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The struggle within: "moral crisis" on the Ottoman homefront during the First World War

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Citation

Oguz, C. (2018, June 13). *The struggle within: "moral crisis" on the Ottoman homefront during the First World War*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/63216>

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Issue Date: 2018-06-13

The Intellectual Contest Over Morality, and Interpretations of “Moral Crisis”

Vicdanlarda artık yaşamayan akide ve âyinleri, aile ve hükümet tarzlarını, ahlâkî vazîfe ve mefkûreleri zorla yaşatmaya çalışmak, istenilen neticelerin tamamiyle aksini tevellid eder. Binâenaleyh bugünkü ahlâk buhranının devâmından mesûl olanlar, birinci derecede yeni ahlâkî tedvîne ve neşre çalışmayan mütefekkirler ise, ikinci derecede de eski ahlâkî zorla idâmeye çalışan muhafazakâr kuvvetlerdir.

–Ziya Gökalp, *Ahlâk Buhranı*

This chapter focuses on debates about moral crisis among the Ottoman intelligentsia with a particular emphasis on the historical context of the First World War. Despite the difficulty of contextualizing a relatively abstract topic such as morality – or more precisely, immorality – the following pages attempt, in various ways, to assess the implications of discourses of moral decline with regard to wartime conditions. For this reason, I have chosen wartime periodicals that elaborate on this topic at great length. This study considers morality as a contested space; therefore, I select representative,

competing ideological perspectives from the Ottoman political spectrum. The journals I evaluate put forward polemics of moral crisis, and morality with several volumes and articles. These journals are, namely, *İslam Mecmuası* (Journal of Islam), *Yeni Mecmua* (New journal), and *Sebilürreşad* (Straight road). Throughout this chapter I use the original title of these journals instead of their English translation. Having seen that abundant references to Muslim women and their place in society were central to morality discussions, I also conducted research on women's journals of the time. By this means, I explore how women writers approached women-related morality discussions and how they pursued the problem of moral decline. However, because prominent feminist journals such as *Kadınlar Dünyası* (Women's World) were not published during the war years,¹ it was difficult to assess how women responded to the male-dominated discussion of morality in which they were often the center. Nevertheless, I outline the main points of morality debates in women's journals at the beginning and end of the war, such as *Bilgi Yurdu* (The homeland of knowledge), *Genç Kadın* (Young woman), *Kadınlar Dünyası* (Women's world), and *Seyyale* (Flowing).

As mentioned above, the journals I have chosen to evaluate in this study represent the differing standpoints among late Ottoman intellectual circles. The Islamic reformists publishing *İslam Mecmuası* were mostly Turkish nationalists including ones who had emigrated from Russia. They sought new interpretations of religion to create new possibilities for the revival of Muslim society. The chief editor of the journal was Halim Sabit, a Turkic émigré from Russia. He published *İslam Mecmuası* from February 1914 to October 1918, the very years of the First World War. Without the benefit of hindsight, one may find it odd publishing a theological journal during the war years. However, a closer look provides a better understanding of this choice. In a time when Turkish nationalist ideology consolidating power, this group sought to clarify nationalist perspectives on religion. This was also important for war propaganda, partly due to the declaration of jihad. Masami Arai, a prominent

1 The editors of the journal decided not to publish during the war. Publication of *Kadınlar Dünyası* resumed on March 2, 1918. For the publication history of the journal, see Çakır, *Osmanlı Kadın Hareketi*.

author who studied nationalist journals of the Young Turks, argues that since nationalists believed their relation to Islam was not sufficiently set out in other journals such as *Türk Yurdu* (Turkish homeland), they founded *İslam Mecmuası* to voice their views on religion.² Arai translated the catchphrase of the journal as “life with religion, religion with life,”³ but given that the journal sought to establish a new life in which religious order fit into contemporary society, a more accurate translation is “a religious life, a lively religion.”

The issue of “finding true Islam” was at the core of the themes with which authors in *İslam Mecmuası* had dealt with.⁴ The names appeared as authors in this journal will sound familiar to scholars of late Ottoman intellectual history: M. Şerefettin (Yaltkaya), Mansurizade Said, M. Şemseddin (Günaltay), Ziya Gökalp, Mahmud Esad, Musa Kazım, Ahmet Agayef (Ağaoğlu), Musa Carullah, Rızaeddin Fahreddin, Abdürreşid İbrahim, Bereketzade İsmail Hakkı, Ispartalı Hakkı, Besim (Atalay), Bursalı Mehmed Tahir, Köprülüzade Mehmed Fuad, Aka Gündüz, and Ömer Seyfeddin. As Arai puts it, the writers for *İslam Mecmuası* “had one characteristic in common: They obtained a modern school education alongside a traditional one; they could thereby see into Islam and its conditions in an informed way.”⁵ They searched for the reasons for the decline of the Muslim world and agreed that while Islam itself was not a barrier to progress, superstition was.⁶ Accordingly, Islam could be progressive if “foreign” elements falsely regarded as religious rules could be eliminated. Therefore, they pioneered the translation of Quran into Turkish. The fields with which the writers dealt varied from jurisprudence (*fıkıh*) to sociology (*ictimâîyyat*) and from history to literature. The final pages of the journal were reserved for news from the Muslim world and jihad. The journal sparked significant discussions on four topics: polygyny, nationalism in Islam, the sociology of Islamic Jurisprudence (*İctimâî Usûl-ü Fıkıh*), and the delivery of sermons in Turkish (*Türkçe hutbe*). These topics became heated

2 Arai, *Turkish Nationalism in the Young Turk Era*, 83.

3 Ibid.

4 Tunaya, *İslamcılık Akımı*, 110.

5 Arai, *Turkish Nationalism in the Young Turk Era*, 86.

6 Ibid., 88–90.

discussions when writers for *Sebilürreşad* harshly criticized nationalist, and reformist interpretations of Islam. For instance, İsmail Hakkı wrote seven articles to refute Gökâlp's arguments on the vast place of mores (*örf*) in Islamic Law and on the re-interpretation of jurisprudence under the heading of *İctimai Usul-ü Fıkıh*.⁷ Some of these debates, such as the one on the place of nationalism in religion, provoked such heated discussions that the government intervened to silence both sides.⁸ Broadly speaking, the conflict between the Islamists in *Sebilürreşad* and the nationalists in *İslam Mecmuası* was exacerbated by the question of the source of law; the nationalists were attempting to open up space for reform in religious thought.⁹ By attaching importance to mores and national culture (*hars*) and claiming that there is a distinction between culture and civilization, the nationalists new interpreted religion and Islamic law anew. Through these interpretations, they touched upon realms such as family formation and dissolution, social conduct in everyday life, religious education, and religious practice. Previously, these were the strongholds of Islamists.

On the issue of morality, *İslam Mecmuası* published a column titled "Ahlâk" (Morality) which accounted for fourteen of the total of 362 articles published over its four years.¹⁰ However, many other articles – for instance, ones in the columns "Jurisprudence" and "Sociology" – also dealt with the issue of morality. Besim Atalay (1882-1965), a teacher and director of several schools of education, was the primary commentator on morality.¹¹ Atalay had acquired eleven years of madrasa education before enrolling in a secular school.¹² After the First World War, as the director of culture (*Hars Müdürü*)

7 Some of these articles were transcribed in Kara, *Türkiye'de İslâmcılık Düşüncesi*.

8 Güler, "İslam Mecmuası (1914-1918) ve İçeriği," 14.

9 For a detailed assessment of these discussions, see Bakırcı, "II. Meşrutiyet Dönemi Din Sosyolojisinin Önemli Bir Kaynağı: İslam Mecmuası (1914-1918)," 177–210.

10 See Arai's table of "Classification of Articles in the İslam Mecmuası" in *Turkish Nationalism in the Young Turk Era*, 87.

11 He signed his articles with his titles School Director from Konya, Maraş and the İçel Teacher Training Schools (Dar'ül-muallims) respectively.

12 The only biographic information on Besim Atalay I can find is a monograph focusing on his studies on language. See Özel, *Besim Atalay*.

he conducted studies on the Turkish language and brought together a book on “pure” Turkish in 1920.¹³ Later, he promoted the simplification of the Turkish language as a member of the Turkish Linguistic Society during the 1930s. His translation the Quran into Turkish in 1941 received the appreciation of İsmet İnönü, then President of the Republic of Turkey.¹⁴ Besim Atalay is known for his studies on language rather than his early career as a writer in late Ottoman journals. To my knowledge, neither a monograph nor a study evaluating his early articles has been published. Even so, discussions on jurisprudence and polygyny overshadowed other articles in *İslam Mecmuası*, including Atalay’s works. It is also interesting to note that *Sebilürreşad*’s writers never addressed Besim Atalay’s articles on morality; they considered Ziya Gökalp and Mansurizade Said to be their addressees.

Other writers who wrote on morality in *İslam Mecmuası* included Ziya Gökalp, Halim Sabit, and Kazım Nami (Duru). Much has been written on Gökalp and his social and political thought in the formation of Turkish nationalism and secularism.¹⁵ While his views on religion, culture, nation, Turkism, and Turkish history are among the most studied topics in Ottoman/Turkish historiography, his understanding of morality has remained unexplored so far.¹⁶ Except for the insight of Zafer Toprak in his works on the emergence of sociological thought in late Ottoman Era, a detailed contextual analysis of Gökalp’s use of morality has never been conducted. Throughout this chapter, I focus on Gökalp’s attempt to create a “national morality” and contextualize what this prominent figure of the time meant by moral degeneration as well as how he responded to conservative arguments on morality.

13 Ibid.

14 “Sevgili Atalay, Tanrı kitabının çevrilmesi için yaptığınız denemeleri zevkle ve sevinerek okudum. Başarınız büyüktür ve çok ümit vericidir. Gelecek eserlerinizi sabırsızlıkla bekliyorum.” Özel, *Besim Atalay*, 25–26.

15 A prominent work in English on Ziya Gökalp’s thinking is Heyd, *Foundations of Turkish Nationalism*. A recent study assessed Gökalp’s views on reform in Islam: Kurzman, *Modernist Islam, 1840-1940*.

16 A far-right nationalist publishing house published simplified version of a compilation of his articles on morality; however, many misinterpretations are evident in this version. Cengiz and Atgın, *Türk Ahlakı*.

Generally his articles on morality were published in *Yeni Mecmua*; however, he wrote several articles that also touched on morality in *İslam Mecmuası*. Kazım Nami is famous for the volumes containing his memoirs which he published in the 1950s.¹⁷ He was a pedagogue and his articles were on upbringing and pedagogy rather than morality. In 1925, he published a book for teachers on moral education in schools.¹⁸

With respect to morality discourses, the importance of *İslam Mecmuası* stems from its theological approach. Instead of looking for arguments completely opposed to Islamist thinking, my aim is to see whether a different approach to morality was possible within the theological framework, and if so, how? What was the nationalist approach to the issue of morality? The themes, questions, and views that were elaborated upon under the heading of morality in *İslam Mecmuası* had points in common. The idea of rejecting European morality was shared by *İslam Mecmuası*'s writers who emphasize the superiority of Islam over Christianity and Judaism with respect to moral thought. They shared the viewpoint of Islamists on the destructive effects of modernist reforms during the Tanzimat era and of Westernist thought on Ottoman Muslim society.¹⁹ They claimed that Tanzimat reforms brought about an obscure ideology of Europeanization and created a generation who sought the reasons for decline in Islam. Referring to the emergence of Islam and the times of the prophet Mohammed, the authors attempted to revive the moral purity of Islam and to apply it to contemporary Muslim society. For reformists, the problems of false traditions and superstitions resulted in the degeneration of religion and moral values in society. For them, the Ottomans remained backward because of superstition. They argued that contrary to the emphasis on morality discernible in theological works, morality was never considered as important as other religious practices in Islam. Besim

17 Duru, *Arnavutluk ve Makedonya Hatıralarım*; Duru, *Cumhuriyet Devri Hatıralarım*; Duru, *İttihat ve Terakki Hatıralarım*. He also wrote a monograph on Gökalp: Duru, *Ziya Gökalp*.

18 Duru, *Mekteplerde Ahlakı Nasıl Telkin Etmeli?*

19 On the Tanzimat and its application, see Yıldız, 150. yılında Tanzimat. Also see the articles in Alkan et al., *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce: Cumhuriyet’e Devreden Düşünce Mirası, Tanzimat ve Meşrutiyet’in Birikimi*.

Atalay argued that morality, as it had heretofore been known, originated from Ancient Greek and Indian thought, and was thus “foreign” to Ottoman Muslim society.

As a distinctive point, the authors in *İslam Mecmuası* attempted to combine religious views on morality with nationalism in order to create a new understanding of morality based on the duty of individuals to their nation. In line with the catchphrase of the journal – “lively religion” – they tried to make Islam useful in society. In juxtaposition to the argument of individuals’ responsibility to God, they emphasized the social aspect of morality. In this framework, morality became a matter of national survival. The nationalists argued that the decline of the nation went hand in hand with the decline of morality. Accordingly, the fact that all the calamities were the result of moral degeneration confirmed that morality is collective. With respect to religious practice, the authors claimed that to be morally upright is better than to pray five times a day.

The happiness emphasized in this journal was an ultimate life goal that was achieved only through upright morality. This new understanding of morality was based on the elimination of ascetic morality (*zühdi ahlâk*) that had so far been promoted by incorrect interpretations of Islam. New ethics of work, life, and family would benefit the whole nation. In order to open up space for the interpretation of morality from the viewpoint of religion, Besim Atalay claimed that morality is not ahistorical; on the contrary, moral thought could change in time. Contrary to other articles on morality, which often referred to the Quran, hadith, or the life of the prophet, this argument was supported by references to philosophers such as Spinoza and Schopenhauer. Describing morality as a social construct, *İslam Mecmuası* emphasized the importance of education, milieu (*muhit*), and inheritance that were at the core of morality instead of religion itself. Other thinkers cited in *İslam Mecmuası* were Rousseau, Gustav Le Bon, and Durkheim. Interestingly, *İslam Mecmuası* had made few references to sexuality – particularly women’s sexuality – as part of moral degeneration. Instead, dishonesty, fraud, and inciting other people were evaluated as among the most significant moral problems. Thoughts resulting in “collective destruction” – such as denying

the past, disrespecting ancestors, and being pessimistic about the future – were counted among immoral behaviors.

The journal *Sebilürreşad* had a longer publication history than *İslam Mecmuası*.²⁰ Initially, the journal was titled *Sırat-ı Müstakim* and was published right after the declaration of the constitutional regime in 1908. The chief editor was Serezli Hafız Eşref Edib, a graduate of the School of Law (*Mekteb-i Hukuk*). The journal is considered one of the “Islamist modernist” journals in the empire, as it published translations of famous Islamist reformers such as Muhammed Abduh and Ferid Vecdi. As discussed by Somel, the writers for the journal had strong ties to the Committee of Union and Progress.²¹

When Ebul’ula Mardin quit the editorship in 1912, the name of the journal was changed to *Sebilürreşad*, and the chief editors became Eşref Edib and Mehmed Akif. As Somel argues, while *Sırat-ı Müstakim* was more tolerant of non-Islamist voices, the political perspective of the writers for *Sebilürreşad* became more radical after events such as the Balkan Wars, the Tripoli War, and the First World War.²² Although the journal supported the War of Independence, it became a stronghold of opposition to the secularist reforms of the Early Turkish Republic. Eventually, the infamous Law on the Maintenance of Order (*Takrir-i Sükûn*), which was enacted to suppress the Sheikh Said Revolt of 1925, spelled the end of this journal because of its Islamic, oppositional stance.

Today, the journal has an important place in the ideological perspective of the political Islamists movement in Turkey. The new mosque of Diyanet İşleri was named for Ahmed Hamdi Akseki, a prominent writer in

20 On *Sırat-ı Müstakim* and *Sebilürreşad*, see Debus, *Sebilürreşad*; Somel, “Sırat-ı Müstakim”; Tunaya, *İslamcılık Akımı*; Toprak, “Türkiye’de Fikir Dergiciliğinin Yüz Yılı.”

21 Somel, “Sırat-ı Müstakim,” 4–5. With respect to the difference between *İslam Mecmuası* and *Sebilürreşad*, for now it is worth noting that the CUP was not a monolithic party in which many different views were coalesced under a single name. On the other hand, the *Sebilürreşad* writers criticized the nationalists because nationalists were benefiting from modernist interpretations of Islam such as those of Afgani or Abduh to strengthen their own view. See Debus, *Sebilürreşad*, 51.

22 Somel, “Sırat-ı Müstakim,” 5–6.

Sebilürreşad, in 2013. Recently, the Bağcılar Municipality undertook a 25-volume transcription of all of *Sırat-ı Müstakim* and *Sebilürreşad*'s issues into the Latin alphabet.²³ The Ministry of Cultural Affairs announced 2011 as the "Year of Mehmed Akif," with a full of events including symposiums, exhibitions, and gatherings. Apart from these, there are convincing parallels between current political Islamists views and the ones defended in the journal. While conducting my research, I saw that most works by *Sebilürreşad* writers, including series of articles that were published in *Sebilürreşad*, were transliterated, simplified, and republished with the sponsorship of state institutions, particularly that of the Ministry of Culture, in the 1980s. The ideological atmosphere at the time was shaped by the 12 September 1980 coup-d'état, and the military government promoted anti-communism as an ideological basis for neoliberal politics. The new ideology, the military elites were convinced, had to embrace and synthesize Turkish nationalism and Islamism, an ideology today known as the "Turkish-Islamist Synthesis." The recirculation of *Sebilürreşad* by the state institutions of that time demonstrates that the works of *Sebilürreşad* writers were useful for feeding the religious side of this ideology.²⁴

The legacy of *Sebilürreşad* in Turkish politics is evident. In addition, an interesting point in the recirculation of *Sebilürreşad* is that both the publish-

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- 23 The Islamist writer M. Ertuğrul Düzdağ edits the series. Online access to the journal is available via the Bağcılar Municipality's website, "Sıratı müstakim." *Bağcılar Belediyesi*, 2017. <http://www.bagcilar.bel.tr/kategori/1137/6/siratimustakim.aspx>.
- 24 On the other hand, a course titled "Din Kültürü ve Ahlak Bilgisi" (religious culture and moral knowledge) became compulsory in schools in 1982. The name and content of the course indicate the unification and equalization of religiosity being moral superiority. Later, in the 1990s, right-wing publishing houses and newspapers such as *Tercüman* and *Dergah Publishing* published these works. Today, in the 2010s, a controversial endowment, Ensar Vakfı, is republishing some of these works through a foundation called the *Değerler Eğitimi Merkezi* (values education center) for instruction in new school courses introduced by the government called "morals/values education." For compilations recently published by the aforementioned publication houses, see Kaya, *Tanzimat'tan Cumhuriyet'e Osmanlı'da Ahlâk Eğitimi*; Bayraktar, *Son Dönem Osmanlı Ahlâk Terbiyecileri ve Ahlak Terbiyesi*. Esther Debus wrote that the articles and arguments in *Sebilürreşad* are popular also among the Turkish Islamist movement in Europe. See Debus, *Sebilürreşad*, 286.

ers and editors of these volumes treat the statements in *Sebilürreşad* as ahistorical – timeless guides to life, politics, society, and religion. No example is more striking than the 1991 catalog of *Sebilürreşad* prepared in 1989 and published by the Directorate of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*), which revealed the ahistorical approach.²⁵ One would expect a catalog of a journal published for decades to be chronological. Instead, the catalog is in alphabetical order because the statements of the *Sebilürreşad* writers are perceived useful regardless of their contexts. A contribution of this dissertation is to contextualize at least the articles on morality.

Given this long introduction to the journal, the importance of studying morality discourses in *Sebilürreşad* and how this sheds light on today's Turkey should be clear. In this chapter, I only consider articles published during the First World War and some from the year 1919 (censorship was lifted from summer 1918 until February 1919, so it is useful to see an uncensored version of the journal.) Also, only those articles referring to wartime and its relation to the moral decline fall under the scope of the study. Pages of *Sebilürreşad* were generously given over to morality issues even before the war. This vast interest in morality, in my opinion, stemmed from the fact that Islamists approached morality, the protection of morality, and moral education as the last strongholds of their intellectual, social, and political superiority.

The most important articles in *Sebilürreşad* to be contextualized in a historical framework are commentaries written in response to other views in the Ottoman press. *Sebilürreşad* commented at great length on articles on morality that were published elsewhere. These commentaries constitute important cases to be evaluated in the following pages.

The authors who dealt with morality in *Sebilürreşad* included, variously, Mehmet Akif (Ersoy), Ahmed Naim (Babanzade), Prens Said Halim Paşa, and Ahmed Hamdi (Akseki). However, most commentaries and reviews written in response to other journals and newspapers were penned by the editorial staff.

25 Ceyhan, *Sırat-ı Müstakim ve Sebilürreşad Mecmuaları Fihristi*.

Before delving into morality debates in *Sebilürreşad*, a few introductory words need to be said about the figures mentioned above. Mehmet Akif (Ersoy) (1873-1936), was the writer of the Turkish National Anthem, famously carries the title of “national poet” of Turkey. A strong supporter of the CUP (during the First World War he served in *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa*, the underground paramilitary organization of the CUP) he supported the War of Independence with famous sermons in the mosques. Later, he was disappointed by secular reforms of the Republic of Turkey and thus abandoned the country and settled in Egypt.²⁶ Ahmed Naim (Baban/Babanzade) (1872-1934) received degrees from Galatasaray High School (*Galatasaray Mekteb-i Sultanisi*) and the School of Civil Administration (*Mekteb-i Mülkiye*) and subsequently became a member of the Ottoman bureaucracy. During the war years, he worked in the Ministry of Education. In the early republican years, he became the rector of Istanbul University until the forced resign during a 1933 purge that targeted academics.²⁷ His work opposing ethnic nationalism, titled *İslam'da Dava-yı Kavmiyet* (Nationalism in Islam) became a manifesto by which Islamists defended the unity of the Muslim *umma* under the caliphate against Turkish nationalists.²⁸ Said Halim Paşa (1865-1921) was the grandson of the founder of modern Egypt, Muhammed Ali. He worked in the Ottoman bureaucracy during the Hamidian regime but was eventually exiled following a denunciation report (*jurnal*). In 1913, he became grand vizier as a member of the CUP despite his criticism of the 1908 Constitution. He remained grand vizier until his resignation – or most accurately, his removal from office by the CUP – in 1917, after the Arab Revolt of 1916. He was a known Islamist and supporter of Muslim unity, this revolt cost him his career.²⁹ His works, most of which were published as series of articles in *Sebilürreşad*, were brought together as a book titled *Buhranlarımız* (Our crises) in 1919. Among the crises he mentioned, I examine the social and ideo-

26 Şeyhun, *Islamist Thinkers in the Late Ottoman Empire and Early Turkish Republic*, 19–20.

27 Ibid., 59.

28 Ahmet Naim, *İslâm'da Dava-yı Kavmiyet*.

29 Şeyhun, *Islamist Thinkers in the Late Ottoman Empire and Early Turkish Republic*, 147–152.

logical crisis with respect to which he harshly criticized Westernists and advocates of European morality. Ahmed Hamdi (Akseki) (1887-1951), a graduate of a madrasa, worked in many medreses as lecturer (*dersiam*). He became the head of the Directorate of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*) in 1947.³⁰ He wrote many books on morality, some of which were composed of the articles he wrote in *Sebilürreşad*.³¹

What were morality and immorality according to the *Sebilürreşad* writers? How did they perceive moral decline, and what was their solution to this problem? A close look at the journal's index shows that morality was one of the topics most commented upon throughout the history of the journal. In most of these articles, the main interest of the writers was to show that religion is the only source of morality. They argued that no morals, values, or manners could exist without religion. For them, because the superior religion on earth was Islam, the superior morality was Islamic morality. In this journal, morality was utilized to criticize Westernists, nationalists, feminists, reformers, materialists, and Bolsheviks. Broadly speaking, the reason for moral decline according to *Sebilürreşad* writers was deviation from religion and Islamic law in both daily life as well as in politics. Most of the writers attacked European-oriented Tanzimat reforms and also the degenerative impact of the Constitutional Revolution of 1908. Debates on the emancipation of Muslim women constituted a distinct issue in the scope of *Sebilürreşad*'s polemics of moral decline. The writers placed the political and social emancipation of women, opposition to the veil, the demands of women to join public life (especially by working outside the home alongside men), and the rights of women vis-à-vis marriage at the center, and they argued that these were incompatible with an Islamic understanding of morality. Accordingly, sexuality remained the basic issue of immorality, and the subordination of women was at its core. With frequent references to increasing prostitution (including the frivolous behavior of women), the *Sebilürreşad* writers took gender roles and sexual limits as defined by Islam as the first condition to be morally upright. Interestingly, unlike many contemporary observers,

30 Kara, *Türkiye'de İslamcılık Düşüncesi*, 271–273.

31 Akseki, *Ahlâk İlmi ve İslâm Ahlâkı*; Akseki, *İslâm Dini, İtikat, İbâdet ve Ahlâk*.

Sebilürreşad articles claimed that the real reason for prostitution was not economic hardships but lack of adequate religious morality.

Broadly speaking, *Sebilürreşad* writers argued that since the superiority of Muslims had always been derived from their morality – and their moral power was derived from the religion – deviation from Islam had brought about the end of this superiority. It was not knowledge or science but moral superiority that would make the Ottoman Empire great again. Science and knowledge could only be instruments to reach higher values. Since many Muslims in the Ottoman Empire disregarded Islamic law and orders in their lives, the country was cursed with unhappiness and defeat in every sphere, particularly at war. They strongly emphasized that the Ottoman Empire is the land of the caliphate and that the “whole Muslim world as well as the enemies of it” were watching it. Women, adolescents, and men had to act properly. Turning to the practices of the “age of happiness” (*asr-ı saadet*) and dispensing with Western influences were ultimate goals in order to correct people’s morality.

In some cases, the *Sebilürreşad* acted as an informant vis-à-vis dubious morality. The journal published the names of writers, journals, and articles – including some excerpts from the works – to urge the government to act against immoral content. Articles on dancing, coeducational meetings, anti-veil propaganda, cinema, theater, and love poems were among these “immoral” publications listed by *Sebilürreşad*. In addition, the editors also published pieces from other papers that they appreciated from a moral point of view.

To sum, the main characteristics of the morality discussion in *Sebilürreşad* that were distinctively different from those of the nationalists were the centrality of sexuality, opposition to feminism and the women’s movement, and the dilemma regarding the embrace of Western modernity. They harshly criticized the concept of “national morality” which they considered antagonistic to God’s orders. On the other hand, Islamists and Turkish nationalists were united with respect to their disapproval of “Western morality.”

The third journal I evaluate is *Yeni Mecmua*. The sixty-six issues of this weekly journal were published between July 1917 and October 1918, the end

of the First World War. It began publishing again upon the foundation of the Republic of Turkey for a short time. Yahya Kemal Beyatlı, who was among the writers of the journal, asserted that the chief editor, Ziya Gökalp, soft to publish a politically independent, financially self-sufficient journal; however, after just a few issues, he was faced with financial problems. A leading CUP member, Küçük Talat (Muşkara), offered help to finance the journal while guaranteeing the independence of its content. From then on, the journal was published with the sponsorship of the CUP.³²

The writers of the journal are among prominent figures in Turkish intellectual history: Mehmed Fuat Köprülü, Ahmed Ağaoğlu, Ömer Seyfettin, Yahya Kemal Beyatlı, Halide Edip Adivar, Avram Galanti, Refik Halid Karay, Tekin Alp, and Necmeddin Sadak. As discussed by Erol Köroğlu, this journal brought together many intellectuals including those with different views in order to increase the efficacy of the cultural output of war propaganda.³³ Together they contributed to the formation of a “national culture” by creating a new literary genre called National Literature (*Millî Edebiyat*) in the pages of *Yeni Mecmua*.³⁴ Moreover, sociology articles columns mostly written by Gökalp constituted the principles of the Turkish nationalist movement. Some of Gökalp’s series of articles in *Yeni Mecmua* (including those on morality) would become part of his handbook on nationalism titled *Turkification, Islamization, Modernization*.³⁵

Yeni Mecmua advertised itself as “weekly journal on scholarship, arts and morality” (*ilim, sanat ve ahlâka dair haftalık mecmua*). In accordance with this claim, articles on morality appeared in almost every issue. I chose this journal because it provides a better understanding of precisely what those prominent nationalists of the time who were writing in *Yeni Mecmua*

32 Yahya Kemal, *Siyasi ve Edebi Portreler*, 17–18, quoted in Yamaç, “Basın Tarihinde Yeni Mecmua Muhteva Analizi ve Dizini,” x. For the publication history of *Yeni Mecmua*, also see Köroğlu, *Ottoman Propaganda and Turkish Identity*, 93–94.

33 Köroğlu, *Ottoman Propaganda and Turkish Identity*, 90.

34 Ibid., 100–115.

35 Gökalp, *Türkleşmek, İslamlaşmak, Muasırlaşmak*; For selected articles of Ziya Gökalp in English, see Berkes, *Turkish Nationalism and Western Civilization*.

thought about moral crisis, how they correlated it to the war, and how their solutions differed from those of theological and religious approaches. Morality was a central topic throughout this journal, as a concept carefully analyzed by Necmettin Sadak and Ziya Gökalp in their attempts to formulate their thinking on the establishment of a “new life.”³⁶ They envisaged a new understanding of morality that would constitute the backbone of Turkish political, economic, and socio cultural life. I discuss this further under the heading “national morality.”

The articles on morality were frequently in the sociology (“ictimâyyat”) column and occasionally under the title the problem of upbringing (Terbiye Meselesi). Necmettin Sadak and Ziya Gökalp were the chief commentators on morality, either Gökalp or Sadak wrote on morality on a weekly basis. Necmettin Sadak is known as the Minister of Foreign Affairs between 1947 and 1950. In the late Ottoman era, he was one of few graduates in sociology and taught sociology with Gökalp at *Darülfünun* (today Istanbul University). Sadak was a journalist, as well; he founded *Akşam* newspaper in 1918.³⁷

In this study, I primarily take the articles of Gökalp and Sadak in *Yeni Mecmua* into account with few exceptions. Gökalp and Sadak shared common views on morality; however, Sadak had more practical insights when contrasted with Gökalp’s historical, theoretical analysis. In his articles, Gökalp argued that only through sociological analysis could the Ottoman society overcome the crisis of morality. On the other hand, Sadak usually expressed his ideas on morality vis-à-vis the issue of upbringing (*terbiye*). Gökalp and Sadak shared a mission to correct the contemporaneous views on morality and establish a theory of secular national morality. Indeed, this formulation of a new morality was a translation the *morale laïque* of the French Third Republic. The term was particularly important for education policy which came into being in the late nineteenth century and sought to replace the monopoly of religion over education. It was important in creat-

36 “Yeni Hayat” was also the name of Gökalp’s book of poetry published by *Yeni Mecmua* in 1918 which reflected his project of national life. Köroğlu, *Ottoman Propaganda and Turkish Identity*, 128.

37 Birinci, “Necmettin Sadık Sadak (1890-1953),” 493.

ing the “citizen” for the new republic. Emile Durkheim was the chief figure who had formulated *morale laïque* in line with his ideas on solidarity, harmonious social life, and common consciousness.³⁸ A cross reference of Durkheim’s work with those of Sadak, Gökalp, and Atalay reveals that the Ottoman intelligentsia translated and adopted Durkheim’s theoretical framework in its entirety with the exception of his understanding of society. While for Durkheim the central concept was society, for Turkish nationalists it was the nation.³⁹

The aim of national morality according to these authors was to bring about a secular understanding of morality that was compatible with Turkish nationalism. This understanding of morality would shape the basic notion of solidarity in society. Although many scholars have evaluated the emphasis of solidarity for the formation of Turkish nationalism, the role of morality in this formulation remains vague. I believe that nationalists formulated solidarity as a solution to the so-called “moral crisis.” In addition, a broad role is attributed to morality for solving social and individual problems that had increased due to the war. The emergence of the discourse of a “crisis of morality” was a reaction to these problems – an attempt to coalesce all social and individual problems under one heading. *Yeni Mecmua*’s vast interest in morality in the very years of war stemmed from the fact that its prominent writers considered wartime as an opportunity to broaden the sphere of nationalism and hasten the involvement of the state and government in untouched realms such as family. This formulation of social revolution, called *ictimâî inkılab*, not only staked claim to the moral realm and shook its religious foundations, but also institutionalized a new morality deemed inherently superior to the religious one. Indeed, it challenged the existing social and political order.

Yeni Mecmua coined a new concept to label the time through which the Ottoman Empire was passing: the stage of transition (*intikâl devresi*). The authors claimed that the crisis of morality was indeed a natural result of this period and had been observed previously in other developed countries. The

38 Stock-Morton, *Moral Education for a Secular Society*, 125–139.

39 Zürcher, *Turkey*, 131.

transition entailed a transition to the age of social division of labor (*ictimâî iş bölümü devresi*). They argued that this process would soon be completed and finalized during the national period (*millî devir*). However, since the Ottoman society had not established a social morality (*ictimâî ahlâk*), this period had become one of chaos. For Gökalp and Sadak, the old “ascetic morality” that was primarily concerned with the “self” and individual salvation was being shaken worldwide, soon a new collective morality would prevail in every developed country as a condition for a happy life.

What was the new morality? For the polemicists in *Yeni Mecmua*, the sources of morality should be national. Instead of superstitions, useless traditions, and norms (that had been adopted from foreign cultures) and imitation of Western culture, the new morality should rely on the mores of the “pure nation” and the collective conscience (*ictimâî vicdan*). The reasons for the moral crisis were conflicts that arose between education in Western-style schools and the realities of Ottoman Muslim society. Therefore, the two scholars emphasized the importance of milieu (*muhit*) in the moral development of an individual. This did not mean that the moral values of contemporary Muslim society had to be accepted per se; on the contrary, by the end of the transition stage the milieu and new moral values would become compatible. The new morality was the key to coping with wartime problems, as well. For instance, the only remedy for war profiteering was to establish corporations with the principle of solidarity. The members of these corporations would have a collective understanding of morality and would never allow profiteering to happen. Due to the war, the Turkish people had come to understand the meaning of collectivity; therefore, wartime realities – despite their destructive effects on society – also open the gates for a new society.

Women’s journals, on the other hand, were not involved in discussions of morality as much as the journals cited above. However, two approaches to “immorality of women” polemics can be observed. The first questions the unequal moral expectations that were set from men and women, and the second critiques the old values accompanying discourses on the need for social reform. In this respect, moral discourses on women were considered an obstacle to the emancipation of women. Moreover, the discourse of moral decline strengthened the idea of reform in the social realm. To an extent, it is

possible to observe anxieties about moral decline among women writers, as well. Instead of a comprehensive analysis of women's articles, I underline the main trends with regard to discourses on moral decline. Therefore, I abbreviate discussions revolving around education, clothing, employment, and gender relations in public and private spaces.

As this study shows, the contest over morality was not only an intellectual endeavor. Morality had become a political instrument between the rival ideologies. It was also important in the context of "saving the state" from decline. The First World War, on the other hand, constituted the setting for testing out the contesting ideologies over morality in society.

§ 2.1 *İslam Mecmuası*: A Theological Perspective on the "New Morality"

In this part of the chapter, we discuss how the authors of *İslam Mecmuası* defined moral crisis and what kinds of solutions they offered from their "Islamic Turkists" perspective. In line with the journal's motto, "a lively religion," the authors of the journal considered morality to be central point for the construction of a new understanding of good and bad to be pursued in the daily lives of Ottoman Muslims. For them, morality was a point of departure for discussing conflicts between the necessities of modern times and the old doctrines of tradition and religion. Questioning the limits of Islamic Law was ideological strength of the nationalists; morality was a great weapon to control this debate. It is my contention that the Turkish nationalist formulation of the modernization of the Ottoman Empire – "adopting the technology of the West but not the Western morality" – served for purpose of avoiding being associated with "imitators of the West." For the sake of analysis, first I begin with what the old morality meant for the authors and how they criticized it. We should note that old morality mostly referred to doctrines of religion, but was not limited to them. The concept also referred to the principles of the Tanzimat era which nationalists resented its European-oriented character. Second, I compare the concept of a new morality to the old, presenting their views on contemporary morality in order to assess their definition of the moral crisis. *İslam Mecmuası* was a theoretical journal that

set out the ideas of Turkish nationalists on Islam and makes theological interpretations of Islam in line with the nationalist principles. Therefore, it would be misguided to expect many references to day-to-day events or practical issues. Instead, such references were abundant in *Yeni Mecmua*.

Eventually, we demonstrate how the discourse of morality crisis was used and manipulated by nationalists for the purposes of advocating reform to the religious mentality. The nationalists embraced the concept of a moral crisis – which was frequently claimed by Islamists to emphasize the troubling consequences of modernization – and took it in the opposite direction in critique of conservatives. It is possible to summarize this view as a theological approach that claimed the moral sphere but this time to use morality in the service of profane affairs. The First World War constituted the dramatic setting in which reformers could call for urgent, radical change.

2.1.1 *The “Old Morality” versus the “New Morality” from the Perspective of Religion*

As mentioned earlier, Ahmed Besim Atalay was among the prominent figures writing on the relationship between religion and morality. Although his writings remained within the theological framework, he developed an alternative understanding of morality to the understanding that he called old morality.

The old morality was originated from a mixture of several sources. Ahmed Besim, in his article “Morality and Religion,” argued that up to then all the moralists in the Muslim world adopted the models in the ancient Greek and Indian philosophy.⁴⁰ He said Muslim scholars adopted and reproduced this “archaic perspective” in their so-called Islamic and religious works.⁴¹ Ata-

40 Ahmet Besim, “Ahlak: Ahlak ve Din,” 27. “İslam âleminde şimdiye kadar ahlâka dair eser veren zevât eski Hind ve Yunan nazariyet-i ahlâkiyyesini esas ittihaz etmiştir. İslam ulemâsının ahlâk hakkındaki düşünceleri hemen hemen Hind ve Yunan nazarlarının bir istisnasından ibarettir.”

41 Ibid. The works he referred to as “archaic” were the classics on morality in the Muslim and the Ottoman literary world, such as Kınalızâde Ali Efendi’s *Ahlâk-ı Alâî* or Nasirüddin Tûsî’s *Ahlâk-ı Nâsirî*.

lay divided Muslim society into three according to perspectives on morality: The philosophical perspective, the first group in Muslim society that adopted the ancient Greek and Indian morality. This group consisted of prominent figures in Islamic scholarship including İbn-i Rüşd, Farabi, İbn-i Sina or Nasiruddin Tûsî. The second group consisted of sufis who appreciated spiritualism and discovered the virtues of high morality. However, they represented a small group and despite some original views that they derived from Islam, they too, were inspired by a foreign philosopher, Pythagoras. The third group was the common people (*avam*). Their understanding of morality did not rely on rational thought, experimentation, or self-improvement. Their understanding of morality relied only on certain false traditions (*eğri doğru birtakım görenekler*) and teachings (*telkînat*); hence, it is impossible to assess the morality of the masses and identify the sources feeding their moral judgments.

He argued that the morality understandings of the first two groups were under “foreign influence,” primarily that of Greek and Indian philosophy.⁴² Therefore, he claimed that Muslims never developed independent thought on morality; on the contrary, among the three principles of Islam (*ahkâm-ı İslamiyye*) Muslims neglected conscience and social principles (*vicdâni* and *ictimâî*) and corrupted jurisprudence and theology (*fıkıh* and *kelâm*) by simply turning Muslims into “praying machines” and spreading relativity and materialism among them.⁴³ Consequently, Islamic scholars did not develop an authentic Islamic morality. According to him, by defining morality as “habitual” practices that need no further consideration (*nefs-i nâtikanın bir melekesi*), Islamic scholars made the mistake of removing “reason” and “cogitation” behind human action.⁴⁴ Because these scholars had wrong interpretations on religious morality, most calamities in both the Orient and Oc-

42 Ibid.

43 Ibid. “Fıkıh İslamları bir ibadet makinesi haline getirdi, kelâm da onları itikad hususunda pek maddî ve pek nazariyatçı yapmıştır.” He claims this is the reason for the emergence of different schools in Islam.

44 Ahmed Besim, “Din ve Ahlâk: Mânâ-yı Ahlâk,” 16.

cident stemmed from the conspiracies of immoral clerics.⁴⁵ Ahmed Besim, quoting from Rousseau and Gustave Le Bon, wrote that such “scholarship” based on poor interpretations did not advance humanity.⁴⁶ Ahmed Besim used Islamist claims – such as “being moral is superior than to making scientific discoveries” or “without morality, knowledge is useless” – and turned their arguments upside down. His formulation was that “religious scholars or clergy (*ulemâ*) are useless without morality.”

As a defender of “true Islam,” Besim argued that upright morals constitute the foundations of Islam. For him, the hadith of prophet Mohammed, “I was only sent to perfect moral character,” summarizes the essence of religion. Islam gained power thanks to its emphasis on high moral standards that prioritize virtues. He referred to the importance of the historical context when Islam was initially spread. The Roman Empire was on the verge of destruction due to the moral failure of the Romans. In contrast, Islam announced morals as fundamental to human life and thus gained popularity among who resented the corruption in the Roman Empire. Islamic principles were based on the fact that morality is the only difference between a human and an animal.⁴⁷ This emphasis on morality had given rise to the advancement of Islam.

İslam Mecmuası had a mission to redefine ideals of morality according to the needs of modern times. First of all, the new morality had to serve collective (*ictimâî*) benefits, not individual ones. Ahmed Besim defined the rituals and practices in Islam (such as prayers and fasting) as part of a “habitual” understanding of morality. He condemned those “who feel sorrow if they wash their nose their left hand [by mistake] during ablution but feel nothing when destroying the lives of orphans’ or accepting bribes.”⁴⁸ “Evil behavior harms

45 “Şark ve Garbde vukua gelmiş olan fenalıkların kısm-ı azminin menşei ahlaksız ulemanın çevirdikleri fırıldaklarda buluruz; tarih buna pek güzel bir şahiddir.” Ahmed Besim, “Ahlak ve Din 2,” 7.

46 “Russo ilmden beşeriyete bir faide gelmeyeceğini ve belki zararlar iras edeceğini ve ahlakın ilme mercih bulunduğunu söylüyor; Gustav Le Bon da yakın ifadatda bulunuyor.” Ibid., 8.

47 Ahmed Besim, “Ahlak: Din ve Ahlak 3,” 11.

48 “Abdest alırken sağ eliyle burnunu temizlediği için muzdarib olan bir kimse rüşvet alırken; öksüzlerin ocağına su dökerken vicdanı hiç isyan etmemiştir.” Ahmed Besim, “Ahlak: Ahlak ve Din,” 27.

everyone... ” he claimed, “if we search for the sources of calamities that human beings – especially Turks – have experienced, we find that they were the moral corruption of some people who acted inconsiderately and did not even deem their acts to be petty sins.”⁴⁹ Claiming that the basic reason for religious practice was to remind people of their moral duty, he frequently quoted the Quran and hadith (the advice of the prophet Mohammed) to support the idea.⁵⁰ Ahmed Besim argued that adhering to high moral standards is more important (and useful) than religious practices such as praying: “God will forgive us if we do not perform physical practices of religion, and such sins do not harm social order (*içtimâîyyat*). However, if we do not fulfill our moral duties, we disregard both the rights of God and the rights of his vassals.”⁵¹ He criticized the current understanding of “religious practice” which, according to him, was limited to “physical” activities. Instead, he claimed there is another, “spiritual” way of religious practice – namely, being moral.⁵²

As morality is spiritual religious practice, it serves both the purposes of being religiously upright and the welfare of society. In fact, the new morality focused on society and collectivity rather than individual and self. In *İslam Mecmuası*, “saving the nation” was central to the effort to formulate a new morality. *Ahlak* had to have a reason (*gaye*). Eventually, the “Muslim Turkists” sought to make use of the “spiritual” side of religion for their cause, as well. Ahmed Besim was convinced that “nations that had survived so far

49 “Beşeriyetin – bilhassa biz Türklerin – başına gelen felaketlerin hakiki menşei araştırılacak olursa görülür ki bazı eşhasın – mühimsemeyerek ve hatta ufak günah bile addetmeyerek – yaptıkları ahlaki yolsuzluklardır.” Ahmed Besim, “Ahlak: Din ve Ahlak, Nazar-ı İslam’da Ahlak,” 7.

50 For instance, he quoted the hadith “Ne kadar namaz kılan kimseler vardır ki kazançları ancak yorgunluktur” which translates as “There are so many of those praying who gain nothing but tiredness.” Ahmed Besim, “Din ve Ahlak, 9: İbadat-ı İslamiyye ve Ahlak,” 14.

51 “Bedenî ibadetleri yapmadığımız zaman Allah bizi affeder ve bu günahlar ictimâîyyatı etkilemez. Ama vazife-yi ahlakiyemizi ifâ etmediğimiz zaman hem hukûk-u Allahı hem de hukûk-u ibâdî ayaklar altına almış bulunuruz.” Ahmed Besim, “Ahlak: Din ve Ahlak, Nazar-ı İslam’da Ahlak,” 7.

52 Ahmed Besim, “Ahlak, Din ve Ahlak: İbadat-ı İslamiye ve Ahlak,” 14.

absolutely possessed a solid moral and spiritual foundation.”⁵³ He considered morality to be a precondition for “progress” and “civilization,” because it was not law that prevented (or encouraged) people to behave correctly, but morality.⁵⁴ He insisted that the decline of the nations, especially Muslim nations, was due to the adoption of the ancient morals of defeated nations.⁵⁵ The rise of the Roman Empire, he argued, was a result of the Romans’ moral strength symbolized by resignation of the senate to return to farm.⁵⁶ For him, an upright morality was similar to military training that encourages people to resist bullets.⁵⁷ All physical religious practices, in his opinion, should serve the needs of society. Fasting, for instance, produces empathy with the poor. Therefore, one should think the social benefits of religion while performing religious duties.⁵⁸ Ahmed Besim and a few other writers commented on the question of whether morality changes over time. As making social values compatible with the modern age, space (*mekân*), and community was their ultimate goal, the reformists in *İslam Mecmuası* agreed that morality changes over time. Or to put it more precisely, they argued that morality had to change. Indeed, this was the genesis of social revolution (*içtimâî inkılab*).

In the first issue of *İslam Mecmuası*, an author called Muallim Vahyi (*Muallim* refers to his profession, a teacher) wrote an article titled “Muslim Morality.”⁵⁹ Instead of engaging in a theoretical discussion, he briefly summarized how Muslims should behave in order to be morally upright. He posited four conditions for ideal Muslim morality: “strength [of the body], wis-

53 “Yaşayan milletler – mutlaka – sağlam bir ahlaka, sarsılmaz bir imana malikdirler.” Ahmed Besim, “Ahlak ve Din 2,” 9-10.

54 Ibid., 10.

55 “Mağlub milletlerin kokmuş ahlâklarını yamamağa başlayan İslamlar terakkileri kadar sur’atle tedenni etmekde gecikmediler.” Ibid., 9.

56 Ibid. He is probably referring to Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus, the Roman dictator who voluntarily returned to farming after his service. “Vatanı yolunda kendini ateşe atanlar, çiftçiliği a’yan âzâlığına tercih edenler bulundukça Roma yükseldi.”

57 Ibid.

58 Ahmed Besim, “Din ve Ahlak 11: İbadat-ı İslamiye ve Ahlâk, Oruç, Hac ve Zekat,” 8.

59 Muallim Vahyi, “Ahlak: Müslüman,” 20.

dom, diligence, and fairness.”⁶⁰ He emphasized how important it is for Muslims to accumulate capital, become involved in trade, and increase their wealth as these were among the good deeds. He recommended Muslims to find practical solutions in every sphere of work, use machine power, make scientific discoveries, and be good at their jobs. He formulated new Muslim morality as such: “the heart of a Muslim beats with God while his hand works continuously.”⁶¹ One may find his advice generic; however, it is possible to read his statements as expressions reflecting the drawbacks to progress in Muslim society. He summarized these drawbacks in contemporaneous morality as: “seeing the world’s despair, being hopeless, [and] falling into idleness.”⁶² I believe these were related to the war and psychological atmosphere of the wartime. Ahmed Besim also mentioned a pessimistic attitude among Muslims in the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, Ahmed Besim advised Muslims to turn their faces toward the future not the past.⁶³

An interesting point that deserves attention in the writings of “reformists moralists” is their emphasis on happiness (*saadet*). In almost all the articles, references to happiness accompany the discourse of “progress;” it is the ultimate goal reached by means of ideal morality. Being happy was used as a contrast to pessimism and asceticism. Ahmed Besim argued that despite the firmness of Islamic morality, it is also capable of rendering happiness to humanity.⁶⁴ Being Muslim, accordingly, is to be happy through self-purification.⁶⁵ On this point, he combined his efforts to change moral rules and to achieve happiness: “We Turks were not able to generate a solid social life because initially we imitated the Persians and then the Europeans. Our morality should stem from our religion, law, customs, and contemporary mo-

60 “Sağlamlık, bilgililik, çalışkanlık, adillik işte müslümanın sıfat-ı kaşifesi, bunlardır!” Ibid., 22.

61 “Müslüman gönlü daima hakda, eli ise hiç boş durmayub iş yapmaktadır.” Ibid., 22.

62 Ibid. “Dünyayı zindan görmek, ümitsizliğe düşmek, işsizliği âdet edinmek.”

63 Ahmed Besim, “Nazar-ı İslam’da Ahlak 4,” 526. “Nazarların maziden ziyade atıye çevirilmesi gerekir.”

64 “Din-i İslâmın ta’limi ahlâkiyyesi kat’i ve surc olduğu gibi insanlığın her türlü sa’adetini te’mîn edecek bir sûret-i kâmileddir.” Ahmed Besim, “Ahlak: Din ve Ahlak 3,” 11.

65 Ibid. “[Müslümanlık] İnsanların tezkiye-yi nefis ederek mes’ud olmalarıdır.”

res so that it will appeal to our souls and minds and make us happy.”⁶⁶ He formulated this ideal morality as a key to happiness as well as to progress: “In short, it is a morality that meets the necessities of [modern] times yet is grounded in national mores that will make human beings happy.”⁶⁷ This led him to the topic of upbringing (*terbiye*) through which the new generation would gain a new understanding of morality. Once future generations received a proper education on religious morality (in line with his interpretation), “finally, real happiness will be manifested in this destitute country.”⁶⁸ This brings us to the issue of *terbiye* through which an ideal morality bears fruit. However, before moving on this topic, a discussion is vital to understand the philosophical ground on which a new education policy was built on.

Moral change (*tebdil-i ahlâk*) was one of the most debated topics in *İslam Mecmuası*. In line with the idea of reform, “Islamist Turkists” reserved a space to put their understanding of the new morality into practice. Once the argument that “morality can change in time” was proven (from a historical point of view), then this space could be created and reserved for reform. Although Ahmed Besim supported his arguments with references to the Quran, hadith, and biographies of the prophet (*siyer*), on the issue of moral change he also cited philosophers such as Schopenhauer and Spinoza. In his article “Does Morality Change?” he argued that this is a philosophical discussion yet there is a conventional – and wrong – assumption among the people concerning the unchanging nature of morality.⁶⁹ He claimed this under-

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- 66 “Biz Türkler bir vakitler Acemi bir vakitler Frengi taklid etmek istediğimizdendir ki koyu bir hayat-ı ictimaiyye vücuda getiremedik. Bizim ahlakımız, dinimiz, yasamız ve töremizden ve bugünün canlı örflerinden alınmalıdır ki ruhumuza ve istidadımıza muvafık gelsin ve bizi mes’ud edebilsin.” Ahmed Besim, “Ahlak: Din ve Ahlak 4, Hakikat-i Ahlak,” 11.
- 67 “Hülâsa ihtiyac-ı asra muvâfık millî örfler üzerine istinad eden ahlakdır ki beşeriyeti mes’ud kılar.” Ahmed Besim, “Din ve Ahlak 6,” 14.
- 68 “Nesl-i atiye iyi bir terbiye-yi diniyye verilir ve din muayyen İslamın düstur-u ahlakiyyesi ruhlara hissi bir suretde yerleştirilecek olursa o zaman şu garib yurtda saadet-i hakikiye tecelli eder.” Ibid.
- 69 “Hükemâ arasında münâkaşa edilen bu mesele nasılsa – pek yanlış bir surette – halk arasına da atlamış; kök salmış ve bir kanaat şeklini almışdır. Hatta ‘can çıkmadan huy çıkmaz; huy canın

standing creates wrong views with respect to upbringing and discipline. To illustrate his point, he argued that God sent prophets to correct people's morality. The understanding of morality was based on three things: milieu, heredity, and education.⁷⁰ As these are subject to change, so too is morality. In this framework, he developed a theological view of morality reform. In another article, he defended renewing the current morality by emphasizing its role in regenerating societies. Accordingly, morality serves the purposes of regenerating a nation and bringing it to the point of progress. Therefore, morality needs to be progressive. Without openly confronting, the Islamists' ideal of "going back to the *asr-ı saadet*," he argued that the proposal to adopt medieval morality in contemporary times was nonsensical.⁷¹ His illustration to show the drastic change in morality was – not surprisingly – the rise of nationalism and the adoption of nationalism and patriotism as great ideals of morality.⁷² The question was how to change the established understanding of morality and practice the ideals that Ahmed Besim theorized. On this topic, more so than to Besim himself, the articles of Gökalp, Halim Sabit and Kazım Nami need to be taken into account.

2.1.2 *Meşihat, Education and Regeneration of Morality*

The writers for *İslam Mecmuası* focused on the issue of *terbiye* as a way of dealing with moral decline in Ottoman Muslim society. The term *terbiye* played a key role in their understanding of the education of the masses. However, the term does not refer to scientific education – rather it translates

altındadır' gibi yanlış telakkilere kadar yol açmıştır; halk bu kanaatin bu darb-ı mesellerin pek çok zararlarını görüyorlar." Besim Atalay, "Ahlak Değişir mi?" 10-14.

70 "Peygamberlerin ba's olunması, kitapların kelimesi, şeriatın kurulması hep bunun yani ahlakın kabil-i tebdil olması üzerine müessesdir. Ahlakımız neden değişmesin?" Ibid., 10.

71 "Ancak insanlara kabul ettirebileceğimiz ve kabulüne çalışacağımız kavanin-i ahlakiyye zamanı, mekanı nazar-ı itibare alarak o cemiyeti yaşatabilecek kavaid ve vesayayı cami olanıdır. Yoksa kur'un-i vüsta ahlakını bugün tavsiye etmek hem beyhude ve hem faydasızdır. Her şey gibi ahlak ve nazariyet-i ahlakiyye de tebdillere, terkiblere uğramıştır." Ahmet Besim, "Ahlak: Din ve Ahlak 4 Hakikat-i Ahlak," 12.

72 "Evvelleri vatanseverlik nedir bilinmezken sonraları en büyük mezaya-yı ahlâkiyye sırasına geçmiştir." Ibid., 9.

to upbringing, discipline or instruction. They formulated *terbiye* for the adolescents of future generations as a key to progress: only through education could the Ottomans catch up to modern standards and carry the mores of a nation as well as the essence of Islam. On this topic, too, their starting point was a critique of old (and current) forms of *terbiye*. However, the critique targeted not only medieval understandings of education but also the policy of education initiated in the Tanzimat era. Accordingly, Gökâlp wrote an article in the first issue of *İslam Mecmuası* titled “Islamic Terbiye: The Nature of Islamic Terbiye,” in which he claimed that the schools of the Tanzimat inculcated modern education (*asrî terbiye*) improperly while Islamic education was under the influence of Arabic nations.⁷³ In his opinion, the crucial problem was a lack of a purpose (*gayesizlik*) that caused degeneration and moral decline in youth. He argued that the purpose of *terbiye* should be to make life meaningful and give it a purpose so that the future generations would rely on it. This education would eventually bless their souls with higher virtues and self-sacrifice in the name of the nation and religion. Modern education would provide people with the necessary tools for national progress.⁷⁴

Kazım Nami, in his article titled “Islamic Terbiye, Religious Terbiye,” made more radical critiques of the “so-called Islamic morality.”⁷⁵ He targeted the Muslim idea of an “other world”: “Those who carry the idea ‘Every man for himself’ by calculating only their comfort in the after life are harmful burdens on social life.”⁷⁶ The reformist but theological perspective of *İslam Mecmuası* on education is worth consideration, as well. Like with other topics, the ultimate goal of the reformists was to penetrate religious discourse and conquer this realm from within. Education was crucial because it would eventually become the only way to instruct an “ideal morality” in society. What is interesting (and new) in the discussion of education that took place in *İslam Mecmuası* is not an emphasis on reforming school or university cur-

73 Ziya Gökâlp, “İslam Terbiyesi: İslam Terbiyesinin Mahiyeti,” 14-17.

74 Ibid.

75 Kazım Nami, “İslam Terbiyesi: Dinî Terbiye,” 17.

76 “Her koyun kendi bacağından asılır” diye yalnız ahirette nefsinin rahatını düşünenler, ictimâî hayat için muzır birer yüküdür.” Ibid.

ricula, but introducing a new religious body responsible for developing a new understanding of education in Muslim society. To put it briefly, they sought to reform the institution of the Office of Şeyhülislam (*Meşihat*) and establish an office of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet İşleri*) for these purposes.

Halim Sabit wrote two groundbreaking articles on the issue in *İslam Mecmuası*.⁷⁷ In line with the Durkheim's "division of labor," he suggested a reconsideration of the role of the Meşihat in the society. Accordingly, he proposed two main bodies for the Meşihat, a religious advisory organ (*dinî teşrî' heyeti*) and a religious education commission (*dinî terbiye heyeti*). He argued that the duties of the Meşihat should be limited to these two within a framework of the division of labor in order to achieve a division between the religious and secular realms. By saying that the ulema is the sole authority in religious affairs, he courted and flattered them. But he narrowed the definition of "religious affairs" and questioned "unholy" things with which the ulema was dealing, such as legislation. He quoted following statement from the Quran, "obviously, God orders you to command [his] entrusted realms to competent [people or institutions]..."⁷⁸ and continued, "henceforth, the religious realm will be clearly defined by relieving it of its burdens."⁷⁹ He based his arguments on the "orders of God" as well as on early practices in Islam, claiming that there was separation between religious and legislative (*dinî ve kazaî*) orders. By using religious references, he avoided formulating his views as anti-religious statements; on the contrary, he presented his ideas as the savior of the religious realm that would bring its holiness back by lifting off worldly burdens. Strikingly, he categorized the implementation of justice as among the burdens of the religious realm and claimed them for secular institutions: "henceforth, jurisprudence, with all its institutions, including family law, should be transferred to the Ministry of Justice, while legislative power

77 Halim Sabit, "Dini Terbiye Heyeti," 3-5; "Velayet-i Diniyye: Meşihat-i İslamiyye Teşkilatı," 5-8.

78 "Şüphesiz Allah emanetleri ehline tevdi etmenizi emrediyor." Halim Sabit, "Velayet-i Diniyye: Meşihat-i İslamiyye Teşkilatı," 5-8.

79 "İşte bunun için din, dine mezâhim olan şeylerden ayrılıp dinin şumûlu dairesini ta'yin etmek icab eder." Ibid.

should be handed over to the sultan, the assemblies of the senate and the deputies.”⁸⁰ Eventually, *terbiye* would be central to the duties of ulema. In accordance with the logic of the “division of labor,” a hierarchy among religious offices should emerge and work for reviving religiosity and increasing the moral standards of Muslim people. In this hierarchy, the caliph was first, followed by the Şeyhülislam, and then the Directorate of Religious Education (*terbiye-yi diniyye müdüriyeti*). In towns, muftis (*müftüler*) would be in charge of these duties, in districts preachers (*va’izler*), in *nahiyes* orators (*hatipler*), and in villages and neighborhoods, the imams.⁸¹ He asserted that his solution was an antidote to diminishing religiosity in society because “the mosques are silent, prayers are cold, and requests are selfish.”⁸² Therefore, he offered this education project to revive religion.

Gökalp discussed the project of Diyanet İşleri in his writings to distinguish religious affairs from government ones, to limit the authority of ulema, and to claim their sphere for reform.⁸³ However, as in the articles of Halim Sabit, reformists running for *İslam Mecmuası* used the Islamist discourse of morality crisis itself to remind the Islamists of “their real duties.” Instead of interfering in worldly affairs, they should withdraw from legislation and jurisprudence and increase the spiritual awareness of the Muslim people.

§ 2.2 *Sebilürreşad*: In Defense of Religious Morality

The *Sebilürreşad* writers published dozens of articles on morality and Islamic morality starting in the journal’s early volumes. In the scope of this dissertation, I limit the discussion to those articles that dealt with the war and its relationship to moral decline. Also, instead of evaluating articles in

80 “İşte bunun için adaletin tevzii hususu aile hukuku da dahil olduğu halde bütün şubeleriyle beraber taksim ve vazifeler usûlüne göre adliye nezaretine, hukukî teşri’ husus da münhasıran zât-ı padişahî ile a’yan ve mebûsân heyetlerine teslim edilmelidir.” Ibid., 8.

81 Halim Sabit, “Dini Terbiye Heyeti,” 5.

82 “Camiler sönük, dualar hararetsiz, nidâlar ferdi...” Ibid.

83 On Gökalp’s views on Diyanet, see Erşahin, “The Ottoman Foundation of the Turkish Republic’s Diyanet.”

Sebilürreşad that posited generic and ahistorical statements to emphasize the importance of morality in Islam, I focus on direct references to moral decline and its setting in order to assess the viewpoint of *Sebilürreşad* writers. *Sebilürreşad* editorial reviews of morality-related articles from other newspapers are emphasized because through these reviews one can best see references to wartime realities and contextualize the intellectual debates about morality. Obviously, these reviews also apprise us of other articles on moral decline in the Ottoman press.

The main concern of *Sebilürreşad*'s writers was to underscore the fact that Islam is the only source of morality and that Islamic practices are the instruments to reach a higher moral standard. In this line of thought, moral decline was the result of divergence from Islam, because religion was the source of morality. Accordingly, all the empire's calamities, including loss of land, dissolution, and social problems, stemmed from moral decline. For them, the strength of Muslims came from faith in the greatness of God and respect for the sharia law; once religion lost its power, defeat was inevitable.⁸⁴

In this part of the chapter, I first briefly present the points in common with respect to morality by *Sebilürreşad* writers and share insights on the importance of morality from an Islamist point of view. Second, I consider editorial reviews in *Sebilürreşad* of other articles in the Ottoman press. These reviews are important because they show the direction and policy of the journal. Most of the articles reviewed by the editorial board were excerpts from the *Tasvir-i Efkâr* or *İkdam* newspapers. *Sebilürreşad* generously reprinted articles considered to be useful for the cause of showing the depth of the problem of moral decline. These articles contain many references to the war and contemporary developments. Third, I evaluate how morality became politicized both among rival ideologies and in the international context. Provoked by an article published in the *Times* concerning the increase in

84 Another important point is that this line of thought – namely reviving Islam and Islamic life style through morality – constituted the main argument of modern Islamic revivalist movements. These movements grounded their thinking on the notion that the source of crisis in the Islamic world was moral decline that originated in deviation from pure Islamic principles, see Şeyhun, *Islamist Thinkers in the Late Ottoman Empire and Early Turkish Republic*, 1-2.

venereal disease and moral decline in the Ottoman Empire, the issue of moral crisis became a significant discussion of the legitimacy of the caliphate and of lifestyles that are incompatible with Islam. One of the main concerns of *Sebilürreşad* was that moral decline might harm the future of the caliphate and thus the future of political Islam. Emphasizing that other Muslim nations were following the news about the Ottoman Empire, the writers pointed out the importance of constituting a “good example” for the Muslim world for the success of jihad. At the end of the war, the issue became more concrete thanks to the establishment of the School of Islamic Philosophy (*Dar’ül-Hikmet’ül İslamiye*) which had advised on press censorship in the name of “protecting Islamic morality.” Along with debates over the *Times* article, I present a conflict that emerged following a concert that took place in the Turkish Hearths (*Türk Ocağı*), over which the contest over morality between nationalists and the Islamists transpired. Fourth, I evaluate lists that of disgusting publications (*iğrenç neşriyat*) published in *Sebilürreşad*. To inform readers and the authorities of the dangers of the spread of immorality in society, *Sebilürreşad* published excerpts from contemporary journals and newspapers demanding that action be taken against them. These excerpts provide us with the opportunity to see exactly which publications were “immoral” according to the editorial board of *Sebilürreşad*. Finally, I evaluate a recurrent theme in *Sebilürreşad* most referred to as the source of moral decline: sexual morality. This evaluation demonstrates how the issues of the place of women in the society, of family, of gender roles, of veils and women’s clothing, and of the feminist movement were discussed with respect to moral decline.

2.2.1 *Religion and Morality from the Perspective of Sebilürreşad*

Among the many articles in *Sebilürreşad* on morality, I would like to begin with Aksekili Ahmed Hamdi’s introduction to morality literature (*ahlâkiyyat*).⁸⁵ In this introduction to a series of articles on morality, he used two concepts to define which behaviors were moral and immoral: *fezail* and

85 Ahmed Hamdi Aksekili, “Ahlâkiyyat Serisi Mukaddimesi,” 92.

rezail, which I translate as “virtues” and “vices.” He published dozens of articles on *ilm-i ahlak* – the science of morality. According to him, people would find the path to happiness and virtues, and distinguish good from evil thanks to this science. Not only Ahmed Hamdi but also other writers for *Sebilürreşad* referred to the concepts of *rezail* and *fezail* while defining morality and immorality. Accordingly, an individual is granted “salvation” and “happiness” in exchange for complying with Islamic practices and remaining within the borders of Islamic law. As Said Halim Paşa stated in his article on Islamization: “Islam is the most complete religion. Its morality is based on its creed, and its sociology derives from these moral principles.... The Islamic credo is the key to human happiness, as long as Muslims feel, think, and act according to the fundamental principles of this religion.”⁸⁶ These two spheres, religion and morality, were therefore inseparable. Leaving one and embracing other, according to *Sebilürreşad* writers, was impossible. As Şeyhülislam Musa Kazım asserted, “it has been argued that old religions can be replaced by a new quasi-religion, ‘humanism.’ According to the advocates of this new ideology, religions belong to the past and are outdated. What is needed for the modern world is a new, non-religious, secular morality: humanism. For me, such a thing is simply not possible.”⁸⁷

The biggest threat to religion that *Sebilürreşad* writers identified was materialism. Indeed, Mehmet Akif and Ahmed Hamdi translated a series of articles in *Sebilürreşad* by Mehmed Ferid Vecdi on the attack of the philosophy of materialism (*felsefe-yi maddiyun*) on the philosophy of spiritualism (*felsefe-yi ruhiyyun*) in *Sebilürreşad*.⁸⁸ The Bolshevik Revolution further in-

86 These passages were taken from Said Halim Pasha’s *Islamization* in manuscript form which were provided to Ahmet Şeyhun by the author’s family. Şeyhun, *Islamist Thinkers in the Late Ottoman Empire and Early Turkish Republic*, 104.

87 Ibid., 32–33.

88 Muhammed Ferid Vecdi, “Felsefe: Maddiyun Meslek Felsefesinin Edyana Hücumu,” trans. Mehmed Akif, 209–211; Muhammed Ferid Vecdi, “Felsefe: Felsefe-yi Maddiyun ile Felsefe-yi Ruhiyyunun Çarpışması,” trans. Ahmed Hamdi, 250–252. Muhammed Ferid Vecdi (1878–1954) was a contemporaneous Egyptian scholar known for being a follower of the Islamic modernism movement. His prominent works were translated by Mehmet Akif in *Sebilürreşad*. For more information on Muhammed Ferid Vecdi, see Yavuz, “Ferid Vecdi.”

creased concern over the future of religion.⁸⁹ In this context, spiritualism and morality were the strongholds of political Islam. Identifying immorality and showing its cure were the tasks for the Islamists to undertake in order to maintain political power. To defend Islam in every sphere, they resorted to the moral decline argument their explanations of the backwardness or progress of nations.

Many writers in the journal discussed the question of whether Islam was a barrier to progress. Dr. İsmail Hakkı Milaslı wrote a series of articles in which this question appeared in the title.⁹⁰ In the last of the series, he argued that there were three conditions for the progress of nations: physical, mental, and moral strength. Since Muslims derived their moral principles from Islam, their source of moral strength was Islam. He contended that “religion and morality are the same” and that when Muslims lost faith, they lost their morality and thus their strength to progress.⁹¹ He agreed about the need for a new morality in contemporary Muslim society; however, the divine referents of morality had to remain unchanged. To achieve the task of “defending Islam as the source of morality,” *Sebilürreşad* directly confronted other intellectual circles particularly in the editorial reviews.⁹²

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- 89 *Sebilürreşad* published several editorials criticizing the Bolsheviks. For instance, “Bolşevik Fikirleri: Erkân-ı Diniyyeye Karşı Hakarat ve Tecavüz,” 174. The editors often referred to Bolshevism in their critique of Turkish Republican secularism. “Bolşevik Düsturları: Mekteplerde Laik Terbiyeden Maksat Ne İmiş?” 214-217.
- 90 İsmail Hakkı Milaslı, “Geri Kalmamızın Sebebi Dinimiz midir? Usûlsüzlüğümüz müdür? Daha başka bir şey midir?” 106-107.
- 91 Ibid. “Zira Müslümanlar ahlakı dinlerinden alırlar cihetiyle ahlakca gerilik demek dince gerilik demektir. Ve hakikatte din ile ahlak birdir. Binaenaleyh bizim geriliğimiz ahlakımızın eksikliğindendir demekle dinimize tevsil etmediğimizden demek arasında fark yoktur. Ve nitekim birçoklarımız da geri kalmamız hep dini terk etmemizdendir derler ve böyle denirse bunun bir manası vardır.”
- 92 Although it is beyond the scope of this study, the reason why the *Sebilürreşad*'s editors set aside many pages in the journal for quoting another source deserves attention. It might be partly due to the theological background of the writers and their aim to develop certain ideas in defense of religion rather than to comment on recent political developments.

2.2.2 *Reviews in Sebilürreşad*

On August 8, 1918, *Sebilürreşad* editorial congratulated the newly appointed Minister of Interior Affairs, Ismail Canbulat, for his interview in the newspaper *Tasvir-i Efkâr*. The interview was titled “The Necessity of Improving Public Morality” and in it the new minister expressed his interest in reforming the organization of the municipal police to more effectively combat violations of public morality:

Indeed, not only the Ministry of the Interior Affairs but the entire government establishment attributes great importance to this [morality] issue. Especially the grand vizier [Talat Pasha] is concerned about the gradual decline of morality. And he firmly agreed to take all necessary precautions against this situation. Actually, in my opinion, government is always interested in morality issues. In every country, governments have moral, intellectual, and behavioral influence over society. The power of this impact is more than that of our [government]. The government has to be the one showing the right path, protecting and restoring public morality by being an example. More than anywhere else, our people need guardianship and tutelage. They slavishly imitate all the behaviors and actions of the government.”⁹³

Strikingly, the minister likened the ideal role of government in Ottoman society to a father in the family – the chief exemplar of good manners and morals.⁹⁴ One might interpret this expression as a critique of the previous ruling elites. Moving on from the role of government to correct public morality, he continued: “Henceforth, during my term of office, I will deal particularly with public morality. I will endeavor with great attention and care to make sure that the municipal police execute their duty with respect to the

93 “Matbuat: Ahlak-ı Umumiye'nin Islahı Lüzumu ve Hükümetin Vazifesi,” 265-266. See Appendix A, Quotation 1 for the source text.

94 Ibid.

protection of morality.”⁹⁵ Eventually he indicated the new gambling houses and the gradual increase in prostitution were initial problems to be addressed. He emphasized his resentment about permissions to open new brothels. Citing examples of European countries that had abolished brothels (such as Switzerland and Prussia), he concluded that government has to put obstacles in the way of immorality: “We will try to reduce the causes that produce or pave the way for moral degeneration. We expect success because in our society, the public’s affinity for moral sentiment is more than other societies’ disposition and nature.”⁹⁶ These statements of the minister brought joy and pleasure to *Sebilürreşad*’s editorial board, and they emphasized that the new minister is famous for his views about applying the law equally for everyone; thus, finally, an “honest and ambitious person had arrived to serve the Muslim nation and prevent its disgrace.”⁹⁷ It appears that *Sebilürreşad* shared the thoughts of the minister on the causes of moral decline – the selective application of law in cases of the violation of public morality. The date of this interview coincided with the last months of the war, and it can be interpreted as a critique of corruption among CUP circles. Indeed, this critique is clear in one *Sebilürreşad* editorial review focused on the article of the famous Turkish nationalist, Necmeddin Sadak, an author for *Yeni Mecmua* and a follower of Ziya Gökalp.

Through the end of the war, *Sebilürreşad* increased its emphasis on morality. In some cases, half the pages of an issue were reserved for *Ahlâkiyyat*. In December 1918, immediately after the war, *Sebilürreşad* cited the article of Necmeddin Sadak titled “The Considerations on Morality” written in his

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- 95 Ibid. “Binâenaleyh nezarete bulunduğum müddetçe bilhassa ahlâk-ı umûmiyye ile uğraşacağım. Zabitanın muhafaza-i ahlâk nokta-i nazarından uhdesinde müttertib vazifeyi son derecede dikkat ve itinâ ile ifâ etmesine sa’y olacağım.”
- 96 Ibid. “Ahlâkımızı bozan, yahud ahlâk bozulmasına tesehhil eden her dürlü esbabı azaltmağa çalışacağız, bizde amme-i nassın fitrat ve mizacından hiss-i ahlâka meyil daha ziyade olduğu cihetle mesaimizde muvaffak olmamız da me’muldur.”
- 97 Ibid. “İslam memleketlerinde tesis olunan umumhaneleri kapatarak, icra-yı fuhuş için tevziğ olunan vesikaları toplatarak bu son zamanlarda meydan alan rezaletlerin önüne geçmek gibi büyük ve tarihi bir hizmeti, millet-i İslamiye ancak İsmail Canbolat gibi mert ve azimkâr nâzırlardan bekler,” 266.

own newspaper, *Akşam*.⁹⁸ At the end of the war, thanks to the lifting of censorship, the time had come to target Turkists “for their role in moral decline.” Before giving details of the editorial review in *Sebilürreşad*, I briefly present the main points Necmeddin Sadak explored in the aforementioned article. His article is also the statement of a “new life” advocate on moral decline as the outcome of war:

Obviously, over the last four years we saw that things had changed. Among these, morality is the most remarkable. Many of us have changed our consideration of morality [and] what to take from it; the borders of the concept of morality have widened. We have seen this transformation in every kind of morality. The morality of profession and duty, women and sexual morality, civil morality, etc. all gradually failed. I don’t know if there is any other country in which morality had declined so quickly.”⁹⁹

Necmeddin Sadak accused this new consideration of morality of corrupting the morality and honor of the Turkish family and Turkish women because its eclectic perspectives on the concepts of progress, civilization, and modernization were incomplete. He continued: “Today we have reached the end. It is difficult to assess the damage that the homeland has witnessed just because of moral corruption. What is done is done; that whirlpool is left behind.”¹⁰⁰ Finally, he explained what he meant by the “damage” caused by moral corruption:

Here are the biggest and most catastrophic ones among these damages that need our attention.... On the one hand, there is the prosperous lifestyle that can be observed among the war profiteers and among those who currently live in comfort, apparently as a result of easily earned wealth at the expense of the country. On the other

98 Sebilürreşad, “Matbuat: Ahlak Telakkisi.”

99 Ibid., 231. See Appendix A, Quotation 2.

100 Ibid., 232. “Bugün işte nihayete vardık. Yalnız ahlak bozgunluğundan memleketin gördüğü zararları şimdi ta’yin güçdür. Olan oldu, o levhiyet geride kaldı.”

hand, there appeared a new form of womanhood, completely emancipated from sexual and familial morality, that is a so-called representation of the life of the European woman with its manners and liberal and extreme desires.¹⁰¹

Sadak put war profiteering and the emergence of a new womanhood at the core of moral corruption. According to him, because these two “damages” remained unpunished, the upbringing (*terbiye*) of young girls and boys was extremely affected. He complained that the new generation is following the example of this comfortable, easily earned life and tends to be ignorant and lazy. He urged families, schools, and the press to take action.

If considerations of a new and moral life do not appear soon – in other words, if the *terbiye* of the family and school do not decry this and the press does not take control of this morality, there will be a more significant and final decline. Let’s work to keep moral considerations in their natural, reasonable boundaries. Only then can we save the future of homeland.”¹⁰²

The *Sebilürreşad* editorial review appreciated these lines and accepted these statements as an apology.

No doubt, it is a success to see an author of *Yeni Mecmua* – the journal that desired to overthrow our entire religious, national, social, and moral basis and replace it with fake institutions; the journal that expressed joy by chanting “a space is opening for the new life” after the gradual fall of our old religious notions of chastity – on the right path, making confessions under the heading ‘Considerations on Morality.’¹⁰³

101 Ibid. See Appendix A, Quotation 3.

102 Ibid. See Appendix A, Quotation 4.

103 Ibid. See Appendix A, Quotation 5.

Sebilürreşad concluded the review by expressing the wish that those intellectuals unite against present calamities (*felâkât-ı hâzire*) and work for the correction of morality.

Actually, competition over morality had increased between the Islamists and Turkish nationalists at the end of the war. As mentioned earlier, the abolition of censorship played a role in direct confrontations, but also the loss of the war and increasing political tensions given the occupation of the empire created an atmosphere in which morality became a tool of the opposition. *Sebilürreşad* deliberately followed the activities of nationalists and used the argument of immorality whenever possible. An example was a concert that took place in the Turkish Hearth (*Türk Ocağı*). On December 18, 1919, *Sebilürreşad* quoted an article by the owner and chief editor of *İkdam* newspaper, Ahmed Cevdet Bey, titled “Orient and Occident,” in which he focused on the “undesirable” consequences of Westernization on women of the Orient (including Greek women.)¹⁰⁴ The aim of the editorial review was expressed as embarrassing the other writers in *İkdam* who appreciated the concert that took place in the Turkish Hearth.¹⁰⁵ The editors harshly criticized the event because women and men were mixed, because women took the stage and sang songs, and above all because of the contrasting image of the misery of the people under occupation and the pleasure of “modernists” in concert halls: “While hundreds of our Muslim brothers, orphans, desperate women, sick, old people are groaning and suffering in the mountains of Izmir, the Turkist clubbers, who give moral lectures to others, are giving concerts with women and men mixed, chanting and singing in the name of the ‘celebration of Turkism.’”¹⁰⁶ The *Sebilürreşad* continued on to criticize Turkish nationalists in a sarcastic way: “Obviously, the club will try to reveal why it was

104 Ahmed Cevdet, “Şark ve Garb,” 118-119.

105 Ibid. “Fakat İkdam gibi ağır başlı diye telakki edilen bir gazetenin de bu erkek kadın karışık zevk-i ahenkleri ishihsan etmesi hiç de yaraşır bir hareket değildir.”

106 Ibid. “İzmir dağlarında yüz binlerce Müslüman kardeşlerimiz, kimsesiz çocuklar, biçare kadınlar, alil ihtiyarlar sefil ve sergerdan inliyorken burada Türkçülük bayramı altına sığınıp öte beride hamiyet dersi veren Türk ocakçıları erkek, kadın karışık hevanendeler, sazendelerle ocaklarında icra-yı ahenk ediyorlar.”

established and attract audiences by continuing the activities of pleasure and concerts.”¹⁰⁷ Debates over “concerts” in the Turkish Hearth would continue. Accompanied by a sarcastic tone, the *Sebilürreşad* editorial board’s comments and reviews had a political agenda, as well.

2.2.3 *Morality from the Perspective of Political Islam: Thoughts on the Future of the Caliphate and Jihad in Sebilürreşad*

The role of ideology in moral decline was debated in all intellectual circles both during and after the war. Each side blamed the other for the “intellectual basis” for defeats in battle and the backwardness of Ottoman society. However, the end of the war brought another political dimension to this debate: the future of the caliphate. As the Ottoman Empire was defeated on the battlefield, the ideology surrounding the caliphate, jihad, was questioned, as well. This counter-propaganda was particularly evident in the British press which openly argued that the Ottoman Empire did not qualify for “holiness” due to immorality observed among the common Ottoman Muslims. This increased the anxiety of Islamists over moral decline and added a dimension that can be formulated as “the whole Muslim world is watching us.” Here, I cite an important event that shows how moral decline became politicized.

On September 11, 1919, the *Times* published an article titled “Decadent Turkey: Muslim Virtues Fast Disappearing” claiming an “alarming increase of venereal disease in Turkey, and especially in the capital during the last few years.”¹⁰⁸ The *Times* correspondent declared that although “long established” in Anatolia, venereal diseases were now becoming a big problem in the capital, Constantinople, with some 40,000 women and girls undergoing medical treatment “in a population of about 1.100.000 inhabitants of both sexes.” The correspondent based this information on a “well-informed Turkish source.” As discussed by Seçil Yılmaz, it appears his source was Abdullah Cevdet, the director of the General Health Administration and the chief edi-

107 Ibid. “Ocak maksad-ı tesisini göstermek istediği cihetle zevk-ü sefâsında, âhenk icrasında devâm etmekle müdâvim celbine çalışacağı tabiidir.”

108 Seçil Yılmaz shared the digital version of this article with me. “Decadent Turkey,” *Times*, 9.

tor of *Ictihad*, who was a prominent “Westernist” figure.¹⁰⁹ Before detailing the “fight” that took place between *Sebilürreşad* and Abdullah Cevdet, we should focus on the rest of the newspaper article to see the process of the politicization of public morality and why it became so important in that historical context.

Moving on from the increasing number of venereal diseases among Muslims, the correspondent of the *Times* depicted the situation of public morality in the Ottoman Empire.

The Government has ceased to recognize Moslem prostitution and to enjoin the medical inspection of Moslem prostitutes, which was some slight check on the dissemination of disease, but takes no steps to close Turkish houses of ill-fame or to punish the food profiteering which is one of the chief causes of the evil. It is also handicapped by the inefficiency and venality of too many Turkish doctors, the lack of drugs and hospitals, the increase of alcoholism, and many other difficulties. It has not been able to check the growth raki drinking among the Turkish working class or the increase in the number of private gambling clubs run by effendis to any appreciable extent, and its chances of tackling the redoubtable problem of the social evil seem small.¹¹⁰

After summarizing the circumstances of “decadence,” the correspondent eventually proceeded to the political ramifications of these circumstances and addressed the petition by prominent Indians that had been sent to the Prime Minister of Britain. The petition was written in solidarity with the Ottomans and expressed concerns over the future of Constantinople, a city that was considered “the center of Islamic civilization and morality.” The correspondent found it “a pity” that “highly distinguished Indians, such as the Aga Khan” joined the solidarity with the Ottomans. Quoting from the petition in which the Indian Muslims expressed concerns after the occupation of

109 Yılmaz, “Love in the Time of Syphilis: Medicine and Sex in the Ottoman Empire, 1860-1922,” 273.

110 “Decadent Turkey,” *Times*, 9.

Istanbul about the replacement of Islamic civilization “by alien civilizations with all their concomitants, casinos, gambling dens, liquor shops, and other undesirable adjuncts,” he stated that either the writers of this petition were ignorant or infected by “early Victorian cant in its most odious and hypocritical form.” Based on the immorality argument, the correspondent argued, “there are good reasons enough for the maintenance of some form of Turkish sovereignty at Constantinople, but it is ridiculous to urge that its present civilization is Islamic, or indeed anything but Levantine.” He concluded his article with the advice to the “Indian friends of Turkey” to offer medical help to Turks suffering from syphilis and consumption (as well as a loss of manpower due to war) because, quoting a British doctor, “in a few years the Turkish problem will be medical rather than political.”

This article had a great impact on the Ottoman press. Especially *Sebilürreşad* took up arms against Abdullah Cevdet, who had proposed licensing Muslim prostitutes in order to combat venereal disease.¹¹¹ The debate led to his dismissal as director of the General Health Administration a year later.¹¹² “Those West-lovers (*Garpperest*) who lead our women to an evil path shall read this,” wrote the editors of *Sebilürreşad* when reprinting a two-page article by Cevdet, the chief editor of *İkdam*, in which he evaluated the article in the *Times*. Here, I briefly present Ahmed Cevdet’s view on the causes of moral decline because his article on the topic was written in a surprisingly explicit fashion and *Sebilürreşad* quoted it in its entirety, despite its length. According to Ahmed Cevdet, the path leading to the *Times* newspaper article resulted from several mistakes that took place in the Ottoman Empire. First off, any civilization project in the Orient had to take religion into account because it was nothing if not religion from which the people of the Orient derived their moral principles. Accordingly, it was a mistake to disregard Islam. A good religious education had to be in place in school curricula.

111 “Ahvâl-i Sıhhiye Hakkında,” 106-107.

112 This debate started with a dispute over the number of venereal disease cases indicated by Abdullah Cevdet. The Ottoman Physicians Society (*Cemiyet-i Ettiba-yi Osmaniye*) claimed that these numbers were exaggerated and incorrect, Yılmaz, “Love in the Time of Syphilis: Medicine and Sex in the Ottoman Empire, 1860-1922,” 274-276.

Second mistake was government legislation in various fields. Economic policies needed to prevent poverty because people sacrifice their chastity due to poverty. Another legal action that the government needed to consider was military service. Recruiting men and separating them from their wives for years, leaving them away from their families in a country that lacked adequate means of transportation, had become a problem from the perspective of morality because in the end the situation corrupted the morality of both men and women. In addition to this, another legal issue that impacted morality was divorce law which gave husbands a monopoly over divorce. Men exploited this right, Ahmed Cevdet argued, and used it extensively to remarry. He also contended that women should obey Islamic clothing rules if they expected to be respected in society. However, since times had changed, they should also have access to the university education and earn their own livelihood. “In our society the number of women is more than that of men,” he said; therefore, it was no longer possible for women to “sit at home and make a living.”¹¹³ Furthermore, Ahmed Cevdet pointed out the role of contemporary literature on moral decline. He claimed novels, stories, and European literature had poisoned people’s sense of spirituality; they not only caused moral decline but also spread a misunderstanding of real European civilization. He asserted that none of the authors in these genres had visited Anatolia, and none had an idea about the essence of Turks. All these works were materialistic – based solely on profane ambitions. He added a critique of CUP rulers who had not paid enough attention to this issue.

According to Ahmed Cevdet, there was an obvious problem of moral decline in Ottoman Muslim society for the aforementioned reasons. Therefore, the article in the *Times*, despite its exaggerations and political agenda, had a point. He referred to a “morally degenerate class” in Istanbul that had emerged in a time of social dissolution along with the declaration of the constitution (*Meşrutiyet*). According to him, such phenomena were natural in times of turmoil; however, this class needed to be replaced by a new ruling elite, which had not yet happened in the Ottoman case. Therefore, he con-

113 “Matbuat: Ahlâk Mes’alesi,” 17. “Bahusus ki bizde kadının adedi erkekden fazladır. Binaenaleyh kadın eskisi gibi yalnız evde oturup geçinemez.”

cluded, “we [Ottomans] are in *fetret devri*, time of troubles.”¹¹⁴ But he argued that the *Times* correspondent had not analyzed the situation as closely as he had, and he urged the office of the Şeyhülislam (*Bab-ı Meşihat*) to take action, particularly against publications that violates public morality.

The declaration of jihad during the First World War made the lifestyles in the Ottoman Empire, which were “incompatible” with Islam, more vulnerable to critiques. In this framework, morality was of broad and intense interest in discussions of the legitimacy of the Ottoman caliphate. The sensitiveness of the political situation had increased by the end of the war when the Ottomans were defeated. Therefore, the fight over morality became more explicit among intellectuals, particularly between Turkish nationalists and political Islamists.

We can also consider the famous dispute over the concert that took place in the Turkish Hearth in this context. The Islamists in *Sebilürreşad* had political motives when they informed authorities of immoral activities that were taking place in the country. In this case, they had a special office to with which to collaborate: the moral censorship commission in the *Dar’ül-Hikmet’ül İslamiyye* (the School of Islamic Philosophy), which was established under the authority of the Şeyhülislam on March 5, 1918. The council was founded “to promulgate and circulate the high virtues of Islam, to protect religious institutions in the best possible way, and to work towards the accomplishment of a variety of goals, such as reforming the medreses (madrasas) and providing religious advice to the general public.”¹¹⁵ Three commissions operated under the office: the first one was called catechism (*akâid*), charged with the task “to protect Islam against philosophical attacks and superstitions;” the second one was jurisprudence (*fıkıh*) commission, which “examined the legal opinions of the Muslim jurists;” the third, and most important for our topic, was the morality (*ahlâk*) commission, “charged with promulgating Islamic morals.”¹¹⁶ This commission would become the main censorship mechanism during the armistice period. The commission, after

114 Ibid. “Biz şimdi bir fetret devresinde bulunuyoruz.”

115 Hanioglu, “Darü’l-Hikmeti’l İslamiye.”

116 Ibid. Notably, Mehmet Akif Ersoy was the chief scribe in this office.

discussion among board members,¹¹⁷ would issue declarations urging the Ministry of the Interior Affairs to take action against immoral publications.

Sebilürreşad resorted to the morality commission to complain about immoral activities and publications. The concert in the Turkish Hearth club was one such activity; thus, from this moral mindset, publications that praised the event needed to be censored. Eventually the School of Islamic Philosophy published a declaration titled “On the Inappropriateness at the Turkish Hearth,” which was also reprinted by *Sebilürreşad* in appreciation of the commission’s statement. An interesting aspect of this declaration was the emphasis on “the house of the caliphate, the place where the whole Muslim world is watching,”¹¹⁸ where the immoral events would “incite the feelings of Muslims and surprise their enemies.”¹¹⁹ Finally, the commission called upon the ministry to take necessary measures against the organizers of the event as well as against the publications promoting it. The School of Islamic Philosophy mainly operated after the war; however, I believe that intellectual discussions that took place during the war together with political circumstances of the time were the actual catalysts for the establishment of this institute. During and after the war *Sebilürreşad* reported “immoral” publications to authorities, urging the latter to take action against what the journal labeled “disgusting publications” (*iğrenç neşriyat*) and “propagandas of immorality” (*ahlaksızlık propagandaları*).

2.2.4 *Listing Immoral Publications – the “İğrenç Neşriyat” – in Sebilürreşad*

As mentioned earlier, through the end of the war the ideological contest between Turkish nationalists and Islamists increased. *Sebilürreşad* considered it a “duty” to inform authorities of publications violating public morality and spreading immorality. The editorial board published excerpts from articles as

117 “Twenty-six religious scholars served on the board between 1918 and 1922. The board members convened 171 times to discuss 273 different matters.” Ibid.

118 “Bütün bilâd-ı İslâmiyenin tevciye-yi nazar eylemiş olduğu dâr’ül-hilafet’ül milliyede...” *Sebilürreşad*, “Türk Ocağındaki Münasebetsizlikler Hakkında,” 119.

119 “yârı müte’essir, ağyârı mütehayyır” Ibid.

well as literary works in its pages under the headings of “immoral publications” or “immorality propaganda.” The editors also commented on them, warning both readers of *Sebilürreşad* and authorities how harmful these publications were. Unsurprisingly, others would label this activity on *Sebilürreşad*’s part as denunciation (*jurnalcilik*), recalling the oppressive years of censorship under the Hamidian regime (1876-1909). However, *Sebilürreşad* would claim that its readers were demanding it “to do something” to stop such immoral publications. For instance, on August 8, 1918, *Sebilürreşad* published a letter to the editors from Konya penned by “a member of the *ulema*.”¹²⁰ The letter complained that a newspaper in Konya, *Türk Sözü*, had published an article that “invited youth to fight against Muslim veils and marriage practices and encouraged women and men to have a lengthy relationship before getting married.”¹²¹ The author asked *Sebilürreşad* to respond this article. *Sebilürreşad* stated that it had taken notice of the mentioned article; however, responding to it “would be superfluous,” though the editors wished the article’s author had read the series in *Sebilürreşad* titled “Diseases in the Islamic World and Their Cures.”¹²² Other reasons *Sebilürreşad* presented for the “denunciation” of immorality were to protect the religion and Muslim women by revealing the “real face” of its political opponents.

For our analysis, it is important to understand what was labeled “immorality” or “things causing immorality” from the perspective of *Sebilürreşad*. In December 1918, *Sebilürreşad* published a two-page list of excerpts from other, mostly nationalist, journals.¹²³ As it is clear from the sarcastic title, *Sebilürreşad* was attempting draw attention to the “contrast” between circumstances in the country and the topics with which the press was dealing.

120 Sebilürreşad, “Konya’da Münteşir Türk Sözü’nün Adâb ve Ahlâka Mugâyir Neşriyatı ve Ahlâka Mugâyir Neşriyat,” 265-266.

121 Ibid. “Türk Sözü gazetesinde müslümanların emr-i tesettür ve izdivaçlarına karşı gençliği ilan-ı isyana davet eden, kadınlarla erkekleri kabl’el-izdivaç uzun bir münasebet ve muvane-sette bulunmaya teşvik eyleyen bir makaleye karşı cevap verilmesi temenni olunur.”

122 Ibid. “Âlem-i İslam’ın Hastalıkları ve Çareleri.”

123 “Memleket Ne Hâlde, Matbuat Ne İle Meşgul,” 149-150.

As an incipit, the *Sebilürreşad* editorial complained about the lack of regulation of such publications and asserted that “one would be ashamed of humanity after seeing this situation. Even enemies would be saddened by this much degeneration and decline.”¹²⁴ *Sebilürreşad* continued with an apology to readers because it was necessary to publish excerpts of this *iğrenç neşriyat* in order to show the degree of the “calamity.”¹²⁵ The first journal targeted was *Fağfur*, which was published between August and November 1918. *Sebilürreşad* considered two love poems in the journal – Faruk Nafiz’s “Baş Başa” (In private) and Selami İzzet’s “Beyoğlu’nun Hanımlarına” (To the ladies of Beyoğlu) – to be among the disgusting publications. Second example was the article “Büyükada Hayatı” (Life in Büyükada) in *Serbest Fikir Mecmuası*, from which these lines were quoted in the editorial: “This luxurious life is the only thing that keeps people alive. I laugh at those who don’t think in this way: To those people who want to see life as misery, sorrow, and poverty brought on by the war, I pity them.”¹²⁶ Another article from *Serbest Fikir* was quoted to show how the authors of such works pursue or wish to pursue the world. For instance, instead of looking for sorrow and misery, one author emphasized the beauty of women’s attire in an article titled “Kadın Tuvaletleri ve Hayat” (Women’s attire and life):

I was looking for the joyful and entertaining sides of life this week. It seems it is easier to find than an abundance of misery! Today we are living a luxurious life. Especially our women; we cannot find anything more interesting and exciting than their carefully chosen elegant dresses, colors, socks, and attitudes.¹²⁷

124 Ibid. “İnsan bu halleri görüyor da bayağı insanlıktan nefret edeceği geliyor. Bu kadar tereddi ve inhitattan düşmanlar bile müteessir olur.”

125 Ibid., 149.

126 Ibid., 150. “Bu şuh hayat insanları yaşatmak için yegane kuvvettir. Ben böyle düşünmeyenlere gülerim: O insanlar ki hayatı elem içinde, ıstırab içinde, bugünkü fecii harbin sefaleti içinde görmek isterler, onlara acırım.”

127 Ibid. “Bu hafta da hayatın zevkli, eğlenceli safhalarını arıyordum. Her halde bu ıstırabı bolluktan daha kolay bir şey! Bugün büyük lüks içinde yaşıyoruz. Bilhassa kadınlarımız, bun-

Lastly, *Sebilürreşad* targeted a love poem published in *Yeni Mecmua* by Enis Behic, who was also an adherent of the Syllabist Movement (*Beş Hececiler*). *Sebilürreşad* introduced the poem sarcastically: “And here is *Yeni Mecmua*, the journal that gives social and moral lessons to the Turkish community on the ‘New Life.’”¹²⁸ The title of the poem was “Bir Çift İskarpın” (A couple of shoes) telling of the harmony of a man and woman’s footsteps on the sidewalks.¹²⁹ Considering that *Sebilürreşad* found advocating “getting to know each other before marriage” to be immoral for Muslim couples, the “harmony” of which the poet wrote might have led its editors to label this poem immoral. Note, however, some among the authors of the “calamities” to which *Sebilürreşad* referred – such as Faruk Nafiz Çamlıbel – are in the contemporary Turkish literary canon and famous for creating the national literary genre. While establishing a fresh, nationalist genre in Turkish literature during and after the war, these poets attracted the critique of the conservatives of *Sebilürreşad*.¹³⁰

This contest over morality revealed other facts regarding wartime censorship. *Sebilürreşad* published a list of articles that, according to it, were “against the sacredness of Islam.”¹³¹ In this list, there were articles from *Serbest Fikir*, *Hürriyet-i Fikriye*, and *Sıyanet* that questioned the practice of veiling women in Islam. These journals claimed that *Sebilürreşad* was acting as an informant (*jurnalci*) and violating freedom of speech in the country. According to Ahmed Hamdi Akseki, who wrote in answer to these critiques, it was the “duty of *Sebilürreşad* to protect Islam” against false statements about the practice of veiling. Therefore, *Sebilürreşad*’s editors drew such arti-

ların pek mütena bir zevkle intihab ettikleri elbiseleri, renkleri, çorabları, tavırları kadar ruhumuzu bir mesti ile helecanlandıran başka bir şey göremiyoruz.”

128 Ibid. “Türk unsuruna ‘yeni hayat’ için ictimâî, ahlâkî dersler veren ‘Yeni Mecmua’ dan.”

129 Ibid. “Mini mini iskarpinler/ Ne sevimli güvercinler/ Parkelenmiş sokaklarda/ Mini mini ayaklarda/ Ne gecelerin sesi gelir/ Vurunca da neşelidir.”

130 See Erol Köroğlu’s work on the national literature movement and its development during the war, *Ottoman Propaganda and Turkish Identity*. It is possible that *Sebilürreşad*’s editors used this opportunity to criticize nationalist attempts to create a literary genre and used morality arguments for this purpose.

131 Sebilürreşad, “İslam’ın Mukaddesâtı Aleyhinde Neşriyat,” 227–228.

cles to the attention of the military administration (*askerî hükûmet*). Ahmed Hamdi also noted that the military government had intervened in the dispute and asked that the topic be closed.¹³² As this case illustrates, the wartime government asked newspapers to end discussions on some “sensitive topics.” It is possible to argue that due to intervention by the wartime government, disputes over morality remained relatively few compared to the post-war period. Therefore, we should keep in mind that intellectual debates during the war had certain limitations.

2.2.5 *Reflections on the War, Women, and Morality in Sebilürreşad*

As mentioned, the problem of “immorality” for Islamists was of equal importance with irreligiosity. Their statements on morality served to link morality and religion and keep it within the limits of Sharia law. According to *Sebilürreşad* writers, among the many versions of immorality, prostitution, or sexual immorality in general, was the worst. The argument that “God sends calamities to those who are immoral” was frequently espoused; however, I dig beneath the arguments to provide the peculiar context of the war and the ensuing years of armistice marked by the Allied occupation and the national resistance against it.

On December 16, 1919, the *Sebilürreşad* editorial board published an article titled “The Problem of Morality in Our Homeland” in which the editors reviewed wartime developments together with intellectual debates that – according to them – had paved the way for immorality and particularly for prostitution.¹³³ The article appreciated that the Ottoman press, after “ten years of destruction,” had finally recognized how evil immorality was and

132 “[askerî hükûmet] tesettür meselesi hakkında gazetelerde münakaşaların devamını arzu etmediğinden Sebilürreşad bu konuda uzun uzadıya bir reddiye makalesi neşrederek meselelerin esasına girişmeyi şimdilik uygun bulmamış, yalnız tesettür hakkında din alimlerine, halis muhlis İslam olan Türk kadınına iftira ihtiva eden o makaleyi askerî hükûmetin nazar-ı dikkatine arz etmekle yetinmişti.” Ahmed Hamdi Akseki, “Tesettür ve Kadın Hakları Konusunda Bilinmesi Elzem Hakikatler,” quoted in Kara, *Türkiye’de İslâmcılık Düşüncesi*, 283.

133 Sebilürreşad, “Memleketimizde Ahlak Meselesi,” 404-406.

had realized that “immorality or prostitution and adultery were social wounds” to be healed.¹³⁴ Most of the complaints by the press proposed no real solutions to the immorality problem and there were common misconceptions on the issue. *Sebilürreşad* was proud of its own perspective on morality, which had never changed from the beginning despite accusations of its “bigotry.”¹³⁵ While others recognized the importance of morality only after the war, *Sebilürreşad* had known the sources of the problem from the beginning: “Now, we shall say it again. The reason for the rapid spread and dissemination of all this immorality and especially prostitution and adultery was the death of religious grace – more precisely, humans forcing the destruction of spiritualism with their many words and speeches.”¹³⁶ Moving on, the article presented an overview of the sources and definitions of immorality from a historical point of view. Accordingly, the problem first started with the misunderstanding of the “freedom” that was announced with the proclamation of the constitution in 1908; “some people thought freedom means being free from religious duties and doing whatever they like.”¹³⁷ The initial phase of this misunderstanding was revealed with respect to the issue of veiling, the most rooted religious practice among Muslims with a history of thirteen and a half centuries. The article went on to refer to “they” without detailing to whom “they” refers. “As they anticipated that once the obstacle [of veil] is removed, the remaining religious duties would collapse more easily; they discovered that they could achieve their plans by destroying the woman’s *çarşaf*¹³⁸ and pulling down the wooden curtain between *haremlık* and *se-*

134 Ibid. “Allah’a şükür ki ahlâksızlığın fenâ olduğu artık teslim ediliyor. Sûi ahlâk veya husûs-u fuhuş ve zinaya ictimâî bir yara deniliyor.”

135 Ibid.

136 Ibid. “Şimdi yine söyleyelim. Bu ahlaksızlıkların ve bahusus fuhşun, zinanın bu kadar sur’atle tevsîğ ve intişarına sebep avâtıf-ı dinîyyenin ölmesi, daha doğrusu nassın maneviyatı helâka doğru zorla sürükleyen birçok lisânlarla, birçok kelâmlarla öldürülmesidir.”

137 Ibid. “Birçoklarımız hürriyeti her şeyden evvel kuyyud-u dinden azâde olarak başıboş yaşamak ve nefs-i emârenin her istediğini yapmak mânâsına aldılar.”

138 An outer garment that covers the entire body of women. For details, see Koçu, *Türk Giyim, Kuşam ve Süsleme Sözlüğü*, 65–68.

lamlık.”¹³⁹ Thus, changes in clothing and gender segregation acted as triggers in the development of moral decline. The article continued listing the “sources of evil”: the opening of cinemas, theatres to women and organizing events where women and men were mixed. Keeping in mind the critique that *Sebilürreşad* made of nationalists regarding concerts in the Turkish Hearths, it is possible to assume that “they” referred to nationalists. The argument continued that the source of “immorality” was the modern understanding of life (*asrîlik*) and the project of creating the modern human (*muasır insan etmek*), to which we are familiar from the works of the prominent figure of Turkish nationalism, Ziya Gökalp. The second issue was women’s participation in economic activities. Although the article did explicitly argue against the idea of women working, it emphasized that “they” indicated that Islam was an obstacle to women’s participation in economic activities since it was only concerned with protecting the honor of Muslim women. Eventually, as argued in the article, young women and men “lost the control of their minds”¹⁴⁰ after such provocations. “Women took the *çarşaf* off saying it was too heavy and jumped into the streets wearing dresses that are reserved for sleeping”¹⁴¹ and men started to engage in acts disapproved of by God (*münkerat*). The article harshly criticized the notion that “foolish women” who were obedient to their husbands were therefore under their yoke.

Unlike other accounts that considered poverty to be the main reason for prostitution, the article asserted that while “poverty might be one reason for prostitution” it was not “as significant as bringing women and men together under the same roof.”¹⁴² They blamed “so-called vanguards” in society who helped unite women and men in *Darülfünun* (imperial university) conferences and organized concerts in halls with women and men together. These

139 Ibid.

140 Ibid. “Bunca telkinât-ı fasîde ile iğfal edilen genç erkeklerle kadınların akılları zıvanasından çıktı.”

141 Ibid. “Kadınlar çarşaf ağır geliyor diye soyunup gecelikle sokaklara fırladılar.”

142 Ibid. “Vakıa fakr-u sefâlet de fuşşun esbâb-ı şuyuundan biri olabilir. Fakat insaf edelim. Cinsiyetten iki gencin bir araya getirilmesini teshil etmek kadar müessir midir?”

“so-called vanguards” sent “young, uneducated” girls alone to European universities. They encouraged the government to employ women and eventually “filled the chambers of the state with unqualified, useless women” and wasted public money.¹⁴³ All these constituted “the first stage of prostitution.” *Sebilürreşad* was proud of its view which, according to the article, had never wavered since the beginning. The article asserted that Muslims had a pure morality bound to religion “despite shortcomings in public morality that prevented our progress.” Apparently, it was not modernization that Islamists considered harmful to morality, but the “path” that nationalist elites had followed to achieve modernization. For the sake of modernization, “they” made people forget God and destroyed the “holy source” of morality. The editorial board of *Sebilürreşad* concluded with these lines:

One should know well that this nation is Muslim. Its source of morality is Islam. It received all its graces from there. And the disgraces have been instilled in its soul and body by foreign hands. And the cure for the immorality microbe from which it suffers is to vaccinate religion at the heart of it.¹⁴⁴

Another writer for *Sebilürreşad*, Mustafa Sabri, summarizes this line of thought more precisely:

The idea of our religious reformers is, “Since we are not able to build our world, we must at least destroy our afterworld.” I can only say I am not one of those who deny the material and moral decline of the Muslims, and I neither want to prevent their awakening nor the methods of reform that could improve the situation of the Muslim world. But if the progress and advancement of the Muslim world is to be obtained at the expense of their religion, by destroying Islam as a

143 Ibid. “Hükûmeti teşvik ede ede nihayet devâir-i devleti vukufsuz işe yaramaz kadınlarla doldurup hazineyi beyhûde ezrâr ettiler.”

144 Ibid. See Appendix A, Quotation 6.

religion, I would rather Muslims stay in that miserable and wretched condition than to benefit from material advancement.¹⁴⁵

The article above was indeed a summary of what Islamists thought about morality and immorality. As is clear, the problems of women's employment during the war, their participation in social life, their veiling and clothing, and their new rights to education were at the core of "immorality" arguments. In general, the "issue of women" stood at the center of the "immorality microbe." Aggressive and exaggerated statements such as "jumping into the streets in night dresses" and claims that modernist nationalist elite projects were the reason for prostitution, constituted the ways that Islamists attempted to reclaim moral authority. In fact, *Sebilürreşad* depicted these elites as "inexperienced doctors" with no idea about the "immorality microbe." Therefore, they could do everyone a favor by "leaving the patient in bed" and stepping aside.¹⁴⁶

The issue of women and its relation to immorality was a prominent topic in *Sebilürreşad*. A Muslim woman's duty was to protect her morality. Women also had power over men to correct their husbands' behaviors. Another article in *Sebilürreşad* titled "The Conditions and Duties of Women" explicitly stated that "the reason of prostitution is not economical, but spiritual."¹⁴⁷ Even at the end of the war, *Sebilürreşad* continued accusing Turkish women of immorality and evilness. Unlike nationalist statements depicting Turkish women as the "heroines" of the war, *Sebilürreşad* recalled the widespread "prostitution and immorality" during the First World War. On October 16, 1919, *Sebilürreşad* reviewed an article published by the nationalist newspaper *İstiklal*. The latter article had praised the sacrifices of Turkish women during the war and celebrated their steps on the path to emancipation.¹⁴⁸ *Sebilürreşad* wrote a sarcastic commentary manifestly accusing Turk-

145 Quoted in Şeyhun, *Islamist Thinkers in the Late Ottoman Empire and Early Turkish Republic*, 46–47.

146 "Memleketimizde Ahlak Meselesi," 404–406.

147 Sebilürreşad, "Kadınların Vaziyeti ve Vezaifleri," 105. "İktisadî sıkıntıdan değil ihtirasî sıkıntıdan kötü yola düşüyor."

148 Sebilürreşad, "Kadınlarımız Hakkında," 19.

ish women of having been corrupted. The review stated, in a sarcastic tone, that “we know what the path of emancipation has been for Turkish women in the last four or five years, especially during the Great War.”¹⁴⁹ *Sebilürreşad* used the passive voice to depict the situation of women instead of blaming them directly. The journal held an unstated subject responsible the situation of women, thus disregarding their own agency:

In recent years, as nobody can deny, prostitution has increased among our women and it has been observed that Muslim women are secretly engaged in prostitution. These women, abandoning and neglecting family life and their duties, were sent to the streets. Men’s duties were saddled on the shoulders of these women in exchange for salaries that were unquestionably insufficient to make a living.¹⁵⁰

Strongly arguing against the idea of women’s struggle for emancipation, *Sebilürreşad* asserted that there was no such struggle between men and women in Muslim society.¹⁵¹ It advised *İstiklal* newspaper to “think first” before publishing such articles.

§ 2.3 *Yeni Mecmua*: The “New Morality” as a Cure for Moral Decline

Yeni Mecmua set aside many pages to elaborate on the issue of morality and offered new insights for solving the problem of moral decline. Its writers approached the issue of morality from a sociological point of view. Most articles on morality were published in the sociology (*ictimaiyyat*) section to emphasize that moral values had to be discussed from a “scientific” perspective. This stemmed from the influence of Durkheim on the development of the disci-

149 Ibid. “Türk kadını[nın] dört beş seneden beri, yani Harb-i Umûmî hengâmesinde sâlik olduğu olduğu târik-i istihlasın neden ibâret olduğu elbet malûmumuzdur.”

150 Ibid. See Appendix A, Quotation 7.

151 Ibid.

pline sociology among Ottoman intellectuals.¹⁵² In line with this, the authors of *Yeni Mecmua* institutionalized moral decline debate within the confines of sociological approaches. For them, once the reasons for decline were revealed scientifically, it would be easier to solve the problem. For the sake of analysis, I highlight those articles that point to the context of war as important to the shortcomings of current moral values. The authors coined the concept of a transition period (*intikal devresi*) that define the war as a moment of transition into the age of the modern division of labor. In this framework, they developed a new understanding of morality based on a “new life” (*yeni hayat*), which social life based on solidarity (*tesanüd*). Ziya Gökalp called this new understanding of morality national morality (*millî ahlâk*).¹⁵³ In the context of war, moral decline, according to the commentators, was revealed especially with respect to the issue of war profiteers because a new morality based on social solidarity had not yet been established in society. To establish such virtues in society and thereby overcome the problem of moral decline, the task of upbringing (*terbiye meselesi*) had to be undertaken in a modern way. Only through education, Sadak and Gökalp emphasized, could moral decline be eliminated.

2.3.1 *The Morale Laïque and the Sociological Analysis of Morality and Moral Decline*

For the authors in *Yeni Mecmua*, morality was something to be dealt with by the discipline of sociology. Moral decline, in this sense was a sociological problem with scientific explanations if approached using the methods of sociology. Therefore, the issue fell in the realm of *ictimâîyyat*, a term that Gökalp coined as a translation of sociology.

152 Many studies on the impact of Durkheim on Ottoman-Turkish intellectuals have been published. For more information, see Toprak, *Türkiye’de Popülizm*; Toprak, “Türkiye’de Durkheim Sosyolojisinin Doğuşu”; Parla, *The Social and Political Thought of Ziya Gökalp*.

153 Zafer Toprak discusses this in the context of “social revolution” in Gökalp’s thought. Social revolution was the second step in the advancement of reform in Ottoman society following the political revolution of 1908. Toprak, “Osmanlı’da Toplumbilimin Doğuşu.”

Before detailing the statements on moral decline in *Yeni Mecmua*, an overview of the term *morale laïque* and how Durkheim's works formulated it is essential to grasp a better understanding of intellectual context. Thus, I draw parallels between contemporary European thought and the works of the Ottoman intelligentsia. Durkheim was convinced that the moral crisis in French society was derived from changes in social structure that had destroyed the common consciousness by removing the basis for ethics.¹⁵⁴ Some French intellectuals of the Third Republic, including Durkheim, undertook the task of creating an official secular morality as a fundamental precondition for social integration.¹⁵⁵ Education was central to the project of nursing children on the new Republican values. As Morton indicates, "morality in education gradually came to mean a civic religion, with regular readings of the Declaration of Rights, civic chants and patriotic fervor as its main components."¹⁵⁶ Moral renewal was only possible by setting up great collective goals that united individuals around common ideals.¹⁵⁷

In Durkheim's works, morality was treated as a "social fact" explicable only from the standpoint of sociology.¹⁵⁸ A significant part of his studies was dedicated to developing a *morale laïque* in the service of society that he envisaged would be organized according to the principle of the "division of labor."¹⁵⁹ He introduced the *science des mœurs* (sciences of mores) to sociology to observe the customs of a society in order to study morality.¹⁶⁰ Gökalp adopted this formulation and developed it in his studies of mores (*örf*) in Turkish society.

On August 23, 1917, Ziya Gökalp published an article titled "Moral Crisis" in *Yeni Mecmua*.¹⁶¹ He began by defining different moralities. From his point of view, there were two different moralities: ascetic morality (*zühdi*

154 Stock-Morton, *Moral Education for a Secular Society*, 128.

155 Ibid., 5.

156 Ibid., 26.

157 Ibid., 134–135.

158 Royce, *Classical Social Theory and Modern Society*, 57–58.

159 Stock-Morton, *Moral Education for a Secular Society*, 127.

160 Ibid., 129.

161 Ziya Gökalp, "Ahlak Buhranı," 122.

ahlâk) and social morality (*ictimâî ahlâk*). Ascetic morality was the moral system of primitive societies (*ibtidai cemiyetler*) established on the concept of mystic “holiness” and the categories of the taboo (*haram*) and the obligatory (*vacib*). Apart from these two, there were licit (*caiz*), permitted (*mübah*), and permissible (*helal*) acts. In monotheistic religions, these categories solidified even more because they had consequences in the afterworld. In this perspective of morality, people who commit sin feel guilty whereas those who fulfill the obligatory rules feel righteous. Therefore, ascetic morality brought high moral values to individuals and established rules in society, up to a point. However, in Gökalp’s opinion, as society advanced, asceticism was transferred from the public to the private sphere, which was an inevitable consequence of the social division of labor.¹⁶² In times of social progress, he asserted, only a few can fulfill the obligations of ascetic morality; social division of labor conflicts with public ascetics and diminishes the number of ascetic people, thus causing a decline in decency and moral quality.¹⁶³ At this point, he refers to the context in which the transformation occurred:

Eventually, in addition to the social division of labor, on one hand, and the excessive admiration that we show towards European civilization, on the other, the spiritual earthquakes that the war caused shook ascetic morality completely, and as a result, souls and consciences tended to be freed from all moral concerns.¹⁶⁴

For him, once emancipated from the influence of ascetic morality it was natural and necessary that individual desires would become rampant. And, Gökalp argued,

that is what we call individualism (*ferdcilik*); after denouncing principles of old morality, people left moral concerns aside and only ran after personal pleasures, joys, and interests. Today, the immorality

162 Ibid.

163 Ibid.

164 Ibid. See Appendix A, Quotation 8.

movement that harms innocent souls with tragic fate is nothing but a wretched consequence of the disease of individualism.¹⁶⁵

As is clear from these lines, he defined “religious morality” as an ascetic morality that – as times changed – would inevitably diminish in society due to three developments: war, the emergence of the division of labor, and admiration for European civilization. “Religious morality” can no longer be adopted, since it belongs to another age: “Both religion and law may establish special codes in society, however; both derive their strength from morality.”¹⁶⁶ This idea was the exact opposite of that of the religious morality defenders in *Sebilürreşad*. Gökâlp indicated that morality was the source of law and religion, while *Sebilürreşad*’s authors emphasized that religion was the source of both morality and the law. Gökâlp took his point further and argued that the conservatives who defended the revival of old morality to overcome crisis of morality were contributing to the current moral decline: their insistence on the old morality made the resistance of individualism to the “domination and tyranny of a diminishing morality” stronger.¹⁶⁷ However, more so than these “old morality defenders,” the people most responsible for moral decline were intellectuals who had not worked on codifying and developing a new morality.¹⁶⁸

Gökâlp simplified the definition of “new morality” to a “social morality” that had to be established on sociological methods.¹⁶⁹ He made it explicit that “nobody would respect” principles not based on scientific evaluation “in the

165 Ibid. “İşte ferdçilik dediğimiz şey, insanların eski bir ahlâka karşı isyan ettikten sonra ahlâk endişelerinden büsbütün vazgeçerek, ferdi ihtiraslarının, ferdi eğlence ve menfaatlerinin arkasından koşması demektir. Bugün, birçok müessif tecellileriyle henüz bozulmamış ruhları dağdar eden ‘ahlâksızlık hareketi’ işte, bu maraz-ı ferdçiliğin menfur bir neticesinden ibarettir.”

166 Ibid. “Din ile hukuk da kendilerine mahsus birer inzibat tesis edebilirler, fakat ikisi de kuvvetlerini ahlâktan alırlar.”

167 Ibid. “Zaten, ahlâksızlık ceryanı bazen kendisini haklı ve nazariye itibariyle kuvvetli gösterebiliyorsa, hiç şübhe yoktur ki, bu kuvveti solmuş bir ahlâkın tahakküm ve istibdâdı sayesinde ihrâz edebiliyor.”

168 Ibid.

169 Ibid.

age of reason.”¹⁷⁰ In order to follow the principles of morality, people had to know how those were established in the course of social advancement and then to define their purposes and benefits from the perspective of the positive sciences, not scholasticism or literary knowledge. He offered two sociological fields to cope with moral and religious decline: moral and religious sociology (*ahlakî ictimaiyyat* and *dini ictimaiyyat*). Only these two fields of sociology could save adolescents from the apparent conflict between the positive sciences and religious and moral emotions. This conflict was what created the gap from which individualism was benefiting from. Strikingly, he not only criticized the moral understandings of materialism, biological determinism, and spiritualism – none of which were able to establish a positive moral scholarship – but also the moral perspectives of Kant, Comte, and Spencer for being agnostic (*gayr-ı münfehim*). He concluded that “sociology is the only positive science that can help maintain the current religious and moral sentiments that constitute the backbone of real duties for social order.... Therefore, we expect the cure for today’s moral depression only through the true path that sociology illuminates.”¹⁷¹

On the topic of individualism and the impacts of modern thought on morality, İsmail Hakkı published an article in *Yeni Mecmua* titled “Ahlak Mücadeleleri” (Moral conflicts).¹⁷² After acknowledging the existence of a moral crisis in society, he analyzed the influence of certain philosophical trends on the decline of morality. According to him, because society was in a period of social dissolution, such trends could easily affect the people, particularly the youth. Among these trends, he considered moral nihilism (*lâ-ahlâkîlik*), biological determinism (*tabiatcılık*), idealism (*fikircilik*), particularism (*infiradçılık*), collectivism (*ictimâîcilik*), conservatism (*mu-*

170 Ibid. “Şübhesiz bugün makul olmayan yahud makuliyeti ilmî tedkikler neticesinde ortaya konulmayan kaidelere kimse itibar göstermez. Bu asır, ilm asrı, terassud ve tecrübeye müstenid akıl asrıdır.”

171 Ibid. “Binaenaleyh, ictimâîyyat ilmi cemiyetlerde el’an yaşamakta olan ve ictimâî inzibâta aid vazifelerin en canlı uzuvlarını teşkil eden dinî, ahlakî duyguların müsbet ilimlere karşı sarsılmamasını te’min edebilecek yegâne müsbet ilimdir.”

172 İsmail Hakkı, “Ahlâk Mücadeleleri,” 187-188.

hâfazacılık), and false idealism (*sûnî mefkûrecilik*). He strictly opposed moral ideas derived from nihilism and Darwinism. Emphasizing the nature of moral codes as social principles, he agreed that “moral Darwinism” was a misinterpretation of Darwin’s “survival of the fittest,” and he claimed that applying such principles to morality was wrong because it leads to a total rejection of moral judgments. Like Gökalp, he proposed the idea of solidarity to cope with the crisis of morality vis-à-vis philosophical trends stirring up conflict in society.

Returning to Gökalp’s sociological analysis of moral decline, we should note that he divided morality into several forms and wrote about each separately. This was in line with his idea of sociological classification to observe “social facts” using a scientific approach. These five moralities were: individual morals, professional morals, sexual morals, family morals (he wrote twelve series of articles on family alone), and finally, general morals (*şahsî ahlâk*, *meslekî ahlâk*, *cinsî ahlâk*, *aile ahlâkı*, *umûmî ahlâk*, respectively). Accordingly, during war, “crime against property increases because the nation becomes a single family and thus it stirs the spirit of collectivity, while on the other hand economic poverty accelerates.”¹⁷³ Consequently, he referred to war profiteering as easily-earned wealth shook the economic and moral foundations in society. He contended that if “professional morals and individual morals have been established in the country before the war, profiteering would not have become such a big problem and it would not have been possible to spend that illicit money in an immoral way.”¹⁷⁴

Gökalp considered sexual morality to be the most important part of *şahsî ahlâk*. He asserted that sexual morality deserves particular attention because the sense of crisis in terms of sexuality reached an utmost degree.¹⁷⁵ After

173 Ziya Gökalp, “İctimaiyyat: Şahsî Ahlâk,” 141. “Harb zamanında bir taraftan millet bir tek aile mahiyetini aldığı için, iştirakçilik ruhunun hakim olmasından, diğer taraftan iktisadî sefâletin tevsîğ etmesinden, mülkiyete tecavüz hadiseleri de artıyor.”

174 Ibid. “Harbden makdem memleketimizde meslekî ahlâk ile şahsî ahlâk kuvvetle tesis etmiş olsaydı, ne ihtikarcılık bu kadar marazi bir şekil alacaktı, ne de gayr-ı meşru bir surette kazanılan paraların gayri ahlaki bir surette sarfına imkan bulunacaktı.”

175 Ziya Gökalp, “İctimâiyyat: Cinsî Ahlâk,” 168.

giving a long historical, anthropological background of gender segregation, his main idea in overcoming crisis of sexual morality was the necessity of establishing the mutual respect of both sexes as the essence between men and women relationships. Once personality was defined as sacred and the “free will” of both woman and man was recognized, this kind of moral crisis would be eliminated. The first stage in the recognition of this free will was to legally recognize the equality of the sexes. Repeating his claim that this was the age of the division of labor, he strongly argued that old moral codes concerning veils and gender segregation created obstacles to women’s participation in the division of labor and had to be eliminated. Conservatives had to accept an understanding of “mental veiling” instead of physical veiling.¹⁷⁶ These lines might have sounded radical at the time; however, the motives of these intellectuals were about saving the state. Perhaps, the legitimacy of this aim allowed them to be radical.

Gökalp continued dealing with “the issue of women” in a series of articles titled “Family Morality.” One of these articles, titled “The Love for Chevalier and Feminism” had interesting insights on morality, or in Gökalp’s terms – “sick morality.”¹⁷⁷ After arguing that feminism was misinterpreted in current intellectual circles and was confused with medieval understandings of aristocratic women chevaliers, who were accepted as superior to men, he defended feminism as a democratic movement that demanded the equality of men and women. He attacked the Tanzimat literature, especially the *Servet-i Fünun* genre (except for Tevfik Fikret) that adopted aesthetic judgments of women from French literature, for its role in “sick morality.” In this aesthetic view, the beauty of women was reduced to their psychical appearance, whereas in other literary genres such as those of British literature, the beauty of women stems from not only appearance but also high morals. For him, “the material beauty of woman and her high morals are indivisible from each other,”¹⁷⁸ and “the way to unite love with morality is only possible

176 Ibid. “Maddî tesettür yerine manevî tesettür kâim olunmalı. Fakat öte yandan muhafazakârlar da bu tedricî tekâmülün zarûrî olduğunu artık kabul etmelidir.”

177 Ziya Gökalp, “Aile Ahlakı: Şövalye Aşk ve Feminizm,” 364.

178 Ibid. “Kadının güzelliği ve ahlâkîliği bir bütündür.”

through marriage.”¹⁷⁹ Adopting feminism in the social and political spheres also meant educating women in national and professional morality since they heretofore lacked these qualities. On the other hand, women’s sexual morality was higher than that of men, according to him, man should take the strength of woman as an example from this point of view. We should note that these arguments opposed those of *Sebilürreşad*’s authors who emphasized the weakness of women on the issue of sexual morality. Gökalp, on the other hand, recognized the “will” of women in this sense and accepted women’s sexuality within this framework. His views on morality imply the fact that he was convinced that morality was socially constructed – in line with the sociological view.

2.3.2 *The Concept of “İntikal Devresi,” Solidarism, and the Understanding of “National Morality” in Yeni Mecmua*

The authors of *Yeni Mecmua* agreed that the Ottoman Empire was undergoing a stage of transition (*intikal devresi*). Accordingly, a sense of moral crisis was a natural outcome of this stage. Used in many different contexts, the stage of transition meant a transformation from ummah to nation, from backwardness to advancement, from feudalism to modernity, and from the extended to the nuclear family. This transition had been marked by social crisis or social dissolution in those countries that had experienced it. Furthermore, the agonies accompanying the transition were evident in every sphere of life; all institutions – including morality, family, marriage, labor, business, bureaucracy, and the military – suffered from turmoils of transition. For instance, Ahmed Midhat (Metya)’s article titled “Professional Groups and Moral Life” claimed that even though it had been one and half centuries since the social turmoil of the Industrial and French Revolutions had started, the world was still struggling with moral and legal tensions.¹⁸⁰ As discussed, Gökalp claimed that there had been a transition from ascetic morality to social morality. Women’s participation in the labor force was also a sign of the

179 Ibid. “Aşkın ahlâkla birleşmesi ise ancak izdivac dahilinde kalmasıyla meşruttur.”

180 Ahmed Mithad, “Mesleki Zümreler ve Ahlaki Hayat,” 258-259.

transition to the modern division of labor that would eventually necessitate legal changes to recognize women's rights in the public sphere.¹⁸¹ Another author, Sadak agreed with him and claimed that it was also "a transition period in the spiritual mindset of the public."¹⁸² He wrote in 1917 that three years of war had brought moral decline in society and argued that the old morality should be replaced with a new one. This new morality, as developed by several authors in the journal, was based on the foundation of social solidarity inspired by Emile Durkheim.

In this line of thought, all civilizations went through a similar social crisis in the transition stage; however, for Gökalp, the problem was deeper and remained unsolved in the Ottoman Empire due to the lack of "great intellectuals." Recognizing solely Tevfik Fikret as a "great intellectual," he argued that there were no other intellectuals in the spheres of morality, law, and philosophy with Fikret's intellectual caliber. These intellectuals in other countries had guided society from ascetic to moral religiosity and from ascetic to social morality.¹⁸³

Apart from the disadvantage of not having great intellectuals during the stage of transition, the cures for overcoming the shortcomings of this period were to reform existing institutions and establish new ones as necessary according to the principles of the social division of labor. Moral problems discussed with respect to the social division of labor were war profiteering, women's participation in social, economic, and political life, and the education of adolescents. I discuss the first two here and reserve another heading for the education issue because while the first two were "immediate" projects, education was a long-term solution for moral decline, yet with a similar perspective based on solidarity.

The authors of articles dealing with war profiteering approached the issue as a moral problem. For them, getting rich off the war was the result of an individualist, self-seeking morality. War profiteers only pursued their own

181 Ziya Gökalp, "İctimaiyyat: Cinsi Ahlak," No: 9.

182 Necmettin Sadak, "Umûmî Ahlâk, Meslekî Ahlâk," 496. "Bu devre, milletin maneviyatında istihale-i intikal devresidir."

183 Ziya Gökalp, "Ahlak Buhranı," 122.

interests, not only economically but also socially. Refik Halid (Karay) wrote an article titled “The War Rich” in *Yeni Mecmua* and expressed that there were two major calamities in the country: louse-borne typhus and war profiteers.¹⁸⁴ According to him, the newly rich thought that being wealthy meant wandering around like a turkey with a full stomach and running after females in the streets. Such rich people, for Karay, did no good for their homeland or fatherland. They ate, drank, had fun, and showed off. Their money, Karay said, did no good for the country; these newly rich never donated to charity. On the contrary, their way of spending money harmed the public good. At the end of his article, he emphasized that these newly rich had emerged within Ottoman society; they were “domestic products.”¹⁸⁵ Such a description of the war profiteering problem indeed had long-lasting echoes, particularly in literary works. Strikingly, the problem was not deemed a consequence of the economic policies of the ruling party. Instead of discussing the failure of the economic policies of the government, intellectuals concentrated on the immorality of businessmen.¹⁸⁶ Therefore, the solution to the war profiteering problem was to establish corporations and unions – or, as described by Sadak in French, *groupements professionnels*. These corporations would be established on the basis of professions as units that would check the work ethics of their members. Even without any “legal” punishment, these corporations would apply “social” punishments such as exclusion from professional circles for “not comply[ing] with the national consciousness.”¹⁸⁷ These corporations would be the tools by which individual interests would be attached to the national interest, and each corporation would share “social”

184 Refik Halit “Harb Zengini,” 301.

185 Ibid. “Balta ormana ‘sapım sizden!’ demiş; bu ictimâî bıçkının da maalesef sapı içimizden çıktı; yerli malı... Evveli, zengin Frenk serveti memlekete bela olurdu. Şimdi de kendimizinki!...”

186 For example, see Ahmed Mithad, “Mesleki Zümreler ve Ahlakî Hayat,” 258-259; Necmettin Sadak, “Umumi Ahlak, Mesleki Ahlak,” 496; Tekin Alp, “Tesanüdcülük: Harp Zenginleri Meslesi,” 313.

187 Necmettin Sadak, ibid. “itbâi mecbûrî olan bu emirlere inkıyât etmeyenler ceza görmez; fakat fa’al ve hareketleriyle ictimâî vicdani rencide ettikleri nispette efkâr-ı imanın takbih ve tel’inine uğrarlar; herkes onlardan kaçır, kimse kendileriyle münasebette bulunmaz, herkesin nefretini celp eder.”

duties according to the principles of the social division of labor. In other words, the logic was formulated as: “corporations would find harmony between individual and national interests and instill a national morality in the members of the professional groups.”¹⁸⁸ For instance, Sadak said, “If we had had a proper trade [society] before the war, we would never have ended up with profiteering in such an ugly and improper way.”¹⁸⁹ For him, people engaged in profiteering because of the lack of “national morality,” – that is to say a moral understanding shaped by solidarity and the institutions that were established on the basis of solidarity.¹⁹⁰ National morality, on the other hand, was the idea of considering the public interest to be superior to individual interests; this was the foundation of the “new life” and the source of all kinds of moral activity.¹⁹¹

2.3.3 *National Education as a Solution to Moral Decline*

As Berkes stated in his groundbreaking work, the “fulcrum” of reformers to liberate individuals from “the yoke of tradition” was education.¹⁹² *Yeni Mecmua* had a separate column on the issue of education and upbringing titled “The Problem of Upbringing.” Instead of restating the importance of education for modernization projects, this study limits the matter to the “healing” effects of education for moral decline. Necmeddin Sadak was the leading figure writing about ideal education in *Yeni Mecmua*. He underlined that some problems in education system had resulted in a crisis of morality. According to him, the initial problem was the conflict between the modern school curriculum and milieu (*muhit*). Sadak asserted in his article titled “The Education of Our Young Girls” that the factor most contributing to “moral decline in the world of women” was the education that young girls re-

188 Ibid.

189 Ibid. “Eğer bizde ticaret muntazam bir meslek zümresi olsaydı, harp esnasında bu çirkin ve muayyıp tarzda, ihtikâr seklinde tecelli etmezdi.”

190 Ibid.

191 Ibid.

192 Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, 412.

ceived.¹⁹³ He contended that the conflict that arose between modern education – particularly the curricula of foreign schools – and the social conditions of society was the actual reason for moral decline. This education had no real basis in the society and created expectations that could never be realized. These girls found salvation by migrating to other countries or places and, in the worse scenario, by committing suicide. In order to cope with this problem, the conflict had to be eliminated; family, the social environment, and schooling had to work in harmony to educate adolescents. Girls had to be educated not only to be wives or mothers but also skilled employees. Morality had to be instilled through this education to convey the “great ideals” of both family and the workplace. In another of his article, he criticized excessive materialism. The article titled “The Danger of Sports” argued that moral progress is superior to bodily progress.¹⁹⁴ The importance of education and the reform of education had become possible thanks to the war. Eventually, national education would be victorious over clerical education.¹⁹⁵ The morality crisis could be eliminated by a “national education” that would give to the young generation “noble causes” and “great ideals.”¹⁹⁶ These ideals would attach the youth to their families, society, and the nation with patriotic feelings.

§ 2.4 Women’s Journals on Moral Decline

Moral decline discourses often revolved around the topics related to women such as veiling, clothing, gender roles in the family and in society, polygyny, the formation and dissolution of marriages, women’s behavior, and gender segregation in the public sphere. Especially veiling practices were a central issue for maintaining gender distinctions and women’s morality in public

193 Sadak, “Terbiye Meselesi: Genç Kızlarımızın Terbiyesi,” 15-16. “Memleketimizde kadınlık alemi oldukça mühim bir buhran geçiriyor. Buhranın en mühim amillerinden biri şübhesizdir ki genç kızların aldığı terbiyedir.”

194 Necmettin Sadak, “İspor Tehlikesi,” 473.

195 Ernest Lewis, “Fikir Hayatı: Milli Terbiyeye Dair,” 132.

196 N. Sadak, “Vatan Terbiyesi,” 354.

space. Starting in the sixteenth century, sultanic edicts were published to preserve traditional veiling by referring to, as Nora Şeni asserts, “what has always been” as a pretext justifying the promulgation of such edicts.¹⁹⁷ On the other hand, Ahmed Refik wrote in *Yeni Mecmua*, Ottoman women “just like the Janissaries” had “never obeyed” these sultanic codes.¹⁹⁸ As discussed earlier in this study, sumptuary laws on clothing had many rationales apart from the obvious – that is, protection of the Islamic principles. For instance, Tunaya considered the veiling issue to be a tool of political Islam to intervene in social life.¹⁹⁹ Accordingly, the issue became attached to the discussion on the limitations of freedom and secular law vis-à-vis sharia law. In the context of the war, the veiling issue took on yet another dimension: the reason for the country’s calamities was suggested to have been women’s resistance to the veil. Mehmet Tahir, for instance, published a booklet on the topic arguing against the general assumption in society that the Balkan Wars had been lost because women had uncovered themselves.²⁰⁰ Fashion, indeed, had ramifications encompassing concerns over morality, identity, and autonomy. Nicole Van Os explains how women’s outfits came to be perceived as a threat in the late Ottoman context.

First, the changes in the outdoor dress of women evoked opposition from those who thought certain types of clothes were not in accordance with religious rules and national morals. Second, expenses incurring while following fashion, defined as a constantly changing of clothes without an actual necessity, were a reason for the rejection of fashion. Third, and often connected with the other reasons, there was

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- 197 Şeni, “Fashion and Women’s Clothing in the Satirical Press of Istanbul at the End of the 19th Century,” 27.
- 198 Ahmet Refik, “Osmanlı Tarihinde Kadın,” 249-252. “Görülüyor ki, yeniçerilerden sonra nizam tanımayan, tabii haklarını müstebidâne ve keyfî kanunlara karşı istirdada kıyam eden kadınlardı. Divân-ı humâyûndan çıkan en sıkı hükümlerin onlar için birkaç seneden fazla te’siri olmuyordu.”
- 199 Tunaya, *İslamcılık Akımı*, 94.
- 200 Mehmet Tahir, *Çarşaf Mes’elesi*. In this booklet, he posed a balanced view of the problem of veiling by arguing that European clothing is no indicator of progress, either.

a growing resistance amongst a part of the population to the increasing economic, political and cultural influence of “the Europeans,” and the perceived subsequent loss of Ottoman independency and identity.²⁰¹

Developing a “simple and plain national dress” was an aim of the feminists, as it sounded morally and politically correct in the atmosphere of the war.²⁰²

The debate about polygyny had a similar, central question: can secular law prohibit what was mandated by sharia law? Islamists defended polygyny as one of the most important aspects of Muslim societies for protecting morality and preventing prostitution.²⁰³ Not only from the perspective of sharia law but also from a Malthusian perspective, Scott Rank posits, advocates of polygyny argued that polygyny was a “natural” condition to “reproduce” in the case of women’s infertility and that it balanced the unequal ratio between men and women.²⁰⁴ In times of war, especially, conservatives embraced the latter argument that the relative number of women was greater than men due to the war and that this gender imbalance would result in increases in extramarital affairs and prostitution.²⁰⁵

During my research on intellectual responses to moral decline, I was curious whether women had reacted to these discussions of morality, particularly to the ones revolving around gender inequality. Interestingly, women’s journals did not deal with the morality issue as much as other journals that I examined. For the sake of analysis and to maintain the wartime context, I scanned journals starting in the years 1912 and 1913, the time of Balkan Wars, as well as some journals published right after the war.

The First World War constituted the context for a new wave of feminism in the Ottoman Empire. The concept of “Muslim Women,” coined by Fatma Aliye, was later transformed into “Turkish Women” by Nezihe Muhiddin in the war years. For Nezihe Muhiddin “a national identity including a national

201 Van Os, *Feminism, Philanthropy and Patriotism*, 229.

202 Ibid., 230–231.

203 Tunaya, *İslamcılık Akımı*, 95.

204 Rank, “Polygamy and Religious Polemics in the Late Ottoman Empire,” 69.

205 Aydın, *İslâm-Osmanlı Aile Hukuku*, 192. See also, Tunaya, *İslamcılık Akımı*, 95.

morality” had to be the basis for the rational, secular, modern sense of womanhood.²⁰⁶ On the discourse of moral decline, it is possible to observe two dominant views that prevailed among women writers of the time. One was the need for social reform that would trigger a questioning of the existing social values in society. Such values in Muslim society were considered an important obstacle to the guarantee of gender equality. Accordingly, these “corrupt” values had to change to emancipate women from the yoke of tradition as well as to bring an end to moral decline. The second view exposed the notion of equality in order to object to the central place of women in discourses of moral decline. According to this view, morality was considered narrowly as protecting the honor of women, while the rule did not apply to men. On the other hand, some women writers sided with discourses of moral decline arguing that Muslim women had to respect national and religious identity.

Kadınlar Dünyası has a distinctive place among Ottoman women’s journals.²⁰⁷ The editors and writers of the journal were comprised of women who explicitly engaged in feminism as a social movement. The owner was Ulviye Mevlan, who was also the founder of the Osmanlı Hanımları Müdâfaa-i Hukuk-ı Nisvan Cemiyeti (Ottoman society for the defense of women’s rights). Many prominent figures of Ottoman feminism were among the authors of the journal including Aziz Haydar, Emine Seher Ali, Mükerrerrem Belkıs, Yaşar Nezihe, Belkıs Şevket, Mesudet Bedirhan, Bedia Kamran, and Meliha Zekeriya. The journal led an effective opposition to the exclusion of Muslim women from higher education, employment, and entering public space. During the Balkan Wars, the authors defended the territorial unity of the Ottoman Empire and joined the nationalist cause in condemning the war. During the First World War, the editors decided to go on hiatus due to wartime conditions and their desire to join humanitarian aid and war efforts on the

206 Zihnioğlu, *Kadınsız İnkılap*, 76–77.

207 On Kadınlar Dünyası, see Çakır, *Osmanlı Kadın Hareketi*; Atamaz-Hazar, “The Hands That Rock the Cradle Will Rise”; Demirdirek, *Osmanlı Kadınlarının Hayat Hakkı Arayışının Bir Hikayesi*.

homefront. Through the end of the war, *Kadınlar Dünyası* announced its return.²⁰⁸

In *Kadınlar Dünyası*, the discourses on moral corruption were accompanied by an emphasis on the need for social reform as an antidote to degeneration. For instance, Mükerrerrem Belkıs wrote an article titled “Harmful Traditions” in *Kadınlar Dünyası* complaining that the government was always busy with political reforms and underestimated important social reforms that would also strengthen the political ones.²⁰⁹ “Establishing happy and solid families,” in her formulation, had to be regarded as the backbone of reform programs including military reforms: a nation ultimately relied on the family.²¹⁰ For her, the first issue was arranged marriages (*görücülük*) as an obstacle to forming such families.²¹¹ She called for the annihilation of old, harmful values in society lest they destroy “all our existence.”²¹²

Another article in *Kadınlar Dünyası* argued that the discourse on morality constituted an obstacle for women to participate in economic, social, and political life. After listing virtues that fall under the heading of upright morality, such as being hardworking, obedient, patriotic, charitable, just, and fair, the article, which was authored by the editorial board, contended that morality in Ottoman society had been reduced to its sexual connotations.²¹³ “Morality is not only about chastity,” the article argued. “The homeland will not be saved merely by chastity.”²¹⁴ Here again, it is possible to see that

208 See Serpil Çakır for biographic information on the authors of this journal, its content, and its publication history, Çakır, *Osmanlı Kadın Hareketi*, 84–.

209 Mükerrerrem Belkıs, “Muzır Adetler,” 49–50.

210 Ibid. “Hükümet her zaman inkılâb-ı siyasiye ile uğraşiyor. Onlar emin olsunlar ki arkalarında parlak süngüler tutan müttehit, sağlam ve her şeyi yıkan bir kuvvet hazırlamazlarsa hepsi hiçtir. Hepsi hiçtir. Bunlar kavi aileler teşkiline vabestedir. Aileleri nasıl mesut ve kavi olarak teşkil edebiliriz?”

211 For discussion of arranged marriages, see Toprak, *Türkiye’de Kadın Özgürlüğü ve Feminizm (1908-1935)*, 67–87.

212 Mükerrerrem Belkıs, “Muzır Adetler,” 49–50. “Eski adet bütün mevcudiyetimizi kemiriyor. Bir gün bizi mahvedecek. Biz onu mahvedelim de ölümden kurtulalım. Vuralım... Vuralım...Hiç Dinlemeyelim... Vuralım... Yıkılsın...”

213 Kadınlar Dünyası, “Ahlak- Hürriyet-i Mesai,” 2.

214 Ibid. “Fakat ahlak yalnız iffet değildir. Yalnız iffetle bir memleket kurtarılmaz.”

women developed a discourse of national interests that through attention to unequal expectations from men and women. The editorial board put the issue of gender inequality forward based on the fact that such righteousness was only expected from women: “Is it logical to expect chastity only from women and leave men free in the matter of prostitution?”²¹⁵ The editors considered women’s equality a necessary condition for the progress of the nation and commented that arguments about immorality were irrelevant to this aim. The article went on to say that the morality argument served the purposes of preventing women from working outside the home or receiving higher education. A similar argument is found in another article in the same journal. Feride İzzet Selim wrote that many people in Ottoman society believe that if girls learn to write, they will write love letters. Due to the immorality argument, many families hesitate to send their daughters to school.²¹⁶ Aziz Haydar put the question of unequal expectations from different sexes in the title of her article: “Why Is It Only Women Who Need To Be Corrected?”²¹⁷ After listing common views of how a woman “must be,” including the condition of being “morally upright,” she asked whether “these conditions are not necessary for men” and whether “men are – as they assume themselves – perfect.”²¹⁸ Indeed, the double standard of morality constituted a major point in morality discussions among women writers.

Nezihe Hamdi, an author in *Kadınlar Dünyası*, wrote an article in September 1914 titled “Moral Anxieties” in which she questioned the double standard in morality discourses.²¹⁹ In her article, she underlined how the morality argument was instrumentalized to create an obstacle to women’s participation in social life. She defined this argument as a weapon (*silah*) of those men who argued that women’s participation in social life would harm

215 Ibid. “İffeti yalnız kadından istemek, erkekleri fuhuşta hür ve serbest bırakmak ne mantıktır?”

216 Feride İzzet Selim, “Kadınlarımızda Lüzum-u Tahsil”, 4-5.

217 Aziz Haydar, “Yalnız Kadınlar mı Islaha Muhtaç?” *Kadınlık*, No: 7, 30 Nisan 1914, 4-5, quoted in Demirdirek, *Osmanlı Kadınlarının Hayat Hakkı Arayışının Bir Hikayesi*, 55-56.

218 Ibid. “Şu kadınlar için elzem olan şeylerden hiçbirisi erkeğe lazım değil mi?... Acaba erkekler zannettikleri gibi lâ-yuhtî midirler?”

219 Nezihe Hamdi, “Ahlaki Endişeler”, 2-3.

their position in the family and led them to search for pleasures other than domestic family life which result in the dissolution of the family. According to her, this rationale was wrong. She argued that there were three reasons for the separation of the spouses: instinctive reasons (*garizî sebebler*), spiritual and aesthetic reasons (*ruhî ve bedîî sebebler*), and financial reasons (*iktisadî sebebler*).²²⁰ She asserted that the real moral anxiety should be concerned about these problems to prevent the institution of family from being dissolved. To establish a balance among the spouses within the family, moral anxieties should not be an obstacle to couples getting to know each other before marriage in a natural environment – that is to say in public space. She not only opposed segregation before marriage but was also against arranged meetings before marriage. Once women began participating in social life, matrimonial candidates would find each other in the natural course of daily life.²²¹ Moral anxieties, for her, were derived from traditional marriage formation practices, and the solution to this problem was to enable women to participate in social life. Defining these moral standards as male morality and a male mentality (*erkek ahlâk ve zihniyeti*), she strikingly concluded her article with a sarcastic comment on the inequality inherent in the morality argument:

We would like to invite those who defend the exclusion of women from social life in the name of moral anxieties to a test that will quell their worries. For centuries, women have lived a secret, enslaved life for the sake of this fictitious anxiety. Nevertheless, people today know through many examples that this segregation has been useless. Therefore, is it not possible to apply the same practices to men, as well? Please, can we ask them to not participate in social life and to leave social institutions to the administration of women for a few centuries? Is it not necessary to enforce women's morality [on men] and turn the sharp side of the knife towards the men?²²²

220 Ibid.

221 Ibid.

222 Ibid. See Appendix A, Quotation 9.

In another journal, *Seyyale* (of which only one issue published, on June 4, 1914), an article signed with the author's initials appeared discussing the "unreasonable" aspects of "immorality" arguments. The author opposed the widespread idea of what she formulated as: "We [Ottomans] can never get used to the European lifestyle because we have something called manners (*âdâb*) about which Europeans have no idea."²²³ She questioned the hypocrisy of "immorality" arguments. Initially, she began with explaining the understanding of entertainment that is generally labeled as "sin" by conservatives. For instance, she asserted that even though they claim theatergoing is a sin, members of the ulema, wearing their clerical clothes, unhesitatingly visit "the ugly imitation" of "European" theaters.²²⁴ She asked why members of the ulema visit these ugly places while opposing the idea of civilized entertainment. Second, mixed entertainment venues in Europe were regarded as immoral by the Ottoman public; however, the same public did not regard it as immoral when observed among Ottoman non-Muslims and even between a Muslim man and a non-Muslim woman! Therefore, the immorality argument was only valid for Muslim women. She concluded that "it is pointless to distinguish between Muslim morals and universal morals and to separate Muslims from other nations as such."²²⁵

As a matter of fact, feminism came to be associated with immorality by some conservative writers, as discussed in this study. They often considered feminism to be a threat to the extant social order that envisaged the control of women in the family. Women's acquisition of equal legal rights, according to this line of thought, would further contribute to moral decline in society. Feride Nihal wrote an article in *Kadınlar Dünyası* to answer these claims. She questioned the rationale of this argument: "I wonder what kind of immorality might emerge by granting women rights? My God! In order to agree

223 C.S., "Âdâb-ı Umûmiye", 11-13.

224 Ibid. "[b]izim eğlenceye şiddetle düşman olduğumuza rağmen gayet çirkin tiyatro taklidleri bizde de türedi .Hatta sarıklılarımız bile kıyafet-i ilmiyeleri ile oralara gitmekte beis görmediler."

225 Ibid. "Âdâb-ı İslâmiyeyi âdâb-ı umûmiyeden tefrik etmeye kalkışmak, müslümanları milel saireden ayırmağa çalışmak beyhûde zahmettir."

with this argument, one would need to be shorn of one's reason and sense."²²⁶

Happiness was a key word for women writers and their projects for an ideal life. Accordingly, equality brought happiness to the family, and happiness was only possible with a spiritual understanding that emphasized the nonmaterial sides of life and morality in particular. Mükerrerrem Belkıs also complained that feminism was misunderstood from the perspective of morality. She argued that feminism had no intent to destroy morality or the family. "On the contrary," she wrote, "feminism is a way to realize a better happiness by observing the principles of morality."²²⁷ For her, feminism has the same purpose as the principles of morality: to guarantee happiness for the people. Both feminism and morality advise people to do good and avoid the bad.

In her article on the understanding of feminism among the Ottoman-Turkish women writers, Elif Mahir Metinsoy argues that despite their demands regarding women's civil and social rights, some of these women writers were reproducing patriarchal lines of thought, particularly after the war.²²⁸ She asserted that "Turkish Muslim women's ostensible emphasis on nationalist and moral values overshadowed their agency in the women's movement and their active participation in social life."²²⁹ Parallel to this argument, moral decadence anxiety was present among men writers of women journals, as well. For instance, Macit Şevket wrote an article in *Bilgi Yurdu* titled "Women and Morality" in which he used a metaphor to describe the need for happiness – that is to say, morality – in addition to knowledge: "Human intelligence is a source of light; it illuminates like the sun, but the sun has another duty, which is to heat. Human beings are in need of heat as much as

226 Feride Nihal, "Hukuk-u Nisvan," 12. "Acaba kadınların hukukunu iade etmek, ne gibi ahlaksızlığa muceb olabilir? Yarab! Buna cevap-ı müsbet verebilmek için her türlü muhakemeden, her türlü histen mahrum olmak lazımdır."

227 Mükerrerrem Belkıs, "Kız Mekteplerinde Ahlak ve Terbiye-yi Ahlakiye," 2-4. "Bilakis, feminizm ahlâk esaslarına ibtinâ ederek daha iyi bir sa'adetin idrakını temin eden bir yoldur."

228 Mahir Metinsoy, "The Limits of Feminism in Muslim-Turkish Women Writers of the Armistice Period (1918-1923)," 86.

229 Ibid., 104.

light.”²³⁰ Therefore, he argued that scientific education and morality had to be combined to work together just like the sun. Halide Nusret Kazimi, a woman author in *Genç Kadın* who also published a few articles in *Sebilürreşad*, was a defender of Islamic values and practices, particularly ones concerning women’s clothing. In one of her articles titled “On Morality: The Problem of Veiling,” she described a moment of “shame” in Inas Sultanisi (Girls High School) concerning veiling. Halide Nusret wrote that some foreigner visitors wanted to see the students. Among the six hundred students at least half were adolescents, but “only three were veiled,” she complained. She continued, “when I told them it is a mistake to neglect national identity to this degree, they shrugged their shoulders and laughed at me.”²³¹ It should be noted that she wrote this article in 1919 during the time of the occupation when anxiety over national identity, or Muslim identity, was heightening. A similar moral anxiety regarding the behaviors of students and graduates of the Girls Schools was expressed by Mükerrerrem Belkıs who wrote in *Kadınlar Dünyası* in June 1918 that she was disappointed by the “moral laxity” that she observed among educated girls. She complained that Girls’ Schools, the only places that could correct the “sick morality of these girls, which they had adopted from their families and previous environments,”²³² lacked moral education. Having witnessed the calamities (*felaketler*) that these girls had experienced, she expressed her resentment of their lack of purpose in life – that they had no idea why they were educated and what was expected of

230 Macit Şevket, “Ahlak ve Kadın,” 53-57. “Zekâ-yı beşer bir menba-yı ziyadır, güneş gibi etrafını aydınlatır; ama güneşin bir de hararet vermek hassası var. İnsan, yalnız aydınlanmak değil, hem de ısınma ihtiyacındadır.”

231 Halide Nusret, “Ahlak: Tesettür Mes’elesi,” *Genç Kadın*, No. 8, 1919, in İlgiz, *Kadın Eserleri Kütüphanesi ve Bilgi Merkezi Vakfı 20. Yıl Özel Yayını Genç Kadın 1919 Ocak-Mayıs (Yeni Harflerle)*, 110. “Ben ‘milliyeti bu kadar unutmak doğru değil’ dedikçe onlar gülerek omuz silkiyorlardı.”

232 Mükerrerrem Belkıs, “Kız Mekteplerinde Ahlak ve Ahlak-ı Terbiye,” 2-4. “Biz mekteplerden ailenin verdiği sakim âdât ve efkârı, bozulmuş seciyyeyi, muhitin telkin ettiği gayr-i ahlâkî temayülüatı düzelterek yeni ve temiz hisler, kanaatler aşılıyarak, ve ruhlar üzerinde sanatkar gibi işleyerek heyet-i ictimaiyyeye birer ruh doktoru, hayat doktoru, ahlâk doktoru yetiştirmesini istiyoruz.”

them. They were extremely individualistic; and had neither interest in feminism nor in any other ideal as such. At the end of her article she contended that “the homeland is in a state of social depression.”²³³

The “moral attitudes” of girls who were studying at the Girls’ Schools were among prominent topics in the popular media. Another article in *Türk Kadını* argued that “many people are talking about the freedom, irreligiousness, thoughtlessness, and immorality of school girls.”²³⁴ Despite such warnings, these schoolgirls continued dressing up as if they were going somewhere else and at the end of the day heading out to the parks. While defending the women’s right to access education was a prominent subject among Ottoman feminists, they also emphasized the importance of being morally upright.²³⁵

Needless to say, I have abbreviated this discussion on women and morality. I presented only patterns of thought that can be observed in the writings of prominent women writers who dealt with morality. How the image of immoral women was transformed into one of morally pure Turkish women in the context of nationalist writings needs further study. Perhaps an instance might give us a clue about this shift in discourses. The harsh critiques targeting women discussed earlier, particularly those in *Sebilürreşad* attracted the attention of “male feminists,” as well. Suphi Nuri wrote in 1919 in his newspaper *İleri* that “we [men] are upsetting our women with our critiques of their morality,”²³⁶ and he called on others to respect women and stop morality polemics that target women. It is possible to say that his extortion signified a general trend marking the end of immorality accusations targeting women.

233 Ibid. “Memleket, heyet-i ictimaiyye buhran içindedir.”

234 “Genç Kızlarımıza Dair,” *Türk Kadını*, No. 13, 1918, 203-204, quoted in Türe, “Images of Istanbul Women in the 1920s,” 120. “Herkes, kızların serbestliğinden, dinsizliğinden, düşüncesizliğinden, ahlâksızlığından bahsediyorlar.”

235 Mahir Metinsoy, “The Limits of Feminism in Muslim-Turkish Women Writers of the Armistice Period (1918-1923),” 96.

236 Suphi Nuri, “Kadınlarımıza Hürmet,” 4.

§ 2.5 Concluding Remarks

This chapter evaluated several views on morality and moral decline as expressed in wartime journals and juxtaposed them with each other. *İslam Mecmuası*, in line with its aim to further incorporate religious principles into daily life, discussed important aspects of morality from a theological perspective and referred to an emerging understanding of a new morality. The authors of the journal articulated their views on the basis of questioning the authenticity of contemporary Islamic morality. For them, an ideal new morality would not exclude Islam. However, a collectivistic interpretation of religious responsibilities and duties must be combined with the needs of the time.

The second part of the chapter evaluated the moral decline paradigm from the perspective of Islamists through a representative journal, *Sebilürreşad*. One would obviously expect to see the defense of Islam as a main reference for morality in the Islamist literature. However, the complex stories and historical context surrounding discourses of moral decline present a fertile ground to develop a better understanding of the contest over morality. By keeping morality in the realm of religion, *Sebilürreşad*'s writers attempted to build a stronghold against nationalist reform advocates. Using the flexibility of the term morality, Islamists rendered a critique of the “new life,” a concept coined by nationalists. Discourses on moral decline helped Islamists to regenerate their ideology by claiming that they had been on the right path all along. In a time in which spiritual ideologies were under attack by materialism, the *Sebilürreşad* writers used a moral decline paradigm to reestablish a religious hegemony over lifestyles and public space.

What followed was a section on *Yeni Mecmua*'s stance on moral decline in Ottoman society. The journal reserved many pages for the matter because the authors regarded morality as key for solving many social problems including war profiteering, the participation of women in social life, and the absence of a national education and upbringing policy. Employing the principles of Durkheimian sociology, Gökalp, Sadak, and other authors emphasized that individualistic values and a lack of solidarism were the core problems with respect to morality. Considering moral decline as an outcome of

stage of transition, they emphasized the need for change in values and moral codes to adopt this new stage of progress. The new morality had to encompass social harmony and define the duties of individuals to society. As opposed to the defenders of religious morality, *Yeni Mecmua* openly argued that the source of morality could not be religion because religious morality was individualistic. Modern times necessitated the creation of a “new person,” and this person had to be equipped with contemporary values.

The last part dealt with the stance of women’s journals on moral decline. The responses of women’s journals on the relationship between war and moral decline were relatively limited. The war also played a role in these limited responses. Nevertheless, it is important to see how women questioned the unequal nature of immorality arguments that held women accountable for immorality while leaving men aside. On the other hand, women also used decline polemics to open up space for reform. Nevertheless, some articles by women writers clearly expressed concern about moral decline, particularly among schoolgirls.

Morality polemics had wide ramifications and were not mere philosophical activity. The debate not only encompassed the law and legal rights, it also constituted a major issue in the Ottoman political and ideological spectra. What united these ideological discourses was an insistence on an authentic morality and their critique of the Tanzimat era. Later on, a critique of materialism added to these points in common. Apart from these two points, their analyses of moral decline differed. While *Sebilürreşad* argued for eternal, unchanging religion as the sole source of morality, *Yeni Mecmua* argued that society (or in their case, the nation) was the source of morality. On the other hand, *İslam Mecmuası* argued for basing morality on a redefined religion freed its historical legacy. From the perspective of intellectuals involved in morality polemics, discourses on moral decline served to set out ideological differences. While nationalists defended the need for a social reform involving the improvement of the condition of women in the family, Islamists used a moral decline paradigm to reestablish Islamic moral hegemony over public space. In this respect, a focus on morality was key to wartime political and intellectual discussions when most writers saw an opportunity to shape future society. While some Ottoman Muslim writers further developed this argu-

ment within the scope of feminism and advanced the need for social reform to eliminate traditional values that constituted a clear obstacle to women's participation in social life, other shared a general anxiety about moral decline.