



PROJECT MUSE®

Differing Interpretations of la conscience collective and “the Individual” in Turkey: Émile Durkheim and the Intellectual Origins of the Republic

Hilmi Ozan Özavcı

Journal of the History of Ideas, Volume 75, Number 1, January 2014,
pp. 113-136 (Article)

Published by University of Pennsylvania Press
DOI: 10.1353/jhi.2014.0000



➔ For additional information about this article

<http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/jhi/summary/v075/75.1.ozavc.html>

*Differing Interpretations of la conscience collective
and “the Individual” in Turkey: Émile Durkheim
and the Intellectual Origins of the Republic*

Hilmi Ozan Özavcı

A significant amount of work tracing the intellectual origins of the Turkish republic has been published as the republic approaches its centenary in 2023.¹ With the belief that the complex nature of contemporary Turkish politics entails revisiting its founding philosophy and early republican thought, such work has successfully depicted the evolution of Turkey’s political and economic mentalities, its political culture, and its Western and Islamic sources of identity. Despite Turkey’s rapid neoliberalization in recent decades, however, little attention has been paid to how the individual as a political, economic, and moral actor has been conceptualized, or to its relationship with nationalism in the Turkish context.²

A prominent representative of early republican liberal thought, Ahmet

This article was funded by the Strategic Research Initiative of the British Institute at Ankara (BIAA). I would like to thank the BIAA for their financial support and the anonymous referees of the *JHI*.

¹ See for example M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution: The Young Turks, 1902–1908* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Nazim Irem, “Turkish Conservative Modernism: Birth of a Nationalist Quest for Cultural Renewal,” *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 34 (2002): 87–112; Ismail Kara, *Türkiye’de İslamcılık Düşüncesi, Metinler/Kişiler*, vol. 1 (Istanbul: Kitabevi Yayinlari, 1988).

² Simten Coşar, “İkili Kimliğin Krizi: İktisaden Birey, Siyaseten Vatandaş,” *Görüş* 38 (1999): 42–49; Murat Belge, “Individualism in the Turkish Context,” in *The Predicament of the Individual in the Middle East*, ed. Hazim Saghie (London: Saqi Books, 2001), 42–50.

Ağaoğlu, published widely on the role of the individual and nationalism in the 1920s and '30s. His writings therefore offer a useful starting point for our understanding of the complex relationship between nationalism and the idea of the individual. A close reading of Ağaoğlu also offers new perspectives on Émile Durkheim's ideological impact on Turkish political thought. Ağaoğlu drew heavily from Durkheim's sociology in propounding his idea of the individual. This is to say that, even though the French writer's influence on Turkey has long been analyzed only with reference to the nationalist ideology of Ziya Gökalp,³ his theories served also as a reference point for the emergence of a version of liberal thought in the Turkish context. In this essay, I will discuss how Durkheim influenced the emergence of modern Turkish nationalism and conceptions of the individual in Turkey through a comparative analysis of the works of these two writers.

Gökalp and Ağaoğlu were two of the leading intellectuals in the late Ottoman Empire and early republican Turkey. They sat on the committees that penned the first party principles of the vanguard Republican People's Party (RPP) and that drafted the first constitution of the republic. They wrote and published extensively to influence the founding philosophy of the republic in the early 1920s, yet their writings have often been positioned far apart on the ideological spectrum.⁴ Gökalp is popularly known today as a pioneer of nationalism⁵ who laid out a communitarian and statist philosophy, drawing from Durkheim's theories. Ağaoğlu, on the other hand, has been named an opponent of Gökalp's communitarian ideas;⁶ he has frequently been described as an anti-statist and a liberal individualist.⁷

When we map out the key terms Ağaoğlu used, trace the origins of his thought, and place under scrutiny his intentions as a writer and what he

³ Uriel Heyd, *The Foundations of Turkish Nationalism: The Life and Teachings of Ziya Gökalp* (London: Luzac, 1950); Hüseyin B. Kubalı, preface to Émile Durkheim, *Professional Ethics and Civic Morals*, trans. Cornelia Brookfield (London: Routledge, 1957), xi; Robert F. Spencer, "Culture Process and Intellectual Current: Durkheim and Atatürk," *American Anthropologist* 4 (1958): 640–57; Said A. Arjomand, "À la recherche de la conscience collective: Durkheim's Ideological Impact in Turkey and Iran," *American Sociologist* 17 (1982): 94–102; Taha Parla, *The Social and Political Thought of Ziya Gökalp* (Leiden: Brill, 1985).

⁴ Samet Ağaoğlu, *Babamdan Hatıralar* (Ankara: Ağaoğlu Külliyyati, 1940), 10; Hilmi Z. Ülken, "Ferd ve Cemiyet," *İnsan* 4 (1940): 57; Fahri Sakal, *Ağaoğlu Ahmed Bey* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1999).

⁵ Ivan Strenski, *The New Durkheim* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2006), 317–27.

⁶ Hilmi Z. Ülken, "Ağaoğlu Ahmet ve Fikir Hayatı ve Mücadeleleri," *Ses*, May 25, 1939.

⁷ Ufuk Özcan, *Ahmet Ağaoğlu ve Rol Değişikliği: Yüzyıl Dönümünde Batıcı Bir Aydın* (Istanbul: Don Kişot Yayınları, 2002); Holly Schissler, *Between Two Empires: Ahmet Ağaoğlu and the New Turkey* (London: Tauris, 2003).

was actually doing in writing his texts in the 1920s and '30s, we see deep Durkheimian elements in his thought and recognize that he was in fact an early representative of communitarian liberalism, perhaps the first in Turkey. There were great similarities between the later works of Gökalp and Aġaoġlu; for example, they both wanted social control over the actions of individuals, in the belief that the individual was socially produced. They were also both nationalists and positivists of some type. That being said, the minute differences in their political thought present some of the subtle features of nationalism and liberalism in early republican Turkey.

I will argue here that Aġaoġlu saw a liberal philosophy in Durkheim's sociology and was inspired by it while reformulating his liberal ideology in the increasingly anti-liberal atmosphere of the interwar period. His insistent emphasis on the symbiotic development, and importance, of the state, society, and the individual—more specifically, his descriptions of the expanding role of the state, the sacredness of individual and social morality, and the historical evolution of societies from simple to complex structures—appear to have been drawn, explicitly or implicitly, from Durkheim's work. Given this, Aġaoġlu's long misinterpreted notion of individualism is best understood through a comparative textual analysis. Such an attempt reveals that, like Durkheim, he regarded individualism as the logical completion of communitarianism.

Aġaoġlu's ideology and interpretation of Durkheim's work diverged from those of Gökalp, as the former stressed the importance (sacredness) of the individual and his or her fundamental role in the social progress of modern societies. Their use of the Durkheimian notion of *conscience collective* was also markedly different. As I shall explain, while Gökalp replaced *conscience collective* with nationalism,⁸ Aġaoġlu would sanctify the republic as the religion of modern Turkey.

Even though a large number of studies on Aġaoġlu's political and social thought have been published in the last three decades with the increasing interest in liberalism in Turkey,⁹ the Durkheimian references in his writings have received mention in no scholarly work, with the exception of Bakirezer's study, which refers to the impact of Durkheim's sociology on Aġaoġlu as "a weak point" of his liberal individualism.¹⁰ No study has

⁸ Hamit Bozarslan, "Ziya Gökalp," in *Modern Türkiye'de Düşünce: Tanzimat ve Meşrutiyet'in Birikimi*, ed. Murat Yılmaz (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2002), 316.

⁹ François Geogron, "Ahmet Aġaoġlu, un intellectuel turc admirateur des Lumières et de la Révolution," *Revue du monde musulman et de la Méditerranée*, no. 52–53 (1989): 186–97; Murat Yılmaz, "Ahmet Aġaoġlu ve Liberalizm Anlayışı," *Türkiye Günlüğü* (summer 1993): 56–71; Simten Coşar, "Ahmet Aġaoġlu: Türk Liberalizminin Açmazlarına Giriş," *Toplum ve Bilim* 74 (1997): 155–75.

¹⁰ Güven Bakirezer, "Bati Medeniyeti Hayrani Bir Liberal Aydınin Çelişki ve Sinirlari: Ahmet Aġaoġlu," *Toplumsal Tarih* 41 (1997): 39–43.

offered an in-depth analysis of his reading of Durkheim, and little attention (again, limited only to Gökalp's work) has been paid to Durkheimian influences on early republican thought. This essay will offer an alternative interpretation to the history of modern political ideologies in Turkey, showing that Durkheim's sociology was a common denominator of the later works of Gökalp and Ağaoğlu (who have habitually been positioned as ideological opponents), and that, for this reason, it deserves to be recognized among the intellectual origins of the republic.

Since they are unknown to many who are not experts in Turkish intellectual history, I would like to begin by providing biographical information on Gökalp and Ağaoğlu and delineating the broader political and economic context in which they lived and wrote. The other three sections will be organized so as to trace the direct succession of ideas from Durkheim to Gökalp and Ağaoğlu and to show how some of these ideas were subject to transformation with respect to the immediate political and intellectual concerns and intentions of the latter two. The second section will lay out which of Durkheim's ideas were given greater prominence in early republican Turkey; the third will attempt to summarize Durkheimian influences on Gökalp's social idealism, while the last will place Ağaoğlu's communitarian liberalism under scrutiny.

LIVES, IDEAS, AND HISTORIES

Let me state at the outset that neither Gökalp nor Ağaoğlu based his theories solely on Durkheim's sociology. While Durkheimian ideas loomed large in their later works, as I shall mention below, they also drew from a number of other writers, European and Middle Eastern, and from the teachings of Islam, but not its theology. This invites us to reconsider ways of capturing meaning in the works of political writers whose linguistic acts were, in the main, an attempt to adapt their major sources to their own local contexts.

The originality of the works of these "secondary intellectuals" has often been limited to their fusion of a variety of sources while addressing contemporary domestic problems, which is why a clear understanding of their writings requires an intellectual excavation tracing the origins of their thought. In the case of Ottoman/Turkish writers, it is often observed that they were rarely concerned with the contexts in which the "migrant ideas" they dealt with had been produced. Instead they treated ideas as independent units. Regarding all ideas as omnipotent tools to help them understand and transform their own societies, they unhesitatingly used an idea of, for

example, Western European origin to discuss the peculiar conditions of Turkish society and politics. But even though they believed in most cases that ideas contained meanings transcending all boundaries, at times they did not hesitate to change these ideas in a way to make them more applicable to their local contexts. A good example of this is the way Gökalp and Ağaoğlu borrowed Durkheimian theories and utilized them as they sought to address local social and political problems in Turkey.

The appeal of Durkheim's sociology for Gökalp and Ağaoğlu may be explained in light of the intentional and ideological overlap between all three writers. Durkheim made it his mission to revive France during a period when it had lost its self-confidence, following its defeat in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71.¹¹ Fournier tells us that he “appeared to his contemporaries as a prophet and the founder of a new (secular) moral [system].”¹² Moreover, according to James Dingley, when Durkheim wrote about society, he was in fact writing about the formation of the French nation.¹³

This was precisely what Gökalp and Ağaoğlu sought to do in the 1910s and the early 1920s in a different setting. Like any other Ottoman/Turkish intellectuals sympathetic to positivism and scientism, they shared the Durkheimian belief that if a country is to be remade, “it must first be educated.”¹⁴ More specifically, they liked Durkheim's opposition to egoistic utilitarianism in a period when the foundation of an independent Turkish nation was sought amid economic hardship. Gökalp used Durkheim's sociology in his nation-building project, while Ağaoğlu wanted to explain the development of altruistic liberal societies with reference to Durkheim's theories.

Both Ağaoğlu and Gökalp began to occupy a place of increasing significance in Turkish intellectual life in the aftermath of the 1908 Young Turk Revolution. This was a period of rapid political and social change with numerous political and economic crises, moral decay, and a desperate search for a westward cultural reorientation following the catastrophic defeats in the Balkan Wars (1912–13) and World War I. Nationalism became the triumphant ideology in the 1910s, and nationalist policies were

¹¹ Marcel Fournier, “Durkheim's Life and Context: Something New About Durkheim?” in *The Cambridge Companion to Durkheim*, ed. Jeffrey C. Alexander and Philip Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 48.

¹² *Ibid.*, 49.

¹³ James Dingley, *Nationalism, Social Theory and Durkheim* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 1.

¹⁴ Fournier, “Durkheim's Life,” 50.

implemented under the authoritarian Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) regime in varying doses.

The disintegration of the Ottoman Empire (1299–1922) was a consequence, in part, of the rise of nationalism. In the early 1920s, a new Turkish nationalist political center emerged in Ankara under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk). The foundation of the Republic of Turkey in 1923 and the subsequent series of westernizing and secular reforms, ranging from the abolition of the caliphate to the introduction of the Latin alphabet, went down in history as the Kemalist Revolution. In the early years of the revolution, Gökalp and Aġaoġlu were recognized as two of the most influential and important political writers in Turkey.¹⁵

Gökalp had been a member of the CUP since its clandestine years in the late 1890s. As a young student at the time, he had been imprisoned for his activities against the monarchy, forced to leave the school, and sent back to his hometown Diyarbakir.¹⁶ There he had become an inspector of the CUP. In 1910, he was elected to the Central Committee of the CUP and moved to Salonika, where the CUP's headquarters were located. In this period, he became acquainted with the works of Léon Cahun, Gustave Le Bon, Henri Bergson, Alfred Fouillée, and Émile Durkheim. In this period a gradual shift occurred in his work, namely from the influence of Fouillée's individualist writings to Durkheim's sociology, as he began to formulate an ideology of Turkish nationalism. Yet he frequently drew inspiration from Bergsonian spiritualism, Durkheimian positivism, and Islamic interpretations in his writings concurrently, believing that they actually complemented each other when one explanatory mode in isolation appeared inadequate to explain social phenomena.¹⁷

After the headquarters of the CUP were transferred to Istanbul in 1912, Gökalp moved there and kept his position among the Unionists until the end of World War I. As the CUP came to power in 1913, his writings were more widely read. In the interim, he set up the first sociology department in the Middle East at the *Darülfünun* (today the University of Istanbul) in 1914. Placing Durkheim's social theories in the Turkish context, he laid out a synthesis fusing nationalist, Islamist, and modernist ideas, with the aim of inspiring a social revolution following the political revolution in 1908.

Like Gökalp, Aġaoġlu also became a pioneer of Turkish nationalism in the 1910s. Before he achieved fame in the Ottoman Empire, he had received

¹⁵ Saffet Ö. Betin, *Atatürk İnkilâbi ve Ziya Gökalp, Yabya Kemal, Halide Edip Adıvar* (Istanbul: Güven Basimevi, 1951), 10.

¹⁶ Parla, *Social and Political Thought*, 10–13.

¹⁷ Bozarslan, "Ziya Gökalp," 316.

an education first in Russian-controlled Azerbaijan (his homeland), at Russian schools, and then attended lectures in law and Oriental languages at the Collège de France, École pratique des hautes études, and École des langues orientales.¹⁸ During his studentship, he was deeply influenced by the teachings of Russian nihilists, Ernest Renan, and James Darmesteter, two of his popular intellectual acquaintances in Paris. After a varied career as a teacher, journalist, and statesman in Baku, he immigrated to Istanbul in 1909.

From that point on and until 1924, he pursued a career parallel to that of Gökalp, which engendered a close friendship and intellectual borrowings between the two.¹⁹ In 1912, the Turkish Hearths, a major Turkish nationalist organization, was founded at his house, and he actively contributed to its activities and publications. Meanwhile, he served as a spokesman for the CUP and, like Gökalp, kept his position even after authoritarian one-party rule was established. He also took up a position as a lecturer at the *Darülfünun*. At the end of World War I, together with Gökalp and many other Unionists, he was imprisoned in Malta by the British because of his affiliation with the CUP. He must have gotten hold of Durkheim's work in this period through Gökalp, because in his writings dating from 1919–20 he began to invoke Durkheim's ideas.

After their release, Aġaoġlu and Gökalp returned to Turkey. Gökalp went back to Diyarbakir and published a journal, while occasionally presenting petitions to Mustafa Kemal. Aġaoġlu joined the Independence War (1919–22) in Ankara and became the editor-in-chief of *Hâkimiyet-i Milliye* (*National Liberation*), the semi-official publication of the revolutionaries.

It is not an easy task to establish the direct influences of Gökalp and Aġaoġlu on early republican politics during a period of struggle for power, one in which the Kemalist leadership sought full political control, eliminated all opposition, and became authoritarian following the Kurdish nationalist and religious uprisings in 1925. That said, the two writers indeed played a role in shaping the initial nationalist and peculiarly liberal ideology of the RPP and the first constitution, and they advised leading elites on the economy, politics, and social life of the new Turkish society. Kemal Karpat and Taha Parla argue that Gökalp's ideas were amply realized under single-party rule.²⁰ Parla also writes, "Through his works, and

¹⁸ F. Georgeon, "Les débuts d'un intellectuel azerbaïdjanais: Ahmed Aġaoġlu en France (1888–1894)," in *Passé Turco-tatar, présent soviétique: Études offertes à Alexandre Bennigsen*, ed. Chantal Lemercier-Quequej, Gilles Veinstein, and S. Enders Wimbush (Louvain: Éditions Peeters, 1986), 376.

¹⁹ Ahmet Aġaoġlu, "Ziya Gökalp'e Dair Hatiratım," *Cumhuriyet*, November 27, 1934.

²⁰ Parla, *Social and Political Thought*, 7; Kemal Karpat, "Ziya Gökalp'in Koropratiçilik, Millet-Milliyetçilik ve Çağdaş Medeniyet Kavramları Üzerine Bazı Düşünceler," in *Mod-*

indirectly through his many students and disciples who came between the two world wars to fill important posts in the Kemalist party and bureaucracy, in academia and in the press, Gökalp continued to exert immense influence on the political and intellectual life of inter-war and post-war Turkey.”²¹ As a matter of fact, Ağaoğlu also continued lecturing on the history of law at the Law School in Ankara and the University of Istanbul (*Darülfünun*) until 1933.

I must note here that during a period of rapid change, the ideas of the two may at times have been informed by the pragmatic political and economic concerns of Kemalist elites. It is harder to judge the extent of Gökalp’s pragmatic responses because of his death in 1924. But this was the case particularly where Ağaoğlu’s writings in *Hâkimiyet-i Milliye* were concerned. Until the end of 1930 Ağaoğlu was a “party man” whose ideas on day-to-day politics were shaped in large measure within the parameters of Kemalist elites. Yet as a prolific writer who contributed articles to numerous journals and newspapers on broader political, economic, and moral issues, he had also created for himself a relatively independent intellectual space, within which he developed certain ideas that he had often associated with liberalism.

Ağaoğlu’s inner convictions keyed to liberalism experienced a breakthrough in the late 1910s, when he got hold of Durkheim’s works. After reading Durkheim, he attempted to determine the structural traits of modern society by means of sociological explanation. At times he explicitly criticized the RPP of becoming far too concerned about status, as in his famous 1926 report to Mustafa Kemal.²² And he developed in this period a version of liberal philosophy to influence the revolution. Despite all of the political and economic changes in Turkey and worldwide in the 1920s and ’30s, including his Free Party experience in 1930, it stayed with him always.

During the three months when he served as the official liberal ideologue of the Free Party, he persisted in his criticisms of the RPP. His subsequent frustration only served to intensify his criticisms, but it did not change the main characteristics of his liberal inclinations, as we see when we compare his writings before and after 1930.²³ However, in 1933, his writings bore costly fruit; he lost all his income, his journal was closed, and

ern Türkiye’de Siyasal Düşünce: Tanzimat ve Meşrutiyetin Birikimi, ed. Tanil Bora and Murat Gültekinil, 8th ed. (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2009), 328.

²¹ Parla, *Social and Political Thought*, 7.

²² Hasan R. Soyak, *Atatürk’ten Hatıralar*, vol. 1 (Ankara: Yapi Kredi Bankası, 1973).

²³ Ahmet Ağaoğlu, “Devlet ve Ferd,” *Milliyet*, May 25, 1926; Ağaoğlu, *Devlet ve Fert* (Istanbul: Sanayii Nefise Matbaası, 1933).

he was forced to retire from his post at the University of Istanbul, together with many other professors from the older generation.

This perhaps explains why his articles appeared to be supportive of a majority of the reforms when he started to write again for the pro-RPP *Cumhuriyet (Republic)* in 1935.²⁴ Despite his discomfort with the strict censorship of the government, he did not bring it up. Nor did he criticize the party for the closure of numerous civil society organizations (intermediary structures), to which he had always attached great importance. Where his economic views were concerned, he maintained a “third way” stance. In the late 1930s, he suggested the implementation of a liberal statist system following the New Deal model in the United States,²⁵ and he fought against the growing interest in socialism and fascism in Turkey.²⁶

DURKHEIM’S SOCIOLOGY AND MODERN TURKEY

Durkheim was the most popular and widely translated Western European social thinker in Turkey in the early twentieth century.²⁷ In the 1910s, Ottoman/Turkish students were sent to France to study sociology under his supervision, among whom was Zekeriya Sertel, a prominent leftist journalist who published in *Cumhuriyet*. Just before the proclamation of the Turkish Republic in 1923, the National Assembly appointed Orhan Midhat (Barbaros) to translate *De la division du travail social* (1893) into Turkish;²⁸ the following year, Hüseyin Cahit (Yalçın) was officially assigned to the translation of *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse* (1922).

During the foundation of the republic, the Durkheimian teachings of division of labor, functional differentiation, and professional ethics were introduced in the pro-Kemalist journals.²⁹ The second article of the first

²⁴ Ahmet Ağaoğlu, “Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi Programı Etrafında,” *Cumhuriyet*, May 24, 1935.

²⁵ Ağaoğlu, “C.H.P. Programı Etrafında,” *Cumhuriyet*, May 18, 22, 24, 26, 1935; “Tarihte Sosyal İnkişaf,” *Kültür Haftası* 20 (1936): 354–69; “Basitten Mürekkebe, Şekilsizlikten Şekilleşmeye Doğru,” *İnsan*, June 15, 1938; “Roosevelt’in Mücadelesi,” *Cumhuriyet*, July 15, 1935; “Türk Devletçiliği,” *Cumhuriyet*, August 28, 1935.

²⁶ Mustafa Türkeş, “A Patriotic Leftist Development Strategy Proposal in Turkey in the 1930s: The Case of the Kadro (Cadre) Movement,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 1 (2002): 91–114.

²⁷ Zafer Toprak, “Anayasal Monarşi ve İttihatçıların Dramı,” *Osmanlı Bankası Arşivi* (2008), <http://www.obarsiv.com/pdf/ZaferToprak-AnayasalMonarsi.pdf> (accessed August 16, 2013).

²⁸ Orhan Midhat, *İcîtmâi Taksim-i Amâl* (Istanbul: Amire Matbaası, 1923).

²⁹ “Durkheim,” *Hâkimiyet-i Milliye*, October 5, 1923.

party program of the RPP in 1931 appears to conceive of society through a Durkheimian lens when it states that the people of the Turkish Republic are a society divided into different occupations for the sake of the division of labor in individual and social life.³⁰ Turkish students paid their debts to Durkheim not only by popularizing his work in their country, but also by making contributions to Durkheim's legacy. Hüseyin N. Kubali, who had also studied in France (though not under Durkheim's supervision) and later became a professor of sociology at the University of Istanbul, was acquainted with members of Durkheim's family, and he prepared Durkheim's *Leçons de sociologie: Physique des moeurs et du droit* (1950) for posthumous publication in book form.

That the popular writer Gökalp saw himself as a disciple of the French writer may partly explain this heightened interest in Durkheim's sociology. As far as I have been able to establish, Durkheim's most direct influence on Gökalp and Ağaoğlu seems to have been through his doctoral thesis *De la division du travail social* and through *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse*, the two books translated into Turkish during the foundation of the republic. Seeking to find a middle way between utilitarian individualism³¹ and Marxian collectivism,³² he had traced in the former work the roles that *conscience collective* and the individual played in traditional and modern societies. According to Durkheim, *conscience collective*, or the ensemble of *croyances et sentiments communs* that constituted moral facts, was a fundamental element of solidarity in both "mechanical" and "organic" societies, though in different forms.³³

The main theory of his early work, if I may simplify a little, was that the increasing division of labor and functional differentiation in modern societies had resulted in an increase in the level of individualism. Consequently, the rights and dignity of the individual had become the most important value consensus,³⁴ which strengthened the *conscience collective*³⁵

³⁰ *Cumhuriyet Halk Firkasi Nizamnamesi ve Programı* (Ankara: T. B. M. M. Matbaası, 1931).

³¹ Robert G. Perrin, "Durkheim's Division of Labour and the Shadow of Herbert Spencer," *Sociological Quarterly* 4 (1995): 791–808.

³² Robert A. Jones, "The Positive Science of Ethics in France: German Influences on *De la division du travail social*," *Sociological Forum* 9 (1994): 37–57.

³³ Mauro Piras, "Le fondements sociaux de l'agir normatif chez Durkheim et Weber: Le rôle du sacré," *Archives de sciences sociales des religions*, no. 127 (2004): 142.

³⁴ Raymond Boudon, "À propos du relativisme des valeurs: Retour sur quelques intuitions majeures de Tocqueville, Durkheim et Weber," *Revue française de sociologie* 47 (2006): 879.

³⁵ Émile Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society*, trans. George Simpson (New York: Macmillan, 1964), 172.

and began to replace traditional religions.³⁶ The *conscience collective* became more a cult of the individual:

. . . what characterizes the morality of organized societies . . . is that there is something more human . . . about them . . . it does not make us servants of ideal powers of a nature other than our own, which follow their directions without occupying themselves with the interests of men.³⁷

This was what most captured Ağaoğlu's attention in Durkheim's early work: the way Durkheim had connected the dignity of the individual, mutual interdependence, and the division of labor as the fundamental tenets of modern society and had done so, in his interpretation, within a liberal framework. According to Durkheim's account, solidarity based on the division of labor constituted the true social link of modern societies, in which the individual depended upon society to the same degree that he was distinguished from it through his personal activity. This relation established among individuals "an entire system of rights and duties which link them together in a durable way."³⁸

In Durkheim's view, the individualism of modern societies not only produced *conscience collective*, but it was also produced by it, an approach that we find in late nineteenth-century liberal socialism, "most sympathetic to the reformist ideas of Jean Jaurès, who also saw socialism as the logical extension of individualism."³⁹ Durkheim was an individualist in the special sense in which he understood the term. In a debate during the Dreyfus Affair, when the individualism of intellectuals was criticized by the conservative and anti-Dreyfussard Ferdinand Brunetière (1849–1906) as anarchical, and as having rejected traditional values in favor of egoistic rationalism, Durkheim needed to make clear that his notion of individualism was distinct from egoism.⁴⁰ In his interpretation, as a moral value, individualism was the defense of human dignity, the only "collective" goal of the Third Republic. It was a response to the moral decay of France that Durkheim lamented, and that discussions surrounding the Dreyfus Affair had shown. One could be an individualist, he wrote, while asserting that the individual was a product of society, rather than its cause.⁴¹ In his view, there was no opposition

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid., 407.

³⁸ Ibid., 206.

³⁹ Steven Lukes, "Durkheim's 'Individualism and the Intellectuals,'" *Political Studies* 17 (1969): 14–30.

⁴⁰ Fournier, "Durkheim's Life," 53.

⁴¹ Émile Durkheim, "L'individualisme et les intellectuels," *Revue bleue* 4 (1898): 8.

between the individual and society or between the individual and the state. He indeed saw a correlation between individualization and socialization and between further freedoms for the individual and the expansion of the state's duties.

In Durkheim's understanding, the fundamental function of the state was to call individuals to a moral life through the promotion of collective ideals;⁴² the state would free the individual by providing for the individual's self-realization, which could be achieved only through membership in a society in which the state guaranteed the rights of the individual.⁴³ In his corporatist theory, occupational groupings and macrosocial or political organizations, as "direct relationships between the state and the individual," played a central role.⁴⁴ Since the state was too remote from individuals, occupational groups had to form the basis of morality, wherein the interests of society and of the individual were reconciled.⁴⁵ A whole range of intermediary groups near enough to individuals were needed for the purpose of "attracting them strongly in their sphere of action and drag[ging] them . . . into the general torrent of social life."⁴⁶ Aĝaoĝlu wrote in his later work precisely in Durkheimian terms when he argued that respect for the individual was the key to social harmony, that individual ethics were socially constituted, and that the competencies of the state would grow in tandem with the increasing complexity of social life.⁴⁷

In *Les formes élémentaires*, Durkheim shifted his viewpoint in order to portray theistic religions as an important part of modern life. He also elaborated further on his concept of *conscience collective* by introducing the term "collective representations." This new term allowed him to conceptualize nonmaterial social facts (ideas, mental images, symbols, etc.) as a subset of the all-inclusive notion of *conscience collective*. It was the means through which *conscience collective* operated; symbols, for example, "represent to men the social ideals of their collective, they recall to the individual's mind the moral and the cognitive knowledge they should be conscious

⁴² Stjepan G. Mestrovic, *Émile Durkheim and the Reformation of Sociology* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1993), 138.

⁴³ Charles Marske, "Durkheim's 'Cult of the Individual' and the Moral Reconstitution of Society," *Sociological Theory* 5 (1987): 9.

⁴⁴ Fournier, "Durkheim's Life," 52.

⁴⁵ Edward A. Tiryakian, "Revisiting Sociology's First Classic: *The Division of Labor in Society* and Its Actuality," *Sociological Forum* 9 (1994): 3–16.

⁴⁶ Émile Durkheim, preface to *The Division of Labour in Society*, trans. W. D. Halls, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1902), xxxii.

⁴⁷ Ahmet Aĝaoĝlu, "Özcülük ve Özgecilik (Egoisme ve Altruisme)," *Cumhuriyet*, January 20, 1935; "Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi Programı Etrafında," *Cumhuriyet*, May 18, 1935.

of.”⁴⁸ They thus guided people’s emotions and sentiments so that “all members of a collective will respond in a similar fashion to particular events or objects.”⁴⁹

COLLECTIVE REPRESENTATIONS AND TURKISH NATIONALISM

This new term provided Gökalp with a scientific explanation upon which to base his theory of nationalism. The ideal of social revolution, or “new life,” that he propounded in 1911 was in some measure a nationalist reflection of some of the characteristics of what Durkheim called organic societies.⁵⁰ He maintained that the bond of solidarity that kept the Turks together in times of political and economic depression was their national ideals⁵¹ and he adhered to the Durkheimian concept of collective representations (*ma’şerî tere’iler*) in explaining this.

Gökalp adapted the term to his nationalist concerns, writing that it was “conscious comprehensions of social phenomena or facts in the *conscience collective* of a society.”⁵² This, he believed, could best be illustrated this with reference to the example of the birth of Turkish national identity. He wrote that even though there had been Turks before the 1908 revolution, the idea and sentiment of “we are Turks” had not appeared in their *conscience collective*. This was to say that there was no Turkish nation in the beginning. Turks had become a social group (a nation) only when the common conscience of the individuals could consciously comprehend it. This explains the rationale for why he and other fellow nationalists sought to create new symbols of Turkish nationalism in their essays and poems. Collective representations played no small role here. “In periods of outrageous depressions,” Gökalp wrote, “collective representations are produced by strong effervescence and acquire a gigantic . . . power. Under these conditions, collective representations are called ideals.”⁵³ Ideals stir social groups, stimulate in them new sentiments, and lead to genuine revolutions.

⁴⁸ Dingley, *Nationalism*, 97.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 96.

⁵⁰ Ziya Gökalp, “Yeni Hayat ve Yeni Kıymetler,” *Genç Kalemler* 8 (1911): 2–3.

⁵¹ Ziya Gökalp, “Türkçülüğün Esasları (1923),” in *Bütün Eserleri*, vol. 1 (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2007), 235.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 213.

⁵³ “Ma’şerî tere’iler, galeyanlı buhranlar esnasında gayer şiddetli vecitlerle hallenerek son derece büyük bir kudret . . . iktisap ederler. Ma’şerî tere’ilerin bu hâline ‘mekûre’ nâmi verilir.” *Ibid.*, 214.

The wars in Tripoli, the Balkans, the First World War, and the Independence War were the type of political crises (*buhran*) that the Turks had gone through. These crises had created the ideal of a Turkish nation, the ideal that the movement of Mustafa Kemal followed.

In Gökalp's interpretation, the main obstacles to realizing these ideals were the loosening of social bonds and the prolonged absence of altruistic values among the Turks. He therefore appealed to a narrative with strong motifs of communitarianism. It was in this context that he outlined a rather vague account of the individual in his thought. Hamit Bozarslan asserts that Gökalp systematically undermined the value of the individual and rejected the discourse of individual rights that began to permeate the Ottoman Empire after 1908.⁵⁴ Gökalp's modern individual had to "do his duty with eyes closed." For him, "there are no rights but duties," and "no individual but society."⁵⁵

In the 1920s and '30s, Ağaoğlu frequently criticized such discourse. In an article he wrote upon the death of Gökalp in 1924, however, he underscored that these pronouncements were a mistake made by the political Gökalp.⁵⁶ He referred to "the political Gökalp" because, for him, there were three different Gökalps: the first was a social and political thinker, the second a political activist, and the third a fanatical Turkist.⁵⁷ According to Ağaoğlu, the political Gökalp could undermine the importance of the individual. By contrast, those who closely followed his works would understand that rights and duties were complementary in Gökalp's theory: "His high spirit conceived no rights without duty and regarded rights as an equivalent of duties."⁵⁸ That is, Ağaoğlu was well aware that Gökalp's 1917 declaration "there are no rights, but duties" was not a constant in his thought.

In his postwar work, employing a Bergsonian vocabulary, Gökalp argued that "the highest moral aim of man is to turn his individuality [*ferdiyet*] into personality [*şahsiyet*]."⁵⁹ His notion of personality was vague. He wrote that the individual would become a personality only by unfettering the self of such material factors as one's physical constitution or one's animal or sensual nature. Personality would then be a reflection of those social emotions and sentiments in the consciousness of the individual. According

⁵⁴ Hamit Bozarslan, "Ziya Gökalp," 316.

⁵⁵ Ziya Gökalp, "Vazife," in *Yeni Hayat* (Istanbul: İkbâl Kitabevi, 1941), 12.

⁵⁶ Ağaoğlu, "Ziya Gökalp'e Dair Hatıratım."

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Ağaoğlu Ahmet, "Ziya Gökalp Bey," *Türk Yurdu* 3 (1924): 165.

⁵⁹ Heyd, *Foundations of Turkish Nationalism*, 53.

to Gökalp, the new consciousness that the individual acquired (through societal change such as industrialization) with functional differentiation and the division of labor in modern societies was not based on the dignity of the individual. This was where he differed from Durkheim and Aġaoġlu. Rather than speaking of the importance (or sacredness) of the individual, he chose nationalism as the new moral bond. Even though he did write that a fully developed personality could be realized “only through freedom from domination and readiness to cast off the fetters of outworn traditions and official ideas,”⁶⁰ there was no autonomous subjective existence in his narrative; the personality could be realized only when social ideals (nationalism) acted upon the individual, or when the latter was checked by collective conscience.

As such, in Gökalp’s work, the notion of the individual never received the importance nor the insistence accorded to it in the works of Durkheim and Aġaoġlu, although all three thinkers were in the main communitarians. Aġaoġlu accentuated the significance of the individual as the normative basis and engine of society, while Gökalp’s notion of the individual was limited to the ambiguous concept of personality. Yet they shared the opinion that atomistic individualism, signifying a lack of ideals and engendering skepticism, led to political and economic crises. How, then, could Aġaoġlu be both for and against individualism at the same time? What did individualism mean to him?

AġAOġLU’S COMMUNITARIAN DEFENSE OF LIBERALISM

According to Hilmi Z. Ülken, Aġaoġlu used French sociology as an instrument for defending his individualist ideas in the anti-liberal interwar environment.⁶¹ Referring to the analysis of the Durkheimian school, Ülken argued, Aġaoġlu demonstrated that the progress from tribes to modern societies resulted in a permanent individualization, differentiation, and privatization. The only aim of his analysis was to reject the recently prevailing idea that liberalism was a nineteenth-century ideology, a passing thought: “He was a liberal individualist and an opponent of Gökalp’s communitarian ideas.”⁶²

It was true that Durkheim’s sociology helped Aġaoġlu form the final

⁶⁰ Ibid., 54–55.

⁶¹ Hilmi Z. Ülken, “Aġaoġlu Ahmet ve Fikir Hayati ve Mücadeleleri,” *Ses*, May 25, 1939.

⁶² Hilmi Z. Ülken, “Ferd ve Cemiyet,” *İnsan*, April 15, 1938.

iteration of his liberal ideology. Ağaoğlu did fight for the view that liberalism was still the only solution to social problems in the twentieth century. However, like Durkheim, he knowingly endowed individualism with two different meanings: the first referred to the protection of individual rights and respect for individual dignity, while the second meant egoism. Ağaoğlu's liberal individualism contained strong communitarian motifs.

The main objective of Ağaoğlu's later work was to steer the revolution in a liberal direction and to fight against moral decay. A leading professor of law during the nascent years of the republic, he was aware that, even though the 1924 constitution liberally defined individual rights and liberties, the fact that it had major flaws in terms of separation of powers—all three government powers were concentrated in the National Assembly—made it difficult to enforce them. The rights and liberties of the individual could therefore be “granted or restricted as the government saw fit,” as had happened many times since the second half of the 1920s.⁶³

Ağaoğlu took it as his task to highlight the importance of individual rights, arguing, as he had before, that it was the liberty and the ensuing creativity and work of individuals that could ensure social progress. He argued that the most influential factor for social, political, aesthetic, and intellectual development was the individual. Yet individuals were inspired by society and extracted from it the components of their ideas and feelings. In his view, there was a reciprocal activity and impact between the individual and the society. Individuals affected society to the same degree that they were inspired by it; they returned with interest what they extracted from society. Otherwise, social life would see no innovation, no progress.⁶⁴ For this reason, individuals had to be emancipated politically and economically; they had to be socialized with communitarian values so that they would not be enslaved by egoistic desires, as had been the case, in Ağaoğlu's account, in the East for centuries.

While Gökalp was of the opinion that the individual could be transformed into a new being (he was unclear as to what this new being was) only through broader structural changes in society, such as industrialization, urbanization, and nationalization, Ağaoğlu thought one could change society only by changing the individual. Ağaoğlu believed that individuals possessed a transformative or creative moral power, here following his highly esteemed acquaintance Ernest Renan, who had imputed great importance to the work of the creative individual in social change.⁶⁵ As early as

⁶³ Kemal Karpat, *Turkey's Politics: The Transition to a Multiparty System* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), 137–40.

⁶⁴ Ağaoğlu, *Hukuk-i Esasiye* (Ankara: n.p., 1926), 37–38.

⁶⁵ Ernest Renan, *Avenir de la science: Pensées de 1848* (Paris: n.p., 1890).

his student years in Paris, Aġaoġlu had therefore identified the moral weakness and the need to emancipate the individual in the East as the capital problem of his time.⁶⁶ Yet he wrote prolifically on the importance of collective action in the Russian and Ottoman imperial contexts, during his intellectual and political struggles for the collective rights of Russian Muslims and Ottoman Turks. Durkheim's work provided Aġaoġlu with a scientifically solid basis for his political (individual rights) and moral (altruism) aims.

As of 1919–20, Aġaoġlu's reading of the historical development of liberalism in the West relied on Durkheim's theory of division of labor and functional differentiation.⁶⁷ The Durkheimian doctrine of solidarism became the underlying social philosophy of his work.⁶⁸ Like the early Durkheim, he regarded the state and intermediary social structures as agents to promote in individual consciousness the moral aims and sentiments embodied in the *conscience collective*. In his view, the revolution could not be completed without the efforts and sacrifices of selfless individuals or if egoism prevailed over altruistic sentiments in society.

Historical experiences in the West and East offered testimony to this. The appearance of the division of labor, Aġaoġlu wrote, had put an end to the struggle between *cléricalisme* and *libéralisme*, which had been the single most important struggle in the history of Europe:

The principle of the division of labor and functional differentiation began to form [in the West] the very essence of the social body. While each cell and each group has a certain function and competency in a society in which there was division of labor, the pressures and tyranny of [the Church] . . . could no more be tolerated. . . . Finally, after all those quakes . . . and reactions, the new spirit, the modern mentality gained the victory. The borders of the competency and prerogatives of the Church and the clergy were completely drawn, and they were not allowed to exceed [these borders] . . . “Free thought and free movement,” “Live and do not impede others' lives,” “Develop your character and do not impede others in developing their characters” have become the principles the new century depends on.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Ahmed Bey, “La société persane: Le clergé,” *La Nouvelle Revue* 70 (1891): 804.

⁶⁷ Aġaoġlu, *Üç Medeniyet* (Ankara: T. O. M. H. Matbaası, 1927), 27.

⁶⁸ Ahmet Aġaoġlu, *Hukuk-i Esasiye*, 11.

⁶⁹ “İşbölümü ve vazife ayırımı kaidesi artık sosyal bünyenin prensibini teşkil ediyordu. İşlerin bölünmüş olduğu bir muhitte her zümrenin, her hücrenin yetkisi ve vazifeleri belliyken herşeye hâkim olmak isteyen, her şeyin üstünde kendini gören bir zümrenin baskı ve zorbalığına dayanılmazdı. . . . Nihayet birçok sallantılardan, uygulama ve bunun

Attacking the views of “the political Gökalp,” Ağaoğlu defended the treatment of Western experience as a model, wherein new values prevailed over aristocracy, despotism, and egoism:

High individuality means working freely in a free arena; it is based on the foundation of a free environment and a free market. These principles began to be applied in the Great French Revolution, and ever since then in the West all of the structures of family, state, and society have taken their inspiration from these principles. For every right a duty, for every duty a right; that’s the meaning of these principles. Now there are no rights without duties, and no duties without rights.⁷⁰

In his interpretation, the French Revolution had allowed the material and spiritual forces of individuals to reappear in a free atmosphere, where they replaced the traditional and aristocratic understanding of rights and duties. Ever since, each individual had been the sole master of his or her own destiny, rather than being in the hands of a despotic leader or an aristocrat. Everyone had a chance to become whatever he or she desired to become, because within this free atmosphere, industriousness, energy, and merit had become the virtues determining one’s status in society.

Most importantly, thousands of social groups had been established in Europe, and new occupational organizations had emerged. Individuals had realized that acting as a group would allow them to achieve their goals more easily. They had gathered around common interests and against common threats.⁷¹ The formation of civil society through occupational groupings and other forms of social organization, Ağaoğlu added, constituted social control over the acts of the individual to check the growth of egoism. They had developed altruistic (*özgeci*) and communitarian (*cemiyetçi*) values.⁷²

tepkilerinden sonra yeni ruh, çağdaş zihniyet tam galebeyi kazandı. Kilise ile ruhani zümrenin velayet ve yetkilerinin sınırları tamamiyle belirdi ve bunun dışına çıkamaz oldu. . . . ‘Serbest fikir ve serbest hareket,’ ‘Yaşa ve başkalarının yaşamasına mani olma,’ ‘Şahsiyetini geliştir ve başka şahsiyetlerin gelişmesine mani olma.’ İşte yeni yüzyılın dayandığı esaslar.” Ağaoğlu, *Üç Medeniyet*, 29.

⁷⁰ “Yüksek ferdiyet, serbest saha üzerinde serbest faaliyet, serbest müşakeret ve serbest rekabet esaslarına müsteniddir. Bu esasları ilk evvel Fransız İnkilâb-i Kebiri tatbik etmeye başladı ve o zamandan itibaren Garp’ta aile, devlet ve cemaat teşkilâtlarının kaffesi mezkur esaslardan mülhem olmaya koyuldu. Her hak için bir vazife, her vazife için bir hak; işte bu anasirin manası. Artık vazifesiz hak, haksiz vazife yoktur.” *Ibid.*, 81.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 83.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 98; Ahmet Ağaoğlu, “Yeni Nesil Arasında,” *Cumhuriyet*, March 4, 1935.

In Ağaoğlu's view, in Islamic societies, by contrast, there were no properly functioning social, political, or occupational groups or organizations because the spirit of collectivity had not developed there and individuals were oppressed. He wrote,

The individual was . . . squeezed, weakened, and made into a paltry being under an increasingly ferocious despotism and put into his own narrow and constricted scabbard in the East. In the West, on the other hand, the individual gradually took hold of his freedoms and, by constantly opening up, felt the pleasure of living and working as a result of the weakening of despotism.⁷³

Ağaoğlu believed that individual liberty and civic equality were what tied individuals together in Western cultures.⁷⁴ The most important value consensus there was respect for the individual, a prerequisite for even the nationalization of a society. In his interpretation, the key to becoming a conscious nation lay in having individuals with free opinion, free conscience, and free movement, who unconditionally accepted the free appearance of social consciousness. Only then would they be able to form a "nation" with national consciousness.⁷⁵ The ultimate way of nation-building and the aim of the state must be to free the individual.

The individual thus emerged as a sacred being in Ağaoğlu's Durkheimian conception of modern society. His stress on the individual's emancipation and moral empowerment, a fugue-like theme in his writings, has led to his being known as a liberal individualist. According to Kadioğlu, this emphasis on the yet abstract concept of the individual, however, was limited to a republican epistemology.⁷⁶ Perhaps an equally important boundary that invites us to reconsider "the individualism of Ağaoğlu" was once again the impact of Durkheim's sociology on his later work.

Ağaoğlu for the first time cited Durkheim explicitly in *Constitutional Law* (1926), a collection of notes for lectures that he had delivered at Ankara University in 1925. He sought to answer in this work the question of how a political system that could ensure both the existence of a strong

⁷³ Ahmet Ağaoğlu, *Devlet ve Fert* (Istanbul: Sanayii Nefise Matbaası, 1933), 27, trans. Ayşe Kadioğlu, "Citizenship and Individuation in Turkey: The Triumph of Will over Reason," in *Civil Society, Religion and Nation: Modernization in Intercultural Context. Russia, Japan, Turkey*, ed. Gerrit Steunebrink and Evert van der Zweerde (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004), 205.

⁷⁴ Ağaoğlu, *Hukuk-i Esasiye*, 45.

⁷⁵ Ağaoğlu, "İhtilâl mi, İnkilâp mi?" *Hâkimiyet-i Milliye*, August 1, 1922.

⁷⁶ Kadioğlu, "Citizenship and Individuation in Turkey," 209.

state and the liberty of the individual could be established.⁷⁷ Following Durkheim, he argued that the growth of the state and individualization (*fertleşme*) were positively correlated.⁷⁸ While the rights of the individual and his or her faculties continued to develop, societal needs became more complex, as did the duties of the state. This entailed the widening of its competencies, though “the essential factor has always been individual activity.”⁷⁹

In Ağaoğlu’s interpretation, the fundamental duty of the state was to create a platform for the individual to undertake his or her activities in a free atmosphere. This was the logic behind his liberal statist understanding. He flatly rejected classical economic liberalism and its utilitarian individualism throughout his life.⁸⁰ His ideal state was an enabling state invested with an increasingly wide range of social and economic responsibilities for its citizens. That is to say that Ağaoğlu’s notion of individualism in its political sense was based on the state’s responsibilities for the health, education, and welfare of all individuals. Yet he needed to stress that if the happiness of the individual conflicted with the general well-being of society or the regime, individual freedom could be subject to restrictions for the good of society.

To secure and maintain the development of society, he argued, the individuals of that society had to seek harmony and be aware that they were mutually dependent.⁸¹ After giving a brief summary of Durkheim’s theory of mechanical and organic solidarity, of how individuals had similar needs and functions in mechanical solidarity, as well as how functional differentiation increased the mutual dependence of individuals and put an end to their like-mindedness, he argued that

a social organism is just like a net. . . . [E]ach of its chains is successively tied to all other chains. The existence, maintenance, continuation, and life of each are a vehicle to others’ existence, maintenance, and continuation.⁸²

The immediate social obligation of individuals, then, was to place the happiness of society above their own. Ağaoğlu wrote that if they wanted, individuals could break the laws, but in the event of a violation social life would

⁷⁷ Ağaoğlu, *Hukuk-i Esasiye*, 11.

⁷⁸ Ağaoğlu, “Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi Programı Etrafında”; “Tarihte Sosyal İnkişaf.”

⁷⁹ “Fakat esas amil daima ferdi faaliyetidir.” Ağaoğlu, *Devlet ve Fert*, 40.

⁸⁰ Ahmet Ağaoğlu, “Demokrasi ve Devletçilik,” *Cumhuriyet*, June 6, 1935.

⁸¹ Ağaoğlu, *Hukuk-i Esasiye*, 11.

⁸² “İçtimai bir uzviyet . . . bir ağ mesabesinde. . . . [B]u şebekelerinin herhangi bir halkası bütün sair halkaları müteselsilen bağlıdır. Her birisinin mevcudiyeti, bekası, devami, hayati diğerlerinin mevcudiyetine, bekasına, devamına vabestedir.” *Ibid.*, 12.

suffer unrest and would become destabilized.⁸³ Therefore, all individuals had to be responsible for protecting social harmony and order. He did not outline a comprehensive explanation of the limits of individual action and subjective rights. Instead, he found it adequate to note that this obligation did not transgress the wills and freedom of choice of individuals, but it did require the inculcation of such communitarian values⁸⁴ as self-sacrifice and altruism.⁸⁵ As the aggregate of individuals, society would control individual behavior. To this end, he maintained, individuals had to be educated:

. . . [W]e have to prepare such an education . . . system that, alongside ensuring the maximum opening-up of everybody's individual skills, should instill the belief that there is no individual happiness beyond the happiness of society. The East is individualist in the pejorative sense of the word. The path . . . it has followed is egoism.⁸⁶

Ağaoğlu asserted that individuals in the West had found the means to reconcile their private interests with those of society through civil society organizations. They did not hesitate to sacrifice their small short-term interests for the greater long-term interests of society. Thanks to their social, political, and economic freedoms, social order and regulation became habitual for them. The more they opened up, the more communitarian (*cemiyetçi*) they became; and the more communitarian they became, the more they embraced the state in the belief that it was what held society together.⁸⁷ He therefore wanted the citizens of the republic to be public-minded and to defend their rights, as well as the republic, against any external threats or from threats within (such as moral corruption).

After the 1928 constitutional amendments, when the republic was declared a secular republic in place of the article declaring it an Islamic republic, Ağaoğlu began to sanctify the republic, as opposed to religious reactionaries discontented with the fact that religious orders had been

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ahmet Ağaoğlu, "Yeni Nesli Yetiştirmek," *Cumhuriyet*, April 8, 1935.

⁸⁵ Ahmet Ağaoğlu, "Eski ve Yeni Ahlâk," *Hâkimiyet-i Milliye*, January 23, 1928; "Özcülük ve Özgeçilik," *Cumhuriyet*, January 20, 1935.

⁸⁶ "Öyle bir terbiye . . . sistemi hazırlamalıyız ki herkesin ferdi kabiliyetlerinin azami derecede açılmasının haricinde ferdi saadete yer olmadığı inani dimağlara ve kalblere yerleşmiş olsun. Şark kelimenin kötü manasında ferdiyetçidir. Egoizm . . . onun tuttuğu yoldu." Ahmet Ağaoğlu, "Terbiye Amaçlarından Bir Tanesi," *Cumhuriyet*, July 29, 1935.

⁸⁷ Ahmet Ağaoğlu, "Doğu ve Batı," *Cumhuriyet*, September 10, 1935.

closed and that a large number of westernizing reforms had been implemented. Following a radical religious uprising in Izmir against the secular reforms, he wrote,

The Republic is a religion itself; it is a belief. But the [holy] book of this religion has not been written yet. No apostles to selflessly devote all their existence to the Republic, no geniuses to enlighten . . . the people by penetrating into the dark layers of the mass of people have appeared! We left the Republic on its own and we were preoccupied with our . . . private works and interests!⁸⁸

He thus introduced the republic as a symbol in the fight against bigotry, religious dogmatism, conformity, egoism, and many other moral illnesses which he associated with the old regime. Through the works of selfless intellectuals (the apostles of the republic), and through the socialization of individuals with certain values (by means of education and their participation in intermediary groups), a new moral communitarian system had to be established to end the moral decay. The individuals of the republic would be endowed with political rights, because they were the motor of progress; the state, with its expanding competencies, had to defend these rights and allow individuals to reappear in a free atmosphere that would replace the monarchical and Gökalpian (political) understanding of rights and duties. In this free atmosphere, the citizens of the republic would further develop the faculties of initiative, courage, and solidarity, and they would further embrace the republic in the belief that it was what held them together.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Although Gökalp and Ağaoğlu have long been cast as ideological opponents in the early Turkish Republic, the major source to which they turned in their later work was the same. Inspired by Durkheim's *conscience collective*, both sought to introduce a new value consensus for social cohesion; in

⁸⁸ "Cumhuriyet başlı başına bir dindir, bir imandır. Fakat bu dinin henüz kitabı yazılmadı. Nefislerini unutarak, bütün varlıklarını Cumhuriyete hasretmiş havarileri çıkmadı, halk kütlelerinin karanlık tabakaları içine girerek halkı irşat ve tenvir edecek dahileri zuhur etmedi. Biz cumhuriyeti kendi başına biraktik ve kendi şahislerimiz . . . ve menfaatlerimizle uğraştik!" Ahmet Ağaoğlu, "Vicdan Azabi Duymayanlara," *Son Posta*, January 12, 1931.

the case of Gökalp it was Turkish nationalism, while Aġaoġlu adduced the sacredness of the individual and the republic concurrently.

Believing that individuals were exceedingly individualistic in the East—a central social ill as they saw it—they wanted to curb the egoism of individuals through the cohesive role of nationalism and the republic, through occupational groupings which would accustom individuals to altruistic values, and through an educational system which would inculcate communitarian values. In their later works, they sanctified Turkishness and the republic as the functional equivalents of Durkheim’s *conscience collective*. Their understanding of morality, however, did not presume a voluntary character; instead it suggested obligation or imposition from above. Gökalp and Aġaoġlu both expected individuals to follow nationalistic or secular republican ideals. Otherwise, individual actions going against the grain of Turkish nationalism or the maintenance of the republic would disturb social harmony, and those actions would be punished.⁸⁹

In these regards, tracing the Durkheimian influences in the writings of Gökalp and Aġaoġlu is of significance because it explains and provides a clear example of the communitarian and nationalist orientation of Turkish political thought in the early twentieth century. It also shows ways in which Durkheim’s concept of *conscience collective* could gain new meanings in different contexts beyond the original intentions of the writer. In this study, my aim has been to demonstrate how Durkheimian influences on Aġaoġlu’s later liberal thought shaped his conception of the individual, throwing light on his perception of *conscience collective* in the early Turkish republican context. Through a comparative textual analysis it becomes evident that Aġaoġlu’s emphasis on individual rights (which distinguished him from Gökalp), and his concurrent theory of establishing control over individual behavior (which brought him closer to Gökalp’s work), was no contradiction for him. I also have sought to explain why the two drew heavily from Durkheim by underscoring the intercontextual parallels and intentional similarities between the three writers.

One last word about their conceptions of the individual: in Gökalp’s evolving system of thought, the term “individual” played an ambiguous role. On the one hand, Gökalp undermined the rights and value of the individual with his “political” discourses; on the other, he spoke of the importance of free personality, yet without any clear emphasis on individual rights. Aġaoġlu’s case was markedly different: like Durkheim, he concurrently stressed the importance of individual rights in modern societies.

⁸⁹ Ahmet Aġaoġlu, *Serbest İnsanlar Ülkesinde* (Istanbul: Sanayii Nefise Matbaasi, 1930), 7–8.

He believed that the individual was the motor of progress, and therefore the private interests of the individual had to be reconciled with the interests of the state. The outcome of his program during the interwar period was a social and statist interpretation of liberalism. Where its moralist component was concerned, we can safely conclude that his revolutionary liberalism was of a communitarian character, because when he argued for the protection of individual rights and for respecting individual dignity in the 1920s and '30s, he had in mind that individual's basic function, that of protecting social harmony and advancing society, was guaranteed. This is to say that his notion of individualism, in its positive usage, was the logical completion of his communitarian views. Despite this, until the 1990s, he was believed to be one of the major representatives of liberal individualism in Turkey. His liberalism, however, conceived of no individual happiness beyond the happiness of society and permitted little space for the autonomy of the individual.

Izmir University and Southampton University.