

Eugenics, Modernity and the Rationalization of Morality
in Early Republican Turkey
Efe Atabay

Institute of Islamic Studies
McGill University, Montreal

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Abstract

This thesis examines the works published under the subject of “eugenics” in the first decades following the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, from the 1930s through to the end of the Second World War, the period when the Republican medical professionals showed the most interest in eugenics. Sample articles from semi-official popular and popular medical journals, proceedings of two national medical congresses, as well as some conferences given by the Republican medical elite the proceedings of which were published by the single party in power are examined to assess the formation of eugenic arguments. The aim of the thesis is to highlight the context in which the interest in eugenics gained momentum. The thesis argues that the intellectual trends of ‘scientism’ and ‘social Darwinism’ paved the way for the entrance of eugenic thought into the intellectual vocabulary of Turkey. Moreover, the rapid westernization that changed family life, marital choices, gender roles and entertainment was a source of anxiety frequently expressed in the press and literature of the period. The same anxiety was also expressed through eugenic literature, where the medical elite claimed to approach these issues with scientific neutralism. The thesis specifically examines the issues of family and marriage (chapter two) and alcohol use (chapter three) as discussed in the eugenic literature, and their relation to the morality of the period.

Résumé

Cette thèse examine les travaux publiés sur le sujet de « l'eugénisme » au cours des premières décennies après la création de la République de Turquie, à partir des années 1930s jusqu'à la fin de la deuxième guerre mondiale, la période pendant laquelle les élites médicales démontraient l'intérêt le plus prononcé pour l'eugénisme. La thèse analyse des articles des journaux populaires et semi-officiels, des journaux médicaux populaires, les comptes-rendu de deux congrès médicaux, ainsi que quelques conférences présentées par l'élite dont les comptes-rendus ont été publiés par le partie unitaire, afin d'évaluer la formation d'arguments eugéniques. L'objectif de cette thèse est de mettre en évidence le contexte dans lequel l'intérêt pour l'eugénisme a pris de l'ampleur. La thèse soutient que les tendances intellectuelles du « Darwinisme social » et du « scientisme » ont été particulièrement importantes à la création d'un vocabulaire eugénique en Turquie. De plus, l'occidentalisation rapide qui a changé la vie quotidienne, les relations conjugales, les rôles des hommes et des femmes, et les modes de divertissement était une source d'anxiété souvent exprimée dans la presse et la littérature de la période. La même anxiété vis-à-vis ces changements était exprimés par l'élite médicale dans la littérature eugénique sous une apparence de neutralité scientifique. Cette thèse analyse notamment les sujets de la famille et le mariage (chapitre 2) et de la consommation d'alcool (chapitre 3) dans la littérature eugénique et leurs relations à la moralité de la période.

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INTRODUCTION

I. Origins of Eugenics and Historiography

It was Charles Darwin's cousin Sir Francis Galton, a nineteenth century English scientist, who first coined the term "eugenics." He was a semi-failed physician from an English aristocratic family. Galton's inventiveness was in the idea of combining statistics with evolutionary biology. His research involved going to family histories of some prominent English men that he thought of as "fitter" for survival in the society in social Darwinist terms and proved that those men also were inheritors of prominent, talented ancestors. Galton elaborated his theory further in his *Hereditary Genius* (1869), asserting that mental and moral traits of humans could be inherited as well as physical traits. Hence through selective breeding the human species could be improved.¹ This intervention could be in the shape of encouraging the breeding and faster reproduction of "fit" people, which was later named "positive eugenics" while the measures to prevent the "unfit" from producing was called "negative eugenics."

Simultaneously German evolutionary biologist August Weismann was developing his theory of heredity, which declared that heredity was only dependant on the germ-plasm (part of a reproductory cell) which was "impermeable to environmental influence."² Weismann's theory defied the French botanist and evolutionary theorist Jean-Baptiste Lamarck's notion of the heritability of acquired characteristics. Despite the widespread acceptance of Weismann's rules of heredity, the neo-Lamarckian ideas on

¹ Daniel J. Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity* (New York: Knopf, 1985), 18.

² Ibid., 18 and 70.

how nature could affect heredity continued to be influential in some parts of Europe, especially France and despite the common conviction it survived even England and USA.³

At the beginning of twenty-first century, Galton's most famous follower in Britain Karl Pearson, who invented the word *biometry* for the field of studying heredity and biology in a mathematicized statistical form, was working to advance the science of biometrics in relation to eugenics.⁴ In 1911, Pearson established the Department of Applied Statistics, which included Galton and Biometric Laboratories. People from diverse disciplines such as mathematics, medicine, biology, anthropometry, criminology, psychology and economics came to study under Pearson.⁵ While on the other side of the Atlantic, Charles Davenport, a famous American biologist, following Pearson and Galton's footsteps founded the Davenport Eugenics Record Office. Between 1911 and 1924 more than 250 trained field workers have been sent out and the data filling about a million index cards collected at the Eugenics Records Office became the source material for bulletins, memoirs, books on hereditary diseases, politics of immigration, sterilization, marriage, tuberculosis, multiple sclerosis, athletic ability and such.⁶ The plethora of subjects that could attract the attention of the Records Office reflected the eclectic nature of eugenics research. The development of eugenics also owed greatly to the rediscovery of the nineteenth century priest and biologist Gregor Mendel's laws on heredity. Mendel's laws, which originally based the heredity of characteristics in plants on calculations of probability were reinterpreted and applied, often not so accurately, to the

³ For neo-Lamarckian influence on eugenics in England see Joanne Dawn Woiak, "Drunkeness, Degeneration, and Eugenics in Britain, 1900-1914" (PhD. Diss., University of Toronto (Canada), 1998).

⁴ Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity*, 35-36.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 54-55.

heredity of characteristics in humans by the eugenists such as Davenport.⁷ Mendelian eugenics suggested that single traits could be inherited through single “genes” and combined with Weissmann’s germ-plasm theory claimed to calculate the continuity and the likelihood of inheritance of certain characteristics with accuracy. Throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries eugenics also gained a socio-political aspect when policy makers who wanted to “improve” the genetic pool of their nations were attracted to it. Around twenty- four American States, Canadian provinces of Alberta and British Columbia, some Scandinavian countries and Germany adopted and implemented various eugenic measures including sterilization of some people deemed to be mentally ill, racially inferior or socially harmful.⁸

In the Anglo-American world the importance of the nature-nurture debate increased. The division between negative and positive eugenics became more rigid. However, eugenics became internationally popular and eugenics societies in the early twentieth century were spread in more than thirty countries.⁹ Therefore the variation in its meaning and scope was inevitable over the world. Mark Adams, a contemporary historian of eugenics, in his conclusion to *Wellborne Science* (1990) claims that recent studies on international eugenics movements of the early twentieth century have denounced the myth that “eugenics was a single, coherent and principally Anglo-American movement.”¹⁰ He also asserts that eugenics cannot be only understood through Mendelian genetics but has to include Lamarckian notions of nature’s influence on

⁷ Ibid., 45-48.

⁸ Daniel J Kevles, "Eugenics and Human Rights," *British Medical Journal* 319, no. 7207 (1999).

⁹ Mark B. Adams, ed. *The Wellborn Science : Eugenics in Germany, France, Brazil, and Russia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 5.

¹⁰ Ibid., 217.

heredity that many international eugenics movements had adopted.¹¹ Contributors to the aforementioned volume, as well as other scholars have exposed the great differences in the theory and applications of eugenics outside the Anglo-American world.¹²

Nancy Stepan, who studied Latin American eugenics, asserts that dismissing Brazilian eugenics as a misunderstood variant of the Anglo-Saxon original would be a big loss for the contemporary historian of science.¹³ She suggested that eugenics in Brazil was a typical example of neo-Lamarckian eugenics that found adherents all over Latin America, France, Russia and other parts of the world with an emphasis on controlling environmental factors on heredity. The non-Anglo American eugenisists considered wide-ranging subjects such alcohol, sanitation, sexual education, fight against poverty, and traditionalism and public health concerns on epidemics as part of eugenics.

For that reason, Mark Adams calls for studies about international eugenics movements to challenge, and expand the definitions of eugenics so far mainly informed by Anglo-American case studies. In a way this study is a response to that call. Even though it is not primarily a comparative study, the study of eugenics in Turkey will be able to help us expand our conceptual repertoire on interpreting the history of eugenics. How eugenics was understood in Turkey strongly resembles how it was interpreted in other non-Anglo-Saxon states. The emphasis was put more on the importance of the

¹¹ Ibid., 218.

¹² For a discussion of eugenics in Iran, see: Cyrus Schayegh, "Hygiene, Eugenics, Genetics, and the Perception of Demographic Crisis in Iran, 1910s-1940s," *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies* 13, no. 3 (2004). For China, see Frank Dikötter, *Imperfect Conceptions : Medical Knowledge, Birth Defects, and Eugenics in China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998). For Latin America, see Nancy Stepan, *The Hour of Eugenics : Race, Gender, and Nation in Latin America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991).

¹³ Stepan, *The Hour of Eugenic : Race, Gender, and Nation in Latin America*, 64.

environment, hygiene, sanitation, pro-natalism, *puériculture*,¹⁴ child-care and body-discipline rather than the elimination of hereditary diseases in improving “the race.”

II. Turkish Eugenics and Historiography

The study of eugenic thought in Turkey in Turkish history of science is limited to some preliminary studies. Ayça Alemdaroğlu’s article was the first study on the subject published in English.¹⁵ The work was valuable so far as it shed light on the fact that such a body of work had existed in Turkey in the second half of the 1930s. Alemdaroğlu explained the eugenics discourse in relation to nationalism and the nation-building project. She examined the Turkish case through the dichotomy that is used mostly to explain the Anglo-Saxon type of eugenics, i.e. between positive and negative eugenics. Alemdaroğlu asserted that Turkish *eugenis*t¹⁶s were more drawn to positive eugenics. They were more interested in improving the lot of the nation through encouragement of procreation of “higher value” members rather than negative eugenics that emphasized the discouraging “lower-value” individuals from reproducing or even their sterilization. She did not elaborate on the reasons for this choice, but highlighted how the eugenic discourse was part of the nationalist discourse that saw the creation of high value members as national duty. She, furthermore, regarded the eugenics discourse and its applications as part of the single party regime’s body politics that regarded the citizen’s body as economic and political capital for the state. With that predominant theory, her article was a survey of the eugenic literature.

¹⁴ *Puériculture* means the health care of pregnancy, but its meaning is usually extended to pre-conception and infant care.

¹⁵ Ayça Alemdaroğlu, "Politics of the Body and Eugenic Discourse in Early Republican Turkey," *Body Society* 11, no. 3 (2005).

¹⁶ I use the term *eugenist/eugenicist* with caution for Turkish medical professionals who showed an interest in eugenics, mainly for the sake of fluidity of the text. It does not imply that any of these doctors were devoted to eugenic research professionally such as the American or British eugenists.

The second article that directly dealt with eugenics was published in 2006 by political scientist, Gürkan Öztan.¹⁷ Öztan looked at the production of eugenic thought from the perspective of the gendered essence of the Turkish nationalist discourse in 1930s, and related it to the contemporary discourses on the female body and nationalism. For the part of the article on history, as well as looking at works that dealt directly with eugenics, he also included works on body discipline/sports, beauty and women. He treated the whole genre as part of a eugenic thought within the social engineering project that wanted to use every technology available to shape the female body as symbols of a strong modernized nation.

A later article on anthropometry and biometrics by sociologist Murat Ergin published in 2008 also heavily relied on the same body of eugenic literature from the thirties, and approached the material from the perspective of nationalism. He asserted that the 1930s was the era when the notions of nationhood in Turkey became more racist rather than ethnicist.¹⁸ Ergin saw the same eugenic literature as part of the wider racialization of Turkish nationalism through anthropology, anthropometry, archeology and linguistics. He looked at the Republican People Party's (RPP) publications of its conferences in various parts of Turkey and suggested that 30 % of these publications were on what he called "anthropometric and biometric projects" that could include anything from the findings at an archeological site to a survey of blood types of a people at a certain area.¹⁹ In that sense, he did not limit himself to eugenics *per se* to claim that a discussion was part of the eugenics discourse. He also suggested that the eugenics

¹⁷ Öztan G Gürkan, "Türkiye'de Öjeni Düşüncesi ve Kadın" [Eugenic thought and women in Turkey], *Toplum ve Bilim* 105 (2006).

¹⁸ Murat Ergin, "Biometrics and Anthropometrics: The Twins of Turkish Modernity," *Patterns of Prejudice* 42, no. 3 (2008).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 295.

discourse was born in a context when Turkish nationalism was reinvented with racist, pseudo-scientific foundations through archeology and anthropometry. For that reason, eugenics was seen as a way to protect and improve the Turkish race that these sciences proved to be member of “the white race” and ancestor of a “grand civilization.”

Other scholars have also linked the eugenic thought in Turkey to a growing racism within Turkish nationalism. Nazan Maksudyan, who studied, The Turkish Anthropology Society’s magazines from the 1930s claimed that the Society through its anthropometric surveys worked on establishing Turks as members of the “white race” as an answer to the European racist discourses that placed Turks at the bottom of the ladder of races. Therefore, the anthropologists in Turkey were endorsed by the State in their endeavors to prove the grandness and whiteness of the Turks. In a small section of her work, Maksudyan also dealt with the eugenic literature during that period.²⁰ In a similar vein to Ergin, she saw eugenics as another aspect of racism that looked for ways to improve the Turkish race. Ahmet Yıldız, who studied the ethnic and religious conceptions of exclusion and inclusion in definitions of Turkish nationalism in the early years of the Republic, also saw the appearance of an interest in eugenics as the racialization of cultural and civic meanings of the nation. Despite the fact that he argued that the racial vocabulary in Turkish nationalism did not become forceful he interpreted eugenics as part of racism in Turkey.²¹

III. A Note on Nationalism and Racism with regard to Eugenics

²⁰ Nazan Maksudyan, *Türklüğü Ölçmek : Bilimkurgusal Antropoloji Ve Türk Milliyetçiliğinin ırkçı Çehresi, 1925-1939* [Measuring turkishness: science fictional anthropology and the racist face of Turkish nationalism, 1925-1939] (Istanbul: Metis, 2005). Later she published a similar article in English: Nazan Maksudyan, "The Turkish Review of Anthropology and the Racist Face of Turkish Nationalism," *Cultural Dynamics* 17, no. 3 (2005).

²¹ Ahmet Yıldız, *Ne Mutlu Türküm Diyebilene: Türk Ulusal Kimliğinin Etno-Seküler Sınırları (1919-1938)* [Happy is the one who can say I am Turkish: the ethno-secular boundaries of the Turkish national identity (1919-1938)] (Istanbul: İletişim, 2001), 168-69.

The fact that the appearance of eugenic literature coincides with the emphasis on race in Turkish nationalism in 1930s is no accident.²² For the Turkish nationalists, finding a scientific basis for the relationship between the Anatolian mainland and her inhabitants was part of their Kemalist variant of positivism, which is discussed in more detail in the following chapter.²³ The nationalist aspect of Kemalists²⁴ had evolved to a great extent from the onset of the First World War. Due to various reasons including the desire to prove the existence and grandness of a Turkish race that had its roots in pre-Muslim Anatolian civilizations, the ethnic/cultural definition of the nation became rapidly racialized from the end of the 1920s.²⁵

The Sun Language Theory and The Turkish History Thesis projects are often regarded as the intensification of racist connotations of Turkish nationalism. Those projects, in fact, explain the link between nationalism and positivism for the Kemalists, as well as shedding light on the context where eugenic literature was born in Turkey. The Turkish History Thesis was initiated by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the modern Turkish state, through Turkish Hearths' Committee for the Study of Turkish History (*Türk Ocakları Türk Tarihi Tetkik Heyeti*) in 1930 to survey the international and Turkish works on the history of Turks by historians.²⁶ The Committee came up with a

²² Karpas argues that racism never became strong enough in the official definitions of nationalism, but suggests that "some German racialist ideas... penetrated the country in one way or another after 1935." Kemal H. Karpas, *Turkey's Politics: The Transition to a Multi-Party System* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), 262-70.

²³ Erik Jan Zürcher, "Kemalist Düşünce'nin Osmanlı Kaynakları" [The Ottoman sources of Kemalist thought], in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce: Kemalizm* [Political thought in modern Turkey: Kemalism], ed. Ahmet İnel (Istanbul: İletişim, 2001), 52.

²⁴ Kemalism refers to the overarching ideology of the Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish Republic. In this thesis, Kemalists and Republicans are used interchangeably to refer to the political nationalist elite that created the Republic and undertook the project of modernization.

²⁵ Yıldız, *Ne Mutlu Türküm Diyebilene*, 119.

²⁶ Soner Cagaptay, "Race, Assimilation and Kemalism: Turkish Nationalism and the Minorities in the 1930s," *Middle Eastern Studies* 40, no. 3 (2004): 87.

framework theory entitled the General Themes of Turkish History (*Türk Tarihinin Ana Hatları*). The Committee, without much credibility, claimed that Turkish people originated in Central Asia and by adopting Islam they went assimilated into Arabic and Persian cultures which caused them to lose their roots. The main remnant of this ancient past was the pure Turkish language that lived with the people of Anatolia. The following year the Committee morphed into the Society for the Study of Turkish History (*Türk Tarihini Tetkik Cemiyeti* – TTTC) under the supervision of Afet İnan, Atatürk's adopted daughter and an emerging historian. Then the First History Conference was convened in Ankara in July 1932. At this conference, the delegates, who were made up of few Turkish and European historians and other social scientists and a big number of secondary school teachers discussed the history of the Turkish people. The findings of the TTTC and the participants created the Turkish History Thesis, which claimed that Turkish civilization was a great civilization in Central Asia thousands of years ago. Then the land dried up and they were dispersed around the globe bringing civilization to other lands, such as Greece, Mesopotamia, Persia, India, southern Europe and Anatolia. The thesis was an attempt to "prove" that the modern civilization descended from the civilization of the Turkish people hence the Republican era was sort of a cultural renaissance where Turkish people were getting rid of foreign influences and reemerging into the civilization that was indigenous to them. Besides the archeological basis of this civilization, the anthropological and racial features of the Turks were also discussed and it was established under the thesis that Turks were bracycephalic people hence ancestors of the civilized races.²⁷

²⁷ Ibid.: 88.

TTTC also formed a committee on studying the roots of Turkish language called the Society for the Study of the Turkish Language (*Türk Dili Tetkik Cemiyeti*). The mission of the language committee was to research and prove the Indo-European roots of the Turkish language and its influence on all the other languages of the world, as well as purging the language of foreign (Arabic and Persian) words. Several language congresses convened with historians and linguists, and the end result was the Sun Language Theory revealed at the Third Turkish Language Congress, held in Istanbul, between 24th and 31st of August 1936.²⁸ The Theory's claims were very close to those of the History Thesis. Turkish language was the origin of all languages according to this theory and it was this pure Turkish that the citizens of Turkey were supposed to learn and develop.

An important reason why the idea of race was introduced into Turkish nationalism was to react to the Western prejudices on Turks' racial incapability. The Turkish intellectuals of the period struggled to challenge the biased histories of the Turks written by Western scholars.²⁹ Tuğba Tanyeri, who wrote on archeology as a source of national pride, put forth the speech delivered by Saffet Arıkan, the Minister of Education of the period, during the opening ceremony of the Language, History, and Geography Faculty of Ankara University, as an evidence of the desire to counter Western racist arguments. Arıkan referred to the history books in which "the Turk was considered as a secondary creature, of the Mongolian type, a barbarian at best" and saw the works by the Turkish linguists and archeologists as the counter evidence to these conceptions.³⁰ This was also witnessed in eugenicists' publications. A prominent physiologist, Sadi Irmak, who was also

²⁸ Ibid.: 91.

²⁹ Yıldız, *Ne Mutlu Türküm Diyebilene*, 162.

³⁰ Quoted by Tuğba Tanyeri-Erdemir, "Archeology as a Source of National Pride in the Early Years of the Turkish Republic," *Journal of field archaeology* 31, no. 4 (2006): 382.

prolific in eugenic publications, was complaining about American immigration laws based on eugenics that declared Turks to be one of the less desirable races as immigrants.³¹

The attempts to find the scientifically historical justification of Turkish nationalism through the utilization of archeology, anthropology and linguistics coincide with the period when the eugenic literature appears in Turkey. Eugenics, in that sense, can be regarded as a continuation of the process of rationalizing nationalism, and attempting to offer a biological basis to compete with the European nationalisms of the period. As the “civilized” origin of the nation was manufactured, eugenics was offered as a “scientific” method to protect the purity of this nation/race against degenerative forces, and improve it through rational organization of marriages, and births.³² The idea of national pride expressed in terms of race, racial purity and presentation of eugenics as a method to improve the race and protect it were undeniably visible notions. This is why so far most of the academics have studied eugenics in relation to racism and/or nationalism in Turkey. On the other hand, within the eugenic literature there were almost no examples of exclusionary racism based on prejudices towards other ethnicities in Anatolia. Ideas on racial segregation, and even examples of prejudices towards other races could be contradicted within the same text due to the confusion and immaturity of eugenics or racial science in early Republican Turkey.³³ Furthermore, the Kemalist nationalist elite

³¹ Mahmut Sadi Irmak, *Terbiyeciler Hekimler Hukukçular İçin İçtimai Biologie: Nüfus, Cinsiyet, Veraset, Terbiye, Tereddi, Taylorizm, Istifa Meseleleri* [Social biology for educators, medical and legal professionals: population, sexuality, heredity, discipline, degeneration, Taylorism, natural selection] (Istanbul: Sebat Matbaası, 1935), 12.

³² Ergin, "Biometrics and Anthropometrics: The Twins of Turkish Modernity," 299-300.

³³ Mahmut Sadi Irmak, *Terbiyeciler Hekimler Hukukçular İçin İçtimai Biologie: Nüfus, Cinsiyet, Veraset, Terbiye, Tereddi, Taylorizm, Istifa Meseleleri* [Social biology for educators, medical and legal professionals: population, sexuality, heredity, discipline, degeneration, Taylorism, natural selection] (Istanbul: Sebat Matbaası, 1935), 46-47. I.e. Irmak could claim that racial mixing could be good for nations

could not agree on the definitive meaning of the terms race and nation. The terms were fluid and caused confusion due to the linguistic and cultural diversity of Anatolian Muslims.³⁴ Some scholars, in fact, argue that the racial theories of the History Thesis were in place to open the way for including disparate ethnicities of Anatolia to a mythical Turkish nation/race. That was why linguistic aspects of nationhood were stressed, as in the “Citizen! Speak Turkish” campaigns that sought to assimilate disparate cultures of Anatolia into the “Turkish race” through language. This is the reason why this thesis adopts Soner Çağaptay’s premise that despite the introduction and rise of a racial vocabulary in the early Republican Period, the idea of race was usually synonymous with nation, based heavily on linguistic and cultural components, as a more accurate description.³⁵

Perhaps due to the limited nature of scientific racism in Turkey, and a lack of agreement on what constituted the Turkish race or nation, eugenics neither became institutionalized nor politicized in Turkey. Eugenic research never took place, and even if a eugenics society was founded it never became very influential or visible.³⁶ Turkish medical professionals mainly wanted to popularize eugenics and try to catch attention to eugenic thought. Most of the articles published and examined so far come from the

if the partners were from the “enlightened strata” of the races because each race had their unique value and common type, Jews for example belonged to the “Eastern type” capable of “abstract thinking,” then as a negative consequence of mixing he would suggest lack of “common traditions.”

³⁴ Howard Eissenstat, “Metaphors of Race and Discourse of Nation: Racial Theory and State Nationalism in the First Decades of the Turkish Republic,” in *Race and Nation: Ethnic Systems in the Modern World*, ed. Paul Spickard (New York: Routledge, 2004), 239-46.

³⁵ Çağaptay, “Race, Assimilation and Kemalism: Turkish Nationalism and the Minorities in the 1930s,” 93-98. Numerous other scholars have had similar positions, i.e. Ayhan Aktar, *Varlık Vergisi ve “Türkleştirme” Politikaları* [The wealth tax and politics of turkification] (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2000), 91.

³⁶ In fact existence of a eugenic society is only mentioned in two sources, by Feridun Frik in *Dirim*, the history of medicine journal he was publishing conveyed by Ayten Arıkan, “Milli Türk Tıp Kongreleri (1923-1968) ve Türkiye Sağlık Politikalarına Etkileri” [National Turkish Medical Congresses (1923-1968) and their influence on Turkey’s health policies] (PhD diss., İstanbul University, 2005), 65; and Çambel who says that the society did not live long, Perihan Çambel, *Öjenik (Eugenics) Hakkında Düşünceler* [Thoughts on eugenics] (İstanbul: Kader Basımevi, 1946), 33.

official journals of the People's Houses, established by the RPP to disseminate party propaganda while educating citizens, primarily from *Ülkü* and to a lesser extent from *Yeni Türk*, that were accordingly semi-official propaganda publications for the single party regime. A few articles also from some popular medical journals such as *Poliklinik*. There are also the books published under the series of RPP conferences and a few by other semi-official organizations.

Therefore, there are two reasons why this thesis does not elaborate on the issue of racism in relation to the growing interest in eugenics in Turkey in the 1930s. First reason is the simplicity and immaturity of the eugenic publications and the confused and eclectic nature of the racist tones of Turkish nationalism of the period. The second, perhaps the more pressing reason is the fact that previous research, reviewed above, has been in that direction. Most contemporary scholars who studied eugenics in Turkey have studied in relation to the increasing racism in Turkish nationalism. Hence, this thesis will examine eugenics (race hygiene) without an accent on racism to offer an *alternative* perspective to the existing literature. Other aspects of Turkish society and the intellectual climate will be scrutinized in order to make sense of the eugenic literature.

IV. The Sources and the Objectives of Research

Due to various limitations that do not need to be reiterated here, this research could not follow the “natural” and perhaps more enjoyable path of one piece of information from a primary source leading to another in Turkey's archives and libraries. As a researcher working from Canada, this author had to limit himself more or less to the same body of primary sources that the above mentioned authors have already studied. Some other and so far relatively less examined sources are the minutes and reprinted

reports from the Turkish National Medical Congresses on eugenics in 1938 and alcohol and drugs in 1935.

In terms of the choice of material, one can probably argue that owing to the little sum of published material dedicated exclusively to eugenics, there were not many options.³⁷ If anything the popular nature of the articles, even the reports produced after the Turkish Medical Congresses, shows that Turkish medical elite were more interested in the social aspect of eugenics rather than its science, and even that interest was narrow and did not yield applications. Turkish eugenic literature was quite scanty, limited to a narrow period, and relatively a small group of medical professional elite. Turkish doctors who wrote under the subject of eugenics were mostly surveying European publications and policies and making their policy suggestions based on the European experience. That body of eugenic literature as mentioned included a plethora of topics under the banner of eugenics, while taking a disproportionate number of pages surveying what was happening in Europe and North America and what Western experts were saying regarding eugenics.

The medical elite, who showed an interest in eugenics, were more concerned with cultural issues, or a cultural degeneration vaguely based on biology rather than racial degeneration. Therefore, it is argued here that the scientific language of eugenics offered the medical elite the possibility of voicing their cultural and social concerns about the changes taking place in a westernizing Turkey without sounding traditional or reactionary. The issues that very frequently appeared in the eugenic publications, such as family life and marriage, and alcohol use and abuse that bothered them as cultural

³⁷ A larger scale research on the general subject of bio-politics in early Republican Turkey would certainly be worthwhile. Even though some scholars do make the link between various topics such as eugenics, public health, statistics, notions of beauty and fitness, body discipline, and nationalism, there is not yet an extensive research on the subject that connects these themes under a legitimate theory. This thesis is mostly limited to the works written either directly under the subject of “eugenics” or contained sections on eugenics and degeneration.

degeneration were all connected to a vague theory of biological degeneration through the eugenic literature.

The thesis attempts to read the emergence of an interest in eugenics as the convergence of various trends that had existed since the modernization efforts of the late Ottomans, the predecessors to the Kemalist modernizers. The first trend studied in detail in the first section of Chapter One is the popularization of scientism. Ottoman intellectuals, after the continuous military defeats, began to look for reasons for the military and economic decline. The often repeated solution was that Europeans had progressed immensely in science and technology while Ottomans had lagged behind, and for this reason lost their powerful status in the world. In order to gain back the prestige and power, European technology as well as a European “scientific” worldview needed to be imported. Some intellectuals were under the influence of French positivism and German materialism. They helped to popularize these intellectual trends, which culminated in the simplified and somewhat rigid positivism of the Kemalists who founded the republic in 1923 and were in power for the next two and a half decades.

This scientist version of Kemalist positivism regarded science as the answer to all problems concerning all aspects of life. The leitmotif of Kemalist propaganda was that Kemalists were achieving the transfer of scientific thinking to Turkey unlike the Ottomans. For them, modernization meant rationalization of every aspect of social life, as well as fighting against the influences of religion and tradition in the name of progress. Even though no individual chapter is assigned specifically to the relationship between scientism and eugenics in Turkey, Chapter One looks at the formation of the scientism of Kemalists in more detail. The aim of that section is to clarify one of the overarching theories in this thesis that eugenics was the result of such a positivistic intellectual

climate. The medical elite, who were mostly the graduates of westernized schools in the last decades of the Ottoman Empire, where positivist ideas were very influential, looked for ways to rationalize the management of society in the newly founded Republic of Turkey. Their professional training and worldview (at least the worldview that was acceptable and encouraged within their professional circles) required them to emphasize rationality in every field of life. Therefore the idea that the future of the nation could be manipulated through rationalization of marriage and births, environmental influences, education of the people, and rational management of everyday life with the help medical scientific expertise seemed very desirable. For that reason eugenics was regarded as a scientific tool to shape the future of the society for social order, and national power and progress.

The second intellectual trend that helped make eugenics attractive to the Kemalist medical elite was the popular social Darwinist arguments for population growth. This trend is also examined in detail in the first chapter that deals with the intellectual and cultural context necessary for eugenics to emerge. Since the later half of the nineteenth century, social Darwinism's appeal had been increasing in the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman intellectuals believed that the international relations were acted out in a chaotic jungle where the powerful nations ruled the weaker. The rule was that only the stronger nations could survive and the weaker ones were doomed to vanish. One of the interpretations for national power was the quantity of the population. Those states with higher numbers of men who were potential soldiers would not lose the game against the strong nations. Therefore, the Ottoman intellectuals as well as the Kemalists who had seen dwindling populations due to incessant warfare, epidemics and poverty stressed the need to increase the population through higher number of births and fewer deaths. The

medical elite took this argument on the national “population policy” one step further in suggesting ways to increase the *quality* of the population as well as its quantity. The medical elite, who wrote about eugenics, always thought of their policy suggestions as part of the population policy debate that was already in place before the eugenic vocabulary appeared. Hence it is suggested that social Darwinist arguments for population growth were also part of the intellectual trend in Turkey that paved the way for the emergence of an interest in eugenics. While the first chapter deals with social Darwinism and the literature on population policy of the early Republic in more detail, the second chapter demonstrates how the eugenicists also had a social Darwinist understanding of national power, thus suggested similar solutions on family and marriage as others who also wrote on the population policy.

The thesis also suggests that if the mutually enforcing currents of social Darwinism and scientism created the necessary intellectual climate for the birth of an interest in eugenics, the effects of modernization were the stimuli that the medical elite were reacting to through the neutral scientific language of eugenics. Chapter Two looks at the connection between family relations in the age of modernization in Turkey and eugenics. The medical elite reiterated the need to rationally manage marriages and choose the right *fit* partners for national power and progress. At the same time they voiced criticisms on the misunderstood sides of modernity that lead women away from being good mothers and indulging in luxuries and pleasures. The degenerative effects of the city life on families and society were mentioned by eugenicists and “scientific” solutions were offered. They were showing their own anxieties about modernity focused on marriage, family and women through the eugenic literature that actually had many similarities with

the general cultural trend of the time that also contained anxieties of immorality caused by westernization.

In a similar vein, Chapter Three suggests that while presenting eugenic thus biological arguments against alcohol use and abuse, the medical elite were also voicing their concerns about cultural degeneration due to a dislike for urbanization and industrialization. Therefore it is suggested in this chapter that the eugenic discourse on degeneration that dealt with alcohol, venereal disease, and such had an anti-urban and anti-industrial subtext that revealed the elite's fears about the immorality of modernity.

The third chapter furthermore offers other factors for an interest in eugenics and especially degeneration theory, besides the intellectual currents of scientism and Social Darwinism. One factor examined in Chapter Three is the role of the psychiatrists. The two influential psychiatrists, Mazhar Osman Uzman and Fahreddin Kerim Gökay worked to popularize the idea of degeneration and eugenics through their various publications and conferences, and proposed eugenics as the social medicine subject for the Seventh National Turkish Medical Congress (NTMC) in 1938. Chapter Three looks at possible explanations why they could have had an interest in popularizing eugenics. It emphasizes the fact that they were educated in Germany and belonged to a German school of psychiatry that had stressed degenerative theory as an explanation to a lot of mental illnesses as the main reason for Turkish psychiatrists' perspective on the importance of degeneration and eugenics. Specifically the formation of the arguments of the degeneration theory in Turkey, namely the division between valuable and valueless classes, the degenerates as burden on society, and alcohol as a degenerative force, with its reasons and consequences are scrutinized in this chapter as well.

Overall the thesis seeks to answer what the eugenic literature of the 1930s can tell us about the social, cultural and intellectual climate of the era. While trying to answer this overarching question, it also reads the material critically and examines the way certain arguments were made by the medical elite. It argues that the intellectual currents of scientism and social Darwinism that has become part of the worldview of both Ottoman and Kemalist modernizers prepared the ground for the Turkish medical elite's attraction to the language of eugenics and attempts to popularize it in Turkey. A scientistic attitude and social Darwinist understanding of population and power also became part of the eugenic literature and were reflected in the primary sources. On the other hand, through the scientific language of eugenics the medical elite voiced their anxieties about morality in modern urban life. They were particularly concerned with family life, the role of women, alcohol use, and venereal diseases. These anxieties that they revealed through eugenics were indeed common among all strata of society during the years of rapid westernization. The literature of the period and periodicals and daily publications included similar arguments. For that reason secondary literature on the cultural, social as well as intellectual climate of the era is read side by side with the primary eugenic literature in order to understand the motivations behind certain arguments made by the medical elite.

Chapter I

THE INTELLECTUAL AND SOCIAL CONTEXT OF EARLY REPUBLICAN TURKEY

This chapter seeks to describe the main historical elements under which the eugenic thought operated in Turkey, examining the context which allowed an expansion of interest in eugenics. The first section looks at the simplified positivism of Kemalist intellectuals, its roots in the late Ottoman Empire, and its intensification with the foundation of the Republic. The scientism of the Ottoman and the Kemalist elite demonstrates that gradually science was exalted to a position of religion in order to refute religion's role in the social domain because the elite believed religion to be the source of backwardness that has made the Ottoman Empire lose her power and prestige in the world vis-à-vis Western states. Hence the rising trend of scientism among the elite caused them to include every aspect of social and cultural life under the domain of science. This was the intellectual landscape that would allow for an interest in eugenics, with its emphasis on rationalization of public and private life, to flourish.

The second section focuses on the “population policy” debates in the context of Social Darwinism. It shows that the pro-natalist propaganda that deemed rise in population as crucial to the progress and survival of the Turkish nation state had been part of the intellectual landscape of the early Republican era as well. It is important to elaborate on social Darwinism and population policy in Turkey since all the elite that wanted to popularize eugenics in Turkey regarded eugenics as an important component of an already existing public debate on population policy.

Finally the last section of the chapter surveys the history of interwar Turkey, reforms and society, especially the scope of cultural changes that affected everyday life of the people, in order to see the type of rapid westernization, which was changing the lives of people from all levels of society including the elite. In the eugenic literature, the medical elite found a way to deal with issues of morality that they believed was challenged by modernity.

I. The Intellectual Climate: Positivism as Scientism and Elitism

A) The Ottoman Roots of Scientism

Even though popular literature and official history claims that there has been a philosophical, cultural and political rupture between the Ottoman Empire and Republic of Turkey after its foundation in 1923, academics since as early as 1950, have been producing works on the continuity of ideas between late Ottoman thought and the Kemalists.¹ The late Ottoman intellectuals such as Abdullah Cevdet, Ali Rıza, Ahmet Ağaoğlu, Ziya Gökalp and Yusuf Akçura were influential in shaping the philosophy and policy of the opposition to the absolutist rule of the Palace throughout the nineteenth century. They all grappled with big questions of religion's role in politics and society and how to negotiate religion's role while bringing scientific and technological progress to the homeland. Even though all had somewhat differing answers, positivist as well materialist thought was very influential among such intellectuals. This was also the period when the seeds of secularist thought in Turkey were sown. A very extremist positivist Abdullah Cevdet, not only defended secularism but also sought ways to divert Muslims away from

¹ For a sample list of such works see Zürcher, "Kemalist Düşünce' nin Osmanlı Kaynakları", 45.

their religious convictions towards a worldview that only depended upon a scientific materialist philosophy.²

Şükrü Hanioglu, a prominent scholar of late Ottoman intellectual history, points at the second half of the nineteenth century as the period when the debate over the irreconcilability of science and religion in the Ottoman Empire became much more intensified. For Hanioglu, one of the main factors that triggered the intensification of this debate was the introduction of what he calls German “vulgar materialism” to Turkey. It was Karl Marx and his disciples, who coined the term vulgar materialism to this school because of the fact that besides attacking religion these German materialists vulgarized the materialist thought by elevating science to the position of religion.³ They also wanted to eliminate philosophy from society because they believed that science was the simple and the only truth and the philosophy needed to be empirical science only.⁴ The German materialist that influenced the Ottoman intellectuals the most was Ludwig Büchner. Büchner believed that in the future human beings would live in a scientific society based on scientific truth when all religions would be obsolete. His works (including *Kraft und Stoff*) were first translated to Arabic in 1876 and his thesis found its adherents and opponents in the Ottoman capital. The conflict became very fierce especially in the early twentieth century. Although Büchner’s first adherents, prominent Ottoman bureaucratic intellectuals, such as Beşir Fuad and Abdullah Cevdet tried to fuse materialism and Islam and offered their own theories about science, art and religion, while later followers

² Ibid., 47. Materialism refers to any and all theories that explain reality and real events as composed of underlying matter and explicable appeals to causation or properties of matter. Walter Brugger, "Materialism," in *Philosophical Dictionary*, ed. Walter Brugger and Kenneth Baker (Spokane: Gonzaga University Press, 1972).

³ Şükrü Hanioglu, "Blueprints for a Future Society: The Late Ottoman Materialists on Science, Religion and Art," in *Late Ottoman Society. The Intellectual Legacy* ed. Elisabeth Özdalga (London: Routledge, 2005), 31.

⁴ Ibid., 30.

strongly opposed religion and even art and literature on the basis that they were not scientific.⁵ Hanioglu alleges that the reason why a philosophy that was not at all that influential in Germany where it was born, gained such prominence among Ottoman intellectuals was because of its simplicity in demonstrating the source of Western superiority. Western material success was due to science, therefore “in the Ottoman Empire...to become a disciple of materialism also meant to become modern, civilized, and progressive.”⁶ The engineers, bureaucrats, doctors translators who were graduates of Western types of schools and who were daily engaged in some sort of science found in *Vulgarmaterialismus*, the idealization of their own labor. Hanioglu presents this as the “further vulgarization of a vulgar philosophy” as Ottoman intellectuals and their literate audience freely appropriated some parts of this literature while ignoring other or fusing them with other conflicting philosophies. He says that “they subscribed to an unsophisticated point of view that promoted omnipotent science at the expense of obsolete religion.”⁷

Berrak Burçak, who has worked with and been influenced by Şükrü Hanioglu, shed more light on what “science” meant for late Ottoman intellectuals. She claims that the Ottomans were amazed by the Western material success and science which meant “progress” instead of scientific research and development. In that sense, she carries Hanioglu’s thesis further by looking into the types of activities that Ottoman intellectuals engaged in. She claims that the “idea of science” in the nineteenth and twentieth century

⁵ Ibid., 64.

⁶ Ibid., 84.

⁷ Ibid., 84-85; Although Hanioglu’s argument is strongly supported, it has not yet reached a wide audience of academics studying Turkey. Therefore, there is still some confusion over the terms on how to refer to the late Ottoman and Kemalist philosophy. The fact that many intellectuals preferred to refer to themselves as “positivist” creates further confusion. This thesis adheres to the widely accepted term by calling Kemalists positivist, yet attempts to distinguish their philosophy as “Kemalist variant of positivism” or “scientism.”

Ottoman intellectual circles evolved into “scientism.” While science is a method of knowing reality, scientism is a world-view that regards science as the *only* way of knowing and disregards possibility of anything beyond the scope of science. In the Ottoman context scientism also gained a utilitarian aspect due to the economic and political situation in the Empire.⁸ Burçak draws attention to the fact that the class who was fascinated with European progress the most was the intelligentsia, and not the scientists, and their activity of modernizing the society with the help of science was ‘scientistic’ rather than scientific. They believed that behind the power of Europe, laid the engine of science, and it could be transferred to the Ottoman Empire to revive the Ottoman strength, especially in military technology.⁹ Thus, Ottoman intellectuals thought that Ottoman Empire was lagging behind if not declining in power and thought of science as a necessary cure to bring progress and close the civilizational gap between their state and Europe.

Following the collapse of the Empire, the debate over the relationship between science and religion, changed shape when “the idea of the Ottomans” began to represent religion. The debate turned into a debate over the “the idea of science” against “the idea of the Ottomans” and it became embedded in the westernization project of Turkey. As the new elite tried to place Turkey on a path of secularization and westernization, what came to be named as “Western science” became a rallying tool for the Republican elite. The whole national education curriculum was transformed with this new scientific approach.

⁸ Berrak Burçak, "Science, a Remedy for All Ills. Healing "The Sick Man of Europe": A Case for Ottoman Scientism" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2005), 5-6.

⁹ Berrak Burçak, "Modernization, Science and Engineering in the Early Nineteenth Century Ottoman Empire," *Middle Eastern Studies* 44, no. 1 (2008): 80-81.

A later work by Aydın Sayılı, a historian of science educated at Harvard University, is worth mentioning here because although it is dated 1984, Sayılı was a young member of the elite during the early years of the Republic. He was chosen by Atatürk to be sent to Harvard to study history of science. His words resemble the early Kemalist discourse on the universality of science's domain, and the idea of passage to modernity as adopting Western civilization through the adoption of scientific thinking. In "The Place of Science in the Turkish Movement of Westernization, and Atatürk," he deals with the question of Ottomans and science. According to Sayılı, the attempt to Westernize by appropriating "science" was inevitable if Ottomans wanted to progress. He underlines the importance to preserve pure science for its own purpose, and suggest that what Ottomans needed to do was transfer this "pure science" or the mind-set that gives birth to a pure science. They needed to do it with certain intensity, perhaps even more intensely than the previous civilization that took over the torch of science, because this time the task was harder as Europe continued to progress with unprecedented speed and force. Such a change "would be tantamount to changing at one fell-swoop from some sort of medieval backwardness to the modern European level of civilization."¹⁰ After criticizing the Ottomans for failing to undertake such a change, in which he believes that the Kemalist era succeeded he turns to the scope of science. For Sayılı, nothing can be out of reach of the "scientific mind." He says "pure science thus has a very important part or role in improving man's life and guiding him in *all his decisions*. Indeed, sound and systematized knowledge can serve as a reliable and indispensable guide not only in

¹⁰ Aydın Sayılı, "The Place of Science in the Turkish Movement of Westernization," *Erdem* 1, no. 1 (1984): 29.

matters pertaining to material aspects of civilization but also in all sorts of *social*, *administrative*, and *moral* questions.”¹¹

B) Kemalist Variant of Positivism and “Scientism”

Several decades before Sayılı wrote about the indispensability of scientific thinking for modernization, the Republicans were developing the modernization project on the same scientificist basis. They believed that if they could transfer ‘the scientific thinking’ or what they called a positivist philosophy into Turkey, then this could answer social, administrative and moral questions. They were, indeed, the inheritors of the late Ottoman tradition of a vulgarized materialism (referred to as “positivism” by the majority of scholars). The Kemalists while continuing the tradition of late Ottoman positivism, in their politics and rhetoric simplified positivism even further.¹² Eric Zürcher, arguably the most quoted historian of modern Turkey, alleges that there were several elements of French positivism that the Kemalist elite shared with their predecessors. These included anti-clericalism, scientism, biological materialism, authoritarianism, intellectual elitism, distrust of the masses, nationalism and social Darwinism.¹³

The emergence of eugenic literature in Turkey was both a product and part of this intellectual landscape. It was, on the one hand, a part of this landscape because it was a tool for interpreting the everyday reality of Turkish intellectuals through what they believed to be a positivist lens. On the other hand, it was a product because various components of Kemalist positivism, namely scientism, elitism, social Darwinism, and nationalism came together to produce an interest in eugenics in Turkey. Therefore it is

¹¹ Ibid., 61. Italics are mine.

¹² Doğan Özlem, “Türkiye’de Pozitivizm ve Siyaset” [Positivism and politics in Turkey], in *Modern Türkiye’de siyasi düşünce: Modernleşme ve Batıcılık* [Political thought in modern Turkey: modernisation and Westernism], ed. Uygur Kocabaşoğlu (Istanbul: İletişim, 2002), 461.

¹³ Zürcher, “Kemalist Düşünce’nin Osmanlı Kaynakları,” 52.

worthwhile to look at the components of this Kemalist variant of positivism in more detail in the next following except nationalism, which was discussed briefly in the Introduction, and social Darwinism, which will be examined later in relation to the population policy.

The Kemalistsinheritors of the late Ottoman modernist worldview believed in the national need to progress fast and extensively. Hence a belief in a system that could steer the way for such change while letting the educated, Western-looking elite in control was the fuel for their hopes for the future of the Republic. This was the period when books such as *Türkün Yeni Amentüsü* (Turk's New Prayer) were written to replace religion with nationalism based on a "scientific worldview."¹⁴ The leitmotif of the modernizing discourse was the indispensability of science and scientific thinking in every proposal for change epitomized in Atatürk's often cited quotation: "For everything in the world, for civilization, for life, for happiness, the most truthful guidance is science."¹⁵ After the foundation of the Republic, secularism was also promoted and supported in the name of science. Since religion could not be reconciled with scientific thinking, the cornerstone of civilization according to the Kemalists, its control was necessary for progress. An early critic, who had been a loyal Kemalist at the onset of the revolution and a minister of health, Adnan Adıvar, would call this "the official dogma of irreligion."¹⁶

The Republican modernizers also sought to replace traditionalism and what they perceived as backward customs and superstitions, which could include any local practice by rational practices.¹⁷ The modernization project through the rationalized services of the

¹⁴ Yıldız, *Ne Mutlu Türküm Diyebilene*, 141.

¹⁵ Quoted in Taner Timur, *Türk Devrimi ve Sonrası, 1919-1946* [The Turkish revolution and its aftermath, 1919-1946] (Ankara: Doğan Yayınları, 1971), 139. All translations are mine unless stated otherwise.

¹⁶ Abdülhak Adnan Adıvar, "Islamic and Western Thought in Turkey," *Middle East Journal* 1, no. 3 (1947): 279.

¹⁷ Christopher Dole, "In the Shadows of Medicine and Modernity: Medical Integration and Secular Histories of Religious Healing in Turkey," *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry* 28, no. 3 (2004).

state, such as bio-medicine and scientific education, in turn sought to transfer the citizens of the state into scientific-minded, “modern” individuals and future generations that would safeguard Turkey’s place among the other modern nation states. In another speech Atatürk showed the reasons for the adoption of this scientific mindset, he declared “The nation has accepted as a principle of absolute truth that in the international field of struggle, science and technology that is the source of survival and power can only be found in modern civilization.”¹⁸ For the Kemalist modernizers, while reaching the level of “civilization,” which was Western civilization, was the national purpose, science was interpreted as the only possible and legitimate vehicle on the path to Western civilization and the strongest tool for survival in the chaotic world of international relations.

Zürcher also puts forward the elitist aspect of Kemalist modernization project as part of its positivist essence.¹⁹ The modernization project in Turkey was carried out by a military bureaucratic elite remnant from the Ottoman state rather than capitalist elite such as the bourgeoisie in Europe.²⁰ The formation of the Kemalist elite was dependant on cultural capital, through secular education, adherence to secularism, positivism and an adoption of non-Muslim lifestyle.²¹ The positivist and elitist sides of modernization were mutually reinforcing. The elite yielded political power from its proximity to the state and their existence was dependant on the state.²² Their proximity further extended their social

¹⁸ Timur, *Türk Devrimi ve Sonrası, 1919-1946*, 139.

¹⁹ Zürcher, "Kemalist Düşünce'nin Osmanlı Kaynakları," 52.

²⁰ Within the scope of this thesis, I refer to the elite as an all-encompassing category though it must be noted that from the Ottoman Empire to the Republic, there were different factions and classes struggling for this status. For a more detailed review see Frederick W. Frey, *The Turkish Political Elite*, [M.I.T. Studies in Comparative Politics Series] (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1965). For a class analysis of elite factions, see Timur, *Türk Devrimi ve Sonrası, 1919-1946*.

²¹ Nilüfer Göle, "Secularism and Islamism in Turkey: The Making of Elites and Counter-Elites," *Middle East Journal* 51, no. 1 (1997): 48-51; Frey, *The Turkish Political Elite*, 29-72. Frey on his detailed chapter on the education of the elite argues that the Kemalist revolution was in fact the outcome of the victory of the Western educated elite over the religiously educated elite.

²² Göle, "Secularism and Islamism in Turkey: The Making of Elites and Counter-Elites," 50.

and political capabilities including an education and a vision that motivated them for reform. Moreover, the elite believed that they were supposed to be the engine for modernization because *only* they held the knowledge to the Western civilization due to their education and worldview. Since they were both servants of the state as bureaucrats and members of an intellectual class through their westernized education, they were naturally attracted to “the positivist vision of a society led by an aristocracy of the mind, by ‘enlightened men.’”²³ The elitist aspect of the Kemalist variant of positivism becomes evident in Ziya Gökalp’s words. Gökalp, often referred to as the founder of Turkish nationalism, was a sociologist who theorized on how to reconcile Turkish culture with modernization and westernization. He believed in the *mission civilatrice* of the elite and reflected his elitism with these words: “The purpose of going to the people is to bring them civilization, because the people do not have civilization. The elite have the key to the civilization. Yet, as a gift to the people, we cannot bring Eastern civilization, or its sub-set, the Ottoman civilization; we shall bring them Western civilization.”²⁴

Medical professionals of the early Republic shared this elite status, hence the use of term “medical elite” throughout the thesis. Most of the medical elite were educated in Western type of civil or military medical schools during the last decades of the Ottoman Empire. They did not necessarily come from wealthy families or belonged to the older religiously educated Ottoman bureaucratic cadres.²⁵ With the formation of the Turkish Republic, some of them were sent to Europe, especially Germany and France for further

²³ Touraj Atabaki and Erik Zürcher, *Men of Order: Authoritarian Modernization under Atatürk and Reza Shah* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 4.

²⁴ Seçil Deren, "Kültürel Batılılaşma" [Cultural westernization], in *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce: Modernleşme ve Batıcılık* [Political thought in modern Turkey: modernization and westernism], ed. Uygur Kocabaşoğlu (Istanbul: İletişim, 2002), 385.

²⁵ Ali Kazancıgil, "The Ottoman-Turkish State and Kemalism," in *Atatürk: Founder of a Modern State*, ed. Ali Kazancıgil and Ergun Özbudun (London: C. Hurst, 1981), 47-48.

education and training. The dependence on the state for education also increased their loyalties. They thought of themselves as representatives of the state in bringing health and services to the people who were poor, needy, and victimized by tradition and traditional or religious healers.²⁶ They believed that their Western education, knowledge of languages, culture and their rational approach to health and healing provided them with an elite status.

Kemalist scientism regarded science as a remedy for all problems of social, political and economic life. The meaning of science and rationality were never clearly defined by Kemalists, and a “scientist discourse” was often utilized for public acceptance and propaganda. This sort of scientism was elitist and nationalist. All of the components of this worldview were adopted by the medical elite as well and played out in the creation of a eugenic literature in Turkey.

II. The Intellectual Climate: Population Policy and Social Darwinism

Another element of Kemalist positivism that Zürcher puts forth is social Darwinism. Social Darwinism is a social theory based on the theory of *survival of the fittest* as part of evolution.²⁷ It can generally be grouped into two levels. The first level is concerned with survival within a society where the fitter ones if left in a fierce competition, without any external aid, are prone to survive longer than weaker members or the dysgenics.

²⁶ Christian Dole, “In the Shadows of Medicine and Modernity: Medical Integration and Secular Histories of Religious Healing in Turkey,” 256

²⁷ “Survival of the fittest” generally refers to the theory that states only the fitter creatures that are more capable of adapting to changing environmental conditions survive because the resources are limited in nature.

The other level is social Darwinism projected onto international relations. The social Darwinists thought of the world as a jungle where different nations/races struggle for a limited number of resources, and where the stronger ones are apt to win this game. The fitter races naturally ruled the weaker ones, and this was desirable for evolution. Even though this is a very rough summary that does not take into account certain nuances and subtleties, the late Ottoman and Republican intelligentsia mostly adopted a quite similar, diluted version of social Darwinism.²⁸

The subtext of social Darwinism was very apparent in the intellectual thought of both the late Ottoman period and Republican Turkey even though the ideas were neither necessarily linked to evolutionism nor belonged to the same school of thought.²⁹ The idea that life is a struggle, especially in the international context was taken as an empirical truth.³⁰ Building their philosophies on this truth, Turkish intellectuals and politicians, most often thought that they were on the weaker side of international politics and if they wanted to survive they had to become stronger. Often, the defeat of the Empire at the end of the First World War was shown as the evidence of the weakness of the Ottomans. The Republic was compared to the Ottomans in this sense, and praised for its successes in public health, and a rational population policy.³¹ Yet they also cared for improvement and the proposals for becoming stronger included: “a strong central state, emphasis on the right of the state over the individual, an economy organized to be ready for war as war

²⁸ Atila Doğan, *Osmanlı Aydınları ve Sosyal Darwinizm* [Ottoman intellectuals and social Darwinism] (Istanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2006), 336.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Hasan Ünder, "Türkiye'de Sosyal Darwinizm Düşüncesi" [Social Darwinist thought in Turkey], in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce: Milliyetçilik* [Political thought in modern Turkey: nationalism], ed. Tanıl Bora (Istanbul: İletişim 2002), 432.

³¹ Mazhar Osman Uzman, "Nüfus Bereketi Arefesindeyiz: Cumhuriyetin Halkın Sıhhatine Hizmeti" [We are on the eve of an abundant population: the Republic's service to the health of the people], *Şihhi Sahifalar* 3, no. 1 (1930).

was usually the manifestation of this struggle” and in general a population strong and large ready for war, usually in the form of defense.³²

The idea of eugenics is tied to social Darwinism on multiple levels as well. First is the apparent Darwinist/evolutionist basis of both. The theories were off-shoots of the evolution theory, and the ideas born out of it, such as *survival of the fittest*. Secondly, the idea of racial improvement is also heavily influenced by Social Darwinism proper, in which human race within a society is divided into a hierarchy of stronger and weaker individuals where the laws of nature requires the survival of the fitter ones. That is why some eugenicists, like social Darwinists, were against any welfare or other systems of social aid that protected the ambiguous category of “dysgenics” or “the weaker.”³³ They believed that those members were destined to lose the competition and give way to the fitter members which would lead to the evolution of the human race. Yet in the Western world, there were many various, contending theories on the relation between welfare and eugenics which did not entirely translate into the Turkish context.

Another level of the relation between eugenics and social Darwinism that is most relevant for the Turkish case is the idea that eugenic measures in a country are necessary for the racial improvement of that nation which, in turn, leads to national power in the international arena. Since the world of international relations was perceived as a world of conflicts and wars, Turkey had to be ready for a war at any time in order to survive. Readiness for war meant a population high in numbers and of good quality. The medical elite that drew attention to eugenics wanted to fill in the quality gap of the population policy that emphasized high quantity. There already existed a big volume of literature on

³² Ünder, "Türkiye'de Sosyal Darwinizm Düşüncesi," 433.

³³ Ibid., 434.

increasing the population, and “population policy” was a popular social subject. Both Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and other members of the government and RPP have made numerous statements from the 1920s onwards, on the importance of population growth.³⁴ Every male member was supposed to be “useful” as a potential soldier as well as a good worker/producer that would support the country’s economic development in this fierce international competition of capitalism.

The period after the First World War and the following War of Independence was marked by a very low population due to the high mortality from decades of war (including the preceding Italian and Balkan Wars) and poor living conditions.³⁵ The big percentage of the male population was lost, there were around one million female widows, and the rural economy was devastated due to lack of agricultural labor and worsening living conditions.³⁶ Furthermore there were various epidemics such as tuberculosis, malaria, trachoma, and syphilis that affected large segments of the population. However, the period after the foundation of the Republic until the Second World War saw a growth of the population on average of 2 % per annum.³⁷ Despite this growth, the pressures on the pro-natalist propaganda did not wane after the 1935 census. The elite thought of incessant population growth as indispensable to progress and defensive power.

³⁴ Cem Behar, ed. *Türkiye'nin Fırsat Penceresi: Demografik Dönüşüm ve İzdeşimleri* [Turkey's window of opportunity: Demographic transformation and its consequences], Türk Sanayicileri ve İşadamları Derneği (Series) (Istanbul: TÜSİAD, 1999), 39.

³⁵ Frederic C Shorter, "The Population of Turkey after the War of Independence," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 17, no. 4 (1985): 423.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 431.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

In 1932, the RPP formed a Population Commission to research methods to decrease the deaths and increase birthrate.³⁸ In 1930, a French book on demography *Le Problème de la Population en France* (1929) by Polish criminologist Léon Rabinowicz, was translated into Turkish and published through the Public Statistics Directory (PSD). In the forward, the translator wrote, “Our solution is to present at least 30 million children to this land with wide boundaries. Aiding a little bit to the unmatched fertility of the Turkish nation will suffice to reach our goal.”³⁹ The infant and early child mortality rates caused doubts about the successes of population growth. The nationalist elite feared that as long as Turkey did not develop economically and technically, the mortality rates would not let a significant growth.⁴⁰ Şevket Süreyya Aydemir, a prominent literary figure in the early years of the Republic, in the journal *Kadro*, wrote a series of articles on population policy that summarized the ideas surrounding population in those days. Turkey could only have a significant growth if the protection of children against mortality and increasing the number of births were adopted as national causes that would infiltrate the economic policies and the laws and regulations of the state.⁴¹ He added these words to show his trust in the fertility of “the Anatolian woman,” with an accent on the reason for further population growth: “It is apparent that the Anatolian Turk is not a degenerate race and the Turkish woman is a power that loves to give and gives a lot of births. However, it is also apparent that our mountains, plains, are not flooded with a big population.

³⁸ Behar, *Türkiye'nin Fırsat Penceresi: Demografik Dönüşüm ve İzdeşimleri*, 39.

³⁹ Adnan Güriz, *Türkiye'de Nüfus Politikası ve Hukuk Düzeni* [Population policy and legal order in Turkey] (Ankara: Sevinç Matbaası, 1975), 45.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 47.

⁴¹ Ibid., 48.

Children living neither in the villages nor in towns are too crowded to fit into the streets.”⁴²

In 1930, the Italian statistics and economics professor Gaetano Zingali’s book was translated into Turkish with the title “The measures taken in Italy to increase the population in quality and quantity” and published by the Public Statistics Directory.⁴³ Turkish political elite had been closely following the Italian pro-natalist policies since 1930, and have tried adopting some laws regarding the rewarding of families with more than five children. They also attempted to introduce Italian laws on bachelors’ tax several times which did not materialize. Mussolini’s speech regarding the population policy was published in the daily *Cumhuriyet* in 1933.⁴⁴ Mussolini’s policy on population crudely was to increase the number of births and decrease the number of deaths. His views also had a tone of anti-urbanization, claiming that city life turned people away from becoming parents. Furthermore he mentioned alcohol as a racial poison that affected the population’s quantity and quality.⁴⁵

Throughout this period numerous articles on the population problem appeared on the journal of the People’s House in Ankara, *Ülkü* that reflected the RPP’s policies.⁴⁶ In 1936, a book compiled by around fifteen statesmen and intellectual elite including German professor at the Istanbul University Fritz Neumark, historian Ömer Celal Saraç, an MP from the town of Manisa, Kazım Nami, author Muhlis Ete, and the owner and

⁴² Ibid., 50.

⁴³ Ibid., 51. The Turkish title was "Nüfusun Kemiyet ve Keyfiyetçe İnkişafı İçin İtalya'da Alınan Tedbirler."

⁴⁴ Ibid., 54.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 53-54.

⁴⁶ Some examples include Zeki Nasır Barker, "Nüfus İşinin Tetkiki" [Examination of the population issue], *Ülkü* 1, no. 5 (1933); Falih Rıfkı Atay, "Nüfus Sayımı" [The population census], *Ülkü* 1, no. 6 (1933); F. Neumark, "Nüfus Sayımlarının Önemi" [The importance of censuses], *Ülkü* 6, no. 32 (1935); "Nüfus Sayımı", [The population census], *Ülkü* 6, no. 23 (1935); Ahmet İhsan Tokgöz and Köyden K, "Dr. Besim Ömer Akalın ve Nüfus İşimiz" [Dr. Besim Ömer Akalın and our project of population], *Ülkü* 7, no. 39 (1936).

editor of the daily *Cumhuriyet* Yunus Nadi, under the name of “Thoughts on Censuses and Population Policy,” was published by the PSD.⁴⁷ It showed that the official policy of increasing the population was adopted almost unanimously. The ideas most frequently repeated were that population meant political strength due to a strong army and economic strength because industry required “more hands.” A continuous population growth would guarantee Turkey’s security against external threats, and aid the economic and industrial growth. Additionally, the opinions on the fertility of the Anatolian stock and the threat of child mortality due to ignorance and lack of economic development recurred in the volume.⁴⁸

The preceding chapters will show that the eugenic literature in Turkey whose presence accelerated after the second half of the interwar years was both a culmination and an expansion of social Darwinist ideas surrounding population policy. Many suggestions on the need to increase the population and the reasons for it were repeated by eugenicists. They drew attention to the quality side of the problem, and offered solutions based on Western European experiences. Hence they picked up on and added to an already strong public debate on population.

III. The Social and Cultural Climate: The Anxiety of Rapid Westernization

If the previous sections can be thought of as the public side of the eugenic debate where scientism was the operating medium, and population growth the public cause, westernization and the anxieties it caused at all levels of society can be regarded as the more personal level of the debate. It is useful to look at some of the cultural and social

⁴⁷ The Turkish title was “Nüfus Sayımı ve Nüfus Meselesi Hakkında Fikirler.” Güriz, *Türkiye’de Nüfus Politikası*, 65.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 67-70.

changes that took place in the period to get a glimpse of the immensity of the cultural shift that was happening to better understand the reactions of the people. The reflections on the cultural and social upheaval in this section will provide a background to the following chapters, which will show how these changes were reflected within the eugenic literature as sources of racial decay, and degeneration and how the issues of morality were problematized by the medical elite.

Both in the late Ottoman Empire and Republican Turkey, the desire to be modern in Western European terms, yet not to lose authenticity or the sense of self had caused great confusion in formation of ideologies and policies. The West determined the very definition of modernity with propulsive force depending on the power it yielded due to the intensity of the idea of enlightenment and the industrial revolution that followed it. As long as West defined the terms of modernity, Ottoman society inevitably found itself struggling to live up to the cultural norms and standards set by the West, and fought to resist its own lower position in the hierarchy constructed by the European representations of the East.⁴⁹

The Kemalist regime sought to change every single aspect of the daily lives of new Turkey's citizens with a modernization project. The nation-building project, empowered by the elite's perceptions of positivism, hoped to remove people away from religious and traditional affiliations and turn them into westward looking nationalist and modern citizens. That project required many changes at political and social as well as cultural and daily levels. The Sultanate and Caliphate were abolished respectively in 1922 and 1924. The Arabic script was replaced by Latin alphabet in 1928 in order to create a

⁴⁹ Nilüfer Göle, *The Forbidden Modern: Civilization and Veiling* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 27.

more definitive gap between the regime of the past and the future as well as an attempt to remove Turkey linguistically from the East and place it among Western nations.

European civil and criminal codes were adopted and Islamic law was rejected. The women were enfranchised in 1930. The classical Islamic/Ottoman hat, the *fez*, was abolished and men were required to wear Western hats as a symbol of Turkish modernity.

Along with these legal reforms, there were also big changes and adoptions of Western manners and culture at the everyday level. For example at a point during the 1930s radios were not allowed to play Turkish/Middle-Eastern tunes any more, and the state promoted classical and other genres of Western music both through the radio and at social events.⁵⁰ Theater companies and symphonies were established in major cities, and the streets were ornamented with Western style sculptures.⁵¹ Therefore the legally westernizing reforms were also supported by other changes that were based on appearing more Western.

The Kemalist approach to modernity was built on fault lines due to the fact that European model of modernization after the end of the nineteenth century had forgotten the ambiguous and contentional nature of its origins and presented itself as a set of criteria that could be applied anywhere. Thus modernity was most commonly interpreted as a menu from which Kemalists could selectively choose their own “project” and apply it on their subjects.⁵² Kemalists had a powerful aspiration to respond to what they usually called “Western misconceptions” and representations of themselves. Yet the

⁵⁰ Orhan Tekelioğlu, "The Rise of a Spontaneous Synthesis: The Historical Background of Turkish Popular Music," *Middle Eastern Studies* 32, no. 2 (1996), 196.

⁵¹ For details on westernization and nationalization of art during the first decades of the Republic, see Nilüfer Öndin, *Cumhuriyet'in Kültür Politikası ve Sanat, 1923-1950* [Cultural politics and art in the Republic, 1923-1950] (Istanbul: İnsancıl Yayınları, 2003), 57-96.

⁵² Çağlar Keyder, "Whither the Project of Modernity? Turkey in the 1990s," in *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey*, ed. Sibel Bozdoğan and Reşat Kasaba (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997).

appropriateness of what was visible troubled the Republicans and the desire to shape the nation into what they wanted it to look like caused them distress which was reflected in a controlling, paternalistic attitude.⁵³ Morphing everyone into a uniform modern citizen was not very feasible, which exacerbated the elite's anxieties on appearance and right type of modernization. In a speech delivered in Kastamonu, on August 30, 1925, Atatürk voiced his resentment to his audience:

In some places I see women who hide their faces and by throwing a piece of fabric, a scarf, or something like that over their heads, and when a man passes by, they turn their backs to him or close up by sitting on the ground. What is the meaning of and explanation of this behavior? Gentlemen, would the mothers and daughters of a civilized nation assume such an absurd and vulgar pose? This is a situation that ridicules our nation. It has to be corrected immediately.⁵⁴

In another speech addressing the Women's Branch of the Red Crescent, the Turkish equivalent of Red Cross, delivered on March 21, 1923, after stating his reaction against the shallow observations of the enemies who picture the Turkish women as idle, secluded and ignorant, he explained the reasons behind this false image: "Honorable ladies, this image that misleads our enemies originates especially from our women's appearance, their way of clothing themselves and concealing their faces."⁵⁵ In the national leader's reprimands the theme that kept popping up was the importance of putting up a modern face against the West in order to avert ridicule. The project of modernity was not complete until every woman and man was taught how the modern citizen should look and behave. The paradox was that the diversity of people and experiences did not fit into the

⁵³ For Atatürk appearing as "the father of the nation" see Chapter Two in Funda Şenol Cantek, *Yaban'lar ve Yerliler: Başkent Olma Sürecinde Ankara* [The natives and the foreigners: Ankara becoming the capitol] (Istanbul: İletişim, 2003).

⁵⁴ Quoted in Zehra Arat, "Turkish Women and the Republican Reconstruction of Tradition," in *Reconstructing Gender in the Middle East : Tradition, Identity and Power*, ed. Fatma Müge Göçek and Shiva Balaghi (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 61.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

dichotomous categories that Kemalists projected upon the population, and the imposition of an alien culture caused resentment and anxiety even for the elite strata.

The importance of visibility of modern fashions and ways of conduct charged certain social events such as “The Republic Balls” with a great amount of social meaning. Balls were designed as political signifiers that represented the Western face of the new regime. Even though Istanbul elites had been introduced to Western type of balls during the last decades of the Ottoman Empire, most of the participants at that time were non-Muslims, foreign visitors, only the elite in proximity to the Palace and almost never Muslim women. Therefore, they were a novelty for the big majority of the Republican Turkish elite. They functioned as laboratories of westernization, where all the new adoptions of costume, etiquette, dance and inter-gender relations could be practiced. The participants were keen on learning the latest dances and showing off their level of civilization publicly through their ability to dance with the opposite sex, their dress and sociable manners.⁵⁶ The new bureaucratic elite would spend big amounts of money on getting costumes from Europe for masked balls and dancing classes from European teachers. The preparations for such events would start at least a month in advance.⁵⁷ On the other hand, the modernization project would also create a generation gap and conflict. Those who were born during the early years of the Republic, the so-called “The Children of the Republic” were more open to and enthusiastic about the new fashions and modes of entertainment, and culture than their parents’ generation. Even the youth who were not

⁵⁶ Şenol Cantek, *Yaban'lar ve Yerliler: Başkent Olma Sürecinde Ankara*, 264.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 276.

invited to the balls were quite curious and excited filling up the streets across from the dance halls and watching what was going on indoors with envy and excitement.⁵⁸

Yet the memories of the elite from the early years of the Republic all point at the nervousness and timidity of the participants whether they were part of the new bureaucracy or from older wealthy Istanbulite families. Famous Kemalist author, Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu witnessed in the balls of Ankara “motionless women by the walls, men standing still like statues by the door, and shy and inexperienced youngsters by the bar that tossed and drank incessantly without any conversation.”⁵⁹ Even an educated and self-confident woman, wife of the aforementioned famous author, Leman Karaosmanoğlu, who grew up in an elite Ottoman family, tried to refrain from such events. In her memories she talks about how she tried to excuse herself by saying that she did not know how to dance but could not resist her friends’ insistence, and thought of it as her duty to get used to these modern ways of entertainment.⁶⁰ While some women personally tried to stay away from balls, sometimes it was the husbands that did not want their wives to attend balls with them because they were suspicious of the intentions of other men.⁶¹ Not everyone looked up to the new habits of entertainment as desirable. Some would describe the balls as the location for superficiality and the participants as “those into the fashions of luxury, higher society.”⁶² The balls and dances did not appeal to everyone even from the bureaucratic classes, and were sources of conflict. There were many sides to the story of modernization and the social and psychological upheaval that

⁵⁸ Ibid., 268.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 265.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid., 267.

⁶² Ibid., 272.

came with it. Burhan Asaf, an early Republican author, in an article titled “The Colors of Balls” (1929) showed his dislike on the superfluous expenditure on the costumes:

At the balls, there were robes, tuxedos, even purses and dress shoes that came from Istanbul. Now we are against this. That thing called a ball that encompasses fun and ornaments, which is, after all, a normal and simple event like any five, ten hours of the day, should never cause the same excitement for a girl who is at the eve of her wedding or a boy who is at the final exams for his career.⁶³

The balls, dancehalls, new fashions and entertainment became symbolic of westernization that was both looked upon with enthusiasm and with dislike. In the 1930s the critical voices within the nationalist elite against certain social aspects of modernization got stronger as the revolutionary fervor was subsiding and a relative stability in the political arena was established with the solidification of the single party regime. Among the new nationalist elite, there existed a dislike of cosmopolitanism which was associated with Ottoman regime, and foreignness, even though they themselves were very eager to espouse westernization and adopt an uneasy relation with the local culture and the traditional cultural heritage.⁶⁴ The cosmopolite higher class was defined as those who did not internalize modernity, which also entailed being a nationalist. The cosmopolites let their kids go to foreign schools to learn the superficial aspects of Western culture, like a new language or piano, and “civilized” behavior equated with Western etiquette (*adab-ı muaşeret*), yet they missed the deeper aspects of civilization which the nationalist elite, themselves, could not define easily either.⁶⁵

⁶³ Ibid., 277.

⁶⁴ Orhan Koçak, "1920'lerden 1970'lere Kültür Politikaları" [Politics of culture from 1920s to 1970s], in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce: Kemalizm* [Political thought in modern Turkey: Kemalism], ed. Ahmet İnsel (Istanbul: İletişim, 2001), 385.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 381.

Hence these ambiguities towards modernization and westernization found voice among the ruling elite through different movements. One such movement that reflected the anxieties of the age in the same manner as the eugenic literature was the peasantist movement. The anti-urbanist and anti-industrialist tones of Kemalism became more and more mainstream in the 1930s through peasantism. Peasantism was an elitist movement to mobilize the rural population, which consisted of the 80% of the general population, as forces of modernization and nation-building through the education of peasants by the urban elite. The People's Houses, and their later extensions House Rooms in remote towns and villages were built as centers where people from various towns and villages would come to be educated and indoctrinated with the ideals of the Republican regime.⁶⁶ Later the same movement would lead the way for the Village Institutes, where the select children from various villages in an area would be educated in modern agriculture as well as other disciplines to return back to his village and enlighten the rest of the population.⁶⁷

Peasantism was an ideology fed by the intimidation of urbanization and industrialization because it was born in the climate of the 1930s, where the Great Depression, perceived to be an inherently Western and urban phenomenon, revealed the worst faces of the industrialized cities.⁶⁸ Rural life was imagined as a source of stability against the potential dangers of chaos and revolution, class consciousness and class struggle because an uncontrolled industrialization could follow the footsteps of the European experience. Due to this industrialization the cities represented cosmopolitanism, class struggle, unemployment and strikes as well as social degeneration. Peasantists saw a

⁶⁶ Asım Karaömerlioğlu, "The People's Houses and the Cult of the Peasant in Turkey," *Middle Eastern Studies* 34, no. 4 (1998): 68.

⁶⁷ Nuri Eren, "The Village Institutes of Turkey," *Journal of The Royal Central Asian Society* 33, no. 3 (1946).

⁶⁸ Karaömerlioğlu, "The People's Houses and the Cult of the Peasant in Turkey," 78.

“correlation between urbanism and anti-nationalism” because they believed that Ottomans, who were envisaged to be the enemies of the new regime, favored cities to the detriment of the countryside.⁶⁹ Peasantist ideology, because of these anti-urbanist and anti-industrial currents, was also in a way an ideology of anti-westernization.⁷⁰

The very similar critics of the class struggle and chaos caused by urbanism, and industrialism also found voice in the eugenics literature. Similarly but with more accent the degenerative forces of these processes were criticized by the eugenisists, and “scientific” methods of controlling or avoiding that chaos were visualized. While the first two parts demonstrated the intellectual climate of scientism and social Darwinism where the eugenic literature emerged, this section showed that even the elite’s experiences with the modernization project were not always easy and unproblematic. The ambiguous nature of Turkish modernization that applauded some parts of westernization as progress while condemning some as excess caused a considerable amount of anxiety within the society. One of the ways the medical elite dealt with the speed of changes in everyday life was to criticize what they deemed to be inappropriate and immoral through the scientific language of eugenics, which will be examined in detail in the following chapter

⁶⁹ Ibid., 74-76.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 78.

Chapter II

EUGENICS, MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

The subject that was touched upon most frequently in the eugenic literature produced by the medical elite in the 1930s was the issue of marriage. The issue of marriage was always interpreted on national terms while most other common subjects of eugenics such as sterilization, racial hierarchies, or welfare systems were mainly understood to be “Western” issues that did not translate much into the Turkish context, hence were only summarized as news from the “modern world.” However, the medical elite thought of marriage as a very relevant subject to which the Turkish government and medical scientific circles had to pay attention.

In this chapter two intertwined aspects of the Turkish concept of “a eugenic marriage” will be examined. In the first section, the demographic and social Darwinist basis of all arguments for the national/public aspect of marriage and why it needed to be scientifically organized is explored. The formation of the arguments by the medical elite for a population high in number and quality and its relation to the general “population policy” discussion is examined in more detail. For the formation of social Darwinist arguments that regarded population as national power for survival, Turkish eugenicists utilized the recent censuses and statistics and mostly Western statistics that were deemed to be scientific and objective.

The medical elite advocated the need to closely control marriages and births as part of the population policy in order to raise its quantity and increase the quality in eugenic terms. The utilitarian aspect of marriage was very clear to the eugenicists. The

most significant and for many, the only, purpose of marriage was “to procreate.” The eugenic view of reproduction and the demographic argument of preserving the strength of the nation supported the claim that marriage could not be a personal issue. It concerned the state, as it was in the state’s interest to have control over the quality and quantity of the population and future generations. The argument followed the logic that in a rational, secular state where science was the new religion, marriage was also supposed to be organized in accord with scientific principles. The medical elite who claimed ownership of this scientific expertise was the only legitimate group of technocrats who could have the authority to this new organization of society. Therefore there was a pedagogic and elitist attitude in their approach to the rationalizing marriage for national purposes.

Consequently, the second section of the chapter looks at medical elite’s proposals on *how* to control marriage eugenically as well as some policies adopted by the state to increase the quality and the quantity of the population. They encouraged people from the “valuable” classes to make more children and strived to convince their audience on the national imperative of this goal. Earlier marriages, especially among socially and genetically more “valuable” partners were of utmost importance to the improvement of the race, while late marriages were seen as morally and genetically harmful. The eugenic language became a rallying point for moralizing the masses on marriage.

The third section problematizes gender relations in relation to marriage, family and modernity as part of the eugenic discourse. The persistence of gender roles within the newly formed framework of “a eugenic marriage” is explored. In the minds of the medical elite, despite the discourse of equality and feminism, women’s primary roles were as mothers and wives. Since the family was the cornerstone of a strong Turkish nation/race, women’s roles as mothers were more important than ever before. The

medical elite put forward the need for women to restrain from work and ills of modern life such as parties, dancehalls and alcohol as eugenic measures. They also harshly criticized women who chose not to marry or have children.

The discussion on the formation of these arguments is followed by the last section that returns to and expands on the social conditions around the modernizing life of the period, introduced in Chapter One, to better understand the subtext of eugenists' arguments beyond the evident political desire to increase population. There were very similar public discussions on how the modern life was leading family life into a chaos, and intergenerational conflict based upon the idea of marriage and family. There were articles and books since 1920s discussing the new values of the youth, the changing patterns of marriage and family formation, and women's roles in society. In general the older elite who produced such works did not approve of the lifestyle of the younger generation that was growing up under a new regime that supported westernization in every aspect of social and cultural life. Therefore this section demonstrates the similarities between the eugenists' anxieties and the general discontent among the rest of the Republican elite and the disagreement on how the appropriate type of modern behavior was supposed to be.

The chapter examines in detail the formation of eugenic arguments focused on family and marriage. Overall, it is argued that the content of the arguments were not very new. Most of the ideas surrounding, the national aspect of marriage and motherhood, the age of marriage and the desire to control certain side effects of urbanity, intergenerational conflict and the so-called "family crisis" had been voiced by the literate circles in the literature and the media since at least the last quarter of nineteenth century. The rapid westernization especially within the literate, bureaucratic or commercial elite families to

which most of the eugenist doctors belonged to caused a social and cultural turmoil where everything seemed to be changing at full speed. For that reason family life became the center of this strife both symbolically and personally. The medical elite, which belonged to an older generation than the young adults at the age of marriage, could no longer argue for clinging to the older family values for the sake of tradition, religion, or simple conservatism. If Social Darwinism prepared the ground for fears that won the elite's support for population increase for nationalist aims, eugenics and the scientific organization of family life gave them the "modern" means to sustain the very same ideas that sounded morally right to them.

I. Social Darwinist Eugenics Declares Marriage as National Duty

The Republican government had started using the demographic technologies of censuses and statistics from the onset of its rule to monitor the country's human capital. The first census conducted in 1927 ended up being inaccurate due to inexperience. The second census of the Republican government was taken in 1935. The population had risen from 13.648.270 in 1927 to 16.188.767. This amounted to an annual 2.3% increase according to an anonymous author in *Ülkü*, who was very proud of this achievement as he declared Turkey was the fastest growing nation after the Soviets.¹ The Ministry of Health and Social Assistance also collected various data on health, birth rates and infant mortality throughout its public health campaigns and published the statistics of the

¹ "Nüfus Sayımı," 213.

results.² This data from censuses and public health campaigns would be the foundation for social Darwinist arguments explored in Chapter One. The population was growing, and the Republican leaders and the elite would often declare their satisfaction with this growth. Yet this did not restrain them from persisting with the idea that population had to increase more in order to become a stronger nation state. The medical elite chose to pay only lip-service to the satisfaction with this achievement, before advocating the need for a higher rate of increase.

As a matter of fact, the issues that they perceived as the population problem such as the late age of marriage, and low fertility rates were only the trends in the cosmopolitan populations of Izmir or Istanbul. Two contemporary social scientists', Cem Behar and Alan Duben's study proves that the level of fertility in Istanbul had been low since at least to the last decade of the nineteenth century. The same was the trend in Istanbul's fertility patterns in the 1930s and 1940s. The two cities of Izmir and Istanbul had a significantly lower birth rate than the rest of Turkey for a long time. While rural families were having around seven children on average, and families in small towns and cities four and above, the average number of children in an Istanbul family was two.³ The mean age of marriage for women which had always been late compared to rest of Turkey, also increased from 20 in 1900s to 23 by the end of 1930s. The same rural-urban discrepancy existed for the average age of marriage for men as well. Urban men tended to marry in their thirties, on average seven years later than their rural counterparts.⁴

² Server Kamil Tokgöz, *Öjenizm: Irk Islahı* [Eugenics: breeding of race] (Ankara: Sümer, 1938), 5.

³ Alan Duben and Cem Behar, *Istanbul Households: Marriage, Family, and Fertility, 1880-1940* (Cambridge Cambridge University Press, 1991), 1-2.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 167.

Hence it seems plausible that rather than the numbers that confirmed a rise in the nation-wide population, the medical elite were more worried about the persisting trends of decreased fecundity in the urban population that they observed on a day-to-day basis. Another reason for their worries about population could be the fact that the “population policy” concerned with increasing the birth rate and decreasing deaths had been a popular topic ever since the early twentieth century. Kemalist elite in addition, took extra pride in rationalizing this policy through censuses and extending public health initiatives. Mazhar Osman Uzman, the famous neuro-psychiatrist, suggested that the Republican regime was the only administration that had ever paid attention to the population policy and demonstrated loyalty to the science of medicine and the citizens’ health.⁵ Therefore, even though the results of the 1935 census showed the Kemalist elite that their policies were succeeding, it also encouraged them to reinforce the pro-natalist propaganda. Their fears regarding the quality and quantity of the population were either directly connected to or had underpinnings of social Darwinism.

The social Darwinist leanings of Turkish medical elite were very evident in the texts on eugenics. Often the argument was that only the strongest nations prevail in the world, and Turkey in order to be stronger and “not eaten up” by other powers needed to have a larger population. Even though the Turkish eugenists agreed that this large population was supposed to be high in quality, they were conservative against any measure that would limit its quantity such as sterilization laws.⁶ For that reason, they preached that having more children was the youth’s national duty as children were seen as

⁵ Uzman, "Nüfus Bereketi Arefesindeyiz," 2. The sequel to this first article elaborated further on the grandness of health services offered by the Republican government, Mazhar Osman Uzman, "Nüfus Bereketi Arefesindeyiz II : Cumhuriyetin Halkın Sıhhatine Hizmeti" [We are on the eve of an abundant population II: the Republic's service to the health of the people], *Sıhhi Sahifalar* 3, no. 2 (1930).

⁶ See Gökay’s response to the question on sterilization laws in Germany posed by the daily *Cumhuriyet* in Chapter Three. Any type of sterilization was completely outlawed in Turkey in 1936.

future soldiers to protect the nation against external threats in the international arena of struggle and conflict.⁷ Dr. Besim Ömer Akalın, one of the most prominent and first gynecologists in Turkey, had been known to say “if we can make two more babies survive we will be adding two more soldiers to our army” as an explanation for fighting infant mortality as the doctors’ nationalist cause.⁸ This cause depended on the goodwill of the parents as citizens as well as doctors’ expertise to organize the quality of this increasing population through eugenic consciousness.

Some examples of social Darwinist arguments and fears about survival of Turkey and Turkish nation in regards to the population demonstrate the significance of that pattern of thinking among the medical elite that wrote on eugenics. One such argument is put forward by Dr. Mazhar Osman Uzman, who today is regarded as the pioneer of modern psychiatry in Turkey. He begins his text on eugenics with stating that all the countries in the world had developed a population policy because they know that the more populated countries are stronger and eat up smaller populations, which is an apparent sign of his Social Darwinist leanings.⁹ It was also a very common feature of the texts by eugenics enthusiasts to allude to the fact that this was something in which the whole world (i.e. Europe and other Western states) was taking an interest. He also reveals his social Darwinist understanding of the survival of the nation while criticizing what he believes to be the common view among educated families that two children are enough as a very faulty mentality. He warns the readers that, “a country filled with families with two

⁷ Fahreddin Kerim Gökay, "İrk Hıfzısıhhasında İrsiyetin Rolü ve Nesli Tereddiden Korumak Çareleri" [The role of heredity in race hygiene and the solutions to protect the generation from degeneration], in *CHP Konferanslar Serisi Kitap 12* [RPP Conference Series Book 12] (Ankara: Recep Ulusoglu Basımevi, 1940), 14.

⁸ Tokgöz and K, "Dr. Besim Ömer Akalın ve Nüfus İşimiz," 207.

⁹ Mazhar Osman Uzman, "Öjenik" [Eugenics], in *CHP Konferanslar Serisi Kitap 2* [RPP conferences series, book 2] (Ankara: Recep Ulusoglu Basımevi, 1939), 2.

children would be destroyed totally in three hundred years! Therefore, he adds “every family should have at least four children, and real patriotic families would make more than four!”¹⁰

Ömer Besim Akalın’s book on infant mortality and eugenics titled *How to Make the Turkish Child Live? Puériculture and Eugenics* (1939) also reflected his social Darwinist anxieties on population. He declared that the child was the key to a population policy and had to be the central of all policies pertaining to increasing the population because progress, power, enhancement of the nation all depended on population. He showed his reasons to fear a cease to population growth with these words: “If a population does not grow... and the race does not progress and is not improved, then the country is in danger.”¹¹ As well as criticizing Ottomans for not understanding this evident fact and protecting public health, he congratulated the Turkish Republic’s policies on the progress so far. Yet for the future, he believed that more extreme measures had to be taken because he was cautious of the population growth in Eastern European states that were close to Turkey geographically. He believed that Eastern Europe’s population was going to keep increasing in the next twenty to thirty years. Poland was expected to rise from 30 to 45 million in 1960, Romania, Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria’s population in total was expected to increase by 20 million to 49 million and Russia’s European lands would be around 170 million. To him these statistics showed the seriousness of the situation so he expressed his aspiration: “For the longevity of Turkish race, and strength of the state, no land should be left vacant and the population should be raised in a rational, organized

¹⁰ Ibid., 8. The exact same argument is repeated in Ali Esat Birol, *Öjenik Tatbikatı: Yedinci Milli Türk Tıp Kurultayı* [The application of eugenics: the Seventh National Turkish Medical Congress] (İstanbul: Kader Basımevi, 1939), 9.

¹¹ Besim Ömer Akalın, *Türk Çocuğunu Nasıl Yaşatmalı?* [How to make the Turkish child survive?] (İstanbul: Ahmet İhsan Basımevi, 1939), 9.

manner.” Rationality in that case meant considering some eugenic aspects.¹² In a similar vein to Uzman, he suggested at least 3 children per couple so that “our population surpasses 40 or 50 million so that we stick to our land, we settle, and when necessary we defend it for its worth.”¹³ He believed that a small population compared to the neighboring states would bring about an inevitable death to the Turkish nation. His pro-natalist argument that was similar to the rest of the works on population policy only added the importance of “rationality” hence eugenic measures, but with a more emphasis on increasing quantity.

Similarly, Sadi Irmak, who was a physiologist educated in Germany and a later prime minister, touched upon the quantity and quality argument in his texts on eugenic issues. His biological argument with elitist underpinnings was based upon the hierarchy of racial value. He defended the necessity of the ambivalent category of “valuable” classes reproducing more than the “valueless.” This was mandatory for the prevention of degeneration due to the increase of cacogenic factors in the population. Contrary to the vagueness of some other doctors, his understanding of degeneration was built upon the Galtonian idea that talents and capabilities could be inherited. He was concerned more with quality of the population; hence his argument was closer to the Anglo-American eugenic arguments. He stated that all the previous “grand cultures” such as Greeks, Romans and Arabs had degenerated and lost their power, because the “hereditary plasm of the culture-producing classes have become infertile.” This amounted to the death of the nation for Irmak.¹⁴ It was inevitably a social Darwinist view of nations where the survival of fittest reigned. It was also closer to the second level of Social Darwinism that saw a

¹² Ibid., 9-12.

¹³ Ibid., 13.

¹⁴ Irmak, *İçtimai Biologie: Nüfus, Cinsiyet, Veraset*, 39.

struggle for life between the different classes of society based on their “culture-producing” merits. He therefore presented making more children as the national duty of those culture-producing classes for survival of the Turkish culture.

Given the social Darwinist fears of the eugenisists, the most pronounced advice for a better population policy was the rationalization of marriage. It is important to analyze how the arguments for this rationalization were constructed by the medical elite. The discourse for rationalization of marriage was that it was no longer a personal issue but a social one. By choosing a partner the individual was not only choosing his/her own feature but the whole society's. If a couple produced degenerate children, this would be a burden on the whole society, but eugenic children were seen as assets that would grow up to aid Turkey in her progress. The medical elite asked every woman and man to look at their prospective partners rationally to make sure that they would be breeders of good progeny for the nation. The existence of physical beauty and mental talents were important. However what they emphasized more were the preventive measures against degeneracy, therefore the lack of any visible physical defects, and hereditary or mental illnesses were critical in choosing partners. The Public Hygiene Law of 1930 already required every individual to get screened for certain diseases that were believed to be harmful on progeny, hereditary or congenital. Even though this law was by no means strictly applied, the medical reformers always referred to it as a source of pride. On the other hand, probably they were aware that it was not so strictly enforced hence they strived to use power of persuasion through their writing and speeches to ensure that the people understood the importance of this issue. A doctor from the province of Sivas, İhsan Özgen was complaining that even at the first screening the more conscious medical professionals did not permit a couple to marry, the people would apply to a chief civil

servant who would then refer them to a doctor that could give them a license to marry more easily. Özgen wanted both the citizens and the medical professionals to comprehend the importance of regarding the marriage from “a eugenic perspective.”¹⁵ The medical elite hoped that by educating the people they could enforce this premarital medical screening which they saw as vital for a health population policy.

One of the reporters at the Seventh National Turkish Medical Congress (NTMC) that convened in Ankara in 1938, under the subject of eugenics, Münir Ahmet Sarpyenir, an orthopedic surgeon, initially briefed all the negative/hard eugenic measures, especially sterilization applied in some northern countries. Then he turned his attention to what was supposed to be done in Turkey as eugenics was cast as a subject that had to be on every nation’s radar. For Sarpyenir, a very important factor for the “beauty of the race” was organizing the family on “scientific principles.”¹⁶ Even though he did not describe in detail what these principles were, he assigned the role of this organization to medical experts. It was the doctors’ expertise that could help the products of such marriages grow to be beautiful, fit, and strong hence able members of the society rather a burden on it.¹⁷ On a similar vein, Ali Esat Birol, a prominent obstetrician and gynecologist who devoted most of research to infertility in women, at the same congress, declared that marriage was not a personal issue, but a concern of the state, and had to be organized under certain rational principles.¹⁸ His argument read:

The preservation of a good generation is only possible by the marriage and reproduction of normal, fit and hereditarily capable individuals. To think of

¹⁵ İhsan Özgen, "Evlenme İşlerinde Hekimin Sosyal Durumu ve Vazifeleri" [The social position and the duties of the doctor regarding matrimonial issues], *Poliklinik*, no. 57 (1938): 266.

¹⁶ *Yedinci Ulusal Türk Tıp Kurultayı, Ankara, 17-19 Birinci Teşrin 1938*, [The proceedings of the Seventh National Turkish Medical Congress, Ankara, 17-19 October, 1938] (Istanbul: Kader, 1939), 99.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 97-99.

¹⁸ Aykut Kazancıgil, "Prof. Dr. Ali Esat Birol (1901-1999), His Life and His Scientific Contributions," *Tıp Tarihi Araştırmaları* 10 (2001).

marriage as an abstract, personal, or need-based issue or a solution of a physiological need is very wrong. This perspective is similar to benefiting only from the shade of a tree that was actually planted for its fruit. Since the family that consists of a man and a woman is the source of life and basis of the generations and state, there's no bigger mistake than leaving marriage to chance. Mutual duties of the family and the state are indispensable and unavoidable.¹⁹

Another ardent believer in the magic of “scientific marriage” in improving the racial quality of the nation, and generally public health was Dr. Akalın. It is true that Akalın was probably one of the earliest pioneers of the quest to rationalize marriage. In 1924 he published *Science and Marriage* in which he had explained why marriage had to be considered a public matter, and organized according to scientific principles.²⁰ His later *How can the Turkish child survive?* (1939) regurgitated the same ideas from his previous book on marriage. Akalın stated that “the purpose of marriage is perfection of race,” because “both good attributes, and degenerative diseases, are passed by birth, today marriage is taken more seriously. From the perspective of heredity, marriage is a social, public, national matter rather than private.”²¹ He suggested that the raising of children could no longer be left to chance because the nation depended on the child; the child was “the national purpose.”²²

As the above examples show, the Turkish medical elite of the early Republican era interpreted eugenics as part of a rational population policy. The social Darwinist concept of *survival of the fittest* was projected heavily onto the matrix of international relations, and in a dangerous world, Turkey's survival and progress depended on the rise in population's quantity and quality. For that end, marriage was re-interpreted as a

¹⁹ Birol, *Öjenik Tatbikatı*, 5.

²⁰ Akalın, *Türk Çocuğunu Nasıl Yaşatmalı?*, 21.

²¹ Ibid., 6.

²² Ibid.

nationalist tool, which if organized properly, could lead Turkey to its goal. Certain rules and principles were pronounced to make marriage more rational, healthy and useful in eugenic terms. Rationalization and nationalization of marriage went hand-in-hand.

II. How to Rationalize Marriage Eugenically?

The eugenisists had various recommendations to the prospective parents in order to rationalize marriage. The necessity to marry at an early age to make more children was probably the primary argument proposed by many authors. The crucial point though was the separation between valuable and non-valuable couples. Eugenists often recommended only those couples they thought of as racially valuable, with beautiful fit, strong bodies, high intelligence, and high moral values to get married earlier and have more children. However, this category was quite vague and not everyone agreed on the same standards of “racial value.” The general consensus was that the valuable classes were urban, educated, but somehow not degenerated by alcohol, luxury, and similar influences. Therefore, only being rich or educated could not guarantee racial value.

In general however, early marriage for reaching a high number of children was encouraged by the eugenists as part of a rational population policy. Şükrü Hazım Tiner, a leading neuro-psychiatrist, for instance, thought that young men had to marry earlier because the statistics proved that couples that got married at younger ages ended up having more children. In order to increase the number of children from more valuable parents they had to be encouraged to marry earlier according to Tiner.²³ This argument found many followers. They believed that early marriages lead to more children, and

²³ Şükrü Hazım Tiner, *Eugenik Bahsine Umumi Bir Bakış: Yedinci Milli Türk Tıp Kurultayı* [A general look at the subject of eugenics: the Seventh National Turkish Medical Congress] (İstanbul: Kader Basımevi, 1939), 41.

were concerned with younger generations spending too much time before marriage. Some authors had another bio-political concern about time spent as bachelors. They suggested that late marriage was especially dangerous for young men because they believed that young men's sexualities were "stronger" and harder to reign in than young women's, and therefore the longer the years spent as bachelors the longer these men were susceptible to venereal diseases.²⁴ Venereal diseases were not only bad because they affected the health of the individual but they also affected his ability to reproduce, or give birth to healthy progeny.

Some eugenisists suggested giving incentives and/or imposing sanctions and penalties on targeted classes to organize the demographic and eugenic outcome from marriages. One such incentive that they proposed was the benefits depending on marital status and the number of children. Another mechanism for control that was suggested by the eugenists was a tax on bachelors for the years spent without getting married after the early twenties. Most of the eugenists' arguments remained on the level of suggestions, except the benefits such as tax exemptions, and rewards for families with more than five children were also adopted by the single party government. There was also a policy of giving 50 liras as award to families with six children which was later dropped to 25 liras. This award had been given until 1932; later the State started accruing debt to those families because it did not have the necessary resources to pay them off.²⁵ A bachelor's tax was also proposed in the parliament but never adopted. The eugenists discussed these same rewards and penalties as eugenic measures, and added their own interpretations and suggestions.

²⁴ Ibid., 21.

²⁵ Uzman, "Öjenik," 7-8.

Ali Esat Birol on his report at the Seventh NTMC urged every family to have four to five kids. He added “Physiologically this number is not a lot at all. Since a woman is capable to giving a healthy birth every 1.5 years and can have up to twenty children. What we desire is actually only one fifth of this.”²⁶ To increase the population through organization of marriage he offered the idea of some tax exemptions and aid to rural families with a lot of children too. While he recommended punishing big landed farmers with few children by preventing the inheritance of the land to his family, the ones with a lot of children were supposed to be awarded with tax exemptions, and every ease possible. Birol suggested lowering the number of children necessary in a family for the current law on transportation tax exemption from five to three children and more, as well providing low-interest credit for housing for such families.²⁷ Akalın, in a similar vein, proposed applying German laws on awarding such big families with tax exemptions and free housing in his book.²⁸

From time to time a tax on singles had been discussed by the medical elite as well. Uzman was one of those who wanted to see it implemented as soon as possible with utmost strictness as it was an important eugenic measure. He suggested that those who did not get married or want children had to give higher taxes; on the other hand, families with more children needed to be exempted from various taxes.²⁹ He even proposed civil

²⁶ Birol, *Öjenik Tatbikatı*, 9.

²⁷ Ibid., 9-10. Similar regulations of pronatalist rewards existed in Italy as mentioned in Chapter One, for more details on Italian pronatalism, see Carl Ipsen, *Dictating Demography: The Problem of Population in Fascist Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 174-83. For Turkey's adoption of Italian criminal code, especially measures against abortion and sterilization see Ruth Austin Miller, *The Limits of Bodily Integrity : Abortion, Adultery, and Rape Legislation in Comparative Perspective* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 45-47.

²⁸ Akalın, *Türk Çocuğunu Nasıl Yaşatmalı?* , 10.

²⁹ However, there was not a consensus on singles' tax as a good eugenic measure. For example Akalın criticized those who proposed singles tax as unrealistic, and blind to the real issues of lack of population, which, for him, was infant mortality, Ibid., 15.

servants' salaries to be raised by 25 to 200 percent depending on the number of children. Most of their suggestions, even the positive eugenic ones to encourage more children, remained inapplicable in a newly formed state that was still recovering from previous wars and struggling with economic hardships of the post-depression period.

Even though eugenists in Turkey mostly relied on a vague idea of racial value and preferred to emphasize the importance of quantity rather than quality, there was still a considerable presence of the idea of struggle for life between different classes that also related to marriage and procreation. A dangerous factor, risking the valuable or the culture-producing classes, besides the fact that they were getting married late and having fewer children, was the rate of early marriages among people of "lower value." They were getting married earlier and reproducing more.³⁰ The fear was that the lower value classes would constitute the majority of the future generations to the detriment of the culture-producing classes and that would mean the death of the nation.³¹ Uzman wanted to draw the attention of his audience to the urgency of this issue:

Smart ones shy away from marriage for egotistic reasons. They don't want to marry and are scared to have children because they pursue feeding women and kids as burdensome. The idiots on the other hand, don't know how to consider the financial realities of life, get carried away by their impulses and lust, marry and reproduce like *mice*!³²

Therefore eugenists believed in the importance of controlling marriage on various levels. Despite the classless ideology of the single party regime to which they paid lip service, they still divided the people into the ambiguous categories of valuable and lower value based on their intellect, talent, beauty and general physical and mental health which were never measured but assumed to be present. To the eugenists, rationalization of

³⁰ İrmak, *İçtimai Biologie: Nüfus, Cinsiyet, Veraset*, 41.

³¹ Tokgöz, *Öjenizm: Irk Islahı*, 3.

³² Uzman, "Öjenik," 3-4.

marriage meant the encouragement of valuable young people to marry early and have more children. It is true that some policies such as tax exemptions, rewards, free-housing to families with a high number of children were proposed and the Republican People's Party, which had turned the country into a single party state and did not face much opposition in its legal maneuverings, adopted certain general eugenic and demographic concerns as its health policy program in 1935 and amended it in 1942.³³ However, the applications of tax exemptions with the exception of a few, free housing and other rewards required more funds which were not available to RPP during the interwar years.³⁴

One policy which the medical elite perceived as a direct eugenic measure, that was adopted, however, was the 1930 Public Hygiene Law. The connection between this law and eugenics for the medical elite is demonstrated by one doctor Naci Somersan's article proudly reminding his Western audience of the prenuptial examination in Turkey in the journal *The Eugenics Review* in 1937.³⁵ Article 122 of the Public Hygiene Law obliged prospective husband and wife to go through a medical examination to get permission for marriage. Articles 123 and 124 prohibited those with syphilis, gonorrhea, soft chancre, leprosy, and a loosely defined "mental illness" from marrying until they were cured.³⁶ Although the medical elite congratulated the government for its efforts in eugenic population policy they were also aware of the lack of diligence in application.³⁷

³³ The fourth section read: "Developing the health and social help (charity) organizations of our country, with the aim of increasing population, *strengthening and beautifying the generation* (nesil), rehabilitating unattended children of broken families who cannot join the workforce, and strengthening familial units, is our goal." Çambel, *Öjenik (Eugenics) Hakkında Düşünceler*, 2; Güriz, *Türkiye'de Nüfus Politikası*, 246.

³⁴ For the lack of funds for social assistance in the interwar period, see Ayse Bugra, "Poverty and Citizenship: An Overview of the Social-Policy Environment in Republican Turkey," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 39, no. 1 (2007): 38-41.

³⁵ Naci Somersan, "Prenuptial Medical Examination in Turkey," *The Eugenics Review* 29 (1937-1938).

³⁶ Birol, *Öjenik Tatbikatı*, 8-9; Alemdaroglu, "Politics of the Body and Eugenic Discourse in Early Republican Turkey," 70.

³⁷ Akalın, *Türk Çocuğunu Nasıl Yaşatmalı?*, 55.

Perihan Çambel, a pathologist educated in the USA from a wealthy Istanbul family, as late as in 1946 was complaining that the law was never applied strictly enough due to the fact that doctors with the authorization to scan the prospective partners and apply this law lacked the necessary training in preventive medicine and eugenics, and were more like bureaucrats rather than doctors.³⁸ Psychiatrists reiterated the unease with the applications of the law because the doctors in the bureaucracy of Anatolia did not necessarily possess knowledge on mental illnesses and degeneracy.³⁹ Some doctors also suggested that the laws banning degenerates, specifically those with mental illnesses, from getting married were supposed to be applied more rigorously to ensure they did not have any possibility of having children.⁴⁰

Some eugenists took the idea of control of marriage even further by suggesting that infant mortality that caused a loss for population policy in fact mostly affected children out of wedlock. This illegitimacy revealed the *immorality* of the parents and the fact that they had lower value hereditary powers. The immoral parents' children would inherit some sort of degenerative disease from them, and end up being criminals, alcoholics or syphilitics. Therefore for some doctors, the death of illegitimate children was not necessarily a loss in terms of eugenics.⁴¹ More importantly, their line of thinking demonstrates that the idea of genetic degeneracy was very loose, and they usually thought of it in terms of morality.

Consequently, eugenists formed their arguments for increasing births by encouraging younger people to marry and have more children. Late marriages were

³⁸ Çambel, *Öjenik (Eugenics) Hakkında Düşünceler*, 27.

³⁹ Uzman, "Öjenik," 11.

⁴⁰ Birol, *Öjenik Tatbikatı*, 45.

⁴¹ Tiner, *Eugenik Bahsine Umumi Bir Bakış: Yedinci Milli Türk Tıp Kurultayı*, 24.

accused for causing a decline in the population, and although this was primarily a concern about quantity the medical elite interpreted quantity of the population also as an issue of eugenics. Furthermore, they added the idea of racial value to the issue of population growth and asked for the encouragement of “high value” or “culture producing” classes to marry earlier and have more children. This was in fact an argument in accord with the fertility patterns of the age that showed that urban populations of big cities like Istanbul and Izmir were not growing. Hence eugenists, despite their anti-urban bias that connected urbanity with degeneracy, thought of urban populations as “culture-producing” and were concerned with the fertility patterns in the cities. To a lesser degree they also asserted their worries about the rate of growth among the “lower-value” strata of people and asked for stricter application of the law that banned marriage among the mentally ill, epileptic, or syphilitic partners for the survival of the Turkish race.

III. Women’s Roles in the Eugenics Discourse

Another problematic issue surrounding family that had been debated since the late Ottoman Empire was the “woman question.” To what extent were women to show up in public, how much freedom in work and social life they could enjoy in a way that would not jeopardize the family life were some of the concerns that troubled the westernizing (as well as the conservative) elite. The same questions would appear in the eugenic literature with very similar solutions, only for a different reason. Mainly the eugenists expressed that woman’s primary role in society was motherhood because her reproductive duty would ensure the survival of Turkish race/nation against other nation states. Furthermore, they accused modern and new ways of education, entertainment and work for tainting the

racial hygiene by seducing young women and changing their attitudes and behaviors, endangering family life and encouraging late marriages and fewer children.

Akalın underlined the role that women play in this bio-political goal. He did not necessarily differentiate between the hereditary role that mothers play in race hygiene, and the pedagogic, or nurturing role. Even though throughout his book he mainly argued for the importance of heredity, he also articulated: “When the issue of race is at stake, role of girls is more important because the one who is going to give the first movement to the child’s brain is the mother and civilization starts with mother’s education.”⁴²

Doctor of obstetrics, Kudsi Halkacı, in his book *Puériculture* (1938), had a subsection entitled “*Puériculture* from a Social and Eugenic Perspective” where it becomes apparent that he understood the issues of child health and hygiene as part of eugenics and believed in the ability of hygiene measures to make the race fitter and stronger. In fact at many times, he referred to “race hygiene” as the purpose of *puériculture*. That is a common aspect of Turkish eugenics that interpreted scientific organization of births and child-rearing as eugenic measures, hence the stress on motherhood as the most important biological aspect of a healthy race. Halkacı asserted that “a woman before anything else is a mother, and a mother should not be harmful to the society but beneficial.”⁴³ To assure that the nation benefited from women as mothers, the science of *puériculture* was supposed to be utilized to raise healthy children. It was also expressed in the book that being a mother was a form of paying back a female citizen’s debt to the state. He quoted one doctor Edwards Pilliet: “The woman who takes up on the duty of raising

⁴² Akalın, *Türk Çocuğunu Nasıl Yaşatmalı?* , 6.

⁴³ Kudsi Halkacı, *Püerikültür* [Puériculture] (Istanbul: Resimli Ay Matbaası, 1938), 6.

children/generation is an entity like a soldier that protects his country.”⁴⁴ The gendered division of how the elite viewed the citizen’s social duty was very clear. A traditional division of labor was simply put into scientific terms. The science of race betterment could have asked for selective breeding of humans, but the Turkish medical-elite picked up women’s roles as mothers as the most appropriate method for the continuation and betterment of Turkish race.

Zeki Ragıp Yalım in his presentation in 1939 entitled “The Goal of Health in Modern Societies” published through the Republican People’s Party (RPP) conferences series, voiced the common eugenic argument in relationship to the women’s position in society. According to him, the most important factor that could affect the health of the race was the women joining the workforce. It was an outcome of modernization that he had already witnessed. He claimed that Europeans had begun to lose their power due to the same trend of industrialization and urbanization. Therefore, he viewed the women’s enthusiasm for working as dangerous to the strength of the state, and in opposition to her population policy. He showed his resentment of the effects of modernity on women by saying “the women get all too excited about becoming independent through their higher education. Then they do not want to marry and even if they do they do not want to have children” and added “if other countries wanted to sterilize our most precious classes, they would not be able to do a better job than having women educated at some of today’s higher education institutions where they get indoctrinated with such ideas.”⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Ibid., 8.

⁴⁵ All quotations from Zeki Ragıp Yalım, “Modern Cemiyetlerde Saadet Ülküsü” [The goal of happiness in modern societies], in *CHP Konferanslar Serisi Kitap 2* [RPP conferences series, book 2] (Ankara: Recep Ulusoglu Basımevi, 1939), 79.

Yet he was aware that his position sounded “backward” so struggled to defend his pro-modernity by reassuring his audience that he was in favor of equality between men and women in fact and he reassured them by saying “I am obviously not going to claim like my grandfathers that ‘world was created by men.’” In his opinion though, that equality was a bit more ambiguous. There had to be a balance between the state’s desire to be “modern” and “strong.” The strength came from higher number of children and that could not happen if women were working or getting brainwashed with the side effects of modernity. Moreover, he admitted that he could not envision a harmonious condition where women could work as men and be good mothers and wives at the same time so he went on to suggest that a woman’s first job had to be marriage and motherhood and a career could only be an “auxiliary department.” He saw it as the elite and state’s mission to teach this to “them” from primary education onwards.⁴⁶ In fact, his position was anti-modernization and he struggled over how to pick and choose from the palette of modernity like the rest of the Kemalist elite. He chose to express these concerns under the language of eugenics but that did not even provide him with the scientific clarity he needed hence his admission that he did not want to sound “backward.” Delineating the borders of modernity was problematic even for westward looking and Western educated, scientific elite.

Fahreddin Kerim Gökay, an influential and socially involved psychiatrist, asserted that women were also especially important from the perspective of eugenics because “women’s racial (hereditary) occupation [was] motherhood.”⁴⁷ Therefore, women had to restrain from stepping into public life as much as possible. For him, they were supposed

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Fahreddin Kerim Gökay, "Milli Nüfus Siyasetinde (Eugenique) Meselesinin Mahiyeti" [The importance of eugenics in national population policy], *Ülkü* 3, no. 15 (1934): 211.

to be occupied with house chores and children. Since public life really exhausted them he claimed that it was harmful on their fertility.⁴⁸ Thus it was a good idea for working women not to have children. Yet if they were not going to have children he added “it is not fair to hinder a young man’s fertility so they should stay single.” Then he contradicted what he said in the previous sentence and concluded that “yet in countries like ours that need a big population even working women should have children, but during their pregnancy they should be well taken care of and their children should have access to day care.”⁴⁹

Gökay’s attitude highlights a couple of the attributes of eugenic literature in Turkey. First of all, the modernizing medical elite were still ambivalent about how far women were to participate in public life, and how this would affect their “duties as wives and mothers” since they were all in agreement with this much. Moreover, their understanding of what eugenics required and how this could be harmonized with the desire to have a high population was not very clear. Sometimes they could offer authoritarian views of why some women should have children and some should not, sometimes, the argument was that they should all be mothers and think of work as a supplementary pastime, and sometimes they believed in the necessity of women working as dictated by modernity and proposed welfare systems of support to make sure that the children were well taken care of. This ambiguity could show up in the same text, in fact in two consecutive paragraphs of even a well-educated doctor such as Fahreddin Kerim Gökay wrote.

⁴⁸ Such ideas were supported by other authors as well, e.g. H. Malik Evrenol, a contemporary intellectual and diplomat suggested that women’s work harmed their fertility and ability to give birth to intelligent and fit babies in H. Malik Evrenol, “Zekası Yüksek Çocuklar Yetiştirme Yolları” [The methods of raising highly intelligent children], *Ülkü* 6, no. 34 (1935): 257.

⁴⁹ Gökay, “Milli Nüfus Siyasetinde (Eugenique),” 211.

Some doctors' criticism of modern way of life through their publications about eugenics and racial health did not even pretend to be "scientific" and could be very directly cultural and personal. One such complaint was voiced by the celebrated obstetrician Akalın. Initially he discussed the laws in Italy and Germany that prevented women from working and single men from working for the government in a favorable manner and suggested them as advisable measures to protect marriages.⁵⁰ Then he criticized the new ways of modern life that turned young girls into very "picky, spoiled women." He exclaimed: "They are educated, or work and make money to spend on movies and clothes and do not take marriage seriously. They hardly like any man. When they get married, due to the ideas they have received from movies and books, it is very expensive for husbands to keep them happy!"⁵¹ He returned to the same idea that modern urban life was detrimental to family life and racial health. He reflected his anxieties of modernity by stating: "Neither the rich in luxuries of alcohol, parties, nor the poor in conditions that toil them and habiting in small, airless apartments, are living a life that is desirable for the betterment of race. This is topped by egotism, competition and capitalism that is also harmful to fertility."⁵² Therefore, the key to a policy for a happy and healthy population became more enigmatic for him.

Others also attacked the degenerative consequences of modern life both on men and women. Dr. Uzman in his *Tababet-i Ruhiye*, the only and most popular psychiatry textbook of the time, warned his readers that being rich could not be necessarily read as being more suitable to bear fit children. He asserted that "the new rich and aristocrat" was the one who "had no crime or mania in his genealogy, whose blood was clean and free of

⁵⁰ Akalın, *Türk Çocuğunu Nasıl Yaşatmalı?* , 16.

⁵¹ Ibid., 17.

⁵² Ibid., 24.

venereal diseases.” He urged his fellow doctors to regard “those who think of themselves as aristocrats spoiled with wealth, and worn down by luxury” as “invaluable and degenerate.”⁵³ Hence the medical elite regarded those who lived in traditional conditions who also happened to be living in poor conditions as not desirable for raising fit children. Perhaps by improving their conditions though, they could become suitable parents as long as their blood was pure, that is not degenerated by the life of leisure and luxury that was often associated with certain immorality, alcohol abuse and venereal diseases, inherently urban problems.⁵⁴ Modernized urban families were under too much stress and Western influence to discipline into patriotic citizens according to the eugenists. The problem of poverty versus luxury, and the undesirability of neither, was a common theme in the Republican elite’s literature reflecting their ambiguity towards to the correct type of modernity. The eugenic discourse was no exception to the troubles that came with modernity.

While some eugenists discussed the relations between maternity and work, and effects of work or other aspects of modern life on women, some turned to the idea of sports for women to be better mothers and bearers of an improved generation within the discussion of eugenics. The medical elite believed that modern medicine held the formula to the right type of female body that could become a source of national pride by its ability to reproduce fit, strong citizens for the Republic. Even though the literature on sports and body discipline in the era is quite wide as sports was regarded as an essential technology

⁵³ All quotations are from Mazhar Osman Uzman, *Tababet-i Ruhiye* [Psychiatry] (Istanbul: Kader Basımevi, 1941), 7-8.

⁵⁴ Perhaps for that reason, many eugenists relied on the possibility of improvement of hygienic conditions, and fighting ignorance as ways to improve the racial quality of the nation. Suggestions included increasing literacy and implementing special pedagogic programs, spreading the habit of exercising and playing sports and getting people habituated to modern medicine and modern child rearing techniques and such; İrmak, *İçtimai Biologie: Nüfus, Cinsiyet, Veraset*, 33; İhsan Şükrü Aksel, "Modern Irk Hıfzısıhhası" [Modern race hygiene], *Poliklinik* 51 (1937): 77; Halkacı, *Püerikültür*, 10 respectively.

to a healthier stronger nation, here the discussion will be limited to the idea of female body within the eugenic literature only.⁵⁵

Dr. İhsan Şükrü Aksel, a prominent psychiatrist educated in Germany, contrary to majority of other eugenicists, presented the rural women as already informed with the idea of eugenics through tradition and intuition. He said that “[Anatolian mothers] know that, for example, a good wrestler is not only born from a wrestler father but a strong mother.”⁵⁶ Yet he did not ignore the pedagogic mission of the modern doctor in teaching them on how to become better mothers for eugenic purposes. He wanted to clarify the meaning of strong mother did not mean a “fat woman with rosy cheeks” but a woman whose body is appropriate according to “doctor’s measurements” and who did sports, or works with her body and exercises her mind, therefore suggesting that despite rural women’s intuitive knowledge, only modern medicine could delimit the definition of beauty, health and fitness for them.⁵⁷

IV. The Anxieties of the Age surrounding Family, Marriage and Women’s Roles

Except the division of people on a loosely defined racial quality, and the connection between women’s roles in society and the health/hygiene of the race, neither the pro-marriage and pro-natalist arguments nor the debate over the correct type of modern family were entirely new. This section will expand on some of the ideas from the first chapter that set the background of social and cultural modernization in the early

⁵⁵ For a more varied discussion of sports and bio-politics in Turkey, see Yiğit Akın, *"Gürbüz ve Yavuz Evlatlar" Erken Cumhuriyet'te Beden Terbiyesi ve Spor* [Robust and strong children: body discipline and sports in early Republican Turkey] (Istanbul: İletişim 2004).

⁵⁶ Aksel, "Modern Irk Hıfzısıhhası," 75.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

Republican period and the moral upheaval and unease that it caused in different levels of the society. It will explore how the anxieties of the period of modernization were focused upon issues concerning marriage, family and women especially in the urban context, and therefore demonstrate that the eugenisists' complaints about the "new life" and proposals for organizing it rationally were in fact a continuation and a repetition of the ideas that were avidly discussed in other publications in non-scientific terms.

The late Ottoman and early Republican elite had been concerned with the pace the family life was changing as more people were being influenced by European ideas. There had already existed a public debate concerning the marriage choices of the youth and lack of enthusiasm for having more children. Even though the very same elite were mostly the pioneers of such change, they were also cautious of the chaotic potential of this westernization.⁵⁸ The idea that two individuals were to unite in matrimony only out of their own volition caused great emotional and social distress for older generations in the late nineteenth century.⁵⁹ The Turkish literature from the *Tanzimat* period (1860s) up to 1920s was obsessed with the themes of love, marriage and inter-family conflict. The first *Tanzimat* intellectuals were all supporters of matrimonial love, and dismissive of nuptial arrangements as backward and traditional. One apparent route for European ideas on ideal of love, marriage and family life to arrive in late Ottoman elite circles was through French literature, where such themes had been prominent. Educated women as well as men were big fans of French literature that appeared in translation and in original in the late nineteenth century. Duben and Behar suggest that the novels had a great impact

⁵⁸ There were most definitely contending perspectives on modernization and westernization and how this related to family life. The subtleties of the Late Ottoman and Kemalist intellectuals' arguments, unfortunately, cannot be covered under the scope of this essay.

⁵⁹ Duben and Behar, *Istanbul Households: Marriage, Family, and Fertility, 1880-1940*, 87-90.

on the lives of the educated people. Many young men and women were looking to fall in love instead of getting an arranged marriage, and such characters would also pop up in Turkish novels.⁶⁰ The Ottoman literature of late nineteenth century was rebellious against parental and in some way, state authority and it showed traces of a budding individualism in the society.⁶¹ Therefore the literature on love and marriage, the rebellion against parental authority, state authority, and the political ideas of liberty went hand in hand for the intellectuals of the late Ottoman society.

However, more or less half a century later, this rebellion which had produced a number of social norms in the new Republic was giving way to a new form of authoritarianism that was symbolized by the Single-Party, the Supreme Chief and a fresher attempt to discipline and control marriage to the benefit of the state and nation. The elite still had issues with family life and woman's role as symbols of modernization and progress, yet their ideas were shifting with the change in social and political conditions. Perhaps the westernization of social life that started at the end of the nineteenth century was entering a more mature phase. As some European ideals of nuclear family, marriage based on love, women's work in public, habits of eating, drinking and cultural socialization became more widespread in the upper and upper middle classes, a reaction or a desire to control this change was born among the older elite. They were no more in favor of volitional marriage based on "romantic love."⁶² The detailed report presented to the American Department of State, on the family life consisting of around forty stories collected from first hand witnesses by a diplomat at the American Embassy in Istanbul, G. Howland Shaw, reflects the family crisis in Turkey

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid., 93.

⁶² Ibid., 94-95.

during 1920s and 1930s. The cause of the domestic strife in the stories is predominantly intergenerational conflict over issues of marriage, honor, and morality due to the rapid westernization. The younger ones struggle to choose their own partners for marriage, maintain their economic independence, or independence from traditional or religious pressures exerted upon them. Even an issue such as listening to American jazz instead of traditional Turkish music can be a source of domestic tension.⁶³ The anonymous commentator from the Department of State on the reports by Shaw read them as “the battle of the old and the new.”⁶⁴ He saw the intergenerational conflict as an outcome of modernization. Even though his words could be biased as a distant Western observer who was just reading these stories second hand, he, nevertheless, summed up at least the public sentiment on the intergenerational tensions:

One can feel for the older generation which sees its deep-rooted traditions and ideals ruthlessly brushed aside for the symbols of the new era movies, cabarets, prostitutes, an easy come, easy go sort of existence, with scant reflect for the old folks’ principles of right and wrong...It is the suddenness of discovery that things are no longer what they used to be, the abrupt realization that a wall of obstinacy is being reared against them by those from whom they are accustomed to receive nothing but obedience, that obviously constitutes the tragedy for these older folk.⁶⁵

The criticism of “the new life” and the youth’s adaptation to it showed up frequently in the press and literature of the period. The immorality and decay of family life with modernization were common themes in the literature of early Republican Turkey. Some such novels included Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu’s *Kiralık Konak* (1922), and *Sodom ve Gomora* (1928), or Payami Safa’s *Canan* (1925).⁶⁶ A popular journal of the late 1920s, *Resimli Ay* (later renamed *Sevimli Ay*) which reached around

⁶³ G. Howland Shaw, *Family Life in the Turkish Republic of the 1930's*, US Diplomatic Documents on Turkey (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2007), 87.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 10. All quotations from this source are auhtor’s translations.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 12-13.

⁶⁶ Duben and Behar, *Istanbul Households: Marriage, Family, and Fertility, 1880-1940*, 100-03.

thirty thousand readers over various cities and towns every month and targeted women and whole families as their audience ran many surveys on issues concerning women's role in society, youth's habits and choices and family life. Some of their survey questions included: "Should girls have the right to select their husbands?" "Should the man or the woman be in charge in the family?" "What are you looking for in marriage: wealth, beauty, or morals?" "Should women be housewives or professionals?" "Who is the perfect husband?"⁶⁷ These surveys were answered by the readers upon which the authors commented. The questions asked demonstrate how the issue of family and marriage became a source of anxiety and were deemed as subjects open to public discussion as people's attitudes were changing in the Republican period.

Another survey-opinion piece entitled "What do today's youth think and believe?" published in 1927 reveals that the intergenerational gap was widening as the older generation and the younger generation had quite different values about morality and lifestyle. It began by asserting that "rebellion against the past and tradition is widespread among today's youth. They don't like religion, they don't like the social order, and they laugh at our ethical principles."⁶⁸ The anxieties of the youth were so overwhelming that there were an increasing number of suicide incidents in the 1920s and 1930s to force the government to ban the press from covering any more suicides at one point.⁶⁹ Several articles that discussed the reasons why the youth were committing suicide, however, were published. One reason that most commentators preferred to comment on more than the rest of possible reasons, including economic hardships or "mental illnesses," was the

⁶⁷ A. Holly Shissler, "'If You Ask Me': Sabiha Sertel's Advice Column, Gender Equity, and Social Engineering in the Early Turkish Republic," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 3, no. 2 (2007): 9.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 11.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 17.

change in social values. Doctor Cemal Zeki, a gynecologist, who commented on suicides in 1927, saw it as “the result of a lack of adequate supervision and guidance. He recommended “strict control” and added “young women ought not to be exposed to novels or frivolous literature; they should be prevented from engaging in activities such as dancing, the pursuit of fashion, or flirtatious games.”⁷⁰ In a similar vein, the commentator to the foreign service agent Shaw’s reports on family thought of cinema, instead of literature, as “the secondary school” of the Turkish youth due to the role it played in shaping their ideas and creating dissatisfaction with the choices and principles of their parents.⁷¹ The same line of arguments accusing modern life represented by cinema, dance, fashion and literature were later repeated by the doctors who wrote under the title of “eugenics” pointing at the new way of life as the culprit of “racial degeneration.”

Some commentators were more empathetic to the youth’s, especially young women’s, plight. Sabiha Sertel, who was a feminist columnist on family issues, said that a common complaint she heard from young girls was that they would be in love with a young man but their family would want to marry them to another man that they did not love. The author suggested that this type of complaint was so common that it had become a “generalized disease.”⁷² Her comments also highlights the fact that the intergenerational gap was mostly played out in terms of love and marriage. For that reason, it does not seem surprising that the eugenists also found the same themes of the eugenic literature concerned with family and marriage as significant. Eugenic vocabulary at least helped

⁷⁰ Ibid., 18.

⁷¹ Shaw, *Family Life in the Turkish Republic of the 1930’s*, 11.

⁷² Shissler, “‘If You Ask Me’: Sabiha Sertel’s Advice Column, Gender Equity, and Social Engineering in the Early Turkish Republic,” 18.

them present their opinions on morality and modernity coated in the objectiveness of science.

The subjects of family, and marriage were unavoidably tied to the role of women in society and for that reason the appropriate type of “modern” conduct for women in the public were popular discussions regarding family during the 1930s. The same arguments on how the modern women had to behave and participate in social and economic life that the eugenists were defending and discussing were very similar to what the rest of the nationalist elite were expressing during the period. One article in *Resimli Ay* published in the summer of 1927, asked and interpreted the opinions of educated gentlemen on “the unveiled young women as butterflies flitting from the tennis court to the beach to the dance hall all summer long.”⁷³ The author’s opinion reflected the ambivalently modest womanhood expected by the Kemalists. On the one hand, the young girls’ behaviors were seen as natural to their youth; on the other hand, they were warned that young men did not like women, who wore too much make-up, or that they could be fooled by flirtatious young men and later could not complain because their light-hearted attitude would be to blame.⁷⁴ Similar criticism against women’s interpretation of modernity and their frivolity was voiced by the eugenists. They stressed that women’s roles as wives and mothers were of utmost importance for giving birth to healthy, fit babies untainted by the ills of modern, urban life. Those fit future citizen would ensure the power of the Turkish nation/race, and her survival in a social Darwinist world of struggle for the eugenists.

The pace of change was accelerating as the Republic of Turkey entered her second decade after the foundation. There was much instability in politics, economics, society

⁷³ Ibid., 14.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

and culture that caused tension for the Republican elite. In the background of this rapid shift, one dominant theme was the social Darwinist conviction that weak nations and states would be eaten up by the stronger ones. The Ottoman experience was perceived as the evidence of this terrible end. To prevent the same from happening again, Turkey's population had to increase in quantity and quality which would be reflected in her economic and combative power. Modern censuses and statistics informed the Republican elite on the status of Turkey's strength as well as giving them the technology to monitor her demography. The idea of eugenics filled in the gaps between demographic power and social modernization. Many of the ideas surrounding how to approach the change, and the problems of modernity had been around at least since the last quarter of nineteenth century. The changes in family relations, ages of marriage, fertility, and women's role in public had been viewed as symbols of modernity and a potential source of crisis in the press and literature since the late Ottoman Empire. The medical elite recognized in the pseudo science of eugenics that had become very popular in the West and the rest of the world, the very same themes they have been struggling with. To them eugenics offered a scientific guise for moral issues regarding the crisis of modernity. As science was promoted as 'the new religion' of the Kemalist Republic, and scientism was especially widespread in the medical circles, it was believed that science could offer miracles for social problems as well. The medical elite suggested rationalizing marriages and family life with the rules of eugenics. The solutions offered under this rationalization was ensuring earlier marriages among hereditarily valuable couples, increasing birth-rates, educating the people to become modern yet moral citizens, teaching women to be rational mothers and stay away from the degenerative ills of modern urban life.

Chapter III

EUGENICS, DEGENERATION AND ALCOHOL

As Turkey left a decade of relative peace and progress behind after her foundation and as modernization/westernization accelerated, some other concerns of modernity has become part of the elite's vocabulary. One such catch-all term *degeneracy*, which had been part of the European vocabulary of modernity since the mid-nineteenth century, was starting to appear more often in the medical literature and scientific elite circles. It was a theory based on evolutionary biology that also developed to encompass a lot of social problems such as poverty, ignorance, illness, mental deficiencies, disabilities and immorality. It was also interpreted in relation to race hygiene or eugenics, as the whole theory of degeneracy was based on the idea of heredity. Eugenists in many parts of the world theorized that the number of degenerates was increasing because those tended to reproduce faster than the healthy and *fit* section of the population. They feared that eventually the majority of the population would be composed of degenerates and that would bring about the death of the nation or the race.

The first part of this chapter summarizes the theory of degeneracy in Europe and its development and integration into the eugenic literature. The work of the German psychiatrist Emil Kraepelin, who turned heredity into an important aspect of his studies on mental illnesses, is summarized in the first part. The second section is on the Turkish pioneers of this German degeneration psychiatry Mazhar Osman Uzman and Fahreddin Kerim Gökay. It examines their professional activities such as the Green Crescent Temperance Movement and the Mental Hygiene Society, as well as taking a look at the

position of neuro-psychiatric professionals in Turkey at the period in order to see how they were attracted to the degeneration theory. The following section scrutinizes the question of degeneration as part of the eugenic literature. The division of people into value, the economic argument of the burden of degenerates on society, and moral anxieties regarding alcohol and venereal diseases in relation to degeneracy in Turkey are read side by side and cross-related in an attempt to understand how and why degeneracy was popularized by the medical elite, especially psychiatrists. The overarching theory of the thesis that most medical elite were reacting to the rapid cultural and social westernization as well as warning against the potential threats of urbanization and industrialization by the “rational” language of eugenics is treated in this chapter as well. Moreover, the chapter looks at the specific ways the theory of degeneration was constructed by the medical elite, and also offers an alternative factor, the psychiatrists trained in German schools and the role they played in society as “doctors of the soul” to explain their attempts to actively popularize eugenics.

I. The Roots of Degeneration Theory

The most influential scientist to elaborate on the idea of degeneracy was the French psychiatrist Bénédict Augustine Morel (1809-1873). Morel’s theory on degeneracy consisted of three core ideas. The first one was the inheritability of the symptoms of degeneracy. This meant that the progeny of degenerates were doomed to be degenerates as well. The second one was the effect of outside stimuli especially alcohol, and other drugs and poisons on triggering such hereditary dispositions. The third idea was the transformability of various degenerative symptoms into one and another through

generations and often in worsening conditions. The son of an alcoholic could be epileptic, and his son could be “feeble-minded.” Morel’s downward spiral of degeneracy would usually start with alcoholism and moral depravities, transforming into criminality and into insanity, and usually ending up with infertility, early mortality and the extinction of the stock.¹ Even though some biologists believed in the idea that degeneracy would end up in infertility which could mean the eventual elimination of the unfit, Morel’s later followers, especially those involved in eugenics movements, defended the necessity of intervention in this downward spiral. They feared that the unfit always had more children and could outgrow the fitter population over time. Therefore, to prevent the spread of degeneracy into the larger population they vehemently advocated for various ways to contain it. Genealogical studies of “degenerates” became the scientific evidence of the accuracy of the theory.²

The branch of science that was most influenced by the degeneration theory was psychiatry. In fact the theory gave birth to what some refer to as hereditary psychiatry. One of the most productive psychiatrists who had adopted very similar views to Morelian degeneration was Emil Kraepelin.³ Kraepelin was considered the supreme authority in clinical psychiatry during the last decades of nineteenth century; the fame of his Munich clinic even reached the United States and influenced the organization of American

¹ Woiak, "Drunkenness, Degeneration, and Eugenics in Britain, 1900-1914," 106.

² The two most famous examples were the studies of The Juke family and Kallikak family by American sociologist Richard Dugdale, and American psychiatrist Henry Goddard respectively. By studying the lives of the progeny of degenerate (criminal or feeble-minded) parents they ‘proved’ that the family kept producing predominantly degenerate children and grandchildren over generations. The Juke family along with other such genealogical studies was frequently presented as an evidence of degeneration by the Turkish eugenics enthusiasts, i.e. Tiner, *Eugenik Bahsine Umumi Bir Bakış: Yedinci Milli Türk Tıp Kurultayı*, 37; Mahmut Sadi Irmak, "Milletlerin Tereddi ve İstifası" [The degeneration and selection of nations], in *CHP Konferanslar Serisi 12* [RPP conferences series, book 12] (1940), 21.

³ Eric J. Engstrom, "'On the Question of Degeneration' by Emil Kraepelin (1908)," *History of Psychiatry* 18, no. 3 (2007): 392.

psychiatric clinics.⁴ Besides, his many contributions to the field of psychiatry including the naming of “manic-depressive disorder,” Kraepelin had also been interested in hereditary disposition to mental diseases, and external agents that triggered mental disorders. Kraepelin’s causal view of mental illness only yielded “meagre thereauputic results” which encouraged him to highlight the preventive measures over improvement and cure. For that reason, alcohol and venereal diseases as preventable causes of mental disorders gained an importance in his practice.⁵

It was especially in Munich, after 1903, that Kraepelin turned his attention to eugenics and degeneration. For him syphilis and alcohol counted among the most destructive social ills. He saw the rising number of patients with paralysis and other mental symptoms in his clinic as the proof of degenerative effects of alcohol.⁶ His textbooks hypothesized that alcohol played a significant role in the etiology of many mental disturbances, as well as facilitating the development of syphilitic paralysis because of its effects on the central nervous system.⁷ He became a medical temperance supporter and he thought of the fight against degenerative forces as the psychiatrists’ responsibility to save the populace since he believed that alcohol had devastating consequences for future generations.⁸ He was also in dialogue with another influential German eugenicist psychiatrist Ernst Rüdin, who expanded the genealogical and demographic studies on degeneration and eugenics. They worked on some projects on an international scope to

⁴ Ian Robert Dowbiggin, *Keeping America Sane: Psychiatry and Eugenics in the United States and Canada, 1880-1940*, Cornell Studies in the History of Psychiatry (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 32.

⁵ Eric J. Engstrom, "Emil Kraepelin: Psychiatry and Public Affairs in Wilhelmine Germany," *History of Psychiatry* 2, no. 6 (1991): 114.

⁶ Engstrom, "'On the Question of Degeneration' by Emil Kraepelin (1908)," 392.

⁷ Wolfgang Jilek, "Emil Kraepelin and Comparative Sociocultural Psychiatry," *European Archives of Psychiatry and Clinical Neuroscience* 245, no. 4 (1995): 232.

⁸ Engstrom, "'On the Question of Degeneration' by Emil Kraepelin (1908)," 392; Engstrom, "Emil Kraepelin: Psychiatry and Public Affairs in Wilhelmine Germany," 115-17.

collect data on varying degrees of degeneration together, and influenced each other's work.⁹ Furthermore, Kraepelin's cross-cultural studies convinced him of the already existing Morelian notion of the detrimental and degenerative effects of modern urban life. For him, one of the main culprits of degeneracy in the cities was widespread use of alcohol.¹⁰

Emil Kraepelin was very significant for the birth of Turkish psychiatric medicine as mentor to the most prominent Turkish psychiatrists.¹¹ The next section demonstrates how the latter were influenced by the German school of psychiatry, then discusses why they were active in promoting degeneration theory and eugenics.

II. The Pioneers of the Degeneration Theory and Eugenic Thought in Turkey

It would not be inappropriate to call Mazhar Osman Uzman and Fahreddin Kerim Gökay as the most prolific authors on eugenics and degeneration, and the most ardent supporters of its popularization among the medical elite as well as in the press. Two examples can demonstrate this. On 28 July 1933, after the German state had adopted sterilization laws requiring the sterilization of those deemed to be degenerates, the popular Turkish daily *Cumhuriyet* ran an article on the first page, titled "Should the insane, feeble-minded and the ill be sterilized?" The paper was asking three renowned

⁹ Engstrom, "'On the Question of Degeneration' by Emil Kraepelin (1908)," 393-94.

¹⁰ Jilek, "Emil Kraepelin and Comparative Sociocultural Psychiatry," 235-36.

¹¹ Vamik D. Volkan, "Turkey" in *World History of Psychiatry*, ed. John G. Howells (New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1975), 391-92.

experts Mazhar Osman Uzman, Fahreddin Kerim Gökay and Besim Ömer Akalın their opinions on the subject. It was Gökay's answer that took about three fourths of the article. He saw the German sterilization laws as the evidence of the magnitude of the importance of mental and race hygiene, the two subjects he had been popularizing. Even though he was in favour of the laws, he underlined that in countries that need a lot of population like Turkey the subject needed to be approached with more care.¹² Two years later, during the Sixth National Medical Congress in 1935 held in Ankara, Gökay was the doctor to introduce a motion to adopt "eugenics" as the main social medicine subject of the next congress. He gave a speech on why it was a crucial subject demanding Turkish doctors' attention and his lobbying fruited in the adoption of his proposal.¹³

Mazhar Osman Uzman was educated in Germany and influenced by the German study of hereditary psychiatry and degeneration. He had been an assistant to Kraepelin himself for three months in Munich at the turn of the century. Later he went on to study briefly with two leading German psychiatrists Hermann Oppenheim (1858-1919) and Theodor Ziehen (1868-1950). On his return to Turkey, he was assigned to the Haydarpaşa military hospital and started teaching the first psychiatry courses at the Dar-ul Funun (The House of Sciences), the predecessor to the Istanbul University. In 1927 he was the founder and the chief doctor of the first modern mental hospital in Istanbul, the Bakırköy Hospital.¹⁴ He was a prominent figure among the intellectuals and doctors who introduced eugenic thought to Turkey. Uzman was concerned with degeneracy and his work on eugenics as well as publications in other areas reflected this anxiety. Fahreddin

¹² "Deliler, Aptallar, Hastalar Kısır Edilmeli mi?" [Should the insane, feeble-minded and ill be sterilized?], *Cumhuriyet*, July 28 1933.

¹³ *Altıncı Ulusal Türk Tıp Kurultayı, Ankara, 7-9 Birinciteşrin 1935* [The proceedings of the Sixth National Turkish Medical Congress, Ankara, 7-9 October 1935], (Istanbul: Kader Basımevi, 1936), 4.

¹⁴ Şahap Erkoç and Olcay Yazıcı, eds., *Mazhar Osman ve Dönemi: Mecnunları, Mekanları, Dostları* (Istanbul: Argos İletişim, 2006), 135.

Kerim Gökay was also one of the foremost and earliest psychiatry and neurology experts in Turkey. He was trained under Uzman in Gülhane Hospital and had also been to Germany to advance his training. Gökay and Uzman often cited Morel and Kraepelin as their reference for eugenic thought in relation to alcohol.¹⁵ Gökay and his colleague İhsan Şükrü Aksel co-authored an article on the history of Turkish psychiatry where they declared Kraepelin as the most influential authority that shaped the modern Turkish psychiatrists' perceptions, in a special issue of the German journal *Allgemeine Zeitschrift für Psychiatrie und psychisch-gerichtliche Medizin* dedicated to Kraepelin on his 70th birthday in 1926, the year that he died.¹⁶ Gökay was also the co-founder of the Turkish temperance society called the Green Crescent (Yeşilay) because his Morelian leanings convinced him of the degenerative effects of alcohol, which he sought to fight through anti-alcohol activism.

Those neurology-psychiatry professionals, who had been trained in Germany under the influence of Morelian and Kraepelinian school, were also the most prolific authors on the subjects of eugenics, degeneracy and alcohol, which, according to them, were all correlated. They underlined these links and paved the way for the eugenic debates for their colleagues. Besides the evident fact that their professional training and their adherence to the German school of psychiatry, there were several reasons for their interest in popularizing degeneracy and eugenics.

First, the hardships of working with mental patients the exhaustion, the struggle for a bigger budget from the government for better care facilities and the lack of returns in

¹⁵ Gökay, "İrk Hıfzısıhhasında İrsiyetin Rolü", 14; Gökay, "Milli Nüfus Siyasetinde (Eugenique)," 209; Mazhar Osman Uzman, *Seriri Cepheden Alkolizma - Altıncı Ulusal Türk Tıp Kurultayı* [Alcoholism from the clinical side: the Sixth National Turkish Medical Congress] (Ankara: Kader Matbaası, 1935), 32.

¹⁶ Şahap Erkoç and Tarık Kutlar, "A Historical Paper Dedicated to Kraepelin 76 Years Ago: History of Psychiatry in Turkey," *Tıp Tarihi Araştırmaları* 11 (2003).

terms of successful rehabilitation convinced these doctors for the need to search for different venues of battling mental illness. The Bakırköy Mental Hospital, the largest specifically psychiatric hospital in Turkey in the early twentieth century, was built over a deserted building, under the supervision of Uzman in 1927. Yet he struggled heavily to find the necessary funds from the government to improve the conditions of the hospital. There were no modern sewage systems, not enough running water, kitchens or enough food to feed the patients. It was always over-crowded with patients coming not only from Istanbul but all over Turkey, and Uzman for that reason, had to work hard on securing more funds to add new facilities to the existing hospital. In an article published in 1950 through the journal *Istanbul Seririyati*, that Uzman owned, he mentioned that about 37% of the patients died due to the unhygienic conditions that resulted in pneumonia, dysentery, meningitis and such.¹⁷ Hence the dire conditions of the psychiatric institutions and patients could have forced these doctors to fight against those agents that they deemed to be more tangible such as alcohol and hereditary degeneracy that could be addressed more directly in order to minimize the number of future patients admitted to the hospitals.

Furthermore, defining what constituted mental illness was quite loose in the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries. The foundation of asylums also widened the definitions of mental illnesses. Uzman, for example, harshly criticized the new director of the Bakırköy Hospital that succeeded him, for selectively admitting patients to the hospital in 1950. His criticism, besides the possibility of personal ambitions and tensions, sheds light on another important fact about the nature of asylum admissions. It is apparent

¹⁷ The article “Zaruri cevaba cevap” [Response to the Necessary Response] (1950) is reprinted in Erkoç and Yazıcı, eds., *Mazhar Osman ve Dönemi: Mecnunları, Mekanları, Dostları*, 32-38.

that in his age which was through the 1920s and 1930s, Uzman would admit “paralytics, light schizophrenics, light psycho-maniac depressives, the feeble-minded, epileptics, and those with chronic psychosis” as patients, as well as other more severe cases.¹⁸ However institutionalization and asylum therapies did not seem to cure a big percentage of the mental patients accepted which transformed doctors’ duties mostly into care-giving rather than rehabilitating. This was also the case in nineteenth century European asylums, due to the high number of patients being admitted psychiatrists working in asylums instead of spending their time treating patients were “simply warehousing [them].”¹⁹ It is conceivable that this disillusionment with the capacity of the asylum system to cure mental illnesses pushed the psychiatrists to search and promote different methods. Gökay’s words from the same newspaper article on German sterilization laws shows this stance. Even though he rejected sterilization as an applicable and suitable method for Turkey, Gökay, nevertheless, presented the sterilization laws of Germany as an alleviation of the helplessness of mental health professionals. He said “in cases like dementia praecox [*erken bunama*- now what is called schizophrenia] the application of such a method is necessary. If I were to describe you the appearance of a desperate sick mother on one side and her sick son on the other, you would be convinced that psychiatrists are right about focusing on this matter.”²⁰

To extend the cause of dissemination information on hereditary mental diseases, Gökay also founded the Mental Hygiene Society of Turkey in 1930. The mental hygiene movement with the emphasis on prophylactic psychiatry, and eugenics with its promise to

¹⁸ Ibid., 38.

¹⁹ Edward Shorter, *A History of Psychiatry: From the Era of the Asylum to the Age of Prozac* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1997), 46.

²⁰ “Deliler, Aptallar, Hastalar Kısırlı Edilmeli mi?,” *Cumhuriyet*, July 28 1933.

minimize births from degenerates were plausible alternatives at the time.²¹ In his opening speech he referred to mental hygiene as a science that was the culmination of “sociology, psychiatry, psychology, pedagogy, ethics and religion” that sought ways to cure as well as “prevent the occurrence of mental illnesses” in order to establish “the individual’s happiness and the harmony of the society to which he belonged.”²² If the science of psychiatric medicine and the technology of mental hospitals were not enough to decrease the number of the abnormalities then hereditary intervention as well as social policies to fight degenerative forces (such as alcohol) could be better solutions to the problem. The pro-eugenic intervention argument, which claimed that degenerates were a big burden on society because the asylums and prisons to contain them were very costly also, alludes to this motive.

It is also plausible that a professional insecurity led Turkish psychiatrists to concentrate on eugenics and degeneration. Their professional status must have been more questionable than the other medical professionals who were receiving tangible results from their actions. Furthermore, those who were mainly involved in fight against epidemics were proving their worth in the eyes of the public, the majority of which was suspicious of Western medicine.²³ The public health specialists had already evidence of the successes they gained for the country, by reducing many deadly diseases such as trachoma, malaria, chicken pox, and others.²⁴ Yet psychiatry as a field of medicine was

²¹ Prophylactic psychiatry is an offshoot of prophylactic medicine, which means preventing mental illnesses before they occur. Often eugenics was also offered as part of prophylactic medicine and psychiatry as it sought to prevent the manifestation of diseases due to hereditary, by taking hereditary control measures.

²² All quotations from Fahreddin Kerim Gökay, *Bizde ve Diğer Memleketlerde "Hygiene Mentale" Mesaisi* [Mental hygiene in Turkey and other countries] (Istanbul: Kader Matbaası, 1931), 3.

²³ Dole, "In the Shadows of Medicine and Modernity: Medical Integration and Secular Histories of Religious Healing in Turkey."

²⁴ Türkiye Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi [Turkish Republican People's Party], *On Beşinci Yıl Kitabı* [The Fifteenth year book], (Ankara: CHP, 1938), 334-35.

less than a century old in the West and not older than a few decades in Turkey. Edward Shorter, a contemporary historian of psychiatry, alleges that European psychiatrists at the turn of the century were insecure about their profession. He states that “not only had asylums themselves sunk to a historic low point, the profession of psychiatry had as well.”²⁵ Then he quotes Werner Heinz, a German psychiatrist’s list of those who become psychiatrists to show the lack of respect for the profession at the beginning of twentieth century. The list included “1) applicants for country medical officer who are afraid of failing the special exam in psychiatry if they don’t get some practical experience 2) Those who are physically inadequate, having rheumatism or heart problem...3) Those who are intellectually inadequate...”²⁶ Therefore, it is probable that the Turkish psychiatrists as well, had to pave their own way for more involvement in social matters to secure their position in the eyes of the public and the ruling elite. They were prolific in producing scientific literature, writing in popular journals, publishing private journals, giving conferences and being active in politics.²⁷ Uzman also founded and directed the Mental and Neural Medicine Society (Tababet-i Akliye ve Asabiye Cemiyeti) through which the Green Crescent temperance society was founded. Gökay worked as the general secretary of the latter.²⁸ Eugenics, in the same vein, as a science of social organization gave them an opportunity for further involvement in social life. Under the subject of eugenics and degeneracy they were able to declare their opinions on social matters through what they perceived to be an un-biased and scientific language.

²⁵ Shorter, *A History of Psychiatry : From the Era of the Asylum to the Age of Prozac*, 67.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Uzman owned the popular medical periodical *Seririyat*, where he would discuss political, cultural and social issues including culinary arts, feminist movements as well as medical subjects. For some samples of his writing, see Erkoç and Yazıcı, eds., *Mazhar Osman ve Dönemi: Mecnunları, Mekanları, Dostları*. On the other hand, Fahreddin Kerim Gökay worked as the mayor of Istanbul between 1949 and 1958.

²⁸ Gökay, *Bizde ve Diğer Memleketlerde "Hygiene Mentale" Mesaisi*, 6

This section attempted to explore some factors for the prominent early Turkish psychiatrists' popularization of eugenics. Uzman and Gökay were naturally drawn to the degeneration theory and eugenics because they both completed their studies on mental health in Germany in close proximity to Kraepelin. Therefore their professional outlook and training lead them to look at heredity as an important factor explaining mental diseases. Furthermore their professional experience in Turkey was not as rewarding as other doctors, since they rarely saw mental patients leave the hospitals cured and rehabilitated. These factors made them active in prophylactic medicine for mental health and become supporters and popularizers of eugenic thought in Turkey.

III. The Discourse on Degenerates: “The Useless Crowds”

The early neuro-psychiatry experts along with doctors of other specialities in Turkey shared a concern about degeneration and the eugenic literature they produced clearly reflected this concern. For the medical elite that were under the influence of eugenics, it was possible to divide the population into the classes depending on people's varying degrees of “racial value.” This divide was usually not so clearly stated but implied in the language of “the fit” versus “the unfit.” Despite the solidarist rhetoric of a classless and unitary society of the single party era in Turkey, this division of valuable and worthless was almost a uniform agreement among different eugenicists. They, nevertheless, paid lip service to the classless state ideology and some of them underlined that this genetic division of value did not mean a class antagonism because it was not a subjective yet an objective and natural division. Some authors emphasized how “value”

could not be equated to financial power or rank.²⁹ It can also be argued that the discourse on “value,” which was sometimes expressed in terms of usefulness for work and production by the eugenists was in harmony with the solidaristic corporatism of the Kemalist state that sought to deny class antagonism by promoting harmony between different occupational groups for national progress through production.³⁰

One of the eugenists that elaborated with detail on the subject of this division was Server Kamil Tokgöz, a bacteriologist and a senior director of the Hygiene Institute in Ankara. He explained that eugenists from the West divided the nation into three classes of high value, middle value and harmful.³¹ Middle value is about nine tenths of the whole population, while the high value is a minority that is in decline and lower value is a minority in rise. Tokgöz declared that this last class “worried the society the most.”³² All the epileptics, mutes, deaf and blind people, “perverts,” alcoholics, vagabonds, and “the immoral” were lumped into this category of cacogenics.³³ Some would utilize European statistics on what percent of the population was made out of these lesser-value members. The statistics were chosen eclectically from Western eugenic literature and there was not an agreement on the proportion of the cacogenic population to the “normal” population. The agreement was that this was an alarming problem, and European statistics and studies

²⁹ Irmak, *İçtimai Biologie: Nüfus, Cinsiyet, Veraset*, 29-30; Uzman, “Öjenik”, 9. Uzman states that “it is not the men without money that are not allowed to marry of course, but the ones who are obviously not capable of bringing a good offspring...”

³⁰ For more on Kemalist solidaristic corporatism and the ideology of a classless society, see Taha Parla and Andrew Davison, *Corporatist Ideology in Kemalist Turkey : Progress or Order ?* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2004), especially the brief overview on pages 80-86.

³¹ The scope of vocabulary used to refer to this ambiguous “harmful class” was quite wide: lesser-value, valueless, worthless, cacogenic, dysgenic, idiotic etc. Some such as Mazhar Uzman did not refrain from using the harshest language, calling them “parasites” or “useless crowds.” Uzman, “Öjenik,” 3.

³² Tokgöz, *Öjenizm: Irk Islahı*, 6.

³³ Ibid.

were the proof. Şükrü Hazım Tiner, for instance, presented one German scientist Prinzing's theory that said 10% of the population were made out of lower value classes.³⁴

They feared that the unfit classes were reproducing more rapidly than the fitter classes and one day they would compose the majority of the population. This fear went hand in hand with the idea that valuable classes were not getting married and limiting the number of their offspring. As the previous chapter showed, this low fertility was in fact the trend among the urban groups in Turkey. Yet there was not much difference in fertility between different classes in a city. Duben and Behar suggest that "The relatively low fertility rates in Istanbul appear to have been widely diffused throughout the social fabric of the city. They were not just limited to the elite or the most modern, westernized strata of society."³⁵ Since none of the medical experts differentiated between the larger metropolises and smaller towns, it would be hard to conclude that they were concerned about the pace of reproduction in small towns and/or the rural population. On the contrary, majority of the medical elite underlined the value of the rural population in terms of national power and race hygiene.³⁶ It seems, therefore, more likely that they actually feared the increase of degenerates and degeneracy in the cities.

The eugenis'ts' fear was twofold. On the one hand, they were concerned with the fitness of the nation and wanted the Turkish nation/race to be composed of fit, strong members to reflect her power and prowess in the international struggle for life; that was the social Darwinist aspect of the debate. They wanted able bodies who could work efficiently to benefit the emerging economy and industry of the Republic. This was partly

³⁴ Tiner, *Eugenik Bahsine Umumi Bir Bakış: Yedinci Milli Türk Tıp Kurultayı*, 10.

³⁵ Duben and Behar, *Istanbul Households: Marriage, Family, and Fertility, 1880-1940*, 173.

³⁶ I.e. Irmak saw the rural population as the source that feeds the urban lineage Irmak, "Milletlerin Tereddi ve İstifası," 22.

the official 'population policy' adopted by the RPP, and frequently echoed by various leaders including Atatürk since 1923 as was mentioned in Chapter One. On the other hand, they feared that the inevitable growth of a degenerate population would increase the burden on the state to contain and take care of them in the form of prisons, asylums, mental and hygienic institutions. The valueless classes were believed to be, at best, sickly and weak, unable to work properly and in need of social assistance and at worst, insane, criminal or immoral threatening the social contract.³⁷

The argument often repeated by every eugenicist was that the members of this valueless class were a burden on the society because of their lack of ability to work and produce, and because of the money spent on all the institutes and funds that are required to take care of them. Uzman would protest that the useful, working section of the society and the state would have to waste money and resources to feed these "useless creeps" that did nothing but fill up poor-houses, asylums and prisons.³⁸ Like all the other eugenicists he would cite Western countries' statistics to prove his points. In his speech delivered at a People's House, and published through the RPP, he claimed that in North America there were one million epileptics and idiots that had no positive contribution to families, society or the state. On the contrary the state had to spend money by institutionalizing them in order to prevent them from harming the society. Then with a hefty calculation Uzman declared that if a dollar was spent daily on each degenerate that would end up costing the State more than 365 million dollars a year.³⁹

Gökay also adhered to the argument that those who were mentally ill or valueless were a big burden on the part of the population that participated in the economy through

³⁷ Uzman, "Öjenik," 4.

³⁸ Ibid., 4-5.

³⁹ Ibid., 3-4.

work. He used the statistics of the mental hygiene society of France to claim that both the care of those mentally ill or valueless units and the losses that they caused by not participating in the work force equaled to around 800 million francs a year. This did not include all the costs related to the problems that they created such as murder, theft or other crimes and suicides. He added with italics that “they [the degenerates] harm the discipline and peace of society.”⁴⁰ Gökay claimed that in Turkey 800, 000 liras a year is spent on prisons and 400, 000 for asylums excluding the salaries of the staff. Hence it was “obvious” that degenerates make life more expensive and harder for the “normal,” “social” people.⁴¹ This economic argument was uniformly agreed upon and the eugenisists offered different solutions to relieve this burden degenerates imposed on the society. Their purpose was to prevent degeneration, yet locating the causes of this degeneration to avert it was a thorny task.

None of the medical elite could really define degeneration and its exact causes. The idea was that degeneration was somewhat embedded in immorality that has been engendered from modernity and urbanity. The causes and symptoms of degeneration could be presented as the same. If a hard /Anglo-American eugenics was to be followed then degeneration would mean the reproduction of people with a particular hereditary disease or anomaly. The cause of it would be in the germ-plasm and the symptoms could be either latent or physically visible in the offspring. This was one side of the coin for explaining degeneracy. That is why the Turkish eugenists struggled to prevent the marriage and reproduction of degenerates and offered solutions based on that as was mentioned in the previous chapter. That is also why they surveyed and introduced to their

⁴⁰ Gökay, "Milli Nüfus Siyasetinde (Eugenique)," 207.

⁴¹ Ibid.

audiences all the sterilization laws in the West even though they could not agree on its benefits.

On the other side of the coin was an understanding of how the degenerative forces in the environment could harm the germ-plasm, and/or reproductive cells of the parents and result in degenerate children. This can be interpreted as a neo-Lamarckian variant of eugenics the same way that some scholars of international eugenics movements do.

Stepan asserts that “to a neo-Lamarckian, alcoholism, poor living conditions, and work fatigue were eugenic issues precisely because they were both causes and symptoms of hereditary ills and because the cycle of causes could be interrupted by social, moral, and medical action.”⁴² It seems that Turkish eugenisists did not care about a strong distinction between Mendelian/mainline or neo-Lamarckian eugenics, but their tendency was to overemphasize social and cultural policies to change the milieu. It was believed that better conditions including hygienic houses and habits, higher moral and family values, bodily discipline, and education could be the solution to elevating the Turkish race to the level it belonged. The lines between environmental effects and hereditary traits were blurry. Even those who felt the urge to underline that acquired characteristics could not be inherited could still give a lot of credit to alcohol and syphilis as forces that degenerate the race, or call for pedagogic action to improve the race.⁴³ Uzman, for instance, believed that every attempt to increase the population, which meant that decreasing deaths by improving living conditions such as sanitation or vaccination were part of positive eugenics.⁴⁴

This section has explained how the argument of racially valuable versus valueless classes of society was presented by Turkish eugenists. They argued that a hazy category

⁴² Stepan, *The Hour of Eugenics : Race, Gender, and Nation in Latin America*, 91.

⁴³ Irmak, *İçtimai Biologie: Nüfus, Cinsiyet, Veraset*, 31-33.

⁴⁴ Uzman, "Öjenik," 6-7.

of degenerates that could include the mentally ill, “the feeble-minded,” the criminal, the immoral as well as deaf, blind or epileptic people, were a big financial burden on the society. For them there was no clear cut difference between degeneration from heredity or from the milieu. They often thought of causes and symptoms of degeneration as a cycle. Besides ignorance and poverty that made life difficult for the majority of the Turkish race, there were other sources of degeneration in the milieu to which many eugenicists turned their attention. The most frequently indicated culprits of this environmental degeneration were venereal disease, primarily syphilis, and alcohol.

The next section scrutinizes the problematization of alcohol use as a eugenic problem as well as the solutions offered to solve this problem. It also highlights the changes that came with westernization as the social and cultural factors that lead eugenicists to adopt an anti-alcohol stance immersed in a scientific language as scientism was the philosophy that informed their worldview even on daily matters.

IV. Alcohol and Alcoholism as Eugenic Problems

A) The Vicious Cycle of Degeneration

Alcoholism was the most frequently cited problem in the degenerative literature and attracted the most attention as it was an easy to detect agent of degeneracy and susceptible to treatment unlike epilepsy or general paresis. In Europe, when the degeneration theory was at its peak, inebriety clinics were increasing in number as asylums’ were dropping down since people had begun to turn their attention to alcohol

consumption as *the* cause of mental illnesses.⁴⁵ The Turkish pioneers of degenerative psychiatry were following the same path as pointing out alcohol as a “racial poison.”

Neuro-psychiatrist Tiner was rhetorically asking his readers in the entry to his article on eugenics: “Can anybody object to the rise in mental illnesses due to rise in syphilis and alcohol?”⁴⁶ While Zeki Ragıp Yalım in *Damage on the generations from syphilis, gonorrhea and alcohol* (1939) was explaining that “Almost all of the people that fill up prisons, asylums, mental institutions today are either alcoholics, or have syphilis or hereditary disorders.”⁴⁷

For Besim Ömer Akalın, the lines between hereditary disease and effects of alcohol on reproduction were not very distinct either. He discussed the interchangeability of degenerative symptoms of alcoholism and suggested that a man who impregnated his friend when he was drunk was bound to have epileptic children. He concluded that “the child [was] victim to degeneracy at the time of conception.” He also added this allegation: “In the hospitals it is always witnessed that sons and daughters of alcoholics are usually nervous (neurotic), feeble-minded or idiots. Older children of alcoholics physically resemble animals, become neurotic, hypochondriacs and usually go mad.”⁴⁸ It is evident that the causes and symptoms in his mind were one and the same. A syphilitic was degenerate and caused degeneracy by giving life to a mentally ill offspring.

Gökay, in a similar vein, complained that degenerates could not continue their occupational activities in discipline, and due to the lack of organization they would catch

⁴⁵ W. F. Bynum, "Alcoholism and Degeneration in 19th Century European Medicine and Psychiatry," *Addiction* 79, no. 1 (1984): 63.

⁴⁶ Tiner, *Eugenik Bahsine Umumi Bir Bakış: Yedinci Milli Türk Tıp Kurultayı*, 9.

⁴⁷ Zeki Ragıp Yalım, "Firengi, Belsoğukluğu ve Alkolizmin Nesiller Üzerine Yaptığı Tahribat" [The damage of syphilis, gonorrhea and alcoholism on generations], in *CHP Konferanslar Serisi Kitap 12* [RPP conferences series, book 12] (Ankara: Recep Ulusoğlu Basımevi, 1940), 58.

⁴⁸ Akalın, *Türk Çocuğunu Nasıl Yaşatmalı?*, 42.

syphilis or tuberculosis or get addicted to alcohol and other substances or were fond of prostitution.⁴⁹ In this argument the degenerates were somehow victim in a vicious circle, where the reasons for this circle were ambiguous. On the one hand, if a man was born with a certain degeneracy that could be manifested in numerous abnormalities, he was prone to lead a life of immorality as well as give life to more degenerate children. That was the point upon which the debates on sterilization were concentrated. On the other hand, it was their bad choices that lead men astray into the downward spiral of degeneration. If they could abstain from alcohol, or illicit sexuality that contaminated them with venereal diseases, they could save themselves and the generations to follow. This ambiguity was not exactly addressed by any of the Turkish eugenisists. Even those who underlined that alcohol cannot affect heredity, such as Irmak or Uzman, still included opinions based on the idea that alcohol could lead to degeneracy in their arguments, and did not strive to delineate the effects of alcohol and heredity.⁵⁰

Yet venereal diseases and alcoholism offered a more manageable venue against degeneracy. In the same way that the medical elite believed that they could control or at least educate the populace towards making eugenic choices in marriage, they looked upon the issues of alcohol and venereal disease as venues towards race betterment where they could lead the way. In a sense, the anti-alcohol position could be actively working against degeneracy yet in a more financially and structurally feasible way. Temperance movement could transform degeneracy into something conquerable and controllable. If harder eugenic measures were out of reach for Turkish medical experts due to the

⁴⁹ Gökay, "Milli Nüfus Siyasetinde (Eugenique)," 207.

⁵⁰ Irmak clearly states that alcohol and syphilis do not have hereditary effects, and distinguishes between congenital and hereditary syphilis, yet he also claims that alcohol and venereal disease can harm the inheritance of talents from parents. Irmak, *İçtimai Biologie: Nüfus, Cinsiyet, Veraset*, 52-53 and 29 respectively.

restricted funds of the state, and lack of infrastructure and organization, or undesirable due to their perception of a population shortage, then at least the eugenic battle could be won against the modern ills such as venereal diseases and alcohol through action.

B) Alcohol as a Degenerative Force

Alcohol had been a symbol of cultural degeneration for a few decades before the 1930s. As a country composed of a predominantly Muslim population, the consumption of alcohol was already quite low in Turkey compared to rest of the European states. The medical elite were aware of this discrepancy, which they thought of as Turkey's advantage but they nevertheless vehemently fought the spread of alcohol consumption.⁵¹

Alcohol was understood as a degenerative force that could deteriorate the germ plasm of humans and affect their offspring, as well as their fertility. What is more important is that by the 1930s, the Turkish medical elite had begun to present the problem of alcohol and alcoholism as part of a eugenic/race hygiene policy as well as part of the population policy at large. Population policy, as discussed in previous sections, emphasized the need for population growth, for national military and economic power, especially vis-à-vis neighboring states. Even though the stress was on the quantity side of the equation in Turkey, the eugenic literature sought to fill in the quality side of the question. The vocabulary of the eugenics literature was rich in words describing this qualitative strength such as *kavi* (strong), *sağlam* (fit), *gülbüz* (robust).

⁵¹ Even though within the scope of this chapter the focus is the relationship of alcohol to eugenics within eugenic literature, this same relationship was also evident in all the anti-alcohol/temperance literature as well. Therefore some reports and discussions from the Sixth National Medical Congress that convened under the subject of "toxicology and alcohol" which clearly related the issue of alcohol consumption to degeneration and eugenics are examined here. The fact that the consecutive 1936 conference and 1938 conference had alcohol and eugenics respectively as their social medicine subjects is noteworthy to show the close link of those two subjects in the medical elite's minds.

The literature on degeneration and alcohol sought to prove the destructive force that alcohol could have on the race/nation. Akalın, in his subsection on race hygiene for example, refers to alcoholism as a “national threat” that “decays the health and mental and physical constitution of an individual, society and humanity at large.”⁵² Gökay, in a public speech published by the Green Crescent Society in 1942, claimed that “the scientific authorities in every country have concurred on the importance of fighting against alcohol consumption for the betterment of race.”⁵³ That is why in Turkey too, Gökay considered the issue of alcohol to be of utmost importance in relation to the national race hygiene policy.⁵⁴ At the sixth NTMC he ends his speech with these words that highlight a lot of issues that were at stake in relation to the temperance movement, race hygiene and the position of doctors in society as well as shedding light on the eugenic aspect of alcohol for him:

There is only one goal in this battle against alcoholism that our State and Nation is fighting together. That is the wish to let our civilization-creating Great Nation that is empowered through its roots in history grow and reproduce as mentally/spiritually and physically strong in our Mighty Country. It is our mission on the path of science and knowledge to wrestle with any dangers that can lead us to degeneration, defeat us in the struggle for life, or lower our productivity from work. The Turkish scientist and the Turkish doctor serve and will serve this mission with love like all of his other missions.⁵⁵

The anti-alcohol position came to represent being a nationalist, a good citizen as well as being scientific. Yet even if it was agreed that alcohol was so important for race hygiene, banning it completely was not an easy option according to the majority of the medical elite. At the sixth NTMC, there were heated discussions on how to proceed

⁵² Akalın, *Türk Çocuğunu Nasıl Yaşatmalı?* , 42.

⁵³ Fahreddin Kerim Gökay, *Alkol ve Tereddi* [Alcohol and degeneration] (Istanbul: Kader Basımevi, 1942), 4.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ *Altıncı Ulusal Türk Tıp Kurultayı*, 56.

legally about alcohol consumption. The first parliament had actually passed a prohibition law (*Menn-i Müskirat Kanunu*) to stop the consumption and sale of all alcoholic beverages in Turkey in 1920. Later this law was overturned and the state decided to monopolize all alcoholic drinks in order to maximize the profits from its sales.⁵⁶ The medical elite who felt that they were the semi-official representatives of a scientific enlightenment could see the contradictions in their position. The government, to which they had their allegiance, was making profits from alcohol as well as advertising it, while they were striving to minimize usage through propaganda which was also supported by the State. This contradiction was also demonstrated in the tension between the initially foreign-owned *Bomonti* Beer Factory, which had a certain exemption after the monopolization and *Hafta*, a popular journal in 1934. The journal after few publications attacking *Bomonti* called for Gökay's expertise in anti-alcohol activism for contesting the owners' claims about the nutritional value of beer in their advertisement campaigns. Gökay in that article denied any nutritional value and mentioned the detrimental effects of alcohol on the Turkish race. However, the quarrel had to subside with the State entering the beer market with the beer produced at the brewery established at the Atatürk farms founded in Ankara by the national leader himself. The book published by the farm management, suggested that beer was less harmful than other drinks with higher alcohol content, and it was becoming "national" thanks to the Atatürk Farm Breweries.⁵⁷ These public claims were perhaps a factor why a year later the nutritional value of alcoholic drinks and the harm that different levels of alcoholic content in drinks were discussed in

⁵⁶ Onur Karahanoğulları, *Birinci Meclisin İçki Yasağı: Menn-i Müskirat Kanunu* [The prohibition law of the first parliament] (Ankara: Phoenix Yayınevi, 2008), 160-61.

⁵⁷ Gökhan Akçura, *Uzun Metin Sevenlerden Misiniz? İvr Zıvır Tarihi 3* ["Do you like long texts?" Trivial history 3] (İstanbul: OM, 2002), 57-65.

the Sixth NTMC.⁵⁸ Some doctors admitted that banning alcohol or even raising the tax was not financially feasible for the government.⁵⁹

At the same congress, Necati Kemal Kip, a psychiatrist who had been an assistant to Uzman and had been sent to the Munich Clinic for further education, had very strong opinions on how to stop the usage of alcohol for good. He offered an outright ban, and all the addict natured degenerates and lesser-value members of the society were to be isolated in work and discipline camps and every alcohol seller was supposed to be punished no differently than murderers.⁶⁰

Uzman, who had been a member of the first parliament that passed a prohibition law in 1920, also disagreed with the infeasibility of a ban on alcohol.⁶¹ He argued that people would cooperate if they knew about its effects and furthermore since there were not that many addicts it was easier to ban alcohol in Turkey than in other countries. He suggested that the gains from such a ban would be much valuable than the financial gain from its sales when the degenerative effects over the long term were considered. He repeated how the degenerative consequences lead to incessant financial spending for asylums, prisons, and institutions on the part of the State as well as the extra burden on the economy due to the criminal activities and loss of productivity. He concluded his argument by stating that alcohol was after all harmful on health and morality, which

⁵⁸ *Altıncı Ulusal Türk Tıp Kurultayı*, 63-71.

⁵⁹ Akalın, *Türk Çocuğunu Nasıl Yaşatmalı?*, 42.

⁶⁰ *Altıncı Ulusal Türk Tıp Kurultayı*, 39-40.

⁶¹ Even though Uzman supported the prohibition law during the first parliaments' debates, it is probable that he abstained during the votes as the anti-alcoholic faction was overwhelmingly conservative. I assume that he abstained because his name is not in the either lists of those who voted for or against, see Karahanoğulları, *Birinci Meclisin İçki Yasağı*, 167-68.

reflected how the biological theory of degeneration was closely linked to morality for him.⁶²

Others such as Abdülkadir Noyan, a prominent military doctor of internal medicine, contested the feasibility and durability of a ban on alcohol use and sale. They were aware of the experiments that have failed in other countries due to black marketing of alcohol. Therefore he proposed scientific education on the harms of alcohol and encouraging moderation as the proximate best solution. If alcohol was consumed in moderation within a “family atmosphere” the scenes of rowdiness and disorder and the negative effects on health could be avoided.⁶³

Similarly, Gökay clearly stated that he did not support reviving the prohibition of alcohol because it would lead to black marketing, an argument offered by all the others who were against such a ban. Instead he proposed education, lowering the percentage of alcohol in drinks, raising its price, and controlling drunkenness and management of bars and pubs to minimize social disorder, as well as prohibiting marriage of alcoholics and educating women on the damages of alcohol as they were the source of racial purity.⁶⁴ He was supportive of the laws already in place against public drunkenness, sale of alcohol to minors, and limitation of sales to select managements.⁶⁵ Additionally, he offered the encouragement of non-alcoholic socialization as an alternative and encouragement of sports and other leisure activities to keep populace busy and healthy as well as pro-temperance information through publications, posters, movies, conferences. On the problem of degeneracy, rehabilitation of alcoholics at special centers, and if that was not

⁶² Altıncı Ulusal Türk Tıp Kurultayı, 60.

⁶³ Ibid., 41.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 46.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 50.

successful than institutionalization at mental hospitals were offered as solutions. Yet, Gökay also suggested sterilization for incurable alcoholics to keep the race “safe”⁶⁶ even though at other instances he contradicted this position, such as his answer to the daily *Cumhuriyet* when he stressed the need for a larger population and recommended caution and pragmatism.⁶⁷ Hence Gökay was trying to please both sides of the argument suggesting minimizing the degenerative effects of incurable alcoholics through sterilization or isolation in mental institutions, and maintenance of social disorder through the control of drunkenness instead of production and sale of alcohol. If drunkenness could be controlled that would make the signs of immorality invisible to the larger public.⁶⁸ This was the repeated theme of what was permissible to be visible in the modernizing Republic as explained in the first chapter. Many eugenists while arguing for the betterment of race and prevention of degeneracy caused by alcohol were at the same time repeating arguments related to the moral issues of public alcohol use.

One such example was Doctor Hayrullah Diker, a distinguished neurologist educated in France. He expressed his worries about public disorder with these words: “How can we be sure that a seemingly harmless drunkard will not rape a chaste family woman on the street coming back from a visit to her neighbor? Or fifty steps later, he will not attack an innocent citizen just because he gets paranoid about his attitude or expressions?”⁶⁹ That is why, for him, every drunkard on the street had to be taken to the police station without any tolerance. If being drunk in the public was prohibited it had to

⁶⁶ Ibid., 51-52.

⁶⁷ "Deliler, Aptallar, Hastalar Kısır Edilmeli mi?", *Cumhuriyet*, July 28 1933.

⁶⁸ On the other hand, one could probably argue that a total ban would make his work on temperance, especially the Green Crescent Society obsolete; hence he could have been fighting for his position.

⁶⁹ Hayrullah Diker, *Adliye Hekimliğinde Toksikomani ve Alkoolizma: Altıncı Ulusal Türk Tıp Kurultayı* [Toxicomanie and alcoholism in forensic medicine: the Sixth National Turkish Medical Congress] (Istanbul: Ahmed İhsan Basımevi, 1935), 54.

be applied with most strictness and not just interpreted as “if he does not harm anyone, let him be.”⁷⁰ Gökay also suggested similar concerns on the link between morality and alcohol saying that “alcoholism leads women to immorality; they lose their honor and virginity when they are drunk.” He also added another dimension to his argument, a criticism of how modernity was misunderstood by some: “It is really unfortunate that today modern women think of alcohol as a symbol of civility and getting used to drunkenness in sociability. They are endangering the strongest weapon of the Turkish nation, fertility of her women.”⁷¹ Zeki Ragıp Yalım, in a similar vein, tied sexual immorality, alcohol abuse and racial purity. He stated that “just like syphilis, alcoholism plays a big role in degenerating the person and the race. And very often, alcoholism is an evil that exists along with syphilis and gonorrhea and competes with them in devastating stock. Sexual encounters and immoral adventures usually start with a drunken introduction.”⁷²

Some criticisms were raised at the Sixth NTMC on alcoholism on the lack of relative data on alcohol consumption patterns in Turkey. Doctors such as the president of the congress Tevfik Sağlam and Osman Şerafettin Çelik seemed to be suspicious of the significance of the problem for the general public. They thought of it as a relatively minor and exclusively urban phenomenon. That is why they asked for statistics on where and by which stratum of society alcohol was consumed.⁷³

Gökay agreed that when the statistics from other countries compared with those of Turkey, the alcohol consumed per person was much less in Turkey. Then he responded to

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Quotations are from Gökay, *Alkol ve Tereddi*, 8.

⁷² Yalım, "Firengi, Belsoğukluğu ve Alkolizmin Nesiller Üzerine Yaptığı Tahribat," 63.

⁷³ *Altıncı Ulusal Türk Tıp Kurultayı*, 39-41.

the criticism on the lack of urban-rural comparison by accusing the unavailability of relevant statistics. Yet he also believed that drinking had not penetrated the village life yet and it was quite shocking to see alcohol being sold in villages three years ago on his expedition. He reassured the audience: “It is the State’s main concern to impede alcohol sale in villages and it is quite successful so far.”⁷⁴ Nevertheless, he also found the problem of peasants visiting the cities that come in contact with alcohol, and heavy drinking during special days such as weddings as alarming. Those patterns seriously concerned him about the racial purity of the villagers.⁷⁵

However, by in large, the problem at least during the thirties when the majority of the eugenic literature was produced was an urban one. In fact the statistics that showed how little the alcohol consumed was compared to the European states, Gökay claimed that the statistics from the Bureau of State Monopolies (*İnhisarlar İdaresi*) showed that in Turkey only 23 centiliters of alcohol per person was consumed compared to 16 liters per person in France.⁷⁶ That makes it evident that alcohol was only becoming part of a small elite’s custom of pleasure. The medical elite were again responding to what they were seeing around their own circles, and were probably not enjoying what they observed. Alcohol was synonymous with immorality and indecency and the eugenic literature offered a scientific framework for their perception of growing immorality among the urban educated class.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 60.

⁷⁵ Ibid.; Seven years later, in another speech, his observations on alcohol consumption in villages were changed because he had been alarmed by the consumption patterns he had seen and the several letters he had received from concerned citizens through the rural mission of People’s Houses, Fahreddin Kerim Gökay, *Köy Kalkınması ve Alkol Sarfıyatı* [Rural development and alcohol consumption] (Istanbul: Kader Basımevi, 1942).

⁷⁶ Gökay, *Köy Kalkınması ve Alkol Sarfıyatı*, 5.

Some of the medical elite voiced their concern for this corruption, or licentiousness (*sefahet* in Turkish) through their work on eugenics. For example Akalın alleged that excess in pleasure and luxury, which also involves excessive drinking lead to “behaviors against the moral order” and added “that is the worst enemy of man. Due to its effects on the individual and future generations it destroys all of his good qualities, even his mind and existence”⁷⁷ Dr. Tiner, to contest the idea that alcohol would not effect fitter members and they could save themselves from the vices, suggested that outside influences were so forceful, widespread and varied those days that they could harm even the strongest of individuals. He compared his day with older times when drugs including cocaine, morphine, heroine were not even known at alcohol was not so generally consumed. More interestingly in terms of how alcohol was seen as part of a larger cultural degeneracy, to this list, he added movies, theater, dance, some publications as those forces “that seduced the youth.” He was also concerned for newcomers from villages because they could not turn down these temptations and would be subject to degeneration in the cities.⁷⁸

The idea that excessive urban pleasures were tainting the youth’s morality as a predecessor of racial degeneracy was a repeated theme. Dr.Yalım blamed the numerousness of entertainment opportunities in the cities that seduce the youth into alcohol and immorality, which also led to a growth in number of syphilis infections.⁷⁹ Some saw the roots of degeneration at the foreign occupation years of Istanbul following the First World War. Dr. Hayrullah Diker, at the sixth NTMC, showed his resentment for the urban immorality with these words:

⁷⁷ Akalın, *Türk Çocuğunu Nasıl Yaşatmalı?* , 42.

⁷⁸ Tiner, *Eugenik Bahsine Umumi Bir Bakış: Yedinci Milli Türk Tıp Kurultayı*, 27.

⁷⁹ Yalım, "Firengi, Belsoğukluğu ve Alkolizmin Nesiller Üzerine Yaptığı Tahribat," 61.

After the big war, *toxicomanie* had also increased its virulence in this beautiful country that has seen every evil, and trouble. The human parasites that have come out of the dirtiest the most disgusting holes of the world to our city, have filled our country with pits of rottenness with the pubs, vice houses, and prostitution sources they have established. Every class of the populace had been contaminated.⁸⁰

Even if alcohol was not a very serious problem, it came to represent a more general degeneracy, which was ornamented in scientific language but mostly understood in cultural and social terms. The changing patterns of leisure and pleasure, the Republic balls, books on table manners, European fashions showing up on the streets, were sources of anxiety even for the educated that perceived themselves as the representatives of progress and westernization. The “new life” as it was often called, caused a certain level of anxiety for older generations, and people from various sections of society. A theater-goer from the early 1930s expressed such discomfort: “It was one of the first evening performances in Ankara. At that time nobody knew how to behave appropriately, how to sit, walk, dance, and how to use their hands and head in acting.”⁸¹ In a way the medical elite were more concerned with cultural “degeneracy” and the influx of new ideas, fashions and modes of entertainment to their homeland rather than biologically understood racial degeneration. Even though most of the elite had been to the most Western looking medical schools as well as continuing their training in Europe, they were still trying to come to terms with the pace of change of every aspect of their daily lives. The seemingly-neutral language of a biological theory that had been born out of Europe offered a site for their cultural anxieties without sounding backward or religious. If in a Kemalist state it was no longer appropriate to be against alcohol or natural and equal

⁸⁰ Diker, *Toksikomani ve Alkoolisma*, 5.

⁸¹ Quoted in Göle, *The Forbidden Modern: Civilization and Veiling*, 67. Author’s translation.

interactions between men and women in public places in the name of Islam and/or tradition and customs, they could voice similar concerns in the name of science.

Another explanation for the significance of the degeneration theory and alcohol consumption in relation to it for the medical elite could simply be the existence of such literature in the West. Almost without any exception, every medical professional who produced work on eugenics and degeneracy, reserved a big portion of their text to the developments in Europe and North America. They surveyed various countries' eugenic policies, laws and statistics and referenced eclectically older and contemporary works on eugenics. The approach was very seldom critical, often informative with a hint of a suggestion to emulate certain policies. The introduction of sterilization laws of some states and provinces of USA, Canada, Scandinavia, and most importantly Germany was lengthily scrutinized. This eclecticism was at par with the Kemalist Republic's path of transferring various legal codes (i.e. the criminal code from Italy, and civil code from Switzerland) almost without any adaptation, while at the same time choosing different schools for cultural and social emulation, such as the transfer of German musicians to the state conservatory or Italian sculptures for metropolitan squares.⁸²

The desire to avert the mistakes of the European civilization on the path to modernity and industrialization must also be added to the factors leading to an interest in eugenics and degeneration. The medical elite were well aware of the different social structures of the European industrialized societies and their own. While they wanted to imitate, transfer, and adopt as many aspects of the European civilization as possible, they also wanted to learn from the European experience in order to avoid the pitfalls. Such a pragmatic approach had lead to the solidarist philosophy to be adopted by the single party

⁸² Öndin, *Cumhuriyet'in Kültür Politikası ve Sanat*, 69-71.

regime to avert any class identity formation. The same pattern of thinking was also the engine behind the peasantist ideology of the period. Therefore, the medical elite were operating within the same paradigms of modernizing without the challenges of urbanity and industrialization. They were also repeating the anxieties on immorality caused by urbanization and modernization, and the desire for social order in an ostensibly scientific language that fitted better to their rigid scienticist/positivistic worldview. This approach reflected the pragmatic side of the Kemalist modernizing mission.⁸³ Theirs was a wishful shortcut to modernity.

⁸³ For pragmatism of Kemalist ideology see İsmet Giritli, "Kemalism as an Ideology of Modernization," in *Atatürk and the Modernization of Turkey*, ed. Jacob M. Landau (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1984). For a critic of such alleged pragmatism, see Taha Parla and Andrew Davison, *Corporatist Ideology in Kemalist Turkey : Progress or Order ?* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2004), 7-11.

CONCLUSION

As the Ottoman bureaucratic and intellectual elite struggled to find ways to reverse what seemed to be the inevitable decline of the Ottoman Empire during the nineteenth century, associated with the loss of land, military and diplomatic power and prestige, many of them turned their gaze towards Europe for solutions. They concluded that European progress in military and political power depended upon Europe's advancement in technology and science. They believed that the transfer of this technology and science could be the saviour of the Empire. After the Ottoman defeat in the First World War, and a difficult war fought against Greece and their European allies, the Republic of Turkey was founded under the leadership of a predominantly Western-oriented, yet Turkish-nationalist military-bureaucratic elite. The new Republican elite were mostly self-declared positivists and they carried the late Ottoman fascination with "positivism" even further by turning it into a simple "scientism," where science was promoted as the new religion of the country, and the key to her progress and power.

Moreover, the social Darwinist interpretation of the international struggle for life between different nations, penetrated into the intellectual landscape of the late Ottoman Empire due to the insecurity of her position in the world. The Republican elite also accepted this social Darwinist view as true and believed a large population to be a crucial factor for the success of the new nation state. Therefore, the new regime adopted a population policy of increasing births and minimizing deaths. The official and unofficial press joined in to disseminate ideas about the necessity of increasing the quality and quantity of the population through numerous publications.

These two intellectual trends of “scientism” and “social Darwinism” prepared a fertile soil for eugenic ideas to grow in Turkey. The medical nationalist elite, whose worldview had been shaped at such an intellectual climate through secular education, sought answers to the population problem from an assumed scientific perspective. Eugenics, as the science of betterment of the human species, provided them with a language that resonated with their positivist worldview, as well as their nationalism and social Darwinism. Eugenics offered the potential to increase both the quality and quantity of the population.

The eugenic prescription included encouraging the “valuable” members of society to procreate more, discouraging the “valueless” or “cacogenic” members from procreating, and saving the nation from degeneration by eliminating venereal diseases, and racial poisons such as alcohol. To this end, Turkish eugenics enthusiasts, through various publications and conferences, declared that marriage was a national duty, and everyone in the society, with the exception of the loosely defined cacogenics, had to marry and produce more children. Criticising such new trends as late marriages, longer years spent as bachelors and the declining number of children in modern families, Turkish

eugenists accused modern urban life for the spread of these harmful ideas and habits. They also frequently pointed at alcohol consumption as a very destructive practice for the fertility and the hereditary quality of the Turkish nation. The medical elite, especially the psychiatric professionals under the influence of the Kraepelinian school of psychiatry, were involved in anti-alcohol activism and fought for measures to ban or minimize its use and popularize eugenics.

Despite the medical elite's claims that their recommendations for the improvement of the Turkish race were the dictates of science, most of the issues they dealt with and the criticism that they voiced were already part of an ongoing public debate in the media and literature. The issues of late marriage, the generation gap, women's work in relation to family life, new modes of entertainment, and alcohol consumption were mostly urban, if not metropolitan, problems. Turkey, especially the larger cities and the elite strata of such urban centers had been going through a rapid westernization with the influx of new ideas, habits and trends. The older generation had differing reactions to such changes, and voiced their concerns about the "modern life" represented by the youth's life-style choices. In relation to such changes in daily life, among the intellectual elite there also existed a trend of anti-urbanism represented through movements such as peasantism that favored a more moderate and careful approach to modernization and urbanization.

Consequently the eugenics discourse, in a similar vein, voiced such anxieties about urbanization and westernization, especially the "degenerative effects" of city life. The scientism of the medical elite persuaded them to look for "scientific" solutions to such social, political and moral problems they associated with modernization and urbanization in a time when religion and tradition's role in society was strongly

challenged. They never seriously promoted hard eugenic measures such as sterilization or confinement of cacogenics, and most of their other recommendations were not strictly applied. The enthusiasm around eugenics was not strong enough to create a society or a movement that could affect socio-political decisions. Turkish eugenicists' ideas were mostly about cultural and social degeneration through environmental influences and acquired characteristics rather than strictly biological inheritance. In that sense the Turkish medical elite were following a Lamarckian notion of heredity even though they never clearly demarcated between different theories nor felt the urge to position themselves scientifically. For those reasons, eugenic literature in Turkey should be regarded as the product of Republican scientism, elitism, social Darwinist nationalism and a reaction to urbanization and rapid westernization, rather than the culmination of evolutionary or racial science.

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