries which describe a distinctively Turkish philosophy of education and because no research has been done about the educational philosophy implicit in Ersoy's poetry.

Therefore, this is what I propose to do in this dissertation: examine how this controversy over the role of religion in education was addressed by one of the leading Turkish cultural figures of the Ottoman-Republic transition: Mehmet Akif Ersoy. His life spans this transition from the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic. Moreover, he was a poet and a public intellectual of considerable renown and influence in that particular time.

There is a significant body of literature in Turkish scholarship that examines Ersoy as a historical figure and examines him as one of the preeminent cultural figures and poets of this period of Turkish history. However, one aspect of Ersoy's thought that has not been examined

carefully are his ideas on education. Ersoy did not write what we might recognize today or even historically as an explicit philosophy of education. He is, nonetheless, in his poetry, imagining an ideal generation and an ideal Turk, and in so doing, he is implicitly articulating educational ideals and a philosophy of education intended to realize those ideals.

But he has not been studied as an educational thinker. Moreover, Turkish philosophy in this period and the contemporary period has been very much Western-oriented. Turkish philosophical discourse is focused on the study of the Western philosophical tradition and commentary analyses. Therefore, this is something that has not been studied. I propose in this dissertation to analyze the work of Ersoy in the historical and cultural context of his time and to render more explicitly his articulation of educational ideals for a Turkey that is at the same time modern and on the other hand Muslim. My dissertation will, therefore, be a contribution to the history of Turkish intellectual thought in this important period of Turkish history. While the examination of poetry or non-philosophical, non-empirical literature for ideas about education is not typical it is not unprecedented as a number of contemporary philosophers of education have done works along this line.

Understanding Mehmet Akif Ersoy requires an introduction of the time in which he lived. His life spanned a tumultuous time in Turkey from the downfall of the Ottoman Empire to the foundation of the Turkish Republic. He witnessed the years of war and the most difficult periods of the country's history: defeat in World War I, the downfall of the Ottoman Empire, the Turkish Republic's Independence War, and many revolts against the new state. This time between the death of one civilization and the arrival of a new civilization struggling to be born clearly contributed to the social criticism and normative ideals so evident in his poetry.

Ersoy was born in 1873 in the Fatih district of Istanbul where he stayed for his entire education from elementary school to college. His father passed away while Ersoy was in high school, so Ersoy went to the school of veterinary medicine to enhance his job prospects after graduation. He was eventually successful in completing his education, acquiring fluency in Arabic, Farsi and French while also developing a strong interest in sports such as throwing, wrestling, running and swimming.

Following his graduation from veterinary school and employment as a civil servant, he travelled widely within Turkey, the Middle East and beyond, visiting Greece, Albania, Syria, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and Egypt as well as Germany to closely observe the problems of people in those societies. Knowing the French language well allowed him to follow developments in the West closely. Yet his loyalty to his own cultural values enabled him to avoid the alienation from Turkish culture so common among other Turkish intellectuals of the time. This knowledge of both the East and the West gave Ersoy a breadth of perspective that was well-suited to thinking through the problems of an emerging Turkish identity grounded in its past but at home in the modern world (Ersoy, 2013; Düzdağ, 1996; Çantay, 1966).

Ersoy was an effective speaker who encouraged people to be hopeful about the future of the country and criticized the damage that ignorance could do in society. He believed that Turkish society was moving away from thinking and argued education reform was an important starting point for development. The proper education of a new generation in science, history and the arts was, he believed, the key to the development of the Turkish republic.

Although Ersoy formally studied veterinary medicine and worked as a civil servant, he never lost his interest in literature. By the age of 20 he was already publishing poetry and essays in Turkish newspapers. His major published works include patriotic sermons exhorting the

defense of the country during the Turkish war of independence (*On Kastamonu Dais*, 1921) as well as the Turkish National Anthem (1924) and works of social criticism such as *Safahat* (1911), a collection of poem-like stories attacking social corruption, *On Suleymaniye Dais* (1912), a book-length poem on the misery of the Islamic world, and *Hakk'ın Sesleri* (1913), an interpretation of Quranic verses and hadith critical of ignorance, laziness and misguided interpretations of the trust of God, and *On Fatih Dais* (1914), which addresses the ignorance and backwardness caused by fatalistic beliefs.

Of most importance to the research proposed here, however, is Ersoy's *Asım* (1924). Reminiscent of Rousseau's *Emile*, *Asım* articulates Ersoy's conceptualization of the ideal of the educated person—and by extension ideal generation—in the fictional character of *Asım*. Written as a dialogue among four fictional characters—Hodjazade, Kose Imam, *Asım*, and Emin—the work continues the social critique of his previous works while articulating a social ideal to which Turkish youth should aspire.

Ersoy was critical of traditional educational practices, such as beating students, a practice that produced, he believed, timid and pessimistic generations who could not benefit society. He criticized social illnesses such as laziness, despair, immorality, corruption, lack of care, and deterioration of religious understanding. He was convinced that all these social illnesses could be cured by education. So, in order to raise awareness of these issues in society, he travelled around the cities propagating his ideas through public sermons.

For Ersoy, education takes place not only at school but everywhere. Education starts in the family, goes on in school, but continues after school as well. He stated that the child's education should start from the family before the school; therefore, he focused on the education of families in his many writings and conferences to train the new generation. Ersoy was among

the first intellectuals to promote values education in Turkish schools, and he made numerous attempts to persuade parents to allow their daughters to go to school. He wanted the educated young people to be faithful, decent, conscientious, and experts in their fields of study.

Ersoy's conception of an ideal generation—hardworking, well-trained, embracing both the past and the future, caring for their own health, equipped with religious knowledge, decent, honest hopeful, and courageous—is developed most explicitly in *Asım*. But in focusing on the ideal generation, he did not neglect the importance of teachers. In fact, Ersoy believed that Turkish civilization could not thrive without well-trained, qualified teachers. Without them, teachers would be nothing but a burden for the state and society. Therefore, he advocated for increasing the numbers of teachers as well as their training.

Ersoy was a veterinarian, a national poet, a writer, a deputy, a teacher, a preacher, a hafiz, and a translator. Ersoy is very important for Turkey and the Turkish people. He is one of the most respected scholars in Turkey, and different Turkish governments have honored him by giving his name to a university, which opened in city of Burdur, while Ersoy was representing in Turkey's founding assembly. Subsequent Turkish governments gave his name to thousands of elementary and secondary schools, street and street names.

Ersoy is widely studied as a poet. However, he articulated an educational vision in his work which hasn't been studied. I will analyze his life and work and try to articulate his philosophy of education. In doing so, I aim to contribute to our understanding of the intellectual history of this period, especially its handling of this relationship between Islam and modernity.

1.4 Method

The primary approach of this study to articulating a comprehensive account of Ersoy's educational philosophy will be hermeneutical. The root of the term hermeneutical comes from

the name Hermes, which refers to the mythological Greek figure who carries the messages of gods to people and interprets them because humankind cannot understand the message directly. (Kavlak, 2014). The word, “hermeneutics,” names the art of interpretation and understanding. In the beginning it was most widely used as a technique for the interpretation of religious texts, but it has been developed since by some modern philosophers such as Wilhelm Dilthey, Hans Georg Gadamer, Friedrich Schlegel, Martin Heidegger, and Paul Ricoeur as a method of interpretation applicable to a variety of texts, thus the hermeneutical approach helps to better understand and analyze literary works, artworks, interviews, and theories (Kavlak, 2014).

As long as humankind is present in the universe, the languages, and the rules of grammars will change and new generations will have some difficulties in figuring out what they mean. Hermeneutics helps people from two different worlds or ages communicate with each other. It also helps in figuring out the meaning of words and symbols that vary according to the time, place and situation in which they are used. In fact, a text can include clues to meanings that are not even recognized by their authors or poets (Kavlak, 2014). Thus, there will always be a need for a method of interpretation called “hermeneutics”.

When people directly communicate with each other, there is less of a problem in conveying the message to each other because it is possible to correct the misunderstanding from the first step. Moreover, because people use body language as they communicate face to face, the responsibility of the grammar of the language becomes secondary (Kavlak, 2014). However, we may make many mistakes in our interpretation of texts—written speech—when the conversation partner is not physically present to supplement their communication through body language or correct misunderstanding with more information. In such cases, we must understand the text in its historical, geographical, political, philosophical, and cultural context. As Kavlak (2014)

states, “in the dessert the sun is unfavorable term, when we approach the poles, it becomes a favorable term. Thus there is a need for a technique to determine the meaning of words and texts that cannot be clarified through ongoing communications with their author (p.1325)”.

Many researchers have argued whether or not the interpreter could understand the text as well as or better than the author. Thoughts go beyond the languages. If the language is strong, it may more closely approach the meaning intended, but it can never reach precisely whatever the author meant. Thus, depending on the reader’s understanding and skill, the reader may approach the meaning that the writer intends, but he can never understand it in precisely the same fashion. His goal is to come as close to the author’s meaning as is possible. This requires not only an understanding of the conventional meaning of words, but an understanding of the historical context, the writer’s psychology, feelings, life conditions, etc. that help shape the meaning of his or her words. Thus Kasapoglu (1992) argues that interpretation requires an understanding of textual and extra-textual context order to evaluate a text in its entirety. The socio-economic situation and social and cultural structure of the period of the text should be investigated.

Poetry is often studied strictly for the rhythm, structure, sound, and mood. that constitute it as a work of art; however, poetry, like Ersoy’s, clearly written for aesthetic and political effect cannot be effective when it is interpreted without considering the poem’s time. Hermeneutics lends itself to this contextual understanding. It also requires the interpreter to consider multiple interpretations that the author may imply in the poem. The words Ersoy prefers in his poems are commonly symbolic and can carry more than one meaning, so it is not surprising that Ersoy’s poems are interpreted in many different ways by different interpreters.

Although Ersoy’s poems are interpreted in different ways, they have maintained their position and influence on many Turkish scholars attempting to imagine a generation which

welcomes modernity and Western values while blending them with Islamic values. The urgency of Asım sometimes diminished when times were stable, but in times of instability and crisis its urgency increases. People who were influenced by Ersoy waited for Asım’s generation from one generation to another. With this study I will attempt to discern what generations of readers of Ersoy’s poetry have found compelling about Asım’s generation and articulate it, to the extent possible, into a coherent philosophy of education.

In this study, a comprehensive account of Ersoy’s educational philosophy will be offered. First, the Ottoman education system will be examined in order to provide a tool to understand Ersoy’s understanding of education. Then Ersoy’s poems and other writings that convey his thoughts on education and society will be collected and analyzed. Passages in his published writings that illuminate Ersoy’s thinking on the topics identified in my research questions will be identified and their implicit and/or explicit conceptualization in Ersoy’s work will be teased out. This study will proceed by attempting to identify clear cases, negative cases, and marginal cases of concepts such as the educated person, “Asım's Generation,” moral, knowing, etc., comparing and contrasting these clear, negative and marginal cases in order to clarify their intended content and structure. The research will also check these interpretations against other passages in his work and then attempt to understand how they relate to one another and constitute an implicit philosophy of education.

1.5 Research Questions

This study will be guided by the following questions:

1. What are the core/critical concepts of Mehmet Akif Ersoy’s thoughts on education and how do they relate to one another? How does Ersoy conceive of the relationship

between moral values—particularly Islamic moral values—and knowing as understood in modern science?

2. What does Ersoy’s conception of the “Asım’s Generation” reveal about his ideal of the educated person?

1.6 Significance

Ersoy is a multitalented historical figure recognized and respected by many Turkish scholars. His patriotic poems and sermons unified Turkish society and Muslims around the world during the late Ottoman era and early Republic of Turkey. Up until today, Ersoy’s poems are analyzed and studied by many scholars, but these studies are mainly focused on Ersoy’s character as writer and poet. His works are mostly studied in the field of Turkish literature. There are around thirty dissertations in Turkish Higher Education Council’s database about Ersoy. According to Candeger (2015), there are thirty-three master’s thesis and dissertations about Mehmet Akif Ersoy finished in Turkey. The majority of them are prepared by students in Turkish Language and Literature studies and Theology departments. His life and personality is a topic of study in public and private schools. However, his thoughts on education have not received enough attention.

These studies have not focused on how Ersoy’s saw the problems of Muslim world vis a vis education and how he idealized educated Turkish youth in his works. The significance of this proposed study comes from the uniqueness and influences of Ersoy’s educational philosophy as it synthesizes Eastern values and Western science into education. Additionally, Ersoy’s understanding of education includes goals for establishing strong solutions for social problems and backwardness of Muslim societies, especially the Turkish people. In other words, while much has been written on Ersoy and his poems, and some has been written about his influences

on the contemporary Turkish state and the social religious movements, there has been no analysis of his educational philosophy.

The analysis of Mehmet Akif Ersoy's educational philosophy may also offer insight into the contemporary problems of Muslim societies as well as the tension between modernity and Islam and the role of education to reduce this tension. Ersoy's philosophy of education may offer useful strategies for mitigating tensions between Islam and modernity and the Muslim world and the West. Thus, the elucidation of his educational thought proposed here is warranted and significant.

CHAPTER 2

FROM RELIGIOUS EMPIRE TO SECULAR REPUBLIC: THE CHANGING EDUCATIONAL LANDSCAPE OF MEHMET AKIF ERSOY

This chapter analyzes the historical context in which Mehmet Akif Ersoy's thoughts develop. The 19th and 20th century transition from what had been a multi-ethnic religious empire into a secular republic and nation state brought about profound changes in Turkish education. The old decentralized tradition of the madrasah with its focus on the acquisition of religious knowledge was evolving into a highly secularized, bureaucratized, functionalist approach to education. For centuries, the long tradition of Islamic education was shaped by the particular aleem (religious scholar, mudarris) a student was studying with, so the curriculum differed according to the particular madrasah he was studying at. There was no common consensus about curriculum, subjects, or methods. A structured system did not exist in this type of education. Students were more like apprentices to the scholars with whom they studied. What emerged in the republic, however, was something more like a modern bureaucratic education system with specific levels, a common curriculum, and particular goals meant to serve the needs of the state. This was a radical transformation. In this space between an old system which was breaking up and a new system coming into existence there was a ferment of ideas about what the new system should be. This was the context in which Ersoy was writing.

2.1 The Islamic Educational Tradition

During the early centuries of Islamic societies, mosques, masjids, schools or specialized schools called "kuttap," ulama houses and libraries were the main education facilities. The purpose of education in general was to acquire religious knowledge. So, the religious places were the most common locations for education. This education was very much dependent on the

particular scholar that led a school, the particular intellectual tradition of which he was a part, and the particular school of Islamic jurisprudence that he came from. The student was very much an intellectual apprentice to this master scholar. Furthermore, there was no centralized authority system to enforce a common curriculum, instructional methods, or subject matter in Islamic education. Therefore, graduation from a madrasah did not provide the same opportunities for all the graduates. The particular scholar and madrasah a student was educated by affected the opportunities graduation provided to a student (Baltacı, 1976).

With the increase of the Muslim population, these traditional arrangements proved increasingly insufficient, so Muslims founded new, independent educational institutions (Yıldız, 2007). These institutions were called “madrasah.” The word “madrasah” comes from the Arabic and means “the place of classes” (Baltacı, 1976). Founded first in the states of Karakhanids and Ghaznevids, they soon expanded throughout the Muslim world, where they served both religious as well as political purposes. For instance, the Seljukian and Ottoman madrasahs were founded in order to raise Sunni scholars and increase the number of them to fight against Shia denominations’ expansion in the Islamic world.

The Nizamulmulk madrasah, founded by Seljukian vizier Nizamulmulk, became a pioneer of all madrasah established in the Islamic world. In Anatolia, the number of the madrasahs was approximately equal to the number of mosques in the second half of the twelfth and thirteenth century. This number reached into the thousands according to the records of institutions funding the madrasah. For example, there were more than sixty madrasah in Damascus alone. Foundations were developed to fund all the education expenses of the students studying at the madrasahs so the education was largely “free” (Uzuncarsili, 1998; Yılmaz, 2016).

2.2 Classical Ottoman Education to the Early 19th Century

The model of Ottoman education inherited from the Seljukian education system represented an essentially continuous educational heritage between these two empires. Similar to the Seljukians, the Ottomans founded educational institutions in order to provide religious knowledge to students. However, the Ottoman madrasahs served the Empire's need for bureaucrats such as governors, judges, army generals, viziers, etc. as well.

To better understand the classical Ottoman education system, it is important to understand the different types of educational institutions that developed in this period as well as their organizational structure. The most important of these were the Sibyan schools, the Enderun schools, and the madrasahs (Cihan, 2007). Sibyan schools, which were roughly equivalent to the modern first through sixth grades, were the first step on the education ladder. These schools were first founded during the Karakhanids and Seljukians and existed in the Ottoman Empire until they were closed by the Republic of Turkey in 1924. There were also Enderun Schools, founded by the Ottomans in the 15th century to fulfill the empire's needs for government bureaucrats at different levels as well as the madrasahs, an inheritance from the predecessors of the Ottomans. The main difference between madrasah and Enderun schools was that Enderun schools were the Ottoman's project to educate talented non-Muslim as well as Muslim students.

2.2.1 Sibyan Schools

Sibyan schools were traditional religious educational institutions that offered children as young as five or six years old, including girls, a four-year course of study in which they learned to read the Quran, to write, calligraphy, Turkish moral values and to acquire knowledge of the fundamentals of the faith (Kodaman 1991). Acquiring good behavior and moral values were the major purposes of these schools (Gelişli, 2002; Yıldız, 2007). In Sibyan schools, the education

was based on memorization and instruction was typically one-on-one. A kind of ceremony called an “Amen Parade” was organized to honor children as they started their education at Sibyan schools (Gelişli, 2002). Although these ceremonies varied according to the families’ wealth, they were very important events for the children’s’ school lives (Bozdemir, 1991).

Sibyan school teachers were madrasah graduates, or had at least started the madrasah course of study, and much of the time worked as imam or muezzin at mosques. The teachers were hired carefully as they were also charged with teaching the female students in these schools (Baltaci, 1976, 27). Sibyan school staff also included other officers, called “khalifa,” who helped teachers as assistant teachers who could teach when needed. The expenses of the Sibyan schools were provided by local charities and the public (Gunyol, 1972). Most of the time, the salaries of the teachers were provided from these contributions (Akyuz, 1999).

With funding from both the public and the state, these schools expanded to almost all villages and counties. According to Bozdemir (1991), the French voyager Belon, who travelled the Ottoman Empire in the sixteenth century, reported that there were Sibyan schools in almost every village, which may have made them more widespread than similar schools in the Western countries. While they focused almost exclusively on religious education at the beginning in the Ottoman Empire, by the beginning of the Turkish republic they were adding new courses to the curriculum in response to republic reforms, eventually becoming the Ibtidai schools that offered elementary education at the beginning of the Turkish Republic (Yıldız, 2007).

2.2.2 Enderun Schools

Enderun Schools were founded in the fifteenth century during the Sultan Murat II era in order to raise qualified people to maintain the power of the Ottoman Empire. These schools were indigenous Ottoman schools which reached their highest quality during the Sultan Mehmet II

era. The goal of these schools was to integrate non-Muslim children into the Ottoman Empire's state system as well as to educate experts to serve the government as bureaucrats at different levels. The most capable of these children, called "devsirme," were chosen to attend the Enderun schools for the higher levels of education from specially selected teachers in specially designed buildings and palaces to make them familiar with Turkish habits and Islamic rules and prepare them for management of the state (İşpirli, 1995; Cihan, 2007; Taşkın, 2008).

The Enderun Schools offered a very rigorous, leveled curriculum which consisted of six stages. At the beginning stage, they were taught courses such as the Quran, Islamic law, morality, and writing. At the second stage, the courses included Arabic and Persian grammar, history of the prophets, geography, art, and writing. At the third stage, Arabic and Persian grammar, Ottoman history, geographic calculation, and art were taught. The fourth stage included Arabic and Persian grammar, general history, geography, grammar, and art. In the final stage, students studied Turkish literature and grammar (Akkutay, 1984). When they graduated, these students could be promoted to very high level state positions such as army generals, vizier, or even grand vizier. Some of them were hired as teachers in these schools (Akkutay, 1999).

As time passed, however, the Ottomans failed to maintain and develop education in the Enderun schools so that, by the end of the 18th century, Enderun schools had lost their reputation. They started accepting unqualified children from wealthy families as well as some students backed by army officials. Thus, the schools started having serious discipline problems, and it was no longer possible to apply the old standards of education. As a consequence, Enderun schools were shut down after the Constitutional period in 1908 (Basgoz, 1995).

2.2.3 Madrasah

During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries science centers in Egypt, Syria, Iran and Middle Asia were superior to the Islamic educational institutions in Anatolia; therefore, Ottoman ulama were traveling to these other centers to gain higher levels of education. Over time, these educational trips and some foreign scholars' visits to Anatolia increased the intellectual activity of the Ottoman Empire (Uzuncarsili, 1998a). The first organizational and legal structures of the Ottomans were made by these ulama. They used their positions to keep alive the authority of Islamic principles governing education, law, and state management, thus contributing to the rise of intellectual activity in the Ottoman Empire and exercising influence over the bureaucracy of the state through their education of those who assumed positions in the government (Özdemir, 2006).

In this fashion, according to Cihan (2007), the madrasah worked as a selecting mechanism for the state's political and management structures, the judiciary and among other lower-level education institutions. The first of these madrasah was founded by Orhan Gazif in 1331 in İznik, then the capital city of the Ottomans. Later, he founded another madrasah with a dormitory as well as a charity for school expenses in Bursa. Murat II founded a madrasah called "Hadith House", a school specializing in knowledge of the Prophet's words, in Edirne, then the capital city, in the first half of fifteenth century. Until Istanbul became the new capital of the Ottoman Empire, Edirne was the science center of the state (Uzuncarsili, 1998a).

There were two types of madrasah common to the classical Ottoman period: the Sahn-i Seman Madrasah and the Suleymaniye Madrasah, which differed somewhat in their academic focus while operating according to similar practices and procedures. The Sahn-i Seman were eight madrasah affiliated with the Sahn-i Seman mosque built by Sultan Mehmet II after the

conquest of Istanbul in 1453. Four of these madrasah were located to the north of the mosque and the other four were located to the south with attendant dormitories and workhouses (Uzuncarsili, 1998b). Each Sahn-ı Seman madrasah had nineteen rooms. Fifteen of the rooms were dedicated to high level students, two of them were designed for professor assistants, and two of them were for maids.

In the Ottoman educational system those students who graduated from the Sibyan schools and aspired to a madrasah education had to pass first through an external and an internal madrasah. In the external madrasah the student took elementary courses such as mathematics, cosmography and logic. If he was successful and earned the approval of the mudarris, the student would be accepted to the “internal madrasah,” or Hasiye-i Tecrid madrasah, where he studied grammar, syntax derivation, calculation, logic and other courses. After successful completion of this level of study the student was eligible, again with the approval of the mudarris, to matriculate to the high school-level madrasah, known as Musila-i Sahn or Tetimme madrasah, for further theological education after which they were eligible for admission to the Sahn-i Seman madrasah if they were interested in law, theology or literature (Uzuncarsili, 1998b).

After the Sahn students completed their education as “danismend,” they took their diploma and recorded as interns. They were qualified to offer lessons as indicated by their teachers on their diploma. After that, based on their scholarly capability, they could offer lessons at higher level madrasah. Sahn-ı Seman madrasah graduates could have very important responsibilities such as being “mufti”, head of religious affairs at city level, “Shaikh al-Islam”, the head of religious affair in the Empire, or as a teacher of the Sultan or prince, military judge, Istanbul judge, etc. (Uzuncarsili, 1998b).

The second important type of madrasah was the Suleymaniye Madrasah founded by Suleyman the Magnificent in 1556 to supply the empire's need for educated people in fields of math, science and medicine. The Suleymaniye Madrasah was a complex of four madrasah, a school of medicine and a hadith house (Uzuncarsili, 1998b). Those students who graduated from middle and high schools and did not want to continue to the Sahn-i Seman Madrasah, which offered law, theology and literature, were accepted into madrasah called "Musila-i Suleymaniye" which served as preparatory schools for Sahn-i Suleymaniye, where students were able to study math, science or medicine (Uzuncarsili, 1998b).

Both the madrasah expenses and mudarris wages were funded by charities (Baltaci, 1976). These charities appointed an officer in the madrasah called a "pointer" who represented the charity organization and was tasked with recording the presence or absence of the madrasah staff (mudarris, muids, danismends and other staff) (Hızlı, 2002:430). If there was some absence among madrasah personnel, they were reported to the charity authority who would then cut their wages or scholarships (İzgi, 1997). The charitable foundations also took care of the students' educational needs as well as their accommodations and daily expenses (Özcan 2002). For example, at Suleymaniye Madrasah, which contained on average 10-15 classrooms, students received two akçe per day as well as dormitory accommodations if they were well behaved, respectful, and trusted and could provide a suitable reference. Some poor students were employed imam and speaker in holy months, especially in Ramadan. For this service they received charity and alms from public (Cihan, 2007).

Professors at Sahn-i Seman Madrasah received daily wages from the sponsoring charity, as did their assistants (Uzuncarsili, 1998b). Because the madrasah teachers did not have salaries from the state and thus were not hired as state officers, they could maintain their independent

ideologies in education as they did not face the scrutiny of government officials (Fazlurrahman 1981). Mudarris also earned retirement salaries based on their last salary in madrasah. Classification and organization of the madrasah in Istanbul was in fact based on the salary of the mudarris as well as other measures of the charity's level of funding as documented in their "vakfiye," an official document prepared by the founder of the charity. The wages of the professors started from twenty "akçe" per day, thus the madrasah which paid forty or sixty akçe daily to their mudarris were called "forty akçe Madrasah" and "sixty akçe Madrasah" respectively (Uzuncarsili, 1998b).

The madrasah's instructional staff included teachers, called mudarris, who enjoyed considerable independence in what they taught and how. In fact, the mudarris a student studied with in the Ottoman educational system was much more important than the particular madrasah he graduated from (Yılmaz, 2016). Mudarris were supported by assistants called "muid" who were entrusted with repeating the lessons that the teacher delivered to students. Muids were chosen from among the most successful danismends according to their ability to write books with a great knowledge and deliver lessons in the madrasah under the supervision of the mudarris. Muids had to be moral, loyal, religious and also intelligent to be entrusted with delivering the lessons to suhtes (high school level students) in the Tetimme Madrasah (Baltaci 1976; Hızlı 2002; Pay 2002). Other staff employed in the Ottoman madrasah included "sheikh" who specialized in teaching the memorization of the Quran at the "Hadith House Madrasah" and "Darulkurra Madrasah" (Hızlı, 2002).

Teacher training under the Ottomans started as early as the Sultan Mehmet II era (Gelişli, 2006). Madrasahs trained their own mudarris using their own resources. If a madrasah graduate wanted to be a mudarris he would apply to an army judge of Rumelia or Anatolia, who were the

highest ranking ulama. Then the candidate registered as an “intern” (Baltaci 1976: 35). The interns who aspired to be mudarris had to pass an exam called “ruus” seven years after their graduation. If they passed, they earned a kind of certificate called “Istanbul ruus” and were assigned as “dersiam” to start work at beginners’ external madrasahs. Once they proved their ability at this level, they could be assigned to a higher level madrasah in time.

Madrasah teachers could request reassignment to another madrasah if there were vacancies. However, if there were other candidates, then an examination took place. This examination had two stages, verbal and writing exams. Madrasah teachers could be assigned as judge if there was a need according to their wage and level (Uzuncarsili 1965; Baltaci, 1976).

Later, after a significant increase in the number of students, a new type of mudarris called “dersiam” was created to offer lessons to large groups of students. In order to be a “dersiam” it was obligatory to take the particular lessons, possess a diploma, then prove one’s capability with an examination (Pakalin 1983; Pay 2002). During the sixteenth century, the lessons in the mosque could be delivered by these interns who aspired to be mudarris. They had to pass an exam called “ruus” seven years after than their graduation in order to do so. If they passed, they were assigned as “dersiam”. They would start to work at beginners’ external Madrasahs at first with a kind of certificate called “Istanbul ruus”. They started the lowest degree of Madrasah, however, they could rise upper levels based on their abilities.

Prior to the Ottoman period students were known as “fakih, mulazım.” The Ottomans gave them new titles, such as “talebe, tullab, danismend, softa/suhte, musteid.” However, the general term used to label the madrasah students was “talebe-i ulum” (Yıldız, 2007). They faced no age requirements or restrictions on enrollment in the madrasah; only their prior level of achievement determined their placement. Once admitted they faced eight to nine years of

training to complete the course of study at the madrasah, though this was later reduced to five years under Suleyman the Magnificent and then down to three years thereafter (Ozyilmaz, 2002; Hızlı 2002).

The madrasah allowed students to take whichever course they wanted and were free to choose any mudarris to take the course from. Hence the students could go and take courses from the most talented mudarris; therefore, the competence and reputation of the mudarris was a big factor in the success of a madrasah (Gungor, 1984). The key relationship in the madrasah was that between the students and the mudarris, which explains the important influence they had on the lives and futures of their students (Yılmaz, 2016).

Before the Sahn Madrasah was established, it is not easy to determine what lessons were taught and what curriculum was applied in Madrasah; however, we can have some slight clues about the Madrasah programs at the end of the fifteenth century (Uzuncarsili, 1998a). During the reign of Mehmet II the “Madrasah Students Law” defined which level Madrasah would offer what kind of courses and addressed the selection of the mudarris who would oversee the selection of the texts (Hızlı 2008). Thereafter in the Madrasah, the courses were taught superficially at the first level. As the level increased, more advanced versions of the courses were given. Therefore, the curriculum at the Madrasah progressed from level to level from easy to more complicated (Akyuz, 1994; Cevdet, 1978).

At the Madrasah, the educational activities were not defined by the state; courses and their content were not clearly defined. The charities which funded the Madrasah partially directed them, however, the tradition defined the curriculum. That’s why there was no single curriculum shared by all Madrasah. Islamic law however was the heart of the Madrasah; therefore, the curriculum was shaped by the Madrasah teachers who were specialists in Islamic

law, hadith, Quran interpretation, literature, logic, and philosophy (Yılmaz, 2016). Thus course syllabi in the Madrasah were designed by the mudarris and their assistants. Mudarris selected a text and the main course activity was a close study of the selected book. The student was required to complete his study of this book to the satisfaction of the mudarris before going on to a new text. So we can see that in Madrasah, there was no course completion per se but rather a graduation progression through a reading list determined by the mudarris (Hızlı 2008). The main purpose of these lessons was to acquire a deep understanding of the essentials of Islam, the ability to defend the religion against harmful movements, to solve social and religious problems, and to master the application of logical debate to inquiry in the Islamic sciences (Unat, 1964)

Later, in the “Kevakib-i Seb’â”, a book written during the mid-eighteenth century about Madrasah curriculum, students are described as studying as many as five courses per day. Each course required hours of preparation the day before. Mudarris would start a discussion topic, invite student ideas, and then referee among the different ideas shared by students. These debates might go on for hours. In the end the muddaris would impart his own interpretation of the text. (İzgi, 1997).

The approach to teaching in the Madrasahs remained largely unchanged for centuries (Yılmaz, 2016), though it could vary depending on the mudarris’s methods. The most common method was recitation—mudarris poses questions and the student answers—and debate (Zengin, 1993). Madrasah students were taught to reason deductively from authorized texts such as the Quran and Hadith. Thus, the students had to memorize the Quran wholly or partially, then they learned many hadith. The students would sit in front of the mudarris in a semi-circle, and follow the course and take their notes. Sometimes, their teachers started a discussion about a selected topic and let the students defend their ideas. Then the teacher would comment on the debate and

give his personal thoughts as a referee. Later, the students would share what they learned in mosques close to Madrasah or with their family and friends during vacations (Uzuncarsili, 1984; Baltaci, 1976; Akyuz, 1994).

Some meetings in the Madrasahs were open to public so the public could be enlightened about some scholarly issues. At other times lessons were given to students at locations outside the Madrasahs, such as mosques. These kinds of courses were also accessible by the public. Some famous teachers—dersiam—would offer courses at big mosques in cities open to everyone. These courses generally were given during afternoon, so they were often called “afternoon courses” (Uzuncarsili, 1984).

Assessment of students’ learning in the Madrasah covered not only the acquisition of knowledge, but also students’ capabilities and morality. Where instruction was still one-on-one, the measuring and assessment activities were conducted when the teacher decided it was warranted (Akgunduz, 1997). In 1910, however, the “Madrasah Sciences Regulation” was declared. It offered an exam for Madrasah students over the courses that they took the previous semester. If a student failed more than two courses, they had to repeat the level. If they failed less than two courses they had right to take another exam to pass the level. If a student could not pass a level for three years, this student would be expelled from the Madrasah (Ergün, 1996a). Where more than one student applied for a position as a mudarris in the madrasah, another exam was given. In this fashion the quality of mudarris in the Madrasah was increased (Atay, 1983).

Diplomas awarded to the graduates of Sahn Madrasah were called “Icazetname”. These were given by the student’s mudarris upon the student’s request after successfully completing the mudarris’ program of study (Akyuz, 1999). These diplomas recorded the name of the student and the name of his mudarris as well as the book titles they had studied together. It would also

indicate the courses that the student successfully passed and the courses that the graduated student was qualified to teach (Uzuncarsili, 1984). Those who completed their studies and earned these diplomas could be employed as teacher, imam, preacher, judge and serve at the highest levels of the Ottoman bureaucracy (Uzuncarsili, 1984).

After graduation, students were distributed to nearby villages and centrums to serve the public by leading their prayers and giving them religious information during the three holy months in Islam, especially in the month of Ramadan. This distribution was called “Cerr”. It functioned as a kind of internship. The public gave these students alms and charities, thus they would help these students’ expenses. By this method, the Madrasah learning was disseminated among the public, supporting their religious needs and inspiring the public to send their children to Madrasah. Thus, even though everyone could not realistically go to these schools, a religiously informed culture was created in society (Akyuz, 1993).

2.3 Late Ottoman Education and Reforms

Beginning in the 19th century, the Ottomans were becoming much more cognizant of the shortcomings of their educational system and so began to look to European models to establish military academies and technical academies in order to get the professionally trained people that they felt they needed to modernize. This was something very different from the Islamic tradition. There is a distinction to be made between education in the service of a religious tradition and religious knowledge and education that is in some sense serving the needs of an empire, a political entity. Even though the Ottoman Empire was an Islamic empire, it had both a religious dimension and a political dimension. So it needed education designed to serve the political and economic needs of the Empire.

Classical Ottoman education was still shaped by the Islamic tradition in the sense of being highly dependent on the knowledge of religious scholars, but it added over time a necessary dimension of educating some individuals to meet the needs of the bureaucracy. When students attend the Madrasah, they knew that if they wanted to be a government official, they had to start there. Students and their families had practical goals. They were not pursuing purely religious knowledge but were well aware of the opportunities provided by Madrasah. For example, during the Sultan Mahmud II era, when the economy was down, families started sending their kids to work as apprentices to support their families instead of sending them to Madrasah for education. This caused such a shortage of students at the Madrasah that the government declared mandatory education for all.

The acquisition of religious knowledge however remained a way into the bureaucracy right through the Ottoman and late Ottoman eras. However, the late Ottoman period saw an unmistakable trend toward a more bureaucratized and systematized approach to education which was reflected both in the establishment of military academies and the Ministry of Education. This new ministry published a regulation called “General Educational Regulation” in order to regulate the educational system, including educators and the other staff, audits and the auditing criteria, the rights of educators, educational management, the preparation and assignment of teachers, examination systems, etc.

Rusdiye schools were founded in this period to close the gap between Sibyan schools and military schools (Yıldız, 2007). The first Rusdiye School, founded in 1839, aimed to train the officers which the state demanded (Akyuz, 1999). The number of Rusdiye schools started increasing very quickly afterwards. The Ottomans founded 351 Rusdiye schools for boys and 7 for girls in Istanbul and other cities, and they reached around 20,000 students in total (Yıldız,

2007). The curriculum of Rusdiye schools changed, science classes were increased and they were extended to a three year course of study (Demirel, 2002).

With the “Islahat Fermani of 1856”, a declaration of rights made by the Ottoman Empire, non-Muslim communities received some rights that allowed them to found national and religious schools at almost every point of the country. The French government took advantage of these rights to promote a school model intended to provide space for different cultures and religions to live together. The French also suggested that the Ottomans found a university to teach science. As a result, the Ottomans founded “Mekteb-i Sultani,” first Western-style high school. It was later renamed “Galatasaray High School” (Unat, 1964; Kafadar, 1997).

In 1857, for the first time in Ottoman history, a “General Educational Ministry” was founded. Henceforth, the schools became official institutions of the state and the General Educational Ministry assumed responsibility over them. Schools were grouped according to three levels: “Sibyan” (elementary level), “Rusdiye” (middle level), and Vocational and Technical schools (Kodaman & Saydam, 1992). Rusdiye schools were founded to fill the gap between the Sibyan schools and the military schools. In Istanbul and other cities a total of 358 Rusdiye schools, 351 schools for boys and 7 schools for girls, founded (Yıldız, 2007). In order to educate teachers for the Rusdiye schools, a male teachers school was founded in 1848 (Arslanoglu, 1998). Later, during the reign of Abdulhamid II, many more male teacher schools were founded in various cities (Kodaman, 1991). Seven female teacher schools were also founded to serve girls’ Rusdiye schools (Demirel, 2002).

Until 1850’s, girls in the Ottomans graduated from Sibyan schools; however, they could not continue their education at higher levels, though some girls from wealthy families took courses privately from teachers or educated themselves in religious subjects or literature (Akyuz,

1994). The first higher level educational institution for girls' education was founded in 1859 as the "Girls Rusdiye School" (Arslan-Akpınar, 2005). During the second half of the nineteenth century 74 of these schools were established. In this same period foreigners founded secondary schools for girls. The French community, for example, founded 19 girls' schools in Istanbul. Wealthy Turkish families often sent their girls to these schools (Akyuz, 1994). An industrial school for girls was also founded in this period as well and, in 1870, a teacher education school for women was founded to prepare female teachers for secondary schools (Arslan & Akpınar, 2005). Later, during the second constitution term in 1911, a girl's Idadi school was founded in Istanbul as a high school. Its name was changed to "Istanbul Girl's High School," the first high school for girls (Kurnaz, 1996). A women's university accepting graduates of the girls' high school and the female teacher education schools was finally established in 1914 (Kurnaz, 1996).

With the General Educational Regulation announced in 1869 the Ottomans planned to found "Idadi Schools," high schools of three year duration intended to prepare the Rusdiye school graduates for the military schools (Ergün, 2000). During the Abdulhamid II era the number of Idadi schools increased throughout the Empire. As Idadi schools reached the countryside the government started evaluating the curriculum they offered. However, no significant change was made (Kodaman, 1991). By the end of the Abdulhamid II era there were 93 official, 11 private, and 5 military Idadi schools. All together they enrolled around 20,000 in 1909 (Yıldız, 2007).

After the "Kanun-i Essai" of 1876, the first constitution of the Ottomans, Mahmud II made the Sibyan schools obligatory by publishing a new law called the "Sibyan Education Regulation" (Kodaman, 1991; Ergün, 2002; Poyraz, 2013). In 1879, "Sibyan School Department" was founded under the Ministry responsibility. Gradually the Ministry founded new

departments responsible for primary, secondary and higher education. It also founded a “Department of Publishing and Translation” in 1864 to prepare textbooks for schools (Demirtaş, 2007). In this fashion education increasingly became a bureaucratic function of the state (Yıldız, 2007).

During the first constitutional period there were no changes related to the modernization of the Madrasah. The Madrasah remained highly resistant to change in this period (Berkes, 2003). From the foundation of the Suleymaniye Madrasah the second constitutional period (1557-1908) the Ottoman Madrasahs did not adequately adapt their educational programs in order to keep up with the new developments and changes that occurred during the intervening three and a half centuries. In fact, the Madrasahs started to regress and could not maintain the esteem that they had once enjoyed. The Ottoman rulers recognized the problem and tried to take some actions; however, they were largely unsuccessful (Ozyilmaz, 2002; Cihan, 2007).

The decline of the Madrasahs in the late Ottoman period can be attributed to a number of factors. For instance, their curriculum emphasized the acquisition of already established knowledge from authorized sources rather than the forms of scientific inquiry that were assuming prominence in the West, thus they became increasingly unfriendly to modern intellectual development. In addition, the Madrasah increasingly faced a language problem in the late Ottoman era. Madrasah education was offered in Arabic, which required students to devote ten years of their educational life to master. But the public spoke Turkish, Persian dominated contemporary literature, and the Ottoman language was largely confined to the palace. This situation caused communication problems among the different segments of Ottoman society (Ergün, 1996a).

These failures to teach the “languages” of the modern world—the vernacular and the language of science—affected the ability of Madrasah graduates to find jobs. At the same time the economy started to weaken leading many in society to see state positions and being state officers as the only one way to make good money. And as the Ottoman’s political and geographical expansion came to a halt young people could not find jobs (Akdağ, 1975). Thus Madrasah graduates also started having problems to find a job (Uzuncarsili, 1998).

The erosion of job prospects caused by this gap between what the Madrasahs offered their students and what a modern society required led to corruption. Patronage and bribery started becoming common among ulama who wanted to be assigned as a judge or mudarris. Some undeserving students were assigned as mudarris, including children of ulama (Ergün, 1996b). And because Madrasah students were exempt from obligatory army duty many unsuited students came to see the Madrasah as a way of avoiding military service (Coskun, 2011). All of this led to the gradual erosion of the quality and status of the Madrasah.

The need to reform the Madrasah system to meet the needs of a changing world had preoccupied Ottoman authorities since the 18th century and caused them to revise the educational system and found new educational institutions (Cihan, 2007). By the time of the first constitutional period (1839-1908), the number of traditional Ottoman educational foundations and their theological staff was declining. Madrasah staff could not follow the new developments in order to compete with officers and intellectuals who graduated from modern educational foundations (Cihan, 2007). This situation caused something of a two-headed educational structure. One of them was new educational foundations under the Ministry control, and the other one was Madrasahs under the responsibility of Shaikh al-Islam (Poyraz, 2013). Thus the period of the first constitution is a turning point for the Turkish educational system. It represents

a breaking point between traditional-classical education and modern-secular education when the traditional identity of the Ottoman educational system was over and a new and different structure came into being (Cihan, 2007; Poyraz, 2013).

The broad thrust of reforms undertaken during the first constitutional period continued under the second constitutional period (1908-1923), which proved to be the final decades of the Ottoman Empire. After the second constitution was declared in 1908, Abdulhamid II took significant steps on education; however, he was unable to achieve significant results (Cihan, 2007; Yıldız, 2007). Education in the late Ottoman era remained divided into a growing, modern, largely secular education sector focused on the acquisition of the technical and scientific knowledge required by the state and a religious sector reluctant to surrender long-held traditions in favor of modernization.

The modern sector included the Muhendishane-I, Bahri-i Humayun, Muhendishane-i Berri-i Humayun, Mekteb-i Tıbbiye-i Şahane, schools of engineering, medicine and other technical areas needed to meet the military-technical demands of the Empire.. These schools were the Ottomans' first Western-style educational institutions (İhsanoğlu, 1992). According to Kushner (as cited in Cihan, 2007), this sector also included a new system of modern schools from basic education through the university level, including new Central İbtidai Schools formed from the merger of the old Rusdiye and İbtidai schools as a result of the “Fundamental Education Rule of Transition in 1913 (Aribas 2000).

The Ottomans took a number of steps in the second constitution term to reform the Madrasah. The first of these was the “Madrasah Educational Regulation,” which required Madrasah to offer a course of study including math, geometry, physics, chemistry, astronomy, cosmography, history, geography and Persian language which could be completed in 12 years.

The Madrasah would accept only students between the ages 15-35. In a second round of regulations in 1914 several Madrasah in Istanbul were consolidated into a single Madrasah called the “Great Religious Madrasah.” This regulation also required Madrasah to organize their programs of study by levels and grades along the lines of the modern schools (Yıldız, 2007).

According to Ergün (1996b), Ottoman authorities created a number of specialized Madrasah in this period in an ongoing attempt to reform the religious education sector. These included the “Mekteb-i Kuzat,” which were founded to educate judges and other staff in both religious and modern law for service on the religious courts. The “Medresetu’l-Vaizin” trained preachers to expand Islam in society and make Islamic propaganda. They also offered religious courses along with social sciences. In 1913 the “Medresetu’l-Eimme-ve’l- Huteba” were founded to train imams, preachers, and muezzin (azan caller). These Madrasah were the forerunners of the Imam Hatip Schools which would be founded under the “Unity of the Education” law at the beginning of Turkish Republic (Ergün, 1996b).

Despite these changes to the Madrasah system, traditional education still survived in some Madrasah through the efforts of traditional mudarris. But in these last years of the Ottoman Empire state, schooling was becoming more Westernized, secular, nationalist, and technical in its orientation while Islamic education was gradually reduced to vocational training for religious functionaries. Soon, even this limited role for the Madrasah would come to an end with the closure of the Madrasah under the new Turkish Republic in 1924 (Unan, 2000).

2.4 Religion and Education in the Republic of Turkey

Turkey is the main successor of the Ottoman Empire. Although Turkey was founded on the heritage of the Ottoman Empire, it made profound changes in many areas from government structure to education. Even lifestyle of the Turkish society was a focus of deliberate change.

However, these changes did not occur without conflict between religious traditionalists and modern secularists over the character of the new Turkish republic. This conflict would determine the future of the educational system. Ataturk's main goal for Turkey was to attain the level of contemporary civilization which was in existence in the West. However, this was not the only motivation for Ataturk. He saw the new Soviet Union and its socialist expansionist policies as a threat to his vision for Turkey. But the Muslim world and the other successors of the Ottomans were not considered good examples for Turkey either. These positive and negative motivations shaped the choices Turkey's founders made about the future direction of the republic.

In this period of transition and political ferment many different ideologies emerged with different visions of the new Republic's direction and socio-political paradigm. These ideologies included nationalism, pan-Islamism, recycled Ottomanism, among others. Some were supporting the new Republic while others were against it. But the general redirection of education begun in the late Ottoman era away from purely religious concerns to more functionalist, practical, nationalist concerns continued into the republican era. Education in Turkey evolved to raise people to serve the state's needs.

Ataturk and his leading team made huge changes in Turkish society in this period. He introduced changes in many different areas—including lifestyle, measurement, the alphabet, education, the law and more. But the way Turkey's founders approached Turkish society was not new. The legacy of imperial rule was a political culture in which political leaders did not feel the need to know whether the reforms they proposed were desired by the society they ostensibly served, thus leaders tended to attempt to reorganize the state based on their own top down agenda. Thus social and educational change was imposed on Turkish society.

Efforts to modernize the Turkish state frequently focused on reform of the content and structure of Turkish education, the underlying philosophy of which was inspired by late-Ottoman thinkers and the political founders of the Turkish republic. Ataturk, Baltacioglu, Hasan Ali Yucel, Ismail Hakki Tonguc, and Rustu Uzel, among others, made important contributions to the reform of education in the early days of the republic. However, such internal Turkish perspectives were not the only influence on the development of the Turkish educational system. Sonmez (1998), for instance, highlights the effect of Western experts and scientific and technological development on the economic, political, and social structure of the Turkish Republic as well as its understanding of education. These influences generally aimed at the creation of a Turkish culture that was modernist in its outlook and lifestyles. Ataturk had the support of several religious scholars and muftis support for his initiatives.

Concern about the scientific and technological development and prosperity of Turkish society and the impediments posed by traditional Islamic culture continued long after the establishment of the Turkish republic. As late as 1964, Ziya Gokalp was arguing that the cosmopolitan character of Turkish Madrasahs and schools was spoiling the morality of Turkish students. Whereas other countries' unified educational systems reflected and promoted a unified national identity, the mix of Madrasah, foreign schools, and modern government schools in Turkey turned those who studied in them into blind partisans for whatever social point of view their schools represented. This, according to Gokalp (1964) was the major illness of Turkish society.

When Kemalist reforms began religion was set apart from political life and education. Since Turkey's foundation in 1920, the nationalist-statist philosophy was dominant. This ideology was focused on bringing the Turkish nation and state to social and economic equality

with the West. Its basic concern was to infuse nationalist feelings in the students and transform them into absolute, obedient and loyal citizens for the president and the nation. In order to accomplish these socio-political and educational aims, the Ministry of National Education took control of all educational institutions under the “Uniformity of the Education Law” in 1924. Ataturk and his team aimed to create common goals and a common system of evaluation with this law. With it he expected to secure the nation’s emotional and ideological unity (Sakaoğlu, 1992). But the Uniformity of the Education Law triggered a variety of very complex consequences.

The rulers of the first two decades in Turkey had an agenda to close all Madrasahs and religious institutions in order to build the nation in a “modern” fashion. However, they did not want to cause any public backlash against their initiatives, so they applied their plan gradually. First, 479 Madrasah that were connected to the National Educational Ministry were closed down in 1924 (Basgoz, 1995). Twenty-nine Imam Hatip Schools (to raise employees to provide religious services for the state) and one theology faculty (to raise highly qualified religious experts) founded in Istanbul, Daru’l-Funun (the old name of Istanbul University), took the Madrasahs’ places.

The minority public schools and foreign schools, which were run according to international pledges, were also connected to the National Educational Ministry. These schools too had to remove religion classes from their education programs and had to add classes such as Turkish Language, Turkish History, and Turkish Geography. All these steps show that the aim of Turkey’s rulers in 1920s and 30s was to build an educational system and society based on Turkish nationalism rather than religion. Their target, however, was not only Islam. They did not

make any distinction between religions. So Turkish modernity was, in a real sense, not simply secular, but overtly against religion and religious life in the early decades.

When the new Turkey declared the Republic in 1923, the Ottoman Madrasah as well as Western-style Rusdiye, Idadi, Ibtidai, Sultan schools and foreign schools were still active. By the following year the “Unity of the Education” law brought them all under the authority of the state. All scientific and educational foundations were put under the control of the Ministry of Education. Once this was accomplished, the Ottoman Sibyan schools and Madrasahs were closed.

2.5 Mehmet Akif Ersoy in the Educational Discourse

This was the historical, political and educational milieu in which Mehmet Akif Ersoy assumed national prominence. He witnessed both the Ottoman and Turkish educational systems. He spent more than forty years of his life within the Ottoman education system. Many of the major reformist ideologies and initiatives bent on restoring the empire took place or even reached their peak during Ersoy’s life. These included Islamism, Nationalism and Westernism. Ersoy leaned toward Islamism, which he took to mean the unity, regeneration, and progress of the Muslim world, but he was familiar with the educational systems in the West. During his life, he witnessed the downfall of the Ottoman Empire and its all hardships with sorrow. Ersoy witnessed disintegration, desperation, and panic in the Ottoman society as it collapsed.

On the other hand, he worked diligently for the foundation of the Republic of Turkey. He was a major figure in the Turkish independence war initiated by Ataturk. He motivated Turkish people to participate and support the independence war through his speeches and writings during this era. These writings articulated the framework of Ersoy’s understanding of independence, education, and progress.

During the independence war, Ersoy attended many meetings, gave sermons, and wrote columns and poems about the problems of Muslim society and their solutions. He also visited Turkish troops. His collected data from these occurrences. They all affected Ersoy's analysis of the problems of the society which he hoped to regenerate and move toward genuine independence. They also provided him a venue through which to work on all these problems.

According to Ersoy, the West made great progress in positive science and technology. However, they used their progress as a weapon against the Muslim world in order to further their imperialist agendas. This negative opinion of the West however did not block from considering how to bring Western science and technology to the Muslim world. He traveled widely in his life and brought back ideas he thought useful for the Turkish nation. So, his thoughts on education have to be considered within the historical context in which he lived and moved.

CHAPTER 3

THE LIFE AND WORK OF MEHMET ERSOY

This chapter provides a brief biography of Mehmet Akif Ersoy. His education, family, and professional life will be addressed as well as his political and social journey. Ersoy was a multi-talented scholar, so his works vary from poems to tafseer texts, magazine articles, and even sermons that he gave during the Turkish independence war.

Ersoy is a famous social-historical figure in Turkey. He is most known for penning the Turkish National Anthem. It consists of nine quatrains and one quintet, and all the students in public schools memorize at least two quatrains. Many symposia have memorialized Ersoy and numerous dissertations and books published about him. Three main aspects of Ersoy are studied very often: Ersoy's religious studies (his tafseer works), his poems as a literary works, and his life journey as a prominent figure during Turkey's independence war. Such studies commonly neglect one very important side of Ersoy's scholarly work: his philosophy of education.

3.1 Ersoy's Education and Life Story

Mehmet Akif Ersoy was born in 1873 in Fatih, Istanbul. His family named him Mehmet Ragıp. His father, Hodja Tahir Effendi, was a tafseer mudarris at Fatih madrasah, and his mother was Mrs. Emine Şerife (Parlatır, 1983).

According to Şen (2011), Ersoy started his education in a local primary school while his father taught him Arabic. He was a very talented student in general; however, his specific interest was on language and literature, which helped him to learn Arabic, Persian, and French. He was very fortunate that he was able to read classical Ottoman poetries such as Layla and Majnun of Fuzuli, arguably the best poet of the Ottomans. Initially, he showed interest in political science, which was quite popular during his time. In order to realize his interest, he started his education at

Mulkiye. However, his father passed away, and their house was burned while Ersoy was a freshman. That put his family in a financial disadvantage, and Ersoy could not afford the expenses. He had to drop out of Mulkiye, and joined a newly founded veterinarian school with the expectation of being hired quickly after graduation. His special interest in poetry developed during his college years even though he was in a veterinary school (Şen, 2011).

Ersoy's opinions about his professors in the veterinary school provide insight to his approach to modern science and Islam discussion. He admired their high knowledge in both their professions and religious fields. He also appreciated their guidance and teachings, which shaped the foundation of Ersoy's religious morality (Şen, 2011).

Ersoy's regard for teaching both Islamic and scientific knowledge in schools partially was nourished by his positive experience with his professors in the veterinary school. In other words, Ersoy synthesized his modern education with his religious morality. His views were greatly influenced by his professors in Halkalı Veterinary and Agriculture School. Ersoy said, "Most of our teachers at the veterinarian school were doctors. They were highly knowledgeable both in their professions and religious fields. Their warnings and teachings affected my religious morality..." (Edip, 1938).

After his graduation from veterinary school, Ersoy worked in the Department of Agriculture as a senior inspector between 1893 and 1906. During his job, he was able to visit many regions of the Ottoman Empire and Europe. He visited Rumelia, Anatolia, Syria, Saudi Arabia, and Germany. These visits helped him to gain experience and learn about society through practical experiences. Later, he also served as a professor in the veterinary school that he graduated from. Eventually, he got appointed as a mudarris in Daru'l-Funun, until 1913. During his teaching years, Ersoy taught Ottoman literature and essay writing (Ersoy, 2013; Çantay, 1966).

Several major events occurred during the last decades of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th Century that impacted Ersoy's thoughts on a number of subjects. For instance, the time period was full of collapses for the Ottoman Empire, including a coup against the Ottoman Emperor in 1876, a new ruler and Constitution and wars that reduced the kingdom to 1/5 of its original land by 1913. Also the population decreased from 40 million to 18 million (Karpaz, 2010).

Ersoy's poems often express his feelings about his time and society. The themes of Ersoy's poems, his lyricism, and his sorrowful voice likely originated from the conditions of Muslim world which are lots of corruptions, poverty, invasions, and ignorance. Just like Ersoy, many scholars and ideologists seek solutions for the social, political problems of the Ottoman Empire. Islamist, nationalist, and pro-West intellectuals including Ziya Gökalp, Namık Kemal, Tevfik Fikret, and Ersoy attempted to share Western developed civilizations' science and technology in order to fix and save the Ottomans from the bad conditions they were in (Karpaz, 2010). Ersoy's solution, as he addressed mainly in his ideal generation of Asım, was to raise generation loyal to the Islamic values while educating them with modern science. However, it is important to note that Ersoy criticized the Muslim society that they miss both sides; Islamic values and hence scientific knowledge. According to Ersoy, a true Muslim should be in quest for knowledge of both physical and moral universe. However, as he criticized, Muslims were in moral corruption and far behind their contemporaries in terms of knowledge about universe.

Atatürk's trip to Samsun in May 1919 is widely considered as starting point of the independence war of Turkey. Ersoy was in Istanbul when Atatürk initiated the foundation of a new republic. He moved to Anatolia to support Atatürk in April 1920 after the Ottoman Empire denounced Atatürk as traitor and labeled the war for independence as treason. His poems "to Süleyman Nazif" and "Çanakkale Martyrs" were written for that purpose (Amanoğlu, 2009). In

fact, Ersoy wrote so many articles on Sebilürreşad supporting Turkey's independence war that Atatürk expressed his contentment to Ersoy for his writings (Kırsıklı, 2009).

In June 1920, Ersoy became the deputy of Burdur city at Atatürk's invitation. (Düzdağ, 1996). Although Ersoy was known with his fiery sermons and very emotional speeches, he never became a significant politician because he didn't like political controversies and had a humble spirit (Kılıç, 2008). After the independence war, Ersoy went to Istanbul in 1923. According to Akbaş (2013), Ersoy found some governmental executions unacceptable, so he decided to go to Egypt when Abbas Halim Pasha invited him in 1925. He stayed in Hilvan city of Egypt for years. He taught Turkish Language and Literature at Camiu'l-Misriyye. After years of homesickness, he was diagnosed with cirrhosis and cancer and decided to go back to Turkey in 1936, several months before he died. Ersoy died on December 12, 1936, Sunday evening in Beyoğlu, Istanbul (Çantay, 1966).

Ersoy had started publishing his prose and poems in magazines; however, he later collected and published them in 16 books. Seven of them are his poetry books, five of them translation works, three of them are collections of his columns, and one sermon. He also wrote a chapter in a book prepared by the Committee of Union and Progress, which eventually became the ruling party of the Ottomans (Işık, 2011).

Ersoy has been widely studied by many scholars from different specialties. According to Işık (2011), there are more than 400 studies focusing on Ersoy, including books, Master theses, dissertations, journal special issues, and conference proceedings. These studies analyzed Ersoy's poetry, tafseer, column works, sermons, and personality as an influential leader and a prominent social figure in Turkey.

3.2 Works of Ersoy

Ersoy was a versatile scholar who was able to produce various types of literary works. On one hand, he was publishing poems to express his observations, analysis, and critiques on social, political, and moral problems. On the other hand, he was writing prose, very often as columns in *Sebilürreşad* addressing subjects similar to those in his poems. The proses were often published on *Sebilürreşad*. Ersoy also translated the Quran into Turkish along with other books from Arabic and French.

3.2.1 Sermons

A Sermon in the Islamic tradition is a speech that given in a mosque or a public religious place. In such a speech, the speaker talks about religious subjects using references from the Quran, hadeeth, or previous scholars. So, a preacher should be knowledgeable of all three resources in order to give a sermon. Ersoy was invited to give sermons during the late Ottomans and early Republic because of his reputation in Islamic knowledge resources.

Ersoy started learning Arabic in his early life and continuing study of it throughout his life. His father along with years of studies formed his deep level of religious knowledge. Starting as early as 1913 in several mosques of Istanbul, he gave sermons during Turkey's independence war years in several mosques such as Beyazıt, Fatih, and Süleymaniye Mosques of Istanbul; Hacı Bayram Mosque of Ankara, Zağanos Paşa Mosque of Balıkesir, and Nasrullah Mosque of Kastamonu. The main purpose of these sermons was to encourage the public to be united and defend the homeland against enemies. However, after the World War I started and Istanbul was invaded by the Entente Powers, Istanbul government did not welcome Ersoy's speeches. When Ersoy's Zağanos Paşa Mosque sermon was published on *Sebilürreşad*, the government shut down the newspaper. His sermons aimed at addressing backwardness, disintegration, and corruptions in

the Ottomans. Ersoy also analyzed the causes of those problems while he promoted unity, strength, and pride in Turkish society, encouraging Turks to fight for their independence (Uçman, 2011).

3.2.2 Columns

According to Mertoğlu (2013), Ersoy's life as a columnist started in 1908 and continued until 1925 when the Turkish Republic banned the media outlet he was writing for. Initially, he started writing for *Sırat-ı Müstakim* magazine. Later, the founders of the magazine changed its title to *Sebilürreşad* in 1912. These magazines continued being published during the Ottomans' biggest depression, which resulted in the collapse of the empire. However, *Sebilürreşad* survived for a couple years during the new republic founded by Atatürk.

Sebilürreşad is an important magazine to understand Ersoy's thoughts. Contributors to this magazine were advocating democratization of the country as well as Islam's coherence with constitutional monarchy. They often used references from the Quran and hadeeth to support their arguments (Efe, 2009). Ersoy developed his approach about the discussion on compatibility of Islam and modern science during the years when he was writing on *Sebilürreşad*. Sarı (2016) states that Ersoy wrote around 50 articles, essays, and memories addressing many different subjects such as literature, religion, and society. He even published his poems, translations, and tafseer works on *Sebilürreşad*. These works illustrated Ersoy's knowledge, thoughts, and sincerity.

3.2.3 Poems

Despite Ersoy's multiple qualifications, he is known foremost as a poet by Turkish society because he wrote "the National Anthem," and Turkey, a nationalist-centralist state, included the anthem in its K-12 education system. For example, it is mandatory for every classroom in public and private schools to have a framed national anthem on the wall. Also, every Monday morning and Friday evening students gather and sing the anthem. Moreover, every textbook in K-12 to

higher education has to include the anthem on one of the first pages of it. Thus, students of every level in Turkey are familiar with Ersoy.

Ersoy's interest in poetry started in his early life. Muallim Naci, a prominent poet during the late Ottoman era, was the biggest influence on him, and many of his poems mirror Naci's style. Other influences included his contemporaries in the Ottomans: Ziya Paşa, Abdülhak Hamid, etc. His advancement in the Persian language helped him to be acquainted with prominent Persian poets such as Saadi Shirazi (1213-1292) and Hafiz-i Shirazi (1315-1390) who further influenced Ersoy's poetry. Ersoy's *Safahat* has many poems starting with quotes from Shirazi. (Çantay, 1966).

As Kuntay (1986) argues, Ersoy was a master of Turkish accents. So, he was able to write his poems in many different accents of Turkish. This helped him to merge the pattern and subject along with language in his poems. Ersoy preferred writing realistic poems. So, the themes and morals of his poems are more important than the rhythm. (Rustam, 2013). Moreover, Ersoy pays more attention to the content than pattern and rhymes in his poetry even though he wrote poems in the classical Ottoman poetry style *aruz*, which is known strictly formalist.

Ersoy published almost all of his poems on *Strat-ı Müstakim* and *Sebilürreşad*. Later, he started publishing them as independent books, publishing seven poetry books in total. His poetry books as follow: *Phases* (1911), *On the Süleymaniye Dais* (1912), *Voices of the Truth* (1913), *On the Fatih Dais* (1914), *Memories* (1917), *Asım* (1924), and *Shadows* (1933).. Ersoy wrote *On the Süleymaniye Dais*, *on the Fatih Dais*, and *Asım* as single poems while the other books had multiple poems. His poems typically address many different problems relevant to moral, social, and religious life of Muslim world in his time. Also, the years when Ersoy wrote and published his

poems during a period when the Ottomans were suffering from calamities, corruptions, and poverty.

The first poetry book, *Phases*, consists of 44 poems. The book mainly calls readers to be more sensitive to social problems and seeks solutions for them. Among the many problems in these poems, these issues came up most often: ignorance, poverty, laziness, and women's ill-treatment by men (Çağan, 2011). Ersoy further continues his addressing of problems of the Ottoman society in his second book *On Süleymaniye Dais*. He alerts readers to ignorance, backwardness, corruptions among executives, and injustice as he laments them. He also expresses his dissatisfaction on the results of declaration of constitution. In his third book, *Voices of the Truth*, Ersoy's subject is the Balkan wars in which the Ottomans were defeated. He provides poetic interpretation of several Quran verses and a hadeeth in this book in order to encourage the Ottomans to be faithful (Ersoy, 2013).

Ersoy's forth book, *On Fatih Dais*, continues providing his critiques of social and political problems. Çağan (2011) argues that Ersoy prefers simplistic ironic language in this book. Lack of functionality of religious organizations, corruptions, and ignorance are among the subjects most criticized by Ersoy in *On Fatih Dais*. Furthermore, the fifth book of Ersoy, "Memories", addresses the moral collapse of the society while offering comparisons between the Ottomans and European cities. He highlights Europe industrial developments and backwardness of the Ottomans with Istanbul's muddy streets (Çağan, 2011).

The first six books of Ersoy, including *Asım*, underline immorality, misunderstanding Islam, and ignorance among many other problems of Muslim world in his time. However, *Asım* provides solutions to the problems Ersoy argues in his previous books. Briefly, his solution for such problems was learning science and technology.

Asım, the main character of Ersoy's sixth poetry book, was a young man with positive and negative attributes on one hand; on the other hand it was the name of Ersoy's ideal generation. Ersoy builds a consciousness in Asım idealization through historical comparisons. He remembers about how good the Turks used to be as well as details how pitiful they were in during his own time (Ersoy, 2013). He describes the habits and unawareness that caused the negative conditions of the society. Ersoy's expectation from Asım was that he would learn sciences from the West and be strictly loyal to the Islamic values while still building the dynamics for saving society from its current situation.

Finally, Ersoy's last poetry book, *Shadows*, has the highest metaphysics content among his other books. Ersoy describes the historical process of Islam in this book. Ersoy also expresses his disappointments about the current situation of the Muslim world (Çağan, 2011).

3.2.4 Translations

According to Sarı (2016), Ersoy translated 55 works from six different authors and published them in *Sırat-ı Müstakim* and then in *Sebilürreşad* in 268 issues. Ersoy's translations were from French and Arabic languages. His translations were from Muhammad Abdûh of Egypt (1849-1905), Ferid Vecdi of Egypt (1878-1954), Ahmet Refik Altınay (1881-1937), Şeyh Şibli en-Numani of India (1857-1914), Abdulaziz Çaviş of Egypt (1876-1929), and Said Halim Paşa (1863-1921). He published his translation in *Sırat-ı Müstakim* and later *Sebilürreşad*. He later published five of his translations as individual books.

One of Ersoy's major translation contributions was his interpretation of the Quran. In order to increase Turkish society's level of understanding the Quran and Hadeeths, fundamentals of Islamic resources, Turkey's Department of Religious Affairs began translating the Quran, hadeeths, and tafseer resources. It offered tafseer work to Elmalılı Hamdi Yazır, a prominent

Turkish tafseer scholar; hadeeth studies work to Ahmed Naim Babanzade, and the Quran interpretation to Ersoy. Although Ersoy did not initially accept this offer, he was later convinced by his friend, Ahmet Hamdi Akseki, to do so under one condition: his work would be entitled “the Quran Purview” and would be published with Elmalılı Hamdi Yazır’s tafseer. (Düzdağ, 1996).

Ersoy started the Quran translation in 1926 while he was in Egypt, completed a draft, and made revisions on it by the end of 1929. Eşref Edip, founder of *Sebilürreşad* and a very close friend of Ersoy, read Ersoy’s translation when he visited him in Egypt in 1932 and said the translation was excellent. Eşref Edip offered to send Ersoy’s translation to Istanbul and publish it there. However, Ersoy insisted on continuing to work on the translation, refusing his friend’s offer. When Ersoy got sick in 1936 and moved back to Turkey, he delivered the translation to one of his friends, İhsan Efendi of Yozgat, and said: “If I get recover, I will take the interpretation back and continue working on it. If I cannot come back, please do me a favor and burn it!” (Düzdağ, 1996).

Unfortunately, Ersoy died a couple of months later. İhsan Efendi did not feel comfortable destroying Ersoy’s work, so he made a copy of it by rewriting it to a clean notebook and kept the two copies. However, just before İhsan Efendi died, he asked his son, Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, to burn both copies, which he did in front of several witnesses (Düzdağ, 1996). Therefore, unfortunately there is no way to obtain a copy of his Turkish translation of the Quran.

It is important to note that Ersoy is influenced by many scholars around the globe. Ersoy has influences from Saadi Shirazi, Rumi, Muhammad Iqbal, Muhammad Abdûh, Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Muallim Naci, Ziya Paşa, Namık Kemal, Alphonse Daudet, Victor Hugo, Emil Zola, and Rousseau (Kılıçoğlu, 2011; Aydilek 2017; Fergan, 1938). In addition, his influence expanded from Turkey to Central Asia including scholars and poets such as Nurettin Topçu, Bahtiyar Vahabzade, Hüseyin Şehriyar, Ahmed Cavad Akunzade (Topçu, 2011; Gündoğdu, 2009)

3.3 Literature about Mehmet Akif Ersoy

Mehmet Akif Ersoy was widely studied in Turkey because of his personality, works, and great contributions during the Turkey's independence war. Ersoy was able to observe the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the rise of Turkey. During the years he worked for government, he visited Europe and Middle East as a part of his mission, which helped him compare his society and Muslims with European societies. His writings have plenty of notes from his observations. Therefore, studying Ersoy directly or indirectly serves as a tool to understand important events that took place in Turkey during his lifetime. For instance, Karaer (2010) recently published Ersoy's family letters. Ersoy often sent photos of him and his family as well as he requested photos of his daughter, son-in-law and grandchildren from them along with those letters he sent and received from Egypt to his daughter and son-in-law in Turkey. They show Ersoy's interest in visual arts even though photography was not easily accessible in Turkey during his time (Karaer, 2010).

Ersoy's multi-disciplinary talent often encouraged studies by many different disciplines in Turkey. There are 18 journals studying literature, art, culture, education, and religion with issues dedicated to Ersoy studies. For instance, Turkish Teacher Union dedicated two issues of *Knowledge, Nurture, Thought, Culture, and Art* for studies about Ersoy. Also, Turkey's Ministry of Education published two issues of *In the Light of Science, Reason, and Education* as Mehmet Akif Ersoy special issues. *Hacettepe University Literature Magazine*, and *National Culture Magazine* of Turkish Culture Ministry are among many other magazines and journals that dedicated special issues for Ersoy studies.

Starting from 1976, there have been 14 national and international symposiums and conferences organized in memory of Ersoy. In these events, hundreds of scholars submitted over

a thousand studies about him. First conferences were organized by Hacettepe University and Selçuk University. Additionally, the Writers Union of Turkey organized nine symposiums since 2007 focusing on many different aspects of Ersoy. Also, it is important to note that Turkey recognized 2011 as Mehmet Akif Ersoy year. Ersoy's followers and friends wrote books dedicated for biography of him such as Düzdağ (1996), Tarlan (1939), Tarlan et al (1961), and Bilgegil (1971).

Ersoy's importance has often been recognized by many scholars, so the studies about him vary widely in Turkey. Among those studies there are books, journal articles, Master theses, and dissertations studying different aspects of Ersoy. Moreover, many conferences and symposiums have been organized in Ersoy's honor. The studies and events highlight Ersoy's life, time, works, characteristics of the dialect, poetic personality, education, values, religion, Islam, ethics, and being a social figure. However, the majority of studies about him focus on his literary side.

In general, studies about Ersoy can be divided into three groups. First are studies about Ersoy's religious side that focus on his tafseer works and many references he uses from the Quran and hadeeth. Within the studies of Ersoy's religious views is social analysis and political criticism as well as his role as a social figure during the collapse of the Ottoman and Turkey's independence war years. Second, there are studies that examine Ersoy's poetry as a work of art, so they focus on literary sides of him. Finally, there are studies focusing on Ersoy's educational thoughts.

Turkey has a central system for graduate studies publishing. So, Council of Higher Education (YOK) of Turkey publishes electronic copies of master's theses and dissertations on <https://tez.yok.gov.tr> web address. According to YOK, there are nine dissertations, one proficiency in art thesis, and 56 master theses about Ersoy. Of them, 31 are conducted as part of

the Turkish language and literature departments while 15 of them fell under the theology department. Education is the third field in terms of number of studies conducted about Ersoy with eight master theses on Ersoy's education. Sociology, philosophy, history, political science, and music have also been topics of theses and dissertations written about Ersoy ("Ulusal Tez Merkezi," n.d.).

3.3.1 Studies about Religion and Society in Ersoy's Works and Ersoy as a Social Figure

Ersoy was a distinguished scholar with his religious identity as well as his literary success. He not only kept his interest in the Quran alive throughout his life, he also considered understanding teaching the Quran as his duty. Ersoy applied the Quran to problems such as social and moral degeneration. Additionally, his recommendations for change and the development of Muslim societies were based from teachings in the Quran.

His educational background and the fact that he got his bachelor's degree in veterinary medicine did not discourage researchers to examine Ersoy as a poet, religious scholar, and educator. Researchers often highlight Ersoy's proficiency in multiple languages, serving as a literature mudarris in Daru'l-Funun and editor-in-chief of popular magazines, as well as his membership on an education board, emphasizing his importance as an educator and poet. On the other hand, his appointment for interpretation of the Quran by the Turkish parliament was a strong sign that Ersoy was recognized as a very important and proficient religious scholar in Turkey. While classical tafseer works study the Quran from the beginning and interpret it verse by verse, Ersoy prefers to combine several verses from different chapters based on their meaning and relevance to the topic he wants to write about.

Examining him as a social figure, researchers often focused on his expectations, aims, and opinions about religion, Islam, the Quran, ethics, youth, future, unity of Islam, social order, language, art, and Turkish by reviewing his sermons, columns, tafseer studies, and poems.

Kayhan (2013) provides a sociologic analysis of Ersoy's sermons and poems during World War I and the Turkish independence war aimed at warning Turkish society. Ersoy argues that immorality and nationalism are the main reasons for social discord and sees the solution in Islam.

Bacaksız (2008) examines Ersoy's poems and proses in order to describe his understanding of family, society, and humanity. Bacaksız (2008) further argues that Ersoy points out a strong relationship between family and state. In other words, Ersoy suggests that a healthy family is the key to create a healthy nation. Immorality, ignorance, and misunderstanding of religion are the most serious social issues according to Ersoy (Bacaksız, 2008).

Şengün (2007) examines Ersoy's method of interpretation of the Quran. He also studies Ersoy's tafseer works and their roots in Islamic tradition as well as Ersoy's poems based on their inspirations from the Quran. Şengün (2007) suggests that Ersoy's poems, which are often inspired by the Quran, can be considered works of tafseer. Moreover, Ersoy's tafseer works are evaluated as sociological tafseer by Şengün (2007). According to Aslan (2010), Ersoy dedicated most of his time to Turkey's independence. Ersoy wrote in magazines and newspapers supporting the independence war of the newly founded republic. Aslan (2010) further suggests that the Turkish national anthem was written under these conditions. Ersoy did not randomly start writing his poems; on the contrary, he found himself in a position that he had to write them.

Yıldırım (2010) studies Ersoy's opinions on tradition and novelty. Yıldırım (2010) suggests that Ersoy followed social-political developments in his time very closely and examined

them analytically in order to help his nation to get rid of backwardness. Ersoy's close attention to scientific and technological novelties that commonly took place in the West did not challenge him to break off his ties with Islamic tradition, so his thoughts and philosophy provide us with clues to understand authentic Turkish history and experience.

Kılıçoğlu (2011) examines Ersoy's poems and proses in order to identify his solutions to the problems of Turkish Muslim society. He further analyzes Ersoy's approach on the social functions of religion, Islam, the Quran, family, economy, and politics in his writings. Also, Demirci (2016) studies Ersoy's understanding of the Quran as well as his journey in obtaining Quranic knowledge in order to discover his approach and methods applied in tafseer works. Demirci (2016) examines key concepts and principles of the Quran that shape Ersoy's intellectual world. Horoz (2010) examines hadeeth which were mentioned implicitly or explicitly in Ersoy's poems. Horoz (2010) finds 31 subjects referring to hadeeth while he criticizes Ersoy for not being meticulous in evaluating hadeeth. In other words, Horoz (2010) suggests that Ersoy included several fabricated and weak hadeeth in his writings.

Similarly, Okay (1998), Yildirim (1988), Pekolcay (1991), Yetiş (1992), Çelenlioğlu (1998), Özel (2000), Bilgiz (2003), Mertoğlu (2013), and Kılıç (2008), studied Ersoy's personality as a social figure as well as his understanding of the Quran and tafseer method, by examining his sermons, columns, and poems.

3.3.2 Studies about Ersoy's Poems and Prose as Works of Art

There is considerable amount of research focusing on forms and style as well as grammatical and artistic aspects of Ersoy's writings. These studies are because of the fact that Ersoy is widely recognized as a very important poet during the late Ottoman and early Republic era.

Gökçek (1995), for instance, studies evolution of Ersoy's understanding of art as a poet by analyzing his poems chronologically. Moreover, he explains the content and literary values of Ersoy's poems. Gökçek (1995) further illustrates the impact of time and events on Ersoy's poetry. He suggests three periods in Ersoy's poetry based on their content: *preparation*, *erudate*, and *sufistic*. Ersoy's poems were in ode form, consists of couplets and their main subject is love, in his preparation period, and he did not include these poems in his books. Gökçek (1995) reports that Ersoy destroyed most of his first poems because his interest changed from individual life and society. Only several poems survived from Ersoy's first period, they were published on magazines like *Pictorial Newspaper*.

In his second term, Ersoy's poems include themes about life and society. Common contexts were social illnesses, social justice, despotism-freedom, immorality, and Westernization in those poems. The last period poems were sufistic, his tone is pessimistic and the common subject was death (Gökçek, 1995). Similarly, Aydın (2002) examines literary arts in Ersoy's poems. According to Aydın (2002), although he did not focus on the artistic side of poetry, Ersoy successfully applied 27 different literary arts such as metaphor (*istiare*), similitude (*teşbih*), allusion (*kinaye*), and antilogy (*tezat*). For instance, Ersoy's poem *Insan (Human)* includes these lines:

When you walk into the darkness, your wise reasoning becomes your torch
Its flames never disappear, eternal lights they are (Ersoy, 2013).

In this poem, Ersoy's voice is very encouraging for human-beings. He underlines relevance between human reasoning and torch that they both illuminate the darkness.

Furthermore, Şeyda (2011) examines syntax within Ersoy's poems. She investigates words, phrases, and sentences in order to set forth their role and function in Ersoy's poems.

According to Şeyda (2011), Ersoy intentionally used a certain level language in his poems, a language that messages of his poems could be easily recognized by the public, in order to communicate with Turkish society. Ersoy preferred using short lines, commonly used words by public, and applied story telling in his poems. It is important to note that there was a long literary tradition in the Ottomans that poets preferred using advanced Ottoman that the majority of society was unfamiliar with.

Similar to Gökçek (1995), Aydın (2002), and Şeyda (2011), there is a considerable amount of research into Ersoy's literary works. Elmas (1997) studies Ersoy's poetry and understanding of art while Tezer (1999) addresses poetic stories and phrases in Ersoy's "Phases." Tezer (1999) further provides a discussion about phrases and expressions in Ersoy's poetic stories. Studies about Ersoy's literary side covers the majority of research about him. However, those studies focused on his art, which is beyond the scope of this research.

Also, many more studies including Tarlan (1971), Canım & Çalık (1995), Elmas (2000), Türk (2004), and Doğan (2009) focus on Ersoy's literary works and his poetic personality. Moreover, these studies often highlight Turkey's national anthem and Ersoy's sensitivity towards national matters and religion.

3.3.3 Studies about Ersoy's Educational Thoughts

There is some research about Ersoy's understanding of education with some limitations. Such studies highlight the importance of education for Ersoy, the harmful effects of ignorance, places for formal and informal education, cultural problems, education techniques, and characteristics of the generations to be raised with educational activities.

Özer (1991) studies the importance of education and its aims, ignorance, and culture in Ersoy's writings from a theological perspective. Özer (1991) suggests that there is a discussion if

the purpose of artistic works is society or art itself. According to Ersoy art is for society's sake. So, his works focus on problems of society that are partially relevant to education such as ignorance and backwardness. Özer (1991) further expresses Ersoy's discontent regarding the dichotomy within the Ottoman education system, madrasah, and Mekteb. There were madrasah which existed for ages in the Ottoman education; however, there were newly founded Mekteb, Western style public schools. He also comments on other major problems like the disconnection between intellectuals and public and having blind confidence in religion without any inquiry.

Avcı (2000) studies the educational background of Ersoy along with his poetry and writing. He analyzes Ersoy's proficiency with discussing Eastern and Western civilizations, ignorance in the Muslim society, and suggestions for solving backwardness in education, role of education in development of the state, and educational policies.

Çay (2003) provides a general analysis on the status of education in Ersoy's time and his thoughts regarding education. The study also analyzes Ersoy's education life, the people who influenced him, the importance of education in his writings, and the topics he addresses. Çay (2003) further illuminates Ersoy's thoughts on components, philosophy, aim, and quality of education. He underlines eight characteristics of education: national and religious, teaching confidence and hope, beneficial and practical, suitable to time and conditions, suitable to level of students, love based, infusing responsibility, and widely accessible (Çay, 2003).

Şenbalcı (2009) compares Ersoy and Tevfik Fikret (1867-1915), a prominent poet and intellectual who is Ersoy's contemporary, based on their educational thoughts. Similar to Rousseau, Ersoy and Fikret suggested that human-being are born good. They both give the responsibility of children to their families first because basic emotions such as love, family bond, hope, and trust are learned in family. Ersoy argued that families' ill-treatment of their children

will put the future under threat. Similarly, Fikret argued that the lack of family could cause kids to lose their *rise demanding and pure core* (Şenbalcı, 2009). This study further examines the differences between Ersoy and Fikret's approaches to education's aims, content, and problems. While there are many differences in their views, the biggest difference is the role of religion in their thoughts, according to Şenbalcı (2009). Religion is at the center of Ersoy's educational thoughts whereas Fikret points to science and liberalism but never mentions religion and religious education. Although Ersoy highlights both moral and academic qualifications of a teacher, Fikret's only concern is about teachers' knowledge in science and determination in teaching.

Emer (2014) studies "values" in Ersoy's poems in his qualitative research, identifying and categorizing them. Hard work, righteousness, courage, hopefulness, determination, and faith are the most frequently repeating values in Ersoy's poems among 36 Emer (2014) identifies. However, Emer (2014) evaluates the values based on their frequency, which is not necessarily relevant to their importance to Ersoy. The study is missing a discussion about the interconnection of such values. For example, determination, hardworking, altruism, idealism, faith, patience, persistence, and hopefulness are considered independent values; however, they are directly or indirectly relevant values.

Uslu (2015) studies education as a concept in Ersoy's work "Phases," examining Ersoy's views about the quality of education, teaching techniques, and necessity of schooling as well as a revision in both schools and madrasah. She further suggests that faith, decency, competence, and conscience are the mandatory qualifications of a teacher according to him. . Ersoy believed education in the West needs to be supported; however, students must not give up on religious

and cultural mentality (Uslu, 2015). Lastly, Uslu argues that Phases can be helpful with creating curriculum and educational applications in the Turkish education system.

Baysülen (2016) studies concepts in Ersoy’s works based on their frequency and determines his educational approach based on their relevance to certain educational philosophy movements. As illustrated in Figure 1, Ersoy is perennialist based on the values relevant to “aim of education,” while he is essentialist in terms of “content,” “method,” “place,” “amount and term,” and “human” categories (Baysülen, 2016).

Table 1. Dimensions of Ersoy’s Philosophy of Education in His Speeches and Writings

Philosophical Schools	Perennialism	Essentialism	Progressivism	Reconstructionism	Dialectic	Marxism	Existentialism	Total
Why to teach Aim	102	45	12	0	0	0	0	159
What to teach Content	47	70	0	16	0	0	0	133
How to teach Method	21	57	23	0	0	0	0	101
Where to teach Place	4	76	0	0	0	0	0	80
How much How long teaching amount and term	15	21	5	0	0	0	0	41
Who/whom to teach Human	16	66	0	0	0	0	0	82
Total	205	335	40	16	0	0	0	596

Baysülen (2016) uses an educational philosophy determination tool in order to identify the relationship between Ersoy’s thoughts and certain movements in philosophy of education.

Moreover, his study assumes that identifying a philosophy of education is possible through aims, content, method, location, time, and human factors of education. It also assumes that Ersoy's philosophy of education can be identified by determining the mentioned concepts in his writings. Baysülen (2016) limits its inquiry with the listed philosophy of education movements.

Ersoy has a great reputation in Turkey's academia. The number of studies show the interest in Ersoy's thoughts on religion, society, literacy, education as well as his importance as a social figure. Although there are many studies focusing on Ersoy's literary sides, religious ideas, and being social figure, there are few studies focusing on Ersoy's educational thoughts. Studies examining Ersoy's educational thoughts often highlight important subjects of education in his understanding such as the harmful effects of ignorance, places for formal and informal education, cultural problems, and education techniques. They also try to define his educational thoughts by analyzing his works based on their similarity with some major educational philosophy movements such as perennialism, essentialism, progressivism, etc (Emer, 2014; Baysülen, 2016). However, these studies are missing philosophical approach to Ersoy's educational thoughts. In other words, a comprehensive analysis of Ersoy's educational thoughts grounded in philosophical, historical, and cultural foundations of Turkish-Muslim background is missing. Also, all of the studies in Ersoy's educational ideas are Master's theses. So, this study will serve as a leading study for future empirical studies focusing on Ersoy's educational ideas.

CHAPTER 4

THE CONCEPT OF THE EDUCATED PERSON IN ERSOY'S *ASIM*

This chapter has two major parts. The first examines *Asım*, a book of poetry about Ersoy's ideal generation for Muslims and Turkish society. An analysis of *Asım*'s design, content, and key figures as well as Ersoy's purpose for writing will be examined along with Ersoy's concept of the educated person, which is implicitly mentioned in his poems, especially in *Asım*. Although Ersoy provided characteristics of his ideal generation predominantly in *Asım*, he mentioned them in his other poems and prose. A study comparing the similarities and differences among education related discussions, concepts, and approaches within his works will provide insight into the meaning, content, and aim of education in Ersoy's thoughts.

4.1 *Asım*

The word "Asım" comes from Arabic language and has multiple implications such as "savior," "protective," "afraid of sin and forbidden things," "abstinent," "religious," "with morals," and "incorrupt" (Sami, 1901). Ersoy's name for his ideal generation, "Nesil," is rooted in the Islamic history which has two meanings: generation and lineage. Generation refers to the future while lineage focuses on the roots of *Asım*. Ersoy's *Asım* is often considered to be a prominent historical character in the early Islamic history. Three aspects of *Asım* will be addressed in this chapter: it is the title of a chapter in Ersoy's collection, the main character in the chapter who is a young man, and a historical figure who is often interpreted as an early Islamic figure.

4.1.1 Asim, a Historical Figure

According to Rustam (2013), there are three ideas about Asim's identity. First, Asim was the name of a student whom Ersoy's father taught. Ersoy liked his personality, in terms of similarity with the Asim generation and considered using his name for his poem's title and main character. Second, Asim was an imaginary character, and he is the model and ideal youth in Ersoy's imagination. Third, Asim was a historical character who lived in the early Islamic history and was either one of the companions of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) or the son of one of them.

There are three prominent figures in the early Islamic history who possibly inspired Ersoy when he chose the name Asim. First one was a companion of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) called Asim ibn Thabit (n.d. - 625). He was one of the first Muslims in Medina known by his heroism and talent in combat. He served as an archer in the first two big battles of Muslims against Meccan pagans in the Battles of Badr (624) and Uhud (625). After his involvement in the battles, he fell into an ambush when he was sent to several tribes in order to expand the message of Islam and was killed by the Meccans (Rustam, 2013).

The second possible historical model was the son of the second caliph Umar, Asim (628-689). He was often praised for his generosity and politeness as well as being a poet. And the last possible historical model is the caliph Umar's great grandson Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz (680-720) who also served as caliph for three years until he died. He is known for his great leadership and interest in the education of Muslim society. Within three years of ruling, he was able to resolve disruption among Muslims. Also, he started an initiative to pay salaries to scholars from the state budget and appoint them as teachers to educate Muslims (Rustam, 2013). Among the three historical figures from the early Islamic history Asim ibn Thabit is the most likely inspiration for

Ersoy's use of the name Asım for his ideal youth. Whether or not any of these historical figures is the actual model for Asım, it is clear from Ersoy's deliberate choice of a name that resonates with these key figures in Islamic history that he intends Asım as a model for Turkish youth.

4.1.2 Asım, a Book of Poetry

As in the previous chapter, Ersoy wrote a total of seven books of poetry. Asım was his sixth book. He later brought all his poetry books together in *Phases* and located Asım in the sixth chapter. Ersoy started writing Asım on September 18, 1919. The book has a total of 2,292 lines in it. Ersoy finished writing the poem in five years, and it was first published in 1924 (Düzdağ, 1996). Nurettin Topçu defines Asım as a "poetic novel." According to Topçu, Asım is a project that combines religion and nation (Şahin, 2015).

Historically, Ersoy wrote Asım after World War I, during the Turkish independence war and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. The years when Ersoy worked on Asım were the time of invasion of the Ottoman lands, and it was just before he was preaching at Zağanos Paşa Mosque in Balıkesir. Ersoy was not alone, however, in seeking solutions for the awful condition of Muslims and in particular Turkish society. According to Oflaz (2017), some scholars such as Tevfik Fikret blamed Islam for the social-political and moral problems of Turkey and advocated the idea of following and replicating what the Western world did. However, there were others, including Ersoy, who agreed that Turkey should import science and technology from the West, but the religious and cultural traditions must be maintained in order to save Turkish society. Fikret's ideal youth, Haluk, was in many respects competing ideal to Ersoy's Asım (Oflaz, 2017).

Asım is written with a very strong national lyricism in a poetic form. He described intellectual and patriotic Turkish youth in the poem. The Turkish youth that were symbolized

with Asım are the youngsters who protected the holy values of the nation and built the future of Turkey as religious society (Amanoğlu, 2009; Aliyeva, 2013).

Asım starts with an introduction in which Ersoy describes the main characters, the general tone of the poem as well as the time and place for the events in it. He also uses a term "today's generation," which can be considered as an undesirable generation by Ersoy because of their lack of attention to family-friend ties.

It should be noted that there are several clues in *Asım* which reminds its audience that the setting of the poem is predominantly traditional Turkey. For instance, in the conversations between Köse Imam and Hocasade, Köse Imam keeps teasing Hocasade (Ersoy himself), by making fun of both his level of knowledge and poetry. For Köse Imam, Hocasade cannot reach his father's level in knowledge nor can he match poets like Sadi and Süleyman Çelebi. Furthermore, the son of Hocasade's serving tea for them as well as men and women sitting in separate rooms are other points that serve as signs of a traditional Turkish family. Ersoy exhibits *Asım*'s scenes as parts of his own life. So, this is a sign that Ersoy at least does not have problem with traditional Turkish family, instead he builds his ideal generation on the foundations of this traditional family.

In the beginning of *Asım*, Ersoy provides a short discussion about the reputation of poets and poetry. Köse Imam does not appreciate poetry in general because he believes the majority of poets are not sincere people. In his mind they do not hesitate to promote unacceptable entertainments such as consuming alcohol, or they even wrote poems to present some vile, immoral people as heroes. However, Hocasade does not agree with him because the Prophet praised poetry as an expression of wisdom. Hocasade's supportive approach to poetry is shared by Ersoy. Ersoy implicitly mentions that he does not write his poems with aesthetic motivations;

his poetry serves for truth. Thus it is clear that Ersoy's Asım is not a work of art for art's sake but rather a work of art with a political purpose: presenting an ideal of the educated youth that could lead Turkish society out of the moral social crises confronting the nation during the transition from the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic.

4.1.3 Asım, the Main Character in Ersoy's Poem

Thus Asım is an ideal character for Ersoy. Ersoy established his ideal generation's attributes in Asım's personality. It is important to note that there are several aspects of Ersoy's ideal generation, Asım, that point to him to being a religious Muslim. First of all, whether he is a historical, contemporary, or imaginary character, Ersoy's Asım has a religious character. Second, inspirations from historical figures in the Prophet's time implicitly refer to companions of the Prophet (pbuh). Furthermore, the word "asım," as mentioned in the Quran, has the same meaning that Ersoy pointed out in Asım. As written in chapter 11-43 in the Quran:

[Son of Prophet Noah] said: "I will take refuge on a mountain **to protect** (ye'simuni, verb form of Asım) me from the water." [Noah] said, "There is no **protector** (Asım) today from the decree of Allah, except for whom He gives mercy" ("11/43" n.d.).

Ersoy often highlights Asım as savior in the poem. These are some examples showing his depiction of Asım as a savior

Now let's make an effort to **save**, we would save (Ersoy, 2013; 791).

Our purpose is of course **saving** that generation (Ersoy, 2013; 798).

Because the justice stays in danger under tyranny,

Nothing else but striving necessary to **save** it (Ersoy, 2013; 811).

In order to **protect** the aggrieved who was abused by one with power.

I have no fear of any power in that fight. All powerful are weak before my eyes (Ersoy, 2013; 813).

Who will **save** us, is there another generation?

- Asım's generation, my teacher! (Ersoy, 2013; 823).

How great you are, your blood is **saving** the oneness... (Ersoy, 2013; 827).

These lines are from Asım, which Ersoy wrote to underscore Asım's most important aspect, a savior or protector. These references often indicate justice, religion, and the need for solutions to individual and social problems.

A desirable personality trait of Asım is altruism, which is presented several times in Köse İmam and Asım's personalities. When Köse İmam has to deal with both his own problems and someone else's problem at the same time, he gives the priority to the latter. For example, once Köse İmam needs to talk with Hocasade about his fears about Asım. However, at that time, one of his neighbors has family issues and asks advice from Köse İmam. He feels uncomfortable to start with his own fears while his neighbor needs his consultation. He ends up bringing his neighbor's problem to their conversation first, then he talks about Asım.

- Should I talk about my son's situation first? However,

It's ugly to start with it while my neighbor's problem needs attention

- Tell me, what is wrong with Asım? I am wondering...

- Let it wait, first let me tell you about my neighbor's issue (p. 697)

This is not the only example of altruistic character. Asım running from one battlefield to another in order to defend the country without even thinking about it when he is called is

another. Köse İmam, even though he is fearful about Asım's life, he is supporting his son to go. He tells Hocasade that "Now that my homeland's horizons are covered with martyrs... / it does not matter if Asım is sacrificed for the sake of the ones left behind (p. 853).

The very first problem Ersoy addresses in Asım is about a rich man who wants to marry his housemaid even though he already has another marriage. Köse İmam tries to persuade him to give up, however, he insists that he is not doing anything wrong because multiple marriage is a practice of the Prophet. So, his action is not to blame, on the contrary, he has to be complimented. Köse İmam does not help him to fulfill his plans; however, the rich man finds another İmam and marries his housemaid. According to Ersoy (2013) this story illustrates three problems: deterioration of family, misperception of religion, and ill-treatment of women. This can be considered an important sign that Ersoy's main problem is relevant to family, education, and religion. His philosophy of education often addresses religion and family. Ersoy utilizes education in order to save religion, Islam.

4.1.4 Characters and Discussions in Asım

Although there are several less important personalities mentioned in Asım, the main characters of Asım are Köse İmam, Hocasade, Asım, and Emin. As noted earlier, Ersoy created a dialogue in Asım, a debate between two fathers of sons about what Köse İmam's son should be. That fictional debate is, at the same time, between two education traditions: Köse İmam represents traditional Islamist perspectives while Hocasade's opinion is more modern.

Table 2. The Characters in Asım

Relations	Family 1	Family 2
Fathers	Köse İmam	Hocazade
Educational View	Traditionalist	Modernist
Sons	Asım	Emin

Asım's Hocazade is the real life Ersoy. Numerous points supports this statement:

Hocazade has interest in poetry. He is a veterinarian, and his father is a mudarris (Ersoy, 2013). Emin is his son in both real life and *Asım*. Ersoy does not mention Emin because he is 11 years old when Ersoy started writing *Asım*. Furthermore, Köse İmam is a real life person, Ali Şevki Hodja. He was a close friend of Ersoy. There are two separate poems mentioning Köse İmam: *Köse İmam*, and *Asım*. Ersoy dedicated *Köse İmam* to his close friend, Ali Şevki Hodja. In the poem, Ersoy (2013) addresses him as being “a great person, although he needs to improve his knowledge” (p. 248).

Köse İmam is a story style poem in which Ersoy tells about his visit to Köse İmam, their conversations, and his fame from having resolved family-related problems around his neighborhood. Köse İmam's personality in this poem and *Asım* are similar. In both, he is an opinion leader that people around him rely on for his talent in problem solving. A key difference between Köse İmam and Hocazade is that Köse İmam symbolizes the generation that lived during Abdulhamid II term and studied in madrasah while Hocazade studied in modern schools and is critical about the emperor.

While Köse İmam and Hocaade personify the two sides of the debate at the time—religious traditionalism or secular modernity—regarding the future of Turkish society, there is a third generation, Asım, that would synthesize the former two generations. This generation is symbolized with the name of Asım. Although Köse İmam and Hocaade are characters clearly described based on their differences from each other, Asım does not have such a clear distinction. This suggests that Asım is not a complete character, he represents an unformed potential to be affected by both Köse İmam and Hocaade as well as Western education. If this generation could be raised with a total religious manner, Ersoy suggests, the future of Turkey will be saved. Ersoy appreciates this generation as “Generation of Asım... I told you... Real generation / Look! They did not let their values be invaded, they will never let...” (Ersoy, 2013; 827)

In the long conversations between Hocaade and Köse İmam, Ersoy primarily depicts their conversations about Asım. Köse İmam, is not happy with him because of Asım’s assertive nature. Asım and his friends organized raids against bars, black marketers, and casinos. Asım further beats people who publicly eat and drink during the month of fasting. On the other hand, Hocaade keeps highlighting Asım’s positive, admirable sides during the conversation. He praises Asım as a perfect person in both ways. He is physically strong, healthy, and a handsome young adult. On the other hand, his personality deserves more admiration in Ersoy’s eyes. The combination of logical, spiritual, and intellectual capabilities makes Asım an excellent person. Asım is smart, sincere, brave, innocent, emotional, and polite (Ersoy, 2013; 837). Ersoy describes Asım’s physical attributes in a very detailed manner. The following is a small portion of Ersoy’s descriptions for Asım’s physical, emotional, and mental characteristics:

-Hoca, you can’t find equivalent to your son, even if you seek,

I've never seen such an excellent human.

What a great creation, Asım, he is like a sculpture!

If God is presented him to you like a permanent source, brave poetry,

You try hard to open his spirit and understand...

I guess, you see that boy wrongly, wrongly!

Did you think only the size of his chest huge?

Go inside of it and see how deep his heart!

(...)

You may think he has no feelings, however, check his spirit once.

What a great politeness, you will see when you check,

A woman's spirit might not be that neat.

Then, I don't have anything to say for his knowledge,

Everything he knows and learnt is strong.

His neck is large, yes, but he has also a healthy brain, (Ersoy, 2013, 837)

Asım never keeps silent when he interprets a situation as unjust. He immediately reacts bravely and boldly and tries his best to solve the situation by himself. As Ersoy (2013) noted, when Köse İmam and Asım were waiting for the ferry to go home from Üsküdar around 11 o'clock in the morning in the month of Ramadan (month of fasting in the Islamic calendar), one of the passengers blows the smoke of his cigarette in Köse İmam's face (considered seriously offensive) and asks: "You tell me, Hodja! / Why would we have to fast like animals?" (Ersoy,

2013, 833). Köse İmam's attempt to stop Asım was futile, as Asım stood up and slapped the guy in the face. This event illustrates Asım's rough understanding of religion and lack of tolerance as well as unlawful approach in unacceptable situations. Köse İmam tries to teach Asım to be patient and let the police and law enforcement officers do their jobs, but Asım does not listen to him.

Asım, we don't need someone's punch or another's;

However there is a need of law: Justice.

Give all the strength to law in order to apply the combination...

Unless, you are not a nation but a dispersed herd...

The country, you see, in a turbulence,

If you continue only with your feelings, you surely collapse it.

Yes, dear... The governor who govern the state with policeman spirit,

His place is under, not on the top of this planet! (Ersoy, 2013, 851).

Summarily, Asım is a person who combined physical, logical, and spiritual beauty excellently. He never closes his eyes to injustice and cruelty. He perseveres in his efforts, never gets silenced, and is capable of learning scientific and religious knowledge. There is no place for despair for Asım. However, he needs guidance to direct his moral passion in positive ways that will lead to good deeds.

Ersoy wholeheartedly believes that Asım will save Turkey from the awful situation described in the previous chapters: corruption, poverty, ignorance, immorality, etc. in Turkish society. The Asım generation showed their character during some battles and finally at the

Çanakkale Wars, a milestone in Turkey's independence war in which more than 200,000 Turks died only. They literally run from one war zone to another without showing any fear, fatigue, or reluctance. Ersoy (2013) calls the young martyrs who died in Çanakkale the Asım generation.

Asım's generation... I was mentioning... It was real:

They did not allow the enemy to touch their values and they will never allow.

Look around, martyrs' bodies on the mountains and rocks...

If it was not for "bowing", the heads would never fall front,

They are wounded and laying on the floor,

For one crescent (flag), my Lord, many suns are going down!

O soldier who fell down for the homeland,

It is worth if your ancestors came down and kiss your forehead

How big you are that your blood saves "Tawhid"

Only the lions of Badr were this much glorious. (p. 829)

These lines are Ersoy's tribute to hundreds of thousands of people who died in the Çanakkale Wars. Even though Ersoy did not explicitly declare whom he exactly wrote these lines for, his conception of Asım and repeated underlining of the educational side of him suggests that Ersoy is talking about the students who fought and died in the Çanakkale Wars. Ersoy highlights one more time the religious personality of Asım, claiming such courage only existed among the Prophet and his companions who fought in the Battle of Badr (624). Also, Tawhid is oneness of God. This reference also supports Ersoy's argument that religion could only be saved through education (Ersoy, 2013).

Ersoy's motivation to point out Asım's physical strength as well as his well-built body may be because of the emphasis and admiration of strength in Turkish society. Ersoy (2013) argues that the privilege of powerful is common in the world.

Look! The entire world, entirely, winners and losers

Who does not prize the power? Everyone does...

Whenever you are defeated, pity on yourself!

Justice of humanity is a myth, justice serves only for the reckless

Defeated ones are kicked out of court, because: they are weak! (p. 835)

One of Ersoy's most prominent messages in Asım is that a nation's true existence as well as its honor is strongly tied with its conservation of moral values. This message is mentioned multiple times, especially in Hocazade's words while he talks with Asım to convince him to go back to Europe and continue his education. He advises Asım to focus on learning only science and technology. On one hand, Asım already has the Islamic values to fulfill his moral needs, on the other hand those values are not contradictory with the science.

Nothing is revealed from the sky... All are raised from ground...

A nation either lives or dies with its own moral (p. 593).

Main reason for our collapse is the collapse of morality

There is only one way to get rid of it: our morality should rise. (p. 594)

Köse İmam is concerned about Asım's future. Because of Asım's aggressive personality and involvement in fights, his father stressfully stays up until midnight every day in order to see if Asım returns home alive. He feels desperate because Asım insists on resolving problems by

violence. So, Köse İmam asks Hocazade's help to give advice to Asım in order to change his attitude. Hocazade tells Asım about a debate between Muhammed Abdûh and Jamaluddin Afgani on bringing about change. Abdûh suggests the establishment of new madrasahs around the world, such as in Sudan, and sending many rising students like Afgani to extend their opinions worldwide. Hocazade likens Asım to Afgani who does not want to wait 20 years to raise an educated generation. However, he finds Abduh's approach more reasonable and advises Asım to calm down and improve himself (Ersoy, 2013). Ersoy clearly believes that the defense of Islam and the future of Turkey are educational rather than revolutionary projects.

Let's take a lesson from this example, what do you think, Asım?

You already understood my point, let's understand each other better:

I want a transformation, but like Abdûh...

Not like the street fighters who make themselves used by others,

Not like raiding against Sublime Porte, executing men.

Withdraw all of your friends from this, you return, too.

Don't walk openly, my son, take a hiding place.

If there is a possibility, turn back to Europe tomorrow (p. 861).

When Hocazade tells Asım about the criteria for a nation's existence and progress Hocazade imposes a mission on him. According to Hocazade, there are two forces required to improve the nation: marifet (science and education) and fazilet (merit, virtue). Marifet provides all physical-material causes and opportunities which lead a society to happiness. Fazilet is utilizing these opportunities for the society in order to produce goodness. Marifet and fazilet are

two wings of a bird, they support each other. A society shows progress only with both fazilet and marifet.

Because, my son, for the future of nations,

Two forces needed: marifet and fazilet

Marifet, first, will give happiness to the people

It carries all means, then fazilet comes,

Takes all the cumulated means, in order to

Utilize them for the sake of country's progress

If there is no power of marifet in a society,

It cannot rise by fazilet only, it gets weak.

Laziness that peculiar to the primitive ones settles in their nerves.

It gets accustomed to this stage

Let's say there is marifet, but no fazilet...

This creates innumerable calamities on societies

This is a wound that poisons the spirit of humanity

It's such a calamity: a lot worse than Black Death! (p. 863).

Ersoy's ideal generation, embodied in Asım, has to be equipped with both marifet and fazilet. According to Ersoy, the Muslim world in general, in particular the Ottomans, sank into a swamp of ignorance within their last three centuries because they failed in combining marifet and fazilet. That caused the Ottoman's lack of competition against the Western states.

We are the descendants of a great nation
that its bright past is full of fazilet, my son, however,
that fazilet did not get along with the progress of
science within the last three hundred years
it got worse when the society sank into ignorance (p. 863)

The strength in their body lost day by day,

...

We have to obey the Western world's orders;
Because of the lack of technic that makes nations superior.

We are deprived of the knowledge power of our enemy,

This insulting situation caused by that.

Also, because of the deprivation for centuries, today,

That fazilet is lifeless, senseless and still. (Ersoy, 2013; 863-865)

With Hocazade's words, Ersoy once more underscores two sides of the ideal generation: religious morality and science based education. Ersoy considers Islam as an everlasting source of morality for Turkish society. All the social problems Ersoy addresses in *Phases* are because of Muslims breaking away from Islam. So, he offers two steps: reviving Islamic values in society and gaining scientific knowledge.

You will see: The honor in this nation,

Leans to the longest and deepest roots. Then it

Has blessed water and it never runs dry: Islam religion.

(...)

Thus, don't give up, my son;

Turn your face to only science of the Western World.

Work hard with the other guys night and day;

Bring back the gone three-hundred years of science (Ersoy, 2013; 865).

At the end of the Asım chapter, Hocasade suggests to Asım that he continue his education in Berlin, Germany. He points to new scientific research being conducted there into the atom and nuclear power. Hocasade urges Asım not to lose time but to start his study abroad and implicitly advises Asım to study chemistry.

“-If the revolution way is only this way,

Go for it with words “Where are you, Berlin?”

Six months, one year study sounds very easy for you...

You suffered the worse for years, even by smiling!

Each passing days of yours equal to a whole life,

Arrive one day before and turn back one hour before.

The Eastern World waits for you to hug that time;

That time would be possible to achieve your goal;

Then, I would listen to you, Asım, for a longer time...

-We will go tomorrow evening.

-Really? Live long! (Ersoy, 2013; 867-869).

According to Ersoy, the Asım generation will serve as a bridge between the Muslim world and the West. Ersoy believes that fazilet—morality and virtue—which the ideal generation, Asım, already has will be sufficient for Turkey’s progress as a nation when it merges with marifet—scientific and technological knowledge—from the West. The Asım generation should bring Western science and technology and establish centers for scientific research. So, they will function as a bridge between the Muslim world and the West. Although Ersoy highlights transferring science and technology from the West, he does not talk about promoting Islamic values to the West. There are two possible reasons for that approach. First, Ersoy focused on saving the Muslim world only, so he disregarded the inevitable interrelations between his ideal generation and the Western world. Second, he already considered that point, so the bridge, Asım generation, will eventually serve for the interrelation with the West.

An Asım generation that is strongly tied to his roots, keeping his fazilet alive, and conscious should go not only to the West, they should also go wherever they can find the scientific knowledge. That’s how Muslims in general, in particular Turkish people will be able to close the gap between the East and West.

... from this point, my son, never give up

Look at only the science of the West

May you and your friends work hard days and nights

Acquire the knowledge that we have missed for three centuries

You all should drink from the fountain of science

and bring that profitable water to your homeland.

In order to revive the same fountains here

Your mind should work, my son, and be a canal in between (p. 865-867)

Ersoy was against imitating the West entirely. Ersoy (2013) argues that every nation has their own way of development. Also, imitating other nations often has destructive effects.

I think our intellectuals do not understand,

Every step towards progress

Depends on nations and societies themselves

Following the footsteps of another nation, often

has destroying effects on society. On the other hand

Every nation has their own direction in progress.

These lines provide us insight to understand Ersoy's intention when he insisted about bringing scientific developments only. He is very sensitive about cultural-religious identities of nations so he does not limit his point for only Turkish society. He insists that every nation should hold their *fazilet*—virtue—in order to survive. He implicitly makes an argument about objective scientific knowledge as not having cultural, national characteristics. It is universal. Scientific knowledge is open to everyone regardless of their background, nationality, religion, etc. Ersoy clearly believes in the complementarity of religious and scientific knowledge rather than the rejection of religious in favor of scientific knowledge increasingly common in the West or the Islamization of scientific knowledge that would gain popularity later in the Muslim world (al-Faruqi, 1982; al-Attas 1999).

Ersoy criticizes people in his time and points to problems of society and state such as injustice, lack of education, and misconception of religion, immorality, and the state's corruption. He further expresses his disturbance about the loss of religious officers' reputation in society. Hocasade makes an evaluation and thinks that it is because the religion officers misbehave.

Ersoy criticizes the dualism of madrasah and modern schooling under the Ottomans. However, his critique of this dualism is not one sided. He lets Köse İmam and Hocasade discuss about this problem. Köse İmam defends the madrasah. However, Hocasade claims that the madrasahs should be revised. Köse İmam argues that madrasahs should have priority while traditional schools in the educational system should be secondary. Hocasade responds that they both have lost their functions. Köse İmam evaluates arguments for the foundation of modern schools to replace madrasahs, but he thinks that this effort is premature and mainly imitative of the West. When Hocasade calls Köse İmam "reactionary," Köse İmam responds him with the following poem:

I can't clap my hands for tyranny, and I never like tyrants;

To make the new one happy, I can't swear to my past.

If someone attacks my ancestors, I even drawn him ...

-No, you can't!

-At least I dismiss him.

I can't pretend like a dog after a few degenerated;

I can't believe in the injustice for the sake of justice, even if I die.

I'm in love with independence, since I was born,

I never used golden chain as a leash.

If I'm good-tempered, that doesn't mean I'm obedient sheep!

Yes maybe my neck be cut, however, it never stands for pulling.

When I see someone suffers, my heart hurts,

I don't stop until the pain is gone even if I got beaten.

I can't say "Never care it, walk away", I really take care.

I smash or been smashed, however, I rise the justice up. (Ersoy, 2013; 769).

Asım's generation is identified as Ersoy's ideal in these lines. Its characteristics are first, protecting the history of Islam and Turkey and, second, not keeping silent in the face of injustice. Suffering every kind of things in order to protect justice is considered a high honor.

The relations among Asım's main characters Köse İmam, Hocaşade, Asım, and Emin predominantly refer to education. For example, Hocaşade's father is a madrasah scholar. Additionally, Hocaşade himself is a teacher. Moreover, Köse İmam is a student of Hocaşade's father. Hocaşade's son, Asım, is a student in Germany. Thus, the entire story in Asım is a discourse on education. Problems are often depicted as due to the lack of education. This lack of education is a result of poor development and maintenance of educational facilities based on contemporary needs and expectations of society. For instance, madrasahs kept the same curriculum, methods, and coursework with a little or no change for centuries which resulted in decreasing interest in education (Ersoy, 2013).

4.2 The Concept of the Educated Person in Ersoy's Asım

In *Asım*, there are four characters, Hocazade (Mehmet Akif Ersoy), Köse imam (Ali Şevki Hoca), Asım (Köse İmam's son), and Emin (Ersoy's son). Asım is the son of Köse İmam, Ali Şevki Hoca. Köse İmam is a former student of Hocazade's father, Tahir Efendi. Köse İmam and Hocazade characters are both educators while Asım is a college student who temporarily came back to Turkey because of World War I. Ersoy loves Köse İmam very much and builds his concept of Asım based on his opinions about social, political, and religious problems as well as his high morality, and patriotism. Ersoy's admiration of Köse İmam continues in his consciousness of history, technological developments, science, and civilization. Ersoy provides these characteristics and his opinions about them in *Asım* through numerous dialogues.

To flesh out Ersoy's conception of the educated person I will analyze three characters which, I will argue, constitute negative, marginal and clear cases of Ersoy's conception of the educated person. The negative case is articulated in Ersoy's observations about his time as well as his objections to Tevfik Fikret's ideal of a Westernized generation embodied in Haluk. The marginal case, on the other hand, is embodied in the *character Asım*, a character with positive and negative sides described in many discussions between Köse İmam and Hocazade. Finally, the clear case of Ersoy's ideal is articulated in his description of the *generation* he also calls Asım. In *Asım*, Ersoy provides opportunities for both Köse İmam and Hocazade to represent their opinions on the ideal generation.

4.2.1 Negative Case

It is important to note that Ersoy's criticism of his contemporaries, his society and intellectuals come from his very own observations. He made several trips to different parts of the Ottoman Empire and observed poverty, ignorance, immorality, and extreme departures from

Islamic values. He also witnessed Europe's developments through his trips. These trips helped him to compare the East and West, evaluate the conditions of Muslims, and think about solutions for the problems he observed.

Ersoy underlines two points in his conception of negative case. First is the people that lived in Ersoy's time. These are the Muslims in the society of Ersoy's time which suffered from religious and moral erosion and eventually suffered through diseases, hunger, poverty and ignorance. Second, although they inhabit the same society and same problems with Ersoy, there were scholars in the Ottomans period who sought solutions to these problems in copying the Western values. Ersoy's evaluation of such approaches is negative. Tevfik Fikret's ideal generation, Haluk, can be read as an example of this approach. Thus Fikret's ideal of an exclusively Western-educated, secular generation can be read as a negative case of Ersoy's ideal of the educated person.

Ersoy's first criticism goes to Muslim society. He appoints Köse İmam and Hocazade to express Ersoy's criticism of his own people. Köse İmam and Hocazade have similar complaints about the public in terms of the moral and religious erosion. Ersoy expresses the situation as follows: People have been disabled. They can't stand up. Even if they stand, their direction is unclear. If today's generation sees a person in a religious outfit, he is immediately defamed by various insults. Those who have traditional values are isolated. Ersoy emphasizes that some religious people are indeed beneficiaries. Ersoy continues describing the society in which he lives: They have been wrongly trained for 300 years, they have no hopes, no ideal, no future anxiety, they are senseless, and they do not want to fight against injustice (Ersoy, 2013).

Tevfik Fikret was a prominent poet and educator in Ersoy's time. Similar to Ersoy, Fikret offered an ideal generation to Turkish society in order to save them from the undesired social

economic and educational conditions in their time. Haluk was the only child of Tevfik Fikret. Tevfik Fikret wanted him to study hard science and be an electrical engineer, so he sent Haluk to Scotland for education. Haluk never came back to Turkey, also he changed his religion to Christianity. (Bahadıroğlu, 2016).

Similar to Ersoy, Tevfik Fikret described how the Turkish youth should be educated and in what environment. He wrote the poem *Haluk'un Vedai* poem for that purpose. He described Haluk as a living person; however, Ersoy's ideal youth symbolized with Asım never lived actually. Both Asım and *Haluk'un Vedai* describe the undesirable situation which the country was in. Tevfik Fikret suggested turning wholly to the Western World without any synthesis. Ersoy had a different point of view. Tevfik Fikret however believed that the science and technology from the West would develop the country (Orhan, 1986). Fikret planned to establish an educational institution for that purpose; however, he could not succeed because he could not raise the money to open such a school (Kenan, 2016).

According to Fedai (2011), Fikret's poems for children did not include direct religious or moral advice. Instead, they include advice about daily life, education, and social relationship. Fikret described Haluk as a hero of the revolutionary generation and savior of the country. Fikret showed the goals and ways to follow in order to save Turkey in the poems in *Haluk's Notebook*. Haluk would go to Europe and bring any kind of useful knowledge in order to make our country more modern and Westernized (Kaplan, 1986).

The main difference between Fikret and Ersoy's opinions is that Fikret thought that science is the only way and he literally idolized it. He sent his son Haluk to Europe to enlighten the Anatolian youth. He wrote poems oriented in the name Haluk for building a new generation. The handbook of the new generation called *Haluk'un Amentüsü*. The word Amentü (belief system) is

derived from Islamic tradition, but Fikret replaced the Islamic belief system with the scientific, modern worldview. On the other hand, Ersoy offered *Asım 'in Nesli* project as a rival to Fikret's *Haluk*. Ersoy hoped for the Asım generation because he admired one of the Prophet Mohammed's friends "Asım b. Sabit". The generation of Asım would walk in the path of the Prophet Muhammed's path and would be capable in Islamic sciences and loyal to his core values at all (Oflaz, 2017).

Ersoy's Asım was his reaction to Fikret's Haluk because of fundamental differences between Ersoy and Fikret. They both described the lack of development, education, and social justice in Turkish society. However, they headed towards totally different directions because of their diagnosis of the same problem. Fikret blamed religious life style for the problems of Turkey while Ersoy points out lack of education and moving away from religious values. So, Ersoy had negative opinions about Fikret's Haluk. He implicitly and explicitly criticizes Haluk project, and insisted revitalizing religious life along with scientific developments in Turkish society in order to save the nation. Thus Fikret's Haluk is a negative case of Ersoy's ideal of the educated person.

4.2.2 Marginal Case (Asım the Individual)

Asım as an individual is not a complete personality. Although Köse İmam represents traditional madrasah scholars with conservative tendencies, and Hocasade represents a more modern approach to education, Ersoy does not describe Asım as clearly as the first two characters. He has great attributes; however, he has a lot to learn in order to be the role model of the Turkish youth. Ersoy expressed the positive and negative features about Asım in the dialogues between Köse İmam and Hocasade. Köse İmam complains about Asım in general, especially because of his impulsive nature even though he is implicitly approving him as father. His complaints are in the marginal attitude of Asım. Hocasade, on the other hand, highlights the

positive character traits of Asım. Hocazade's positive opinion comes from his admiration of Asım.

As mentioned earlier, the positive characteristics of Asım are generally expressed by Hocazade. It is possible to point out the positive characteristics of Asım as physical, spiritual, emotional, moral and intellectual. On one hand, Asım is a young person with physical and mental health, on the other hand, he is faithful, knowledgeable, and well-mannered. In addition, Asım is a person of good character, independent, just, full of hope, enthusiastic, hardworking, trustworthy, and patriotic (Ersoy, 2013).

Asım does not have negative attributes in Ersoy's eyes. Instead, he has some shortcomings that causes him to make mistakes. Those shortcomings should be fixed by education. Ersoy makes Köse İmam speak about Asım's shortcomings. Köse İmam asks Hocazade to advise Asım because he has some complaints about him. There are several incidents that illustrate his shortcomings. Once, Asım attacked those who mocked Ramadan and fasting. In addition, Asım and his friends raided the taverns and threatened the gamblers. Furthermore, Asım attacks the night time entertainers. Asım forcefully takes money from gamblers and distributes the money to orphans.

Although these are not desirable behaviors for Asım, he has his own justification for his actions. Asım defends himself in this way: how will people be tolerated in pubs and casinos, when people are hungry and poor? No one has the right to say anything if they have fun in a modest manner. However, they do not care about the mourning of their neighbors, "No more!" Asım is passionate in his defense of traditional moral virtues—fazilet—but he has much to learn.

The question about what Asım should learn has different responses from Köse İmam and Hocazade. Through their dialogue, Ersoy explores different opinions, traditionalist and

modernist, on education. Köse İmam's expectation from Asım is as follows: Asım will be in harmony with his history, culture, society, and religion. Asım is not cowardly and timid, but he is contentious. Asım will defend the independence of the nation and religion against the oppression and domination of the West, protect its honor and even sacrifice himself for them if necessary. Hocazade's opinion is not fundamentally different from Köse İmam's. However, his slight difference comes from his addition, learning Western science, marifet, and developing his society by merging it with Islamic virtues, fazilet.

4.2.3 Clear Case (The Asım Generation)

Ersoy has two separate conceptions for Asım as an individual and a generation. As an individual he has admirable qualities but he also has important shortcomings. Asım has to fix his imperfections through Western education in order to be Ersoy's ideal generation. Thus the Asım *generation* has numerous great features that provide ground for acquiring moral values and scientific knowledge. According to Ersoy, the Asım generation is a symbolic name for Turkish youth molded by Islamic values. Asım's first and foremost duty is to save the nation and religion, then he will lead the country to more a developed and advanced stage in the future.

Asım as a generation is an ideal for Asım as a person. Ersoy's ideal generation has some attributes that the individual Asım already has. He is mentally and physically healthy, faithful, wise, hopeful, hardworking, and sensitive. His altruism and emotional depth are especially recognized by Ersoy. Asım comes back from Berlin, where he was a college student, to serve in the army in battle of the Çanakkale with no hesitation. Ersoy appreciates his bravery and altruism with referencing the appreciation of the Prophet (pbuh). Ersoy highlights that these attributes help the individual Asım to serve as a model for ideal generation. Asım shows success in

fighting against the enemies of his society in World War I. He does not hesitate fighting against ignorance which is another enemy of the Muslim society according to Ersoy.

According to Ersoy, a nation needs two powers to rise: marifet (science and education) and fazilet (value, virtue). Marifet provides all the material causes and opportunities that lead a society to happiness. However, only with fazilet can those material opportunities can be utilized to produce goodness for society. Ersoy considers marifet and fazilet similar to two wings of a bird, their existence and cooperation are necessary to fly. A society's only way to show progress is marifet and fazilet. Ersoy suggests that the lack of either causes serious problems for a society.

At the end of Asım, Hocazade advises Asım to go back to Berlin in order to continue his education. His advice to study abroad is very important because it is a fundamental task for Asım in order to save Muslim society from undesirable conditions. Also, Asım would save Islam from the attack of ignorance, immorality, and misunderstanding through education in both religious and scientific inquiry.

Ersoy's observations about the Ottoman society and his contemporaries' approach to the solution of social problems served as a starting point for him. His conception of the negative case addresses poor, uneducated, and broken Muslim society as well as attempts to get rid of religious virtues in order to fix those problems. Furthermore, his marginal case conception underlines different aspects of individual Asım. He has positive attributes as well as some shortcomings; however, he has great potential to be special. Ersoy builds his ideal generation on the foundation of those good attributes. Ersoy's clear case points out his expectations from Asım as a generation. Ersoy has a journey from individual Asım, marginal case, to Asım generation, clear case and science based Western education is the means for that ideal. In other words, individual Asım has fazilet; however, he needs marifet in order to realize Ersoy's ideal generation. Thus

Ersoy's ideal of the educated person is oriented by passionately held moral virtues grounded in traditional Islamic values, equipped with a thorough understanding of modern science and technology, and motivated by a love of country.

4.3 Philosophical Presuppositions of Ersoy's Ideal of the Educated Person

According to John Dewey (1916), philosophy asks “what the known demands of us.” Philosophy, which is simply a more rigorous and refined application of how we think, begins with a “felt difficulty,” or problem, and concludes with “something to be tried.” In other words, philosophy begins and ends in the real life of human experience. Thus Ersoy's *Asim* is a work of philosophy, even though it is not written in traditional philosophical discourse. In the remainder of this chapter then I intend to translate Ersoy's poetic discourse into a more traditional philosophical discourse in order to articulate the aims and content of the philosophy of education implicit in his ideal of the educated person and explore its implications for related concepts such as the teacher, student, school and family. In doing so, I hope to contribute to the articulation of an indigenous Turkish philosophy of education that offers insight into “something(s) to be tried.”

Ersoy conveys his philosophy of education in manner not dissimilar to Plato. Plato's *Republic* is written as dialogues. Similarly, Ersoy expresses his educational philosophy through the dialogue between Hocasade and Kose Imam in his poems. Ersoy's starting point for his philosophy is addressing social, individual, moral problems in Muslim-Turkish society, in other words, what the known demands of him. Thus, his main characters inquire into the reasons for the problems facing Turkish society and explore different arguments for resolving them. These dialogues then offer insight into key tenets of Ersoy's philosophy of education.

4.3.1 Rejects Dichotomization of Knowledge and Morality

The first of these tenets is Ersoy's rejection of the dichotomization between knowledge and morality, is and ought characteristic of the Western science of his day. He offers two terms marifet and fazilet. Fazilet refers to the everlasting moral values of Islam while marifet can be recognized as knowledge about the physical world itself and any knowledge produced by scientific inquiry. Islam does not only provide Muslim societies with fazilet, but it also promotes pursuit of marifet wherever it can be found. According to Ersoy (2013), fazilet can only flourish with the help of marifet, and fazilet can only find direction from marifet. Belief and scientific knowledge are not opposite to each other. One completes the other and helps continuity and development of a society.

4.3.1.1 Gnosis vs. Episteme

The rise of experimental science in the late 19th and early 20th century caused the idea that morality had to be separated from knowing because it is considered as a threat to objectivity. This opinion offered a separation of moral values from scientific examinations because if the separation is not applied, then it threatens the objectivity of scientific findings. Therefore, epistemology and ethics or morality have to be separate. Beliefs about what is good, bad, etc. have to be set aside in order for scientific inquiry to be objective.

According to Davis (2009), there was no opposition between religious and scientific knowledge before the Enlightenment era. However, he points out that both religious and scientific knowledge shared important roles, and they both were considered essential. Gnosis and episteme were not initially seen as competing with each other. The general opinion was that they served different and non-overlapping purposes.

The key to their comfortable coexistence was a tidy distinction –a dichotomy- that assigned each its proper area of competence. The ancient Greeks flagged the distinction with the dyad *gnosis* and *episteme*. *Gnosis* -reference to mystico-religious belief and the word from which the French *connaissance* is derived -had to do with matters of existence and questions of meaning. It was associated with *poiesis*, the creation of forms and artifacts that were intended to sponsor creative interpretation. *Episteme* that is, everyday know-how that is based in a logical-rational mode of thought –was focused on practical matters around how the world works (p.26).

Thus Ersoy’s philosophy of education returns to this notion of the complementarity of *gnosis* and *episteme* characteristic of pre-Enlightenment philosophy. According to Davis (2009),

“Historically, different modes of representation were associated with *gnosis* and *episteme*. *Gnosis*, with its focus on the meanings of existence, tended toward more poetic genres and made use of such figurative devices as myth, parable, fable, allegory, personification, and metaphor-devices that went along with an acknowledgment that some things exceed human capacity to understand in explicit and direct terms. *Episteme*, more oriented toward practical, everyday matters, was more suited to linear chains of reasoning and literal expressions” (p. 27).

4.3.1.2 Priority of Episteme in Western Science

Davis (2009) argues that the modern era can be described as the triumph of the *episteme* over *gnosis*. The embracing of logical and rational thinking among the interrelated historical developments and the educated popularity of logico-rational thought among the elites supported the rapid expansion of formal science.

It made incursions into many aspects of the cosmos that had previously been seen as the purview of gnosis, such as the relationship of Earth to the rest of the universe. In effect, the comfortable co-existence of gnosis and episteme collapsed as prevailing cultural sensibilities began to shift from theism (the belief that God, the creator, intervenes in everyday life) to deism (the belief that God, the creator, set the self-determining universe in motion and no longer intervenes), agnosticism, and even atheism (p. 27).

Max Weber characterized the modern era with rationalization and intellectualization. Weber saw science as a vocation which serves for clarification of itself and interrelated facts about the universe. He argued that this is a fundamental difference from religious knowledge which is considered as a revelation.

Science is a *vocation* organized in special disciplines in the service of self-clarification and knowledge of interrelated facts. It is not the gift of grace of seers and prophets dispensing sacred values and revelations, nor does it partake of the contemplation of sages and philosophers about the meaning of the universe. (cited in Milligan, 1998; 89-90).

4.3.1.3 Priority of Moral Knowing Over Rational Knowing in Islam

Muslim scholars' view on the relationship between religious and scientific knowledge is that they see religious knowledge as a priority. Al-Farabi suggests that the progress of individuals to a perfect condition is the primary goal of education. According to Gunter (2006), al-Farabi makes a distinction between sciences: foreign and religious and prioritizes religious sciences over foreign.

Similarly, Avicenna advised that education has to promote deep faith. However, he did not disregard the importance of scientific and philosophical knowledge. His distinction offered a hierarchy of knowledge and put religious knowledge in a more important level than science and philosophy. Ibn Sina also underlined the importance of certain characteristics that teachers should have in order to realize the primary moral aim of education. “The teacher ought to be religious, honest, wise, fair, clean and dignified, know how to socialize and be familiar with children’s training and educational methods and their moral edification” (Ibn Sina, 1985).

Al-Attas (1978) argues that the goal of education is to raise good people with universal values. So, it has to aim at raising students with good behavior and a sense of justice. However, al-Attas observes that fact that Muslim world started missing the moral side of education while they focus on raising skilled workers. This tendency resulted in the lack of religious knowledge centered on the reality of God. Al-Attas (1978) argues that Islamic education cannot miss teaching about a person’s body, spirit and God which serves as a foundation of all religious and moral values. Al-Attas does not ignore physical side of human being. His approach advises to locate religious-moral values at the center of education while he welcomes teaching about physical side of a person. He underscores the fact that if some people learn about natural sciences a society can continue surviving; however, without spiritual-moral teachings that society is in danger.

4.3.1.4 Ersoy Asserts Complementarity of Morality and Knowledge

Ersoy’s understanding of morality and knowledge first and foremost is a rejection of the dichotomization of morality and knowledge. Ersoy repeatedly underscores the necessity of combining religious and scientific knowledge for social development as well as religious life. He is not alone in his approach in Turkish intellectual history. Said Nursi, for example, had similar

concerns with Ersoy about Turkish society as well as the Muslim world. He supported the existence of Western education in madrasahs in order to resolve backwardness and corruption within the Empire. Nursi strongly supported science and modernization in the light of the Qur'an. He promoted the combination of religious and modern sciences for the sake of reinforcement of the truth of religion. Nursi (2007) argues that

The light of conscience is religious sciences (*ulumu-diniya*). The light of mind is modern science (*funun-u-medeniya*). Reconciliation of both manifests the truth. The students' skills develop further with these two sciences (*ulum-u-diniya* and *funun-u-medeniye*), but when they are separated, superstition from the former and corruption and skepticism from the latter, are born (p. 507).

Nursi had a university project in the Eastern side of Turkey, in the city of Van called Madrasatu'z-Zahra. He suggested teaching both religious and modern science in this madrasah. He also required three languages in the education for that specific location: Turkish, Arabic, and Kurdish. He argued that Arabic should be mandatory, Turkish is necessary and Kurdish language is suggested. Arabic language would help to understand religious texts while the Turkish language would help students to access Turkish resources for different ethnicities. Kurdish language is offered because the local community language is Kurdish.

Ersoy's *marifet* and *fazilet* conception has similarities with Nursi's conception of religious and modern sciences as lights of conscience and mind. In both approaches, the scholars require religious and scientific knowledge in order to realize the goal they suggest to reach for their society. Ersoy's *fazilet* corresponds to Nursi's *ulumu-diniya* and *marifet* corresponds to *funun-u medeniya*.

When Hocazade tells Asım about the criteria for a nation's existence and progress Hocazade imposes a mission to him. According to Hocazade, there are two forces to rise a nation: marifet (science and education) and fazilet (merit, virtue). Marifet provides all physical-material causes and opportunities which lead a society to happiness. Fazilet is utilizing these opportunities for the society in order to produce goodness. Marifet and fazilet are two wings of a bird, they support each other. A society shows progress only with both fazilet and marifet.

4.3.2 Affinities with Pragmatism

While the dichotomization of gnosis and episteme was a major trend in the post-Enlightenment philosophy of the West, a trend accelerated by the rise of experimental science (Davis 2009), Turkish thought in the time of Ersoy held to the complementarity of gnosis and episteme, fazilet and marifet. Turkish thought however was not alone in questioning the tidy distinction between moral judgements and knowing. American pragmatism, which was reaching the height of its development in the United States at roughly the same historical moment, also challenged this distinction (Rorty 1980). So, while my objective in this dissertation is to begin to articulate a distinctively Turkish philosophy of education rather than import a ready-made Western philosophy, I think it is useful to briefly compare Ersoy's thought with pragmatism. Since pragmatism gave rise to perhaps the most well-known philosophy of education of the 20th century in the work of John Dewey, the comparison—I am making no claim of direct influence—may help to tease out, hermeneutically, key elements of Ersoy's philosophy of education.

Ersoy's attempt to establish a generation combining both religious morality and scientific knowledge is not his ultimate goal. Ersoy's purpose for creating such a generation is that they will be equipped with marifet and fazilet in order to protect Islam against ignorance and preserve

the Turkish nation. Ersoy put so much emphasis on fazilet as a foundation and starting point for a sound society. He is against any cultural influences from a different worldview because he firmly believed that a culture has its authentic characteristics which benefit only its owners. His rejection is to protect the Turkish-Muslim culture built over centuries. In this attempt to revitalize the Islamic fazilet and merge it with the Western marifet Ersoy is similar to one of the early figures in the development of pragmatism, Ralph Waldo Emerson. According to Cornel West (1989),

The organic intellectual activity of Emerson serves as a useful prehistory of American pragmatism not only because he prefigures the major themes (power, provocation, personality) and crucial motifs (optimism, moralism, individualism) but also because Emerson creates a style of cultural criticism which evades modern philosophy, deploys a set of rhetorical strategies that attempt to both legitimize and criticize America, and situates his project within and among the refined and reformist elements of the middle class-the emerging and evolving class envisioned as the historical agent of the American religion (p.40-41).

4.3.2.1 Ralph Waldo Emerson

Like Ersoy, Emerson was a poet, essayist, religious thinker and passionate public intellectual who argued for a distinctively American culture that did not slavishly imitate European tradition. His poetry conveyed a sense of unifying, transcendental values that might provide a spiritual basis for American democracy. West (1989) argues that Emerson heralds American pragmatism in the subjects of his writings such as “individualism, idealism, voluntarism, optimism, amelioration, and experimentation” (p.35). Emerson’s interpretations of power, provocation, and personality deeply affected the emergence of American pragmatism

through their content and manner of his discussions. Ersoy's discussions, subjects, solutions about Turkish society and its problems did not aim at affecting the Western world; instead, he was trying to utilize his own society's resources to feed the ideal generation. Similar to Ersoy, Emerson did not look for a change or replacement for modern philosophy; instead, he ignores it.

Emerson's alternative to modern philosophy was neither to replace it with a new philosophical problematic nor to deny it by means of a strict and severe skepticism. Rather he evades modern philosophy; that is, he ingeniously and skillfully refuses: (1) its quest for certainty and its hope for professional, i.e., scientific, respectability; (2) its search for foundations. This distinctly American refusal is the crucible from which emerge the sensibilities and sentiments of future American pragmatists (West, 1989; p. 36).

The period of Ersoy's life shares similarities with Emerson's in that they are both writing in historical periods characterized by the collapse and rejection of old cultural habits and the struggle of distinctively new ways of living and thinking to be born. They both assume the importance of a national-spiritual ethic as an organizing principle of that ethic, and they both turn to poetry, essays and cultural criticism to articulate that ethic.

4.3.2.2 John Dewey

Similar to Ersoy's rejection of a dichotomy between marifet and fazilet in terms of following one or the other, John Dewey rejected the epistemology/ethics split. Dewey argued that knowledge is a byproduct of the pursuit of purposes. Purposes are moral/ethical choices: The knowledge acquired by a community in a particular time and place is a result of the decisions made about which purposes are more worthy of pursuit than others (West 1985). Therefore the acquisition of knowledge is guided by moral judgements. Dewey, however, was convinced that

science was the surest road to the improvement of society, not religion. He was very suspicious of religion because he was afraid it would block scientific inquiry.

There is but one sure road of access to truth—the road of patient, cooperative inquiry operating by means of observation, experiment, record and controlled reflection (Dewey 1934, p. 32).

The objection to supernaturalism is that it stands in the way of an effective realization of the sweep and depth of the implications of natural human relations (Dewey 1934, p. 80).

4.3.2.3 *Richard Rorty*

According to West, (1985), Rorty was trying to overcome the Western philosophical tradition. His solution was to keep distance against its “ahistorical philosophical notions of necessity, universality, rationality, objectivity, and transcendentalism” (p. 262-263). Instead of the stated philosophical notions, he offers historical conversations about “transient practices, contingent descriptions, and revisable theories” (p. 263). West (1985) underlines Rorty’s position against the privileged role of philosophical discourse in resolving intellectual disagreements.

Rorty strikes a deathblow to modern North Atlantic philosophy by telling a story about the emergence, development, and decline of its primary props: the correspondence theory of truth, the notion of privileged representations, and the idea of a self-reflective transcendental subject. Rorty's fascinating tale –his-story– is regulated by three Quine-Goodman-Sellars shifts which he delineates in detail and promotes in principle, the move toward antirealism in ontology, the move toward anti-foundationalism in epistemology and the move toward dismissing the mind as a sphere of philosophical inquiry.

Its result is a form of pragmatism because the claim is that evolving descriptions and ever-changing versions of objects, things, and the world issue forth from various communities as responses to certain problematics, as attempts to overcome specific situations and as means to satisfy particular needs and interests. To put it crudely, ideas, words, and language are not mirrors which copy the 'real' or 'objective' world but rather tools with which we cope with 'our' world (West, 1985; p. 263).

Rorty's rejection of metaphor of knowledge as a mirror of nature—a metaphor central to post-Enlightenment philosophy and science—led him—one of the most important philosophers of the latter half of the 20th century—to turn from formal philosophy to the humanities and literature. Without a privileged route of access to what is really real—Dewey's one sure road to truth—we are left with the stories they tell to explain the choices they make, stories that have an internal coherence but which are not necessarily shared by others who have different stories to tell because they have made different choices (Rorty 1989). These stories are our only means of understanding them.

When the notion of knowledge as representation goes, then the notion of inquiry as split into discrete sectors with discrete subject matters goes. The lines between novels, newspaper articles, and sociological research get blurred. The lines between subject matters are drawn by reference to current practical concerns, rather than putative ontological status.

Once this pragmatist line is adopted...one can emphasize, as Dewey did, the moral importance of the social sciences (Rorty 1982, p. 203).

Thus Ersoy shares two important characteristics with pragmatism: the inseparability of moral choices and knowledge acquisition—*marifet* and *fazilet*—and the function of imaginative literature as a vehicle for framing, articulating and criticizing those moral choices. However, unlike the mainstream of pragmatism, he wants to hold on to traditional religion—in his case Islam. One contemporary pragmatist philosopher and public intellectual who makes a similar choice is Cornel West, who articulates what he calls “prophetic” pragmatism (West 1989).

4.3.2.4 Cornel West

Cornel West highlights pragmatism’s “evasion” of epistemology centered philosophy—that is its attempt to mirror nature—as an important development that emphasizes the democratic search for solutions to social problems defined through moral choices rather than a search for the truth. He criticizes the pragmatist tradition, however, for failing to recognize that most people in the world still frame their moral choices within religious traditions. This suspicion of traditional religion makes pragmatism politically weak.

The culture of the wretched of the earth is deeply religious. To be in solidarity with them requires not only an acknowledgement of what they are up against but also an appreciation of how they cope with their situation. This appreciation does not require that one be religious; but if one is religious, one has a wider access into their life worlds.

Yet since the Enlightenment in eighteenth-century Europe, most of the progressive energies among the intelligentsia have shunned religious channels. And in these days of global religious revivals, progressive forces are reaping the whirlwind. Those of us who remain in these religious channels see just how myopic such an antireligious strategy is. The severing of ties to churches, synagogues, temples and mosques by the left intelligentsia is tantamount to political suicide...(West 1989, pp. 233-4).

West highlights the way his own Christian faith frames the moral ideals that give direction to his social and political criticism as a public intellectual. But he also recognizes the ways in which religious beliefs often degenerate into absolutism and fundamentalism. But pragmatism's emphasis on the contingency of knowledge claims and the search for what works rather than what's true balances this tendency in religion. So West describes his position as *prophetic* pragmatism in that it accepts pragmatism's notion of revisable knowledge claims and experimentation in pursuit of moral ideals expressed within religious traditions (West 1989).

So, we might view Ersoy as an early Muslim prophetic pragmatist who recognized the usefulness of scientific and technological experimentation in pursuit of social improvements guided by moral ideals framed within an Islamic tradition. If this is a reasonable description of Ersoy's implicit philosophy, then perhaps some, but certainly not all, of the educational implications of pragmatism as drawn by Dewey (1916) may also be consistent with Ersoy's thought.

4.3.3 Continuity and Change

According to Ersoy there must be moral continuity and epistemic change. In fact, moral continuity does not mean that it should not change; Ersoy's point is that it must be fed from the same source, Islam, continuously. Even though epistemic change may affect moral values, they cannot change them out of a circle when they are fed from the source. Ersoy also argues that new knowledge does not necessarily negate moral truths as stated in Weber's claims. Furthermore, moral truths should not block the development of new knowledge which was the case in the late Ottoman madrasah. Openness to epistemic change and loyalty to moral tradition enables both modernization and cultural continuity.

4.4 Relevance to Turkish Concept

It is very important to note that Ersoy's understanding of humanity comes from the Quran 95/4. He emphasizes the importance of human beings by locating them at a higher level than angels:

You are not even aware of your own presence yet,

“I have no value” you say as human, however, if you could know...

Your value is higher than angels (Ersoy, 2013; 149).

In “Two Friend's Walk to Fatih,” Ersoy complains about his generation's disloyalty to their educational heritage. Ersoy describes historical mosque-madrasa relations as clinging to each other. The mosque represents God's unity, so it is located at the center of the külliye “mosques-madrasah building complex,” and madrasahs represent sciences surrounding the mosque. He talks about Suleymaniye mosque and madrasah in this poem describing religious knowledge as the core of Asım's education. In his view, education begins with moral and religious knowledge, while scientific knowledge comes second. The mosque-madrasah complex is a kind of sacred geography that reflects the relationship between moral/religious knowledge and secular knowledge in Islam.

Ersoy (2013) indicates madrasahs previously provided medical training, and parts of their buildings served as hospitals. However, the closure of the medical schools and prominence of coffee shops in them in later years shows the interest of people shifted from education to time wasting in coffee shops. Ersoy's thoughts on medical education relates to his observations about Turkish society in his time. People suffered illnesses, but there was not much medical attention available. In “Two Friend's Walk to Faith,” he provides a scene to illustrate how his nation

betrayed its ancestors by leaving great educational facilities empty. In Asım; however, he shows the consequences of the earlier situation.

Ersoy's approach to education is problem focused. He often follows pragmatic steps such as observing problems, discussing possible reasons for the problems, and offering his solutions to them. When he describes a problem, he does not hesitate showing pros and cons both for the subject. In a discussion about madrasahs, Hocazade complains about them as outdated and implicitly praises the new education institutions such as schools of engineering, medicine, and political sciences. Köse İmam however underlines madrasahs' being indigenous and non-imported as well as serving the society in many ways. He also responds to Hocazade with his criticism of new schools for being dependent on the West. Whenever a problem occurs in the country relevant to those areas, they always invite a European expert to fix it (Ersoy, 2013; 751-753).

According to Ersoy, primary education should be systematic and well planned as well as accessible for everyone. He even finds a discussion about the necessity of Mekteb inappropriate.

Education should definitely spread out,

If the citizens can read and write, opportunities are unlimited

...

Mektebs are necessary, do not lose time with even thinking about the contrary!

If there were Mektebs in our previous times,

There would not be riots sparked by a few crazy people in Albania. (p. 527)

He mentions the necessity of Mektebs in several other lines. All are referring the Mektebs as being well planned. They should also respond to the needs of the society in the current time.

Ersoy further suggests that there is a necessity of having shared goals among educational institutions.

To a mudarris who criticized a governor for opening Mekteb:

Have you raised a scholar who can give up on his head for the sake of truth?

Is it the only matter, just to criticize Mekteb?

Nothing comes out from empty promises; empty sieve, empty pot...

If your Mekteb is hungry, madrasah is hungrier...

Ersoy's educational thoughts also have many references to family-education relations, educational programs, the role of teachers, and fundamental principles of education.

4.4.1 Family, Education and Society Relation in Ersoy's Thoughts

According to Ersoy, education should be for families first. In *Köse İmam*, Ersoy highlights the century's main focus: science. He finds a relationship between the education of families and science. He further addresses the relation of freedom with science and family education. He sees them as a prescription to heal a sick nation.

You can go nowhere with this ignorance; look, we are in the age of science

My son, let your education start on families

Declaration of freedom is not sufficient

Make the society digest the idea of freedom, too (Ersoy, 2013; 261).

Ersoy (2013) repeatedly speaks of ignorance when discussing societal ills, including divisiveness, backwardness, disaster, and illness as well as family, society, and religion (p. 261, 290, 323, 336, 413, 415). Ersoy clearly sees ignorance as a religious, personal, and social illness.

He argues that religion is under the threat of ignorant people more than foreign enemies, and he sees more religious and scientific education within family and society as the way to treat this illness. According to Ersoy, families should raise optimistic generations who imagine a better future. In the family environment, religious beliefs should be imposed on children. Also, positive emotions should be transferred to children so that their skills can be developed.

4.4.2 Basic Principles in Education

There are several educational principles Ersoy advocates in his writings, including the beliefs that education should be science based, publicly accessible for everyone, and aiming at building an honorable and moral society. Moreover, education should promote self confidence in the society.

4.4.2.1 Being Science-based

Ersoy (2013) includes several references about his admiration for the Western states and Japan because of their scientific developments. He feels while the Western world is trying to dominate the sky, not only the earth, the Eastern world is lazy and undeveloped. Moreover, he believes if the situation continues, the Eastern world will be removed from earth. “Look at science and its products: Ships are crossing the oceans among continents, the trains are moving through regions. All of these examples are related to working very hard” (Ersoy, 2013; 489). Ersoy underscores the practical results of scientific efforts. Ersoy acknowledges that the source of the science is the Western world. Thus, Muslims immediately need to go to the West and learn science. However, he also stated that Muslims should not leave their own culture, which has strong ties with religion, in the process.

4.4.2 Accessibility or Education as a Basic Right

According to Ersoy, the real victory will come by raising the cultural structure of the nation, increasing the number of reader-writers, and increasing the number of educational institutions. Local schools (primary education) needs to be improved so that everyone can be literate. Ersoy argues that all social problems could be solved easily if the population was more educated.

Finally! The nation, for sure, must be strengthened from every side;

However, we should think about its foundation first.

Of course! Education should be widespread:

If the society can read and write, what can't we do? (Ersoy, 2013; 527)

Accessibility of education by everyone has key importance in Ersoy's understanding of education because of his observations on the Muslim world. He noticed that the level of literacy is too low in the Muslim world, which causes all the social problems, according to Ersoy. Ersoy (2010) argues that there were only several hundreds of people who could access books, magazines, and newspapers.

4.4.2.3 Building Society with Honor and Morals

In his poem "Uyan," Ersoy expresses his pride in the former days of Turks. Then he starts talking about the present time, so his voice changes to a sorrowful tone. He keeps repeating that his nation is responsible for the awful situation because of their common immorality. However, there is only one way to resolve the problem: rising moral side society. He further suggests that what makes the human superior than angels is not the materialistic side but spiritual side, morals. Ersoy indicates its importance as follows:

Neither knowledge nor conscience is the source of rising moral values;

Sense of honor in humans comes from the fear of God. (Ersoy, 2013, 581)

...

But I must express this holy event with a good phrase:

There is one way for victory: Our morals should rise (Ersoy, 2013, 595).

4.4.2.4 Giving Self-Confidence to Individuals

Ersoy correlates self-confidence with believing in God. By doing so, he calls on Muslims to be self-confident. Self-confidence is considered as a tool to be a religious person according to Ersoy (2013). Also, he chooses four virtues along with self-confidence: Iman (true belief), good deeds, truthfulness, and patience. “What a heart, effort, and self-confidence / This is the true meaning of believing in God’s aid / Here is the Quran by telling ‘There is no fear for them.’” Ersoy concludes “when the four comes together, there is not losing for you anymore...” (p. 813).

4.4.3 Role of Teacher in Ersoy’s Educational Philosophy

Believing that the future will be built by teachers, Ersoy considers them to be very important to society, and he shows his appreciation for teachers:

“He/She is your state, your holy, everything of yours.

Is there a bigger right about teacher?” (Ersoy, 2013, 757)

According to Ersoy (2013), there are four qualifications of teachers. They should be religious, moral, professional, and have a conscience. He argued that all these four are necessary, and a teacher is not acceptable without them. Ersoy agrees that sciences should be taught to children; however, teachers should attend to the holy values as well (Ersoy, 2013, pg.281-282).

Ersoy was not happy with teachers in his time. He felt the teachers of his time did not compare to those of the past.

No doubt, the nation should be strengthened in every field;

But they should consider the foundation before everything.

The education should be spread strictly:

If the society can read and write what can't be done?

Navy and army are obligatory needs,

However, even that is taught by teachers!

...

As we say the educators army, as if locust army they are

Just wait and see the disaster!

The one who claim "I'm Educator" should be religious;

With moral, then skillful and with conscience. (Ersoy, 2013, 527, 529)

According to Ersoy (2013), the teacher who would educate Muslims' children should be religious and raise a religious future generation. A teacher should know the sciences as well as their religion.

"Neither demand a screwy, nor retarded drifters!

One of them: Finds a large ox and load the earth on it;

The other: Shakes the earth by his kicks!

Our children don't need the one who goes with ox;

Or kicking the earth like the other one” (Ersoy, 2013, 529)

In Asım, Ersoy actually explains the imaginary Turkish youth under the name of Asım by touching upon various topics. Ersoy (2013) implies the characteristics of a teacher, his desired and undesired qualifications in a story. That story is about Köse İmam's visit to city of Konya. When he was there, he made his first visit to a town where a teacher was fired from his job. After he arrived at the town, he visited a mosque, and the crowd insisted that he give a sermon. He accepted their request, and gave a sermon there. He spoke about the benefits of education and knowledge and criticized ignorance. Then he criticized them because he found them ungrateful complainers. Traditionally, it is considered disrespectful to have a debate with a scholar in a mosque, so no one responded him.

When the time came for sleeping, one of the locals, Mestanlı Dayı, hosted him and he told the details of the incident on the way. Mestanlı Dayı told Köse İmam that they built the school because they felt desperate about the need for better education. Later, the government sent a teacher who was not acceptable in any condition. Ersoy (2013) does not give much detail about Mestanlı Dayı's personality. This strongly suggests that he was an ordinary Turk. So, his complaints and the details of their conversation can be considered as an explanation of expectations from teachers in Turkish society.

The teacher who was fired was described as clearly irreligious (never visited the mosque, no prayer, no fasting, etc.), unclean (smells of urine from not washing himself after urinating and does not clip his nails), asocial (had plenty of time, but did not want to communicate with the locals or even rudely stayed silent to their attempt to talk with him), arrogant, ignorant, and disrespectful of his own culture's tradition (entering houses without removing his shoes). There were engineers at the same time while teacher was there. They were non-Muslim but very

respectful, not publicly consuming alcohol. However, this teacher even spoiled them. After they met him, they started acting like him, so Mestanlı Dayı likened him to an epidemic and concluded, "I would rather see my child ignorant than taking education from him." (Ersoy, 2013).

4.4.4 Traditional versus Modern Textbooks and Educational Methods

Ersoy's approach on teaching methods and educational resources has similarities with John Dewey's traditional and progressive education comparison. Ersoy finds traditional resources inappropriate for children's level of understanding. In one of his columns, Ersoy criticizes textbooks for not being properly prepared according to children's level of development. Ersoy argues that their lack of suitability is in their language and subject, though he acknowledges some improvements in textbooks in the last decades of the 19th century.

Nowadays, I am seeing some reading and science books prepared for little children. Even I am having hardship to understand them. All right, how do my kids can understand or their teacher can teach from those textbooks. My dear readers, many of you have kids. Review your children's textbooks that they keep carrying and ask them what they have been studying. You will see by yourself that those little kids do not understand anything, the information they hold in their mind as if they have trust funds. We were stunned by this. Should we let those kids to resemble their parents? (Ersoy, 2010; 167)

In this quote, Ersoy mentions memorization when he addresses children's gain from their education. He warns families to pay attention for the outcome of the traditional education while he offers a solution to run a competition among scholars to prepare textbooks in every single field, religious and scientific courses. He advises the competition to be run by ministry of education. These new textbooks will consider kids' ages to simplify the language and content.

A couple months later, Ersoy expresses his excitement about an introduction to religious knowledge textbook written by Halim Sabit (1883-1946). This textbook is able to simplify complex subjects such as the attributes of God, which children only memorized in the past. Ersoy argues that not only do students need textbooks prepared according to their age, but teachers also need texts to assist them to be able to manage the teaching activities accordingly. However, there are many different courses so there is much to do. Ersoy (2010) suggests following:

All parents do not have time to educate their own child or money to hire a teacher to do so. Furthermore, ministry of education does not have such a power to raise such talented teachers who can build a teaching method to the contemporary needs. In that case, what is the right thing to do? Whoever is capable of writing textbooks for school kids prepared for their levels should write books. Those authors should write teacher editions of those textbooks in order to help them to know how to teach subjects of the books (p. 92).

Ersoy (2010) further argues that these textbooks and innovative approach to education helps students to avoid memorization. Also, it helps students to make inferences from their learnings.

Even though Ersoy's main work is poetry, his observations, the problems that he addressed through these observations, and his plan of action to resolve those problems demonstrate that his personality, life journey, and works deserve to be examined for insight into a distinctively Turkish philosophy of education. Ersoy's ability to speak multiple language as well as his job in government helped him to observe Europe, North Africa, and Middle East. These observations provided him with an opportunity to compare and analyze the West and Muslim world. In addition to his trips, Ersoy's effort to raise Asım is caused by the social, political, and moral-religious conditions of the Muslims in his time.

On one hand, *Asım* is an expression of nostalgia, on the other hand, he is the ideal generation to save the future of Muslim world. Asım's very first feature is that it is Ersoy's educational project. Asım serves as a model for the Muslim world; however, he is not complete. Ersoy completes him with the scientific knowledge that is produced in the West. Ersoy represents his passion for the Prophet's time, the Era of Bliss, and his dreams about the future through an educational project. When Ersoy's observations and evaluations about Turkish society as well as Muslim world are examined, it can be seen that there are similar problems: ignorance, poverty, clashes, and conflicts in Muslim world. Not only are his observations still true, but also his solution which combines Western and Islamic education is needed to resolve these problems.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

5.1 Overview

Philosophy of education and educational research have been examining how people learn and how teachers can teach more effectively throughout recorded history. Some of the most prominent issues include what education should aim to teach students, how educators teach them, when and where education should take place, and even who should be educated. Theories abound and trends come and go because education has strong ties to social, political, cultural, and economic life almost everywhere in the world and the impact on quality of life is universal. Likewise, religion has an undeniably high impact on much of the world's population, and religious thought can certainly influence thought on educational issues. Thus, the relationship between education and religion is worthy of being studied.

The role of religion in public education has long been debated in the Western and Eastern world. Western and Eastern philosophers of education tend to approach the issue differently in terms of disengagement or embracing of religious education. Weber (cited in Gerth & Mills, 1946) and Dewey (1908), for instance, had concerns about the involvement of religion in education while Feinberg (2003), Kunzman (2015), Milligan (2002), and Noddings (1993) argue that it is worth studying as a subject in education. Though such dissention began later in the Islamic world, Muslim countries have also struggled with the role of religion in education. In general, throughout the world, education has shifted from religion-centered to secular in nature. With the rise of modernity and science in the West, educational thinkers began to argue that religion should be excluded from government education in favor of science and reason.

Before the institutionalization of education, religion was in the center of education. While, in the West, the church was in the center of education, there was mosque-based education in the Islamic world. In the Muslim world, the dominant assumption about the role of religion in education has long been that religion is the point of education. However, Islamic values do not prohibit welcoming knowledge about the world and human life from outside sources. Farabi (cited in Rauf et al., 2013), and Ibn-i Sina, (1985) for example, supported a curriculum which includes both “religious” and “foreign” sciences. In addition, contemporary Muslim scholars such as Nursi (2007) and el-Attas (1978) argued that education should provide both religious and scientific knowledge.

In the Ottoman Empire, discussion about the role of religion in education did not exist until the middle of the 19th century. While the center of the Ottoman education system was madrasah-based education, the Ottoman Empire lost its superiority in military and economic fields, which led to some debates about religion’s role in education. In order to overcome these shortcomings, the Ottoman administration gave priority to military training. Western style educational institutions were founded in this period.

With the foundation of the Western style schools, a dichotomy emerged in education: Western and traditional school systems. Supporters of these two education systems began arguing against each other, which resulted in a polarization among the educated elite. While the madrasas were affiliated with the Sultan, Western-style schools were founded under the newly established ministry of education. Madrasa schools were structurally privileged both in raising their own instructors and providing job opportunities to their graduates in government. Western-style schools, on the other hand, held different views on both the training of their instructors and on how to employ their graduates. This situation was at the center of the discussions of

madrasah-schools in the late Ottoman period. The collapse of the Ottoman Empire, then the foundation of the Republic of Turkey by Ataturk, introduced pro West approach to education and prepared the end of madrasah school system in Turkey.

Ataturk and his allies who founded the Turkish republic imposed a top down pro-Western approach. In doing so, they expected to create a society resembling the West in its bureaucracy, military, education, as well as government. Thus, the Turkish constitution has many rules that are adapted from various European states. For instance, the Turkish educational system imposed an assertive secularism similar to what exists in some Western countries, particularly France (Kuru & Stepan, 2012). This strongly pro-Western approach and its popularity among the educated elite tended to discourage studies based upon Turkish history and experience.

When considering Turkish educational experience, however, it is really hard to identify a philosophy of education grounded in Turkish historical, cultural, or educational experience. It is no surprise that the European-American tradition in philosophy of education does not explicitly address Turkey, but Turkish philosophers have not systematically addressed education either. Throughout Turkey's history, which is only about 100 years as it is a new country, few, if any, scholars studied or published in philosophy of education. Turkish philosophers mainly specialized in ontology, ethics, political philosophy, theology, epistemology, philosophy of Islam, and philosophy of science. Moreover, the vast majority of this work in philosophy by Turkish scholars has focused on the European and American philosophical canon rather than describing or developing distinctively Turkish philosophies grounded in Turkish culture and experience. For instance, Cevizci (2011), Sisman (2007), and Sonmez (2011) studied philosophy of education. The main discussions in their works are Western-oriented philosophies of education.

Philosophy of education and educational research in Turkey have been affected by this tendency to Westernize. The Western view is so popular and dominant in philosophical and educational studies in Turkey that it might be possible to question whether there is such a thing as a Turkish philosophy of education based upon Turkish culture, reasoning, tradition, experience, and characteristics. But surely such inquiries are more likely to offer coherent educational policies as well as more effective solutions to the many social, economic and educational problems that Turkey has faced over the decades.

However, it is clear that there has been and cannot be any lasting, settled answer to this debate in either the Western or the Muslim world. Rather, the issues must be continually re-examined in the light of the relevant conditions and aspirations of particular societies and particular moments in their historical development. This dissertation contributes to the search for an intelligent theory of education for modern Turkey by exploring the ideas of one deeply influential Turkish intellectual—Mehmet Akif Ersoy (1873-1936)—at a key moment in Turkish history—the transition from the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic. The elucidation of Ersoy’s ideas on modern education and the role of religion in it is the first step in an effort to reconstruct and philosophically analyze the discourse on education and religion in the Turkish context and articulate a distinctively Turkish philosophy of education reflective of the unique mix of Islamic belief and secularism in Turkish society.

Even one century after claiming its independence, there is still no explicit Turkish educational philosophy rooted in the history, culture, and experience of the Turkish people. However, when one looks at the existing literature in educational philosophy, there is little or nothing on a philosophy of education that reflects Turkish culture, history, and experience. Thus, these resources provide little insight into Turkish ideals of the educated person. Rather, they

commonly include Western experience and discussions of Western philosophers of education. Although these are important resources, they do not share cultural, historical and empirical ground with Turkey. This dissertation has examined the lack of indigenous Turkish educational philosophy by analyzing and articulating the educational thought of a key cultural figure of the late-Ottoman/early Republican period of Turkish history, Mehmet Akif Ersoy.

Ersoy's importance has often been recognized by many scholars, so the studies about him vary widely in Turkey. Among those studies there are books, journal articles, master's theses, and dissertations studying different aspects of Ersoy. Moreover, many conferences and symposiums have been organized in Ersoy's honor. The studies and events highlight Ersoy's life, time, works, characteristics of the dialect, poetic personality, education, values, religion, Islam, ethics, and being a social figure. However, the majority of studies about him focus on his literary contributions.

In general, studies about Ersoy can be divided into three groups. First group studies are about Ersoy's religious side that focus on his tafseer works and many references he uses from the Quran and hadith. Within the studies of Ersoy's religious views is social analysis and political criticism as well as his role as a social figure during the collapse of the Ottoman and Turkey's independence war years (see Bacaksız, 2008; Kayhan, 2013; Şengün, 2007). Second, there are studies that examine Ersoy's poetry as a work of art, so they focus on literary sides of him (see Aydın, 2002; Elmas, 1997; Gökçek, 1995; Şeyda; 2011). Finally, there are studies focusing on Ersoy's educational thoughts (see Avcı, 2000; Çay, 2003; Özer 1991; Şenbalcı, 2009).

Turkey has a central system for graduate studies publishing. So, the Council of Higher Education (YOK) of Turkey publishes electronic copies of master's theses and dissertations on the internet (YOK, 2019) According to YOK, there are nine dissertations, one proficiency in art

thesis, and 56 master theses about Ersoy. Of them, 31 are conducted as part of the Turkish language and literature departments while 15 of them fell under the theology department. Education is the third field in terms of number of studies conducted about Ersoy with eight master theses on Ersoy's education. Sociology, philosophy, history, political science, and music have also been topics of theses and dissertations written about Ersoy (YOK, 2019).

Ersoy was a distinguished scholar known for his religious identity as well as his literary success. He not only kept his interest in the Quran alive throughout his life but also considered understanding and teaching the Quran as his duty. Ersoy applied the Quran to problems such as social and moral degeneration. Additionally, his recommendations for change and the development of Muslim societies were based from teachings in the Quran. Ersoy's educational background and the fact that he got his bachelor's degree in veterinary medicine did not discourage researchers to thoroughly examine him as a poet, religious scholar, and educator. Researchers often highlight Ersoy's proficiency in multiple languages, serving as a literature mudarris in Daru'l-Funun and editor-in-chief of popular magazines, as well as his membership on an education board, emphasizing his importance as an educator and poet. His appointment for interpretation of the Quran by the Turkish parliament was a strong sign that Ersoy was recognized as a very important and proficient religious scholar in Turkey.

While classical tafseer works study the Quran from the beginning and interpret it verse by verse, Ersoy preferred to combine several verses from different chapters based on their meaning and relevance to the topic he wants to write about. Examining him as a social figure, researchers have often focused on his expectations, aims, and opinions about religion, Islam, the Quran, ethics, youth, future, unity of Islam, social order, language, art, and Turkish thought by reviewing his sermons, columns, tafseer studies, and poems. There is also a considerable amount

of research focusing on forms and style as well as grammatical and artistic aspects of Ersoy's writings. These studies are because of the fact that Ersoy is widely recognized as a very important poet during the late Ottoman and early Republic era.

There is some research about Ersoy's understanding of education with some limitations. Such studies highlight the importance of education for Ersoy, the harmful effects of ignorance, places for formal and informal education, cultural problems, education techniques, and characteristics of the generations to be raised with educational activities.

Ersoy has a great reputation in Turkey's academia. The number of studies show the interest in Ersoy's thoughts on religion, society, literacy, education as well as his importance as a social figure. Although there are many studies focusing on Ersoy's literary sides, religious ideas, and being social figure, there are few studies focusing on Ersoy's educational thoughts. Studies examining Ersoy's educational thoughts often highlight important subjects of education in his understanding such as the harmful effects of ignorance, places for formal and informal education, cultural problems, and education techniques. They also try to define his educational thoughts by analyzing his works based on their similarity with some major educational philosophy movements such as perennialism, essentialism, progressivism, etc. (Emer, 2014; Baysülen, 2016). However, these studies are missing a philosophical approach to Ersoy's educational thoughts. A comprehensive analysis of Ersoy's educational thoughts grounded in philosophical, historical, and cultural foundations of Turkish-Muslim background is missing. Also, all of the studies in Ersoy's educational ideas are Master's theses. So, this study will serve as a leading study for future empirical studies focusing on Ersoy's educational ideas.

The primary approach of this study was to articulate a comprehensive account of Ersoy's educational philosophy that is hermeneutical. The root of the term hermeneutical comes from the

name Hermes, which refers to the mythological Greek figure who carries the messages of gods to people and interprets them because humankind cannot understand the message directly.

Hermeneutics refers to the art of interpretation and understanding. Originally, it was widely used as a technique for the interpretation of religious texts, but it has been developed since by some modern philosophers such as Wilhelm Dilthey, Hans Georg Gadamer, Friedrich Schlegel, Martin Heidegger, and Paul Ricoeur as a method of interpreting a variety of texts (Kavlak, 2004). Thus, the hermeneutical approach helps to better understand and analyze literary works, artworks, interviews, and theories. Hermeneutics helps people from two different worlds or ages communicate with each other. It also helps in figuring out the meaning of words and symbols that vary according to the time, place, and situation in which they are used. In fact, a text can include clues to meanings that are not even recognized by their authors or poets (Kavlak, 2014). Thus, there will always be a need for a method of interpretation called “Hermeneutics.”

When people directly communicate with each other, there is less of a problem in conveying the message to each other because it is possible to correct the misunderstanding from the first step. Moreover, because people use body language as they communicate face to face, the responsibility of the grammar of the language becomes secondary (Kavlak, 2014). However, people may make many mistakes in their interpretation of texts—written speech—when the conversation partner is not physically present to clarify communication through body language or additional information. In such cases, texts must be understood within their historical, geographical, political, philosophical, and cultural contexts. As Kavlak (2014) states, in the desert the sun is unfavorable term, but when we approach the poles, it becomes a favorable term.

Thus, there is a need for a technique to determine the meaning of words and texts that cannot be clarified through ongoing communications with their authors.

Poetry is often studied strictly for the rhythm, structure, sound, mood, etc. that constitute it as a work of art; however, poetry, like Ersoy's, clearly written for aesthetic and political effect cannot be effective when it is interpreted without considering the poem's time. Hermeneutics lends itself to this contextual understanding. It also requires the interpreter to consider multiple interpretations that the author may imply in the poem. The words Ersoy prefers in his poems are commonly symbolic and can carry more than one meaning, so it is unsurprising that Ersoy's poems are interpreted in many different ways by different interpreters.

Although Ersoy's poems are interpreted in different ways, they have maintained their position and influence on many Turkish scholars attempting to imagine a generation that welcomes modernity and Western values while blending them with Islamic values. The urgency of Asım sometimes diminished when times were stable, but in times of instability and crisis its urgency increased. People who were influenced by Ersoy waited for Asım's generation from one generation to another. Generations of readers of Ersoy's poetry have found Asım's generation compelling and have tried to fashion it into a coherent philosophy of education.

Because Ersoy is an important cultural and intellectual figure at a critical transitional time for Turkey, a transition from the Ottoman Empire to a modern secular state, he is an ideal figure to examine in order to understand the educational thinking in this critical point of time. He is also an important figure to begin a larger project of exploring indigenous Turkish philosophies of education. Therefore, this dissertation has attempted to elucidate Ersoy's ideas about education.

To do so it has asked the following questions:

1. What are the core/critical concepts of Mehmet Akif Ersoy's thoughts on education and how do they relate to one another? How does Ersoy conceive of the relationship between moral values—particularly Islamic moral values—and knowing as understood in modern science?
2. What does Ersoy's conception of the "Asım's Generation" reveal about his ideal of the educated person?

5.2 Findings

Ersoy conveys his philosophy of education in a manner similar to Plato. Plato's *Republic* is written as dialogues. Similarly, Ersoy expresses his educational philosophy through the dialogue between Hocasade and Kose Imam in his poems. Ersoy's starts his philosophy by addressing social, individual, moral problems in Muslim-Turkish society. His main characters inquire into the reasons for the problems facing Turkish society and explore different arguments for resolving them. These dialogues then offer insight into key tenets of Ersoy's philosophy of education.

Ersoy rejects the dichotomization between knowledge and morality that is characteristic of the Western science of his day. To explain the complementary nature of the concepts, he offers two terms: *marifet* and *fazilet*. *Fazilet* refers to the everlasting moral values of Islam while *marifet* can be recognized as knowledge about the physical world itself and any knowledge produced by scientific inquiry. Islam does not only provide Muslim societies with *fazilet*, but it also promotes pursuit of *marifet* wherever it can be found. According to Ersoy (2013), *fazilet* can only flourish with the help of *marifet*, and *fazilet* can only find direction from *marifet*. Ersoy believes a nation needs the powers of *marifet* (science and education) and *fazilet* (value, virtue) to grow and develop properly. *Marifet* provides all the material causes and opportunities that

lead a society to happiness. However, only with fazilet can those material opportunities can be utilized to produce goodness for society. Ersoy considers marifet and fazilet similar to two wings of a bird: their existence and cooperation are necessary to fly. Ersoy suggests that the lack of either causes serious problems for a society. Thus, belief and scientific knowledge are not opposite to each other; one completes the other and helps continuity and development of a society.

Ersoy's attempt to establish a generation combining both religious morality and scientific knowledge is not his ultimate goal. His objective is to protect Islam against ignorance and preserve the Turkish nation by creating a balance between two. Ersoy put much emphasis on fazilet as a foundation and starting point for a sound society. He is against any cultural influences from a different worldview because he firmly believes that a culture has its authentic characteristics that benefits only its owners. His rejection is to protect the Turkish-Muslim culture built over centuries. In this attempt to revitalize the Islamic fazilet and merge it with the Western marifet Ersoy is similar to one of the early figures in the development of pragmatism, Ralph Waldo Emerson.

Ersoy has two separate conceptions for Asım as an individual and a generation. As an individual he has admirable qualities, but he also has important shortcomings. Asım has to fix his imperfections through Western education in order to be Ersoy's ideal generation. Thus, the Asım *generation* has numerous great features that provide ground for acquiring moral values and scientific knowledge. According to Ersoy, the Asım generation is a symbolic name for Turkish youth molded by Islamic values. Asım's first and foremost duty is to save the nation and religion. Then he will lead the country to more developed and advanced stage in the future.

The Asım is a clear case of Ersoy's conception of the educated person. Ersoy's ideal generation has some attributes that the individual Asım already has. He is mentally and physically healthy, faithful, wise, hopeful, hardworking, and sensitive. His altruism and emotional depth are especially recognized by Ersoy. Asım comes back from Berlin, where he was a college student, to serve in the army in battle of the Çanakkale with no hesitation. Ersoy appreciates his bravery and altruism by referencing the appreciation of the Prophet (pbuh). Ersoy highlights that these attributes help Asım serve as a model for the ideal generation. Asım succeeds in fighting against the enemies of his society in World War I. He does not hesitate fighting against ignorance, which is another enemy of the Muslim society according to Ersoy. At the end of Asım, Hocazade advises Asım to go back to Berlin in order to continue his education. His advice to study abroad is very important because it is a fundamental task for Asım in order to save Muslim society from undesirable conditions. Also, Asım would save Islam from the attack of ignorance, immorality, and misunderstanding through education in both religious and scientific inquiry.

Ersoy's observations about the Ottoman society and his contemporaries' approach to solving social problems served as a starting point for him. His conception of the negative case of the educated person addresses poor, uneducated, and broken Muslim society as well as attempts to get rid of religious virtues in order to fix those problems. Furthermore, Asım, the individual, constitutes a marginal case of Ersoy's ideal generation. His marginal case conception underlines shortcomings of individual Asım. He has positive attributes as well as some shortcomings; however, he has great potential to be special. Taken together, Ersoy builds his ideal generation on the foundation of those good attributes. Ersoy's clear case points out his expectations for Asım as a generation. Ersoy has a journey from individual Asım, marginal case, to Asım

generation, clear case, and science based Western education is the means for that ideal. In other words, individual Asım has fazilet; however, he needs marifet in order to realize Ersoy's ideal generation. Thus, Ersoy's ideal of the educated person is oriented by passionately held moral virtues grounded in traditional Islamic values, equipped with a thorough understanding of modern science and technology while motivated by a love of country.

Ersoy's philosophy might be called a proto prophetic pragmatism. Ersoy's prophetic character comes from two aspects: First, he is prophetic figure in that he is drawing on the example of the Prophet. But also he is a prophetic figure in the way that Cornel West (1989) talks about the biblical prophets. West (1989) describes the prophets as social critics. They come to their people and say, "This is what you say you believe, this is what you say you aspire to (the model of the Prophet Mohammad (pbuh), and the ideals of Islam); but this is the way you live, and this is what you are." Ersoy is a prophetic figure in two senses: he draws on the example of the Prophet but also that of a social critic. So, he can be deemed a prophetic figure. Yet Ersoy would seem to have some pragmatic characteristics that are consistent with pragmatism. He looks to science and technology as a way of solving social problems and improving society, lifting up the nation, etc. But it is not clear from what he has written that he is a pragmatist in a philosophical sense, in the sense that he would recognize knowledge claims, truth claims as being contingent and revisable.

Regarding question four, how Ersoy's philosophy of education translated into educational practice, there is not enough evidence to answer it because it is not known if he tried to implement his philosophy of education in a school somewhere—or if others tried to do so. Unlike Dewey, Ersoy did not write specifically about schooling there aren't texts about putting Ersoy's ideas into practice, and we don't have any kind of contemporary examples of people

trying to implement his ideas. However, it is possible to infer what his fundamental ideas might look like in practice.

5.2.1 Curriculum

Ersoy would likely advocate for some sort of moral formation or religious studies as the heart of the curriculum. He clearly would also advocate for science and mathematical training. Ersoy believed education should seek to convey and protect national moral values. Also, education should elevate a nation to the level of modern civilizations. Children should be educated according to their talents and contemporary needs while considering their levels of progress. Schools should foster dominant cultural values. Education should address social clashes while it raises talented, knowledgeable citizens and individuals. Education promotes freedom and independence for the society.

Progress and development of society is only possible with the guidance of knowledge. So, teachers should attempt to provide current knowledge and technology to help students reach levels of understanding like those of modern civilizations. National identity can be preserved if it is nourished with wisdom and moral values. In such an approach to education, history and language would be prioritized because they improve awareness of national identity among students. Curriculum should also contain scientific findings that help students' needs, improve their consciousness, and freedom. While education should welcome foreign languages, the mother tongue should have priority. Foreign language has to be a part of education because it is very important to learn about the world as well as for the nation's progress in marifet. Ersoy speaks of "transmitting the national essence," which means emphasizing national morality, religion, and fear of God. Thus, he would advocate for religious education being mandatory starting in primary education.

5.2.2 Teaching

Above all, Ersoy views teaching as a moral enterprise. Thus, a teacher's main responsibility is the moral formation of the young. The teacher is a kind of moral example, not necessarily explicitly teaching moral values. Believing that the future will be built by teachers, Ersoy considers them to be very important to society.

According to Ersoy (2013), there are four qualifications of teachers. They should be religious, moral, professional, and have a conscience. He argued that all these four are necessary, and a teacher is not acceptable without them. Ersoy argues that sciences should be taught to children; however, teachers should attend to the holy values as well. Ersoy (2013) suggests that teachers who would educate Muslims' children should be religious and raise a religious future generation.

Desirable and undesirable characteristics and qualifications of a teacher are imparted by a story Ersoy tells of one that was fired: The teacher who was fired was described as clearly irreligious (he never visited the mosque, pray daily prayers, nor fasted during Ramadan, etc.), impure (he was not paying attention to his personal hygiene, so he smelled and appeared dirty), a social (he had plenty of time, but he did not want to communicate with the locals or even rudely stayed silent when they attempted to speak with him), arrogant, ignorant, and disrespectful of his own culture's tradition (he was entering houses without removing his shoes). Ersoy expresses how an ordinary Turk would react to such a teacher: they would rather see their child ignorant than receiving education from such a teacher.

5.2.3 Learning

Ersoy highlights the moral aspect of education. One of the meanings of the word "Asım" is "someone furnished with moral values." In other words, Ersoy's entire ideal generation is

based upon raising a moral society. Thus, all educational activities per Ersoy's educational philosophy are shaped by this foundation. Students of such an education atmosphere have to learn moral values first and foremost. It even helps them to learn modern sciences better. According to Ersoy, morality (fazilet) motivates a student to utilize the findings of scientific inquiry for the benefit of their nation. Without morality, education is considered disable in Ersoy's approach.

Ersoy highlights the importance of a teacher in education about culture and moral virtues. In such an education, a teacher's main role is guidance for their students. Ersoy argues that new methods should be applied in education. He offers interactive education environments that also promote student-centered education. According to Ersoy, experience-based education should be the center of education. Practice should have priority over theory in order to create an educational atmosphere that produces long lasting effects of education activities. Classrooms dedicated for the foreign language, and students' active involvement should be encouraged. Experience-based education atmosphere is more effective in language learning. Ersoy's argument about language education has similarities to Dewey's progressive education. Both of them recommended students' active involvement in education activity and classroom design based on what is being taught.

5.2.4 Schooling

Educational environments should be designed in a way that students can learn how to resolve problems and interact with each other. Application-based education should be promoted. Educational circumstances should be created in order to promote students' development in creativity and free thinking.

Ersoy relates his understanding of freedom to his religious view. Two of his poems refer to the Persian King and the Ottoman Emperor of his time. His harsh criticism on them is mainly regarding their oppressive ruling as well as its effects on Islam, which does not tolerate oppression according to Ersoy (2013): “Although the goal of Islam is to gather under Prophet’s freedom flag, / Why is that flag trampled under the feet of tyranny? (p. 167)” Ersoy argues that freedom and education have very strong ties. Even though freedom has priority for a society in order to survive, education insures the existence of freedom by informing people about it. Students’ interest and capability should be considered when classrooms are designed.

Ersoy argues that education institutions are the only institutions that improve a nation because they are devoted to transferring social values, morality, and virtues. For Ersoy, they have to provide not only scientific knowledge, but they also have to teach about religion. Similar to the Western education institutions, education centers that specialize in certain fields of science should be established. Moreover, educational institutions should be designed and managed in a way that they can produce the knowledge which society needs. Education’s functionality has to be constantly considered in every facet of its development. Theory and practice should be balanced and based on what goals are expected from specific courses and programs.

Ersoy supports education institutions specialized in certain fields; however, he criticizes contents that do not fulfill contemporary needs and expectations of Turkish society. His main concern is that Turkish society wasted three centuries because it disregarded marifet. Ersoy shows little tolerance for spending time and money on educational activities that do not produce his ideal generation, Asım. This generation will serve Turkey as well as Islam as a savor and protector.

In today's Turkey, Imam-Hatip schools have similarities to Ersoy's approach. Imam-Hatip schools offer education for middle and high schools. Their curriculum combines religious courses with many contemporary courses such as history, science, and math. Ersoy's ideal education combines religious and scientific courses. So, they are similar on the curriculum level. However, religious courses and scientific courses are taught by teachers who approach the curriculum in the same way. They teach in a similar educational atmosphere with similar textbooks. So, although Imam-Hatip schools can be partially recognized as Ersoy's ideal school type, they miss a major part of it: method, teacher, and education environment. While Imam Hatip High Schools include both religious and secular courses in the curriculum, they don't directly implement Ersoy's thoughts. In addition, these schools were founded under secular governments.

5.3 Insight into Turkish Educational Thought

The main social problems Ersoy identified in his time were laziness, poverty, conflict, ignorance. About a hundred years later, Turkish society continues to deal with these problems. After the establishment of the Republic, Turkey turned its face to the West until the beginning of the twenty-first century. This alignment with the West was mostly an exclusive approach to religion. Turkish governments have imposed an assertive model of secularism on Turkish society, including education. However, within the last 10-15 years, Turkey started returning to its roots in the East. Turkish government does not pay attention to modern science as it did previously. One of the many reasons for this unstable situation of Turkey's education system is that there is a never ending dichotomy in Turkey that shows itself as "West-East", "Islam-Secularism" polarization. Ersoy himself was against this dichotomy because he truly believed that there is a way to merge the two sides. He even left Turkey because of his frustration with

assertive secularist implementations of the Turkish government. Turkey would be quite different if Ersoy's ideal generation that promotes balancing marifet-fazilet and using their knowledge for a better nation and state was realized. This different Turkey would not have an incurable polarization and never ending clashes between different social, ideological movements.

5.4 Future Research: Indigenous Turkish Philosophy of Education

This study about Mehmet Akif Ersoy was a first step to examine and articulate indigenous Turkish philosophies of education. There is not much written in the Turkish context, having largely been commentaries written on Western philosophers and Western philosophies. Ersoy is one person to examine in order to move forward on this topic but there is future research that needs to be done to understand religion's role in education for Turkish people. Many other figures, such Said Nursi, Namik Kemal, Tevfik Fikret, Nazım Hikmet, and Nurettin Topcu should be studied in order to synthesize Turkey's philosophy of education from its own intellectuals.

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Zeki Akdemir was born on June 27, 1981 in Erzurum, Turkey. He earned a Master's and Bachelor's combined degree in Philosophy Teacher Training from Ataturk University in Erzurum, Turkey in 2004. Between 2004 and 2006, he continued his Master in Sociology Department in Dumlupınar University Kutahya, Turkey. In 2006, Turkish Ministry of National Education awarded Zeki with a full scholarship for his doctorate education in the United States. He started to get English education at Florida State University's Center for Intensive English Studies in 2007. In 2008, he started his doctoral program in History and Philosophy of Education at the Florida State University.