

AN EXAMINATION OF ISLAMIST DISCOURSE IN THE FACE OF
WESTERN CHALLENGE: THE CASE OF İSMET ÖZEL

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis examines İsmet Özel's Islamist discourse on the Western challenge in the context of Islamic movement by using the textual analysis method. To this end, I analyze his three major books, including *Üç Mesele* (1978), *Cuma Mektupları I, II, III, IV, V* (1988-1992) and *Tahrir Vazifeleri* (1994). The main argument of the thesis is that the fundamental tension shaping Özel's thinking as an Islamist intellectual emerges out of the distinction between the "political West" and the "philosophical West." I examine his political project in *Cuma Mektupları* and his existentialist perspective in *Tahrir Vazifeleri*. Secondly, this study analyzes the transformation of his ideas from *Üç Mesele* (1978) to *Cuma Mektupları* (1988-1992) and *Tahrir Vazifeleri* (1994). By comparatively investigating his ideas with its political and philosophical aspects, this thesis provides insight into the thought of this important intellectual as well as contributing to the understanding the Islamist intellectual movement in Turkey.

Keywords: İsmet Özel, the New Muslim Intellectual, the Islamic movement, Intellectual Islamism, Textual analysis

ÖZ

BATI'NIN MEYDAN OKUMASI KARŞISINDA İSLÂMCI SÖYLEMİN İNCELENMESİ: İSMET ÖZEL OLAYI

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Bu tez, Batı'nın meydan okuması karşısında İsmet Özel'in İslâmcı söylemini İslâmi hareket bağlamında metinsel analiz metoduyla incelemektedir. Bu maksatla O'nun üç önemli entelektüel çalışması olarak *Üç Mesele* (1978), *Cuma Mektupları I,II,III,IV,V* (1988-1992) ve *Tahrir Vazifeleri* (1994) adlı kitapları incelenecektir. Bu tezde bir İslâmcı entelektüel olarak İsmet Özel'in düşüncesini şekillendiren temel gerilimin "Siyasi" ve "Felsefi" Batı arasındaki ayrımın ortaya çıktığı iddia edilmektedir. Bu bağlamda, Cuma Mektupları'nda Özel'in siyasi projesi ve Tahrir Vazifeleri'nde O'nun varoluşsal perspektifi incelenmektedir. İkinci olarak, bu çalışma *Üç Mesele*'den (1978) *Cuma Mektupları* (1988-1992) ve *Tahrir Vazifeleri* (1994)'ne kadar Özel'in fikirlerinin dönüşümünü analiz etmektedir. Özel'in fikirlerini karşılaştırmalı olarak siyasi ve felsefi boyutlarıyla soruşturmasıyla bu çalışma hem önemli ve tartışmalı bir İslâmcı entelektüelin düşüncesinin iç yüzünün anlaşılmasını sağlamakta hem de Türkiye'de entelektüel İslâmcı hareketin anlaşılmasına katkı sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İsmet Özel, Yeni Müslüman Entelektüeller, İslâmi Hareket, Entelektüel İslâmcılık, Metinsel Analiz

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

West Indies, the holy grail, Ithake, Macin!
I've been sentenced to a long haul.
Nothing left of my share in the country of the whites
I have committed crimes against the lands of the natives
a dangerous strife among tyrants
I am unbecoming among the nations
My savagery
has torn me off the taste of plummy fruits
I have chosen myself
a taste of bitter root in this world
there are no nearby shadows for me to rest under
I've been sentenced to a long haul. (*Mataramda Tuzlu Su*, İsmet Özel)

1.1 Setting the Problem

The map of Turkish intellectual field has not yet been adequately revealed by academic studies. In addition to this, fragmentary structure of the Turkish world of thought makes it difficult to develop the theoretical and conceptual framework on the intellectual field. Compared with Western countries, it can be observed that in the Turkish academic and intellectual field, traditional strong ecoles do not dominate the field. Rather than major schools and actors that construct an autonomous field, more hybrid and transitional embodiment in Turkish intellectual and academic field is the point in question. From this standpoint I can say that Turkish intellectual field has a relatively chaotic structure, partly due to this, conceptual and theoretical framework that will enable us to make sense of this fragmentary structure has not been developed in Turkey. Perhaps that is why the position of many intellectuals and thinkers could not be determined in this chaotic milieu.

A famous poet and a socialist-turned Islamist (-turned religious nationalist) intellectual, İsmet Özel has always been controversial and somewhat influential among the reading public in Turkey, usually claiming for himself a

faithful group of enthusiasts and followers, particularly from among the educated, urban youth. Within the framework of all above limitations, in this dissertation, I will examine İsmet Özel as an Islamist intellectual in terms of his stance toward Western civilization. The main research question of this study is, “what kind of rhetoric does Özel develop in the face of the Western challenge?” In order to answer this umbrella question, I will analyze his three major books including *Üç Mesele* (1978), *Cuma Mektupları I, II, III, IV, V* (1988-1992) and *Tahrir Vazifeleri* (1994). The subject matter is worth studying, because, as I mentioned above, many intellectuals in the Turkish history of ideas have not yet been evaluated by locating them in a historical and social context. In this dissertation, I will handle the ideas of İsmet Özel, who is one of the major public figure of the 1980s and 1990s, in the context of the Islamic movement. Moreover, in order to grasp and inquiry current discussions of Islamism (namely whether Islamism is dead or not), a study on an Islamist intellectual who constantly inquires about Islamism itself can also give important clues. Also in this manner I should specify that in the discussions about Islamism, Islamism is either imprisoned in an essentialist content by ignoring its historicity, or is reduced to a political ideology by neglecting its strictly intellectual dimension. As I will briefly indicate in the next chapter, Islamism as the context of this dissertation will be considered within its own dynamic historicity. Moreover, in this dissertation, I will try to emphasize the intellectual dimension of Islamism by taking into account Özel’s philosophical essays. Finally, I should remark that in İsmail Kara’s last volume of the anthology called *Türkiye’de İslamcılık Düşüncesi*, including the Islamists of the Republican era, the last intellectual he included was İsmet Özel, because, according to Kara, problems brought about by him have not yet been overcome. Through this inspirational account and my personal interests, I have decided to examine the ideas of İsmet Özel. Because his discourse, especially his stance against the Western challenge has also affected myself, this study will enable me to take steps toward acritical examination of my own preconceptions. That is why in this dissertation, I will try to be a self-reflexive as I can.

In order to answer my main research question, I will reexamine Özel’s essays based on a significant distinction between the “political West” and the “philosophical West” from a comparative perspective. The basic claim of this dissertation is to demonstrate that the fundamental tension determining his thinking

as Islamist intellectual can be based on this distinction between the “political West” (world-system) and the “philosophical West” (existentialist perspective). In literature, this distinction and the existential aspect of his thought has been ignored, except for Çiğdem’s analysis. My examination is inspired by his perspective on the thought of İsmet Özel, including the above distinction. In virtue of its importance, I would like to quote his analysis:

Although he claims that the West constitutes a whole in itself, it is witnessed, at least, the presence of a distinction between political and philosophical West in Özel’s writings. By making this distinction functional, he does not avoid to appeal to the Western thinkers and thoughts for justifying his thinking. . . . Özel thus has been re-establishing both the traditions of Islam and the Western thought by an idiosyncratic method, and he has also been trying to overcome a shallow East/West dichotomy that existed as one of the major dilemmas that determines Islamist thought (Çiğdem, 2012, p.143).¹

By referring to this analysis about political/philosophical distinction, I will also examine Özel’s essays based on a comparison between world-system theory and existentialist philosophy, between cynical and humanitarian point of view. From the axis of these dualities, I will also question the basis of this distinction in his essays.

In order to answer the main research question more adequately, I will also seek to answer the following specific questions: What is his view of the contemporary Islamic movement in Turkey? How does he build Islam in the face of political West or the world-system? What function does he perform within the Islamic movement? In general, what is his political project? On the other hand, how does he interact with the contemporary Western thought? Is it consistent with his arguments in his political and philosophical essays? Moreover, what could be his main reference points or intellectual sources in forming these views? Also, what kind of an intellectual figure in the Turkish intellectual field; does he represent a partisan intellectual within an ethical-political engagement or is he an autonomous intellectual defending the high culture in the Ivory Tower? I will seek to answer

¹ “Batı’nın kendi içinde bir bütün oluşturduğunu iddia etmesine rağmen, Özel’in yazılarında, en azından siyasal ve felsefi Batı arasında bir ayrımın varlığına tanık olunmaktadır. Bu ayrımın işlevsel kılınmasıyla birlikte Özel, kendi düşüncelerini temellendirmek üzere Batılı düşünür ve düşüncelere müracaat etmekten kaçınmamaktadır. Özel, böylece hem İslâm, hem Batı düşünce geleneğini kendine özgü bir yöntemle yeniden kurmakta, İslâmcı düşüncüyü belirleyen ana ikilemlerden biri olarak varlığını sürdüren sığ bir Doğu/Batı ikilemini de aşmaya çalışmaktadır.”

these questions by drawing on a conceptual framework and sociological methods.

1.2 Sources and Methodology

In order to examine his political project and existentialist ideas, I picked up his three important books, *Üç Mesele* (1978), *Cuma Mektupları I-II-III-IV-V* (1989- 1992) and *Tahrir Vazifeleri* (1994). These books have a rich content featuring Özel's political, philosophical and religious views and therefore they deserve special attention. Let me specify briefly the characteristics and importance of the books in terms of my methodological choice. Firstly, *Üç Mesele* represents the initial stage of İsmet Özel's Islamist period. In this sensational book, Özel seems to negate Western philosophy and thought in a defensive manner, rather than proactively explaining theses. Nevertheless, his approach to technology and civilization was widely perceived as a new orientation for the Islamic movement (Aktay & Özensel, 2011, p.785). In this book, he tries to overcome the apologetic and modernist understanding of Islam by using the widespread critiques in the West against the Cartesian philosophy, scientism and the humanist thought. He strives to instil confidence in the Islamic movement with this rejection, which has always remained a decisive theme in his relationship with Islamism. Also, *Üç Mesele* has been the forerunner of a new and confrontational Islamist discourse. That is why, it has a symbolic importance for the Islamic movement.

Secondly, the five volumes of *Cuma Mektupları* (1988-1992) represents Özel's political project about the Islamic movement in the context of the world-system. In these essays, he crystallises his major political themes such as the world-system, the specificity of Islam and Turkey, democracy and the relationship between state and nation. By collecting all these themes, I will present his political project and attempt to demonstrate how the "political West" was built within his essays. In addition to this, I should mention that these essays reveal his normative and political concerns. That is why, I will attempt to examine the connection between his political essays and the *Milli Görüş* movement.

Thirdly, *Tahrir Vazifeleri* (1994) includes important essays on his existentialist thought, religion and science. Moreover, I will argue these essays reflect his attempt to establish a fruitful interaction with the possibility of Western thought, as well as demonstrating his ideational dimension. In this regard, I will

attempt to show how the “philosophical West” was constructed by these texts. Moreover, in order to discover and reveal the dimensions of change in his political and philosophical views, I will attempt to compare his first book, *Üç Mesele* (1978) with *Tahrir Vazifeleri* (1994) and *Cuma Mektupları* (1989-1992). Finally, I will present and discuss his intellectual work in the 1990s in the context of this dualistic distinction.

In terms of method, this dissertation is based on qualitative research adopting textual analysis whose ultimate objective is to reveal the “characterization of discourse” (Fairclough, 2003). Examining texts and discourses are important, because discourses

both affect and are affected by, social developments, thereby functioning as indicators of social change. That is, they both reflect changes in social reality and help shape them, by making sense of this reality for individuals and groups, thereby informing their decisions, actions, and reactions. For they provide cognitive and social lenses through which to perceive one’s social environment, which in turn influences the ranges and angles of these lenses. Furthermore, discourses not only affect actors’ dispositions, but also justify their positions – and undermine their opponents’ – in social struggles (Ardıç, 2012, p.33).

In this manner, I would like to highlight two points related to the methodology of this dissertation: Firstly, I will take discursive formations in texts within the social context. Secondly, in parallel with Ardıç, I adopt that discourses and texts are not simply a reflection of the external structure, rather they shape social reality as well as being constituted by it.

I will take Islamic movement in the 1980s and 1990s and Islamist intellectual circles as the context of my analysis. External factors or contextual structures are very important, because every text occurs in given historical and social conditions. That is why, I will focus on non-discursive formations as well as discursive ones. For instance, regarding my dissertation, *Üç Mesele* (1978) somehow bears the imprint of its own period materializing the rise of Islamism, resulting in Iran Islamic revolution in 1979. In parallel with this, Özel’s political project in *Cuma Mektupları* (1988-1992) can only be understood in the context of the rising Islamic movement, which became an alternative locus of power in Turkey. However, this does not mean that his ideas are a reflection of the conditions of that period, because, as Bourdieu emphasized, intellectual works cannot be reduced the context as

Marxists did (Bourdieu, 2006, p.61). For instance, Özel's concern with the existentialist philosophy or broadly, his adoption of anti-positivist understanding cannot be reduced to his Islamist political engagement or to his class origins. For sure there might be a close relationship between his Islamist engagement and existentialist ideas, nonetheless, this relationship cannot be reduced the causality. In this manner, I will try to pay a methodological attention between internalist linguistic approaches and externalist contextual approaches.

I adopt textual analysis due to several reasons. First, İsmet Özel has always been a controversial public figure in Turkey and frequently come to the fore in recent years with his sensational political statements. Thus, he has become the object of public debate for a while. Secondly, Özel also adopts an interfering and sensitive attitude towards his own texts. These factors make it difficult to handle his ideas for an academic study. That is why in order to avoid this mediatic atmosphere and Özel's subjective accounts of himself, I put forward Özel's texts in this dissertation. In other words, instead of the author, his intentions, biographical or personal attributes, I focus on his texts by considering broader historical context. However, I do not claim in this dissertation that this is the only correct formula or interpretation of his texts. Rather, I will attempt to put forward the main axes of his thought by taking into account a fundamental distinction between political and philosophical ones. I will also examine intertextuality and the source references of his texts, particularly from the Western literatures.

1.3 Literature Review

This dissertation is located at the intersection of three literatures: contemporary Islamism studies, new Muslim intellectuals literature and specific works on İsmet Özel. In order to crystallize my position, I would present a brief and critical reading of these three literatures in terms of their benefits and shortcomings.

Within the first literature, Islamism in Turkey has been examined in many different dimensions. Many subjects such as the historical development of Islamism, different religious interpretations within intellectual Islamism, Islamist pioneers, the periodisation and political position of Islamism and the current debates on Islamism have so far been discussed. In terms of the history of Islamism, Kara's study (2001) examines political views of Islamists on constitutionalism, the caliphate and parliament at the end of the 19th century.

Similarly, Mardin (1962) and Türköne (2011) handle the emergence of Islamism in the 19th century. These studies have documented different aspects of the development of Islamism, providing a ground for further analysis. In terms of intellectual Islamism, the period of modernization in Muslim societies has also created a ground that flourished different religious interpretations. In this manner, Mertoğlu (2013) deals with the notion of return to the source that is the political orientation as well as a kind of religious interpretation as the demand for Islamist circles. Öztürk (2013) examines the historicism, the text-oriented religious interpretation that emerged in modern era and its important representative, Fazlurrahman. On the other hand, some researchers focus on the political aspect of Islamism, notably the *Milli Görüş* (National Outlook) tradition in Turkey. For instance, Çakır (2011) examines briefly the history and structure of *Milli Görüş* movement. Çınar (2005) also studies the political logic of *Milli Görüş*, arguing that *Milli Görüş* is the Islamic version of Kemalizm in terms of its governing logic. Erkilet (2011) studies radical Islamist movement in the 1990s, outside of the institutional politics in Turkey and its important advocate, Ercümen Özkan. Some studies also deal with the periodization and the positioning of Islamism in the political arena. Bulaç (2011) examines Islamism within its historical process by dividing it into three generations. Kentel (2011) examines the Islamist thought of the 1990s, focusing on important Islamist reviews such as *Tezkire*, *Bilgi ve Hikmet* and *Umran*. In the political arena, Bora (2013) attempts to situate Islamism within the left-right diagram. In addition, researchers deal with the ideas of well-known Islamist intellectuals and pioneers. For instance, Duran (2013) treats Sezai Karakoç on the civilization discourse of Turkish Islamism. Mollaer (2007) deals with Nurettin Topçu's ideas in terms of broad perspective of Islamism and Anatolianist socialism. Ardıç (2014) also examines the civilizational discourse of Ahmet Davutoğlu in the context of modernity, identity and politics. Finally, I should mention that in recent years, Islamism has become the agenda of public debate started between Bulaç and Türköne in *Zaman* newspaper (Türköne, 2012).

Within the quite extensive Islamism literature, I want to discuss three different approaches in the discussion of Islamism in terms of political positioning. The first approach briefly defines Islamism as a threat to the modern, secular world. Those who adopt this approach usually emphasize the confrontational character of Islamism against secularism. The prominent representatives of the “secularist”

approach include Bernard Lewis (2002), Huntington (1993) and Tunaya (1962). With the collapse of the Soviet Union and after the September 11 attacks, this approach has been popularized across the world by the mediatic, columnist academics. In this approach, Islamism is not considered as a thought system emphasizing the social and political aspects, only it is roughly presented as a political ideology. This approach expertly draws a line between Islam (religion, not ideology) and political Islam (the ideology) for allegedly defending Muslims. In the context of Turkey, this approach evaluates Islamism as a challenge or a threat to liberal secular system. Actually, I can say that the rhetoric of American neo-conservatives is placed in the context of Turkey through Kemalist popular writers such as Ergün Poyraz (1996) and Soner Yalçın (2009). In this manner, for instance, the distinction between political and cultural Islam in Turkey of the 1990s is the product of this approach. I can say that this approach, for being under the yoke of political motivation, cannot develop a reasonable analysis on Islamism.

The second approach offers Islamism as a representative of democratic society in the face of Kemalist bureaucratic structure. One of the pioneers of this approach is Şerif Mardin (1973), with his center-periphery analysis. According to him, Turkish elites in the center maintain to power against the majority in the periphery. The classical structure of the Ottoman Empire, for example, took shape in the axis of distinction between the small ruling class (askeri) and the large masses of subjects (re'aya). Economic relations, legal status and the culture in society are determined by the center-periphery dichotomy. In the Republican period, while the modern bureaucracy and the military (Kemalist elites) took over the position of traditional Ottoman bureaucracy, the periphery consists of different social groups including provincial notables, clerics and religious people, the Kurds and the non-Muslim minorities. Liberal-left oriented academics such as Özdalga (2006) and Göle (2007), maintaining this approach, evaluate the rise of Islamism within the framework of such concepts as the emergence of alternative modernities, pluralistic society and democratic values. Especially with the younger generation of researchers, this approach has become widespread after 1980 in Turkey. I would say that this approach is more objective and therefore better reflects the social reality of Turkey than the first one. However, in recent years, by criticizing this liberal approach, left-wing academic and intellectual circles have developed a critical-left line.

This third approach argues that founded dichotomies such as democratic- nationalist and center-periphery do not fit into the reality of Turkish society. Rather, those who adopts this approach focus on class struggle and economic structure. In this manner, it attempts to reveal that Islamism is somehow supported by the state and the bourgeoisie. In recent years, several studies have addressed the impact of Islamism in the neo-liberal transformation of Turkey. For instance, Özçetin (2011) examines the transformation of Islamist discourse from “opposition” to “compliance”. Similarly, Tuğal (2011) argues that thanks to the AK Party experience in Turkey, the Islamic movement has become absorbed into the secular, capitalist hegemony. Taşkın (2013) also emphasizes the cooperation between Islamism and the state and capitalism. I can say that these researchers emphasis on class struggle and economic structure provides a realistic basis for criticizing the culturalist position. However, in this schema, Islamism is labeled “naturally” as a right-wing politics. For instance, Bora (2013) argues that Turkish Islamism is just a variant of rightism. I can say that, this approach ignores the potential and oppositional dimension of Islamism, as well as the autonomous dynamics of its development since the mid 19th century.

In this dissertation, my perspective is closer to the second approach in terms of position of Islamism in Turkish politics. For, firstly, it can be said that Islamism can embody a strong potential against the status quo in the Middle East. This argument can be justified in terms of culturalist and class-based, materialist perspectives. Moreover, Islamism that emerged in modern conditions of the 19th century was the product of historicity that oscillated between Islam and modernity. That is why, rather than a rigid ideology, this historical phenomenon indicates a hybrid aspects of Islamism. In this dissertation, I will consider Islamism as a movement that reflects the demands of the people against the state without ignoring material facts. However, beyond that, I should mention that I do not have an essentialist or normative claim about Islamism.

The second body of literature I draw on is studies on “new Muslim intellectuals”. In the early 1990s, Meeker (1991) depicted the emergence of a new type of Muslim intellectuals. For him, new Muslim intellectuals including İsmet Özel, Ali Bulaç, Rasim Özdenören, İlhan Kutluer, Ersin Gündoğan and Abdurrahman Dilipak, are the product of the secular Republic of Turkey after 1950, and they differ from pre-1980 Islamic thinkers because of this background. Thanks to

this background, “the kind of language he uses, the literary works he cites or analyses, the stance he takes toward Westernism and secularism, together with less tangible features of his discourse, are unprecedented” (Meeker, p.215). Meeker also demonstrates that the new Muslim intellectuals further differentiate themselves from Islamist thinkers of the late 19th century with their views about Western civilization, science and technology. Meeker’s study successfully reveals the distinctiveness of the new Muslim intellectual. Meeker’s sociological portrait on the new Muslim intellectual can provide a ground for studying Muslim intellectuals after 1980, as well as his analysis is quite illuminating for Turkish readers.

The literature, following the portrait of Meeker, often emphasizes that the new Muslim intellectual rejects the Western culture, science and technology. Toprak (1993) states that the new Muslim intellectuals take a negative stance towards industrial development and technology. Moreover, they are sensitive to any attempt to justify Islamic principles from the standpoint of Western perspective. For Meeker, “This, he argues, was the basic mistake of Islamist thinkers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Out of a feeling of inferiority before the power of the West, he contends, they lost touch with the distinctiveness of an Islamic outlook as they attempted to develop Islamic versions of Western concepts and institutions” (Meeker, p.272). Thus, for Toprak “at this point the earlier question of how Muslim societies can come to terms with the modern age has lost all its significance for the new generation of Islamist thinkers” (Toprak, p.253). On the other hand, Göle (1997) studies three categories of the Islamist counter-elites as the engineers, the women and the intellectuals. For her, “all three are the result of the hybrid nature of modernism and Islamism” (Göle, p.57). Contrary to Toprak, Göle thus emphasizes the similarities between secular-Republican elites and Islamist counter-elites. Kentel (2011) also examines the new Muslim intellectuals of the 1990s in the context of Islamist reviews such as *Bilgi ve Hikmet*, *Tezkire* and *Umran*. This study reveals the reflexive and self-confident dimensions of the Muslim intellectuals in the 1990s. Karasipahi (2009) studies the discourse of the new Muslim intellectuals in the face of authoritarian Kemalist state. Moreover, Karasipahi only emphasizes the oppositional aspect of the new Muslim intellectuals. For instance, he argues that “Islamic sources and principles constitute the single reference point for them” (Karasipahi, p.193). This statement, I will argue, does not fit into Özel’s essays very well.

On the other hand, this literature indicates that the Muslim intellectuals are against radicalism or “fundamentalist” Islam, because, for them, an Islamic transformation should take place primarily in the inner world of individuals. Moreover, they think that society initially should embrace Islamic values and lifestyle and that is why, they do not adopt the official strategy, which has been based on a state project of centralization of the political power, was to be “musliminized from top to bottom”. Secondly, related to this, their critical stance against Western civilization is in the level of thought. That is why, their challenging rhetoric against Western civilization does not have a practical content. Thirdly, their conscious denial-based stance does not mean ignorance of the products of Western culture. Contrary to what has been argued, the new Muslim intellectual owes much to concepts, theories and developments in Western philosophy and science. This actually was a natural result of the education they received. As is known, Islamist intellectuals have completed their education from secular higher education institutions in Turkey, and most of whom knew at least one European language. This new type of intellectual has had a serious, long-standing, interest in Western literature, philosophy, or social history (Meeker, p.272).

Some studies also examine the Muslim intellectuals in the context of Islamism’s political transformation. In this manner, Çeğin and Meder (2012) studies the transformation of Islamist intellectuals within the frame of rising Islamism in post-1980 Turkey. They argue that “the sincere intellectual struggle that the new Muslim intellectuals had undergone for the Islamic transformation against modernization was defeated by the “Protestantization” that has taken place in the social life” (Çeğin&Meder, p.270). Özçetin (2011) also examine the transformation of Islamist discourse from opposition to compliance. This study demonstrates that although Islamist confrontational discourse has been dominant in the 1970s and the 1980s, thanks to the major ideological inspirations such as postmodernism, multiculturalism and globalization for the new Islamism, the transformation of Islamism in Turkey refers to gradual elimination of this anti-systemic, anti-status quo Third Worldist populism (Özçetin, p.334). This perspective emphasizing the importance of neo-liberal transformation is illuminating regarding the historicity of discourses and structural process in Turkey.

However, there is an important gap in the relevant literature. Firstly, the evolution of Muslim intellectuals’ thought scarcely has been analysed. In this

manner, for instance, in her study on new Muslim intellectuals, Karasipahi states as follows: “if we analyse their evolution from the 1980s through the 1990s, we do not see any remarkable change in their thinking. In other words, we observe that they repeat the same arguments, criticisms, and proposals” (Karasipahi, p.57). This claim, for me, has not been refined very well. I will argue in this dissertation that Özel’s thought seems to change partly in terms of his philosophical and political ideas. For instance, in *Üç Mesele*, Özel does not refer any positive meaning about nationalistic ideas as well as criticizes the nationalist view. However, since the early 1990s, he began to emphasize the Turkishness identity. That is why, Karasipahi’s claim does not fit into Özel’s intellectual orientation. I will elaborate this point later. As Meeker points out that there has not yet been any attempt to show the change of Özel’s ideas (Meeker, p.281). In this dissertation, I will partly demonstrate the change of Özel’s thought in terms of his political and philosophical understandings. Secondly, for me, Özel’s some essays does not fit into the emphasis of this literature. In this dissertation, I will argue that Özel not just only have a serious, long-standing, interest in Western thought and philosophy; but also seems to evaluate it as a possibility for Muslims. However, the general tendency in the literature is that the new Muslim intellectuals, including Özel in absolute contrast with Western culture, science and philosophy. That is why, the phenomenon of Muslim intellectuals interested in the Western culture more than Islamic resources is seen as a contradiction for Muslim intellectual. For me, this perspective is not totally wrong, but reductionist in some respects. I will address this point later.

The third body of literature I draw on is the specific studies on İsmet Özel’s thought and poetry. In this dissertation, I will not deal with his poetry in order to narrow and crystallize the subject. Rather, I will treat him as a public Islamist intellectual in this work. Briefly stated, İbrahim Tüzer’s comprehensive study (2012), *İsmet Özel: Şiire Damıtılmış Hayat*, is one of the most important works on Özel’s poetry. Tüzer attempts to associate his poems with Özel’s ontological problems about his life and personality. Şahin (2010) makes a critical analysis of *Üç Mesele* in her master thesis. Arslan (2013) also compiles the religious and political views of Özel in the context of sociology of religion. In his book, Yusuf (2014) also provides a summary of his political thought. In addition, Yusuf considers Özel as a universal intellectual in Benda and Edward Said’s normative conception. This analysis, for me, does not fit into Özel’s intellectual

position, because he develops an attitude within the ethical-political engagements, which I will discuss later. Briefly, it is safe to say that this book and two dissertations mentioned above only summarize the ideas of Özel, without presenting an in-depth analysis of any aspect of his thought.

On the other hand, Özel's ideas have become the focus of attention as part of the rise of Islamism in the 1980s and the 1990s. First, by addressing the ideas of Özel in *Üç Mesele*, Toprak (1985) claims that Özel was proposing an anachronistic transformation of society on early Islam. That is why, according to her, "the social model that they (Bulaç and Özel) propose is utopian. As all the utopias, it pretends to be true every time and everywhere, it is outside history and it does not accept reality" (Toprak, 1985, p.150). In a reply to this analysis, Özel preferred to be a *revendicatif* (protester) instead of utopian, because rather than imagining fantastic worlds, he attempted a critique of the present system (Özel, 1986, p.19, quoted in Guida, p.125).

Meeker (1991, 1994a and 1994b) also analyzes Özel's ideas and translates from fragmentary of his books including *Üç Mesele*, *Zor Zamanda Konuşmak*, *Cuma Mektupları*, *Taşları Yemek Yasak* and *Waldo Sen Neden Burada Değilsin* with a preface. One can argue that Meeker's work on Özel contains important analysis and findings. In this manner, I have utilized from Meeker's concise analysis about the ideas of Özel throughout this dissertation.

Morrison (2006) deals with and translates from Özel's three allegorical tales. The protagonists of each are, "Nasreddin Hoca (the folk hero), a solitary tourist in a hotel restaurant in Spain who cannot articulate his desire for a simple steak, and Chuang-Tzu, a Confucian sage who opts to remain fishing by a brook rather than ascending the corridors of wealth and power" (Morrison, 2006, p.520). This article discusses Özel's view on what it means to be a Muslim living in the secular Republic of Turkey through his metaphorical language. In all three images such as hoca, tourist and wise man of metaphorical narrative, "the Islamist appears as the weaker, as the outsider, as the dissenter, but one who possesses integrity, a modest dignity, and even wisdom" (Morrison, p. 520). Özel also warns Muslims against the lure and temptations of ruling power with his didactic style. For Morrison, "Özel defines success for these embodiments of the Muslim believer in Turkey as persisting on the right path, not in terms of palpable accomplishment" (Morrison, p.520). Thus in this work, Morrison reveals the guiding aspect and

didactic style of Özel's essays.

Aktay and Özensel (2011) examine Özel's political ideas in the context of his positive and negative contribution to Islamist thought. They deal with Özel's important books chronologically including *Üç Mesele* and *Cuma Mektupları*, arguing that Özel's critical and moral stance has made a significant contribution to the self-reflexivity of Islamism. However, they also indicate that Özel's political analysis and world-system imagination deepen the conspiratorial paranoia that is already common among Islamist circles. Moreover, they argue that Özel's world-system analysis has led him to a cynical attitude that rejects the reality of political arena. This attitude could have only produce heroism for escaping the world-system. For them, this heroism corresponds to his idiosyncratic Turkishness identity in his late period.

Guida's article (2014) analyzes Özel's political ideas and the major polemics that accompanied his career. After summarizing his life story, Guida deals with the ideas of Özel in his first book, *Üç Mesele* and then his new Muslim-Turk nationalist orientation from the 1990s to the 2000s. For Guida, the case of İsmet Özel helps us understand the evolution of Islamism in Turkey, its main contradictions and sometimes its occasional failures (Guida, p.118). In this manner, Guida discusses Özel's opposition to the AK Party experience as the "new strategy" of Islamists.

Yıldırım (2013) also analyzes Özel's ideas considering his relationship to Islamism. This article describes and compiles his ideas under certain themes such as third way, Turkey-centered stance and Iranian Revolution. In the epilogue, Yıldırım argues that there are three phases in Özel's thought: early period under the influence of Egyptian Islamist thinker Sayyid Qutb, Turkey-centered political views in the axis of world-system theory, the Turkishness thesis as the most mature period in Özel's thought. This periodization, however, is a product of a teleological view of his intellectual journey. In other words, this standpoint reconstructs Özel's political and intellectual trajectory by looking toward the past backward from today. Whereby one can argue that his ideas were gradually developed and matured by following a linear course. This also means to internalize the autobiographical narrative of intellectual or writer himself about his own image. In this dissertation, I will attempt to put forward the sociological context in the face of teleological narrative.

Fındıklı (2014) also analyses Özel's political views as presented in his important essays, *Cuma Mektupları I, II, III, IV, V* (1988-1992). This article focuses on Özel's world system imagination and his alternative Islamic offer against the world-system. This article presents a critical and fruitful analysis of his political essays.

As is clear, this specific literature on İsmet Özel's ideas has usually examined his political aspect. However, he is a kind of total, public intellectual who has written essays on many different subjects such as science, culture and philosophy. That is why, in order to make a more inclusive analysis of Özel's ideas, his cultural and philosophical aspects should be taken into account as well. In this dissertation, I will also examine his philosophical essays along with his political analysis. Furthermore, as highlighted by Meeker, there has not yet been any attempt to represent the change in Özel's ideas (Meeker, 1994, p.281). I will briefly outline the transformation of his ideas from *Üç Mesele* (1978) to *Tahrir Vazifeleri* (1994) and *Cuma Mektupları* (1988-1992). In this manner, this thesis aims to help fill this gap in literature by analyzing and comparing his political and philosophical views in the context of world-system theory and existentialist philosophy, as well as tracing the transformation of his views from the late 1970s to early 1990s.

1.4 The Organization of the Dissertation

I would like to present briefly an outline of the dissertation. In the second chapter, I will examine the course of Islamism in Turkey, focusing on the Islamic movement in the 1980s and the 1990s. I will also discuss the rising of Islamic movement after 1980 in Turkey. This chapter will constitute the context of this dissertation. Then, after summarizing the biography of İsmet Özel, I will summarize and examine his first book, *Üç Mesele* in the context of its own period. I will also discuss the importance and the effect of *Üç Mesele* in Islamist circles. At the end of second chapter, I will discuss the position and the effect of Özel as an Islamist intellectual from 1980s to the 2000s. I will also address the writing style and the didactic aspect of his texts.

In the third chapter, first I will present the political project of Özel about Islamic movement in his five volumes of *Cuma Mektupları* in the context of his world-system approach. In this manner, I will also examine his important political themes such as the specificity of Islam and Turkey, democracy, state and

nation. As a result, I will demonstrate how the “political West” was built within his essays. I will also argue that his political essays reveal his normative concerns and political engagements. Second, I will analyze his philosophical discourse in *Tahrir Vazifeleri* within the framework of major themes such as humankind, religion and existence. I will also demonstrate the influence of Heidegger on Özel’s existentialist views. Then, I will examine his analysis on modernity, culture and science in the contexts of sociology of science and Buber’s philosophy. I will also show Özel’s eclectic attitude in his relation to Western thought. I will also demonstrate how the “philosophical West” was built within his texts. As a consequence of the dissertation, I will examine his thought in the axis of fundamental distinction between “political” and “philosophical” West and will compare his views from *Üç Mesele* to *Tahrir Vazifeleri* and *Cuma Mektupları* for examining his orientation.

CHAPTER 2

THE FORMATION OF AN ISLAMIC THINKER: İSMET ÖZEL'S INTELLECTUAL PORTRAIT

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, initially I will attempt to express the context of Islamist intellectual, Özel's essays. I will take this context as "Islamic movement" or more broadly, "Islamism", because Özel has worked as a columnist for Islamist newspapers such as *Yeni Devir*, *Milli Gazete* and *Yeni Şafak* from 1977 to 2003. Moreover, the content of his essays was closely related to Islamic movement and has commonly been seen a representative of this movement. For these reasons, his essays cannot be understood without considering Islamic movement. Also in connection with Islamism, 1980s and 1990s were a period of significant structural transformations in Turkey. Here, after outlining Islamism, I will summarize the rise of Islamism in the context of changing structural processes in Turkey. Then I will briefly describe a group of Islamist intellectuals in the 1980s and the 1990s called as "new Muslim intellectuals" in the literature, in which Özel also is included. Then, I will present a brief biography of İsmet Özel. Afterwards, I will summarize and reconstruct his first essay, *Üç Mesele* in the context of Islamic movement. In this chapter, I want to develop the following main arguments: First, Özel seems to want to determine the orientation of a rising and promising Islamic movement with his first book, *Üç Mesele* (1978). Second, this book was quite effective in the Islamist intellectual circles until the end of the 1980s. Özel seemed to be a mentor with his stimulant style among the educated Muslim youth. In this chapter, I will generally depict both the historical process and his first book, *Üç Mesele* and I will associate them with each other. This depiction will also provide the foreground for next chapter.

2.2 The Structure of Islamism in Turkey

An overview of Islamism in Turkey demonstrates that there are roughly five different Islamist groups in Turkey:

- a. Political organizations: the political parties of Milli Görüş movement;
- b. Religious orders and communities like several branches of the Nakshibendi order and the Nurcu movement;

- c. Intellectuals like Sezai Karakoç, İsmet Özel, Ali Bulaç and Rasim Özdenören;
- d. Business associations (Müsiad), trade unions (Hak-İş), and human right associations (Mazlum-Der);
- e. Independent small organizations around some journals, foundations and associations (Çınar & Duran, 2008, p.25).

Although Islamic movement was irreducible to one political party, an essential part of the movement in Turkey was *Milli Görüş* parties, because Islamic demands gained visible political ground and popularization with *Milli Görüş* movement for the first time. In this manner, first *Milli Görüş* party, MNP in 1970s roughly consisted of three social strata: 1) the new elite that originate from the provincial, religious family and grew up in the Republic's education institutions, who were engaged in self-employment, 2) provincial religious entrepreneurs who were engaged in trade and industry, 3) low-income Sunni Muslims living in both urban areas and the countryside (Çakır, 2011, p.545). Due to its social composition, the Islamist movement in Turkey has a heterogeneous and conservative appearance. Starting from this point I have to emphasize two important matters.

First, this also means that the social ground of Islamic movement is based on the Sunni masses which constituted majority in Turkey. It can be said that in order to get the support of Sunni-conservative masses, there was a growing political rivalry between the official rhetoric and dissident Islamist discourse in the 1990s. This is also the axis of culture wars as Turkey's central political struggle. It can be said that there was an important role of intellectuals in this discursive contestation. "Secular elites" and "Islamist counter-elites" have taken position on this axis and have developed their respective discursive strategies. In the next chapter, in this sense, I will attempt to show how Özel constructed a counter-discourse against official secularist rhetoric in his political essays, (*Cuma Mektupları*) for Islamic movement.

Secondly, by referring to Aktay I should mention the double legitimacy problem of Islamism in the face of both state and society. To defend explicitly Islamic demands have been exposed to the legal obstacles of state. This has caused that none of political party programs have an "Islamist" content (Aktay, 2011, p.15). Both the sacred of the regime and 'realpolitik' requirements has strictly drawn the boundaries of Islamism in Turkey, and none of the formation traditionally referred to

Islamism wanted to be within these boundaries (Çiğdem, 2011, p.29). Therefore Islamic demands usually could not be pronounced against the regime and Islamist intellectuals have undertaken to meet this need by participating in a public debate. In terms of societal dimension, religious demands in a “Muslim” country could draw reaction, because Islamism had to establish its own legitimacy under the circumstance that nearly all of society has an alleged “Muslim” identity. That is why, the emphasis on Islam can create an exclusionary category that objected to the Islamic understanding of others. However, without this exclusionary emphasis on Islam, how Islamists differentiate themselves from other political identities becomes a problem (Aktay, p.16). Islamist intellectuals in depth dealt with this dilemma and tried to provide the societal justification for Islamism. I will argue that Islamist intellectuals have a crucial role in the face of the above problems. In the next chapter, I will also attempt to analyse the role of Özel in the context of Islamic movement.

Finally, I should mention that Islamism, emerged as a response to the superiority of Western civilization at a particular historical moment, is also ultimately historical and that is why, the integration of Islamism to a variety of political movements throughout its own history does not mean that Islamism is just version of the Turkish right or nationalist conservatism (Duran, p.130-131). Contrary to this claim (Bora, 2013), I would argue that Islamism is a tradition of producing “hybrid patterns” (Göle, 2007), because Islamist tradition has tried to respond to different political and social demands and problems by constantly re-interpreting its own resources. In this manner, for example, the question of the relationship between Islam and democracy does not have fixed answers. Rather, this relationship is reconstructed by Islamist interpreters in the context of social needs and historical circumstances. Thus I argue that approaching Islamism with a historical and dynamic view is more convenient to understand social processes in Turkey, as well as its adherents.

2.3 The Rise of Islamism in Turkey: From 1970s to February 28

The course of Islamism in Turkey in parallel to Turkish modernization can be roughly divided into four phases:² The first is the “modernist” approach that can be summarized with “adoption of Western technique and preservation of Islamic

² I benefited from Ferhat Kentel’s explanation in making this periodization of Islamism: “1990’ların İslâmi Düşünce Dergileri ve Yeni Müslüman Entelektüeller”, in *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce 6-İslâmcılık* (İletişim, 2011).

culture” for saving the Ottoman Empire from dissolution. The second phase is the forced retreat in the face of authoritarian modernization process during the One Party period (1923-1945). Islamism were not visible for a while in public sphere because of the state’s understanding of strict secularism. The third phase starts with the adoption of a multi-party system, where religious demands of the Muslim people could partly find their representation within right-wing conservative parties. During these years, Islamism was integrated into the right-wing parties. However, a revival of Islam, here, was limited to the private sphere, not yet public sphere (Çaha, 2011, p.476). For example freedom of worship, religious education and conservation were among main demands for Muslim people. The attitudes of the communities and the sects that continue religious life can be seen as an indicator of the “proto-Islamism” in the Republican period, because they tried to protect the presence of Islam against Kemalist domination in Turkish society. Without this effort, Islamism might not find a social base in the 1970s. This point is important, because in spite of the authoritarian Turkish laicism, the authority of Islam at the societal level was partly continuing throughout the republican history particularly in the provinces. So, Islamic revival actually did not spring up at once, but only gradually increased its visibility in public and metropolitan areas. However, Islamism did not correspond to a political formation separated from rival ideologies for a long time. In other words, until the end of 1970s, Islamism represented a parochial tendency that avoided formulating its demands through a political discourse (Çiğdem, p.28).

The concept of “Islamic movement” have been widely used to express Islamist formations in the 1980s and 90s. This movement as a fourth phase of Islamism in Turkey was based on a postulate shared by a group of people which embraced Islam as a way of life in Turkey that Islam cannot confine itself to the private sphere.³ As Kentel states, starting at the end of 1960s, Islamic movement gained much momentum due to the Iranian Islamic Revolution of 1979 and lasted till February 28 1997, is described by the process in which the Islamic movement assumed a “conflicting” nature against the westernization model (Kentel, 2011, p.722). In this period, an oppositional and confrontational rhetoric against the Western hegemony, capitalism, technology and Kemalist regime dominated the

³According to Bulaç’s classification, the Islamic movement was the second period of Islamism (Bulaç, 2011, p.49). The first generations of Islamism were shaped by Ottoman modernization and had a ‘rescuer mission’, because the aim was to save the empire. Islamic movement evolved into a ‘founder mission’ as a design of a new society and state.

Islamist thought and discourse.

With the 1960 military coup, Turkey has experienced serious rupture in terms of both the history of Islamism and the religion-state relations. As Kara claims, the issue of religion has been pushed to become a matter of a particular group. Islamist MNP (National Order Party), founded in 1970, emerged as a reaction to the changing religion-state relations after the coup (Kara, 2010, p.19). Also in this period, due to the translation movements, Turkish Islamism found an opportunity to interact with the Islamic world for the first time in the history of the Turkish Republic. Books and writings of several Islamic thinkers from Egypt, Iran and Pakistan such as Hassan al- Banna, Sayyid Qutb, Mawdudi and Ali Shariati were translated into Turkish. These Islamist scholars and the rhetoric of religious-activist movements in Egypt and Pakistan considerably impacted on contemporary Islamic thought in Turkey. This translation movement performed an educative function politically for Turkish Islamism. Thus Islamic movement slowly began to break away from rightist and conservative understandings during the 1970s. In other words, as long as Turkish Islamism gains an international dimension through the effect of both translations (theory) and political movements (praxis) from Islamic world, Islamists in Turkey has found much of its distinctive colour. Cemil Aydın expresses the positive aspects of translation process as follows:

This reinternationalization of Islamist thought in Turkey, after about half a century of preoccupation primarily with the “Kemalist other,” refined the thinking about different aspects of Western civilization and modernity. It also gave Islamism a new global outlook and confidence as the Islamists could liberate themselves from the agenda of Turkish nationalism and Kemalism to discuss issues of neo-colonialism, the Palestinian question, and the Iranian revolution, in ways that the Turkish secularists would not discuss these issues. This internationalism had the potential to help free at least some Islamists from culturalist thinking and nationalist discourse and sometimes even to connect them with critiques of capitalism, third world dependency, and environmental destruction advanced by the global left (Aydın, 2006, p.454).

While translation movements contributed the internationalization of Islamism, this interaction process, in some accounts, has paved the way for a groundless, universalist theoretical fiction that missed the specificities of Turkish society. In other words, emphasizing the ummah Islamist thought in Turkey tried to detach itself from its own social reality and historicity in Turkey. However, the

reality of the Islamic movement was inseparable from the reality of Turkey. As Çiğdem states, Islamism primarily must find solutions to the problems of this society for continuing its existence in Turkey (Çiğdem, 2012, p.118).⁴ In this sense, I can say that intellectualist or doctrinal (*kitabi*) fractions of Islamism had an idealistic rhetoric that neglected the social reality and problems in Turkey. For example, the issue was how Sayyid Qutb's books will be adopted in the context of Turkey. This problem, for me, cannot be resolved on the basis of the ummah as an idea. This situation made it difficult to build a common language between the contemporary Islamist rhetoric and the language of the Muslim people in Turkey. Later, I will address Özel's essays in this respect.

The political agenda of the National Salvation Party (MSP) reflected this intellectual mobility in that period. The MSP embarked on competition with the leftist parties by emphasizing a statist and equitable economy and with rightist parties by using the rhetoric of morality and spirituality (Çakır, 2011, p.547). In this way, Islamists attempted to create a different and original position in both discursive (intellectual) and practical (political) dimensions on Turkish politics. For instance, while Turkey experienced political violence of unprecedented levels that erupted from the late 1970s, the MSP and its youth organization, *Akıncılar* refused to interfere with the spiralling of violence between the socialists and nationalists. In addition to this, despite the tensions of the period, the MSP was able to establish a coalition government with the "leftist" Republican People's Party (CHP) in 1974. Moreover, even though Islamic movement was labelled as "green communists" by the right-wing nationalists, the youth base of the movement insisted on emphasizing their "otherness". In short, the Islamic movement achieved to attract public attention towards itself through its capacity to distinguish itself from the other political positions. That is why, many academicians and intellectuals such as Şerif Mardin, Atilla İlhan and Mümtaz Soysal dealt with the case of MSP since the early phase of the phenomenon.

At the end of the 1970s, an upward trend in the Islamic world was the radical Islamic movements. Two striking examples of Islamism to replace third-

⁴ At this point, Çiğdem distinguishes an important issue for Muslims: Being a member of a society does not mean to transform the sense of belonging. The former has an explicit sociological meaning, whereas the latter turns into a political belonging to this social reality (Çiğdem, p.118). For this reason, being nationalist indicates another meaning from what is meant here.

world socialism were the Islamic revolution in Iran and the jihad (holy war) carried out against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan (Çakır, p.547). In the context of Turkey, the rise of the Islamic movement accelerated during the major turning points such as the 1980 coup d'état (internal factor) and 1979 Iranian revolution (external factor). The Iranian revolution has crucial symbolic importance in terms of emphasizing the political and social dimensions of Islam. Islamist circles in Turkey were seriously affected by revolution and this effect has consolidated an “ummah” (community of Islam) discourse against conservative-nationalist understandings.

After the September 12 coup, it is not easy to explain why Islamic movement rises rapidly. I will try to explain this fact in two-dimensions. First, the state was increasingly using an Islamic discourse especially against the “threat of communism” in the metropolises since the beginning of 1950s. Moreover, in the military coup of 1980, the state tried to construct its own legitimacy with references borrowed partly from religion, and therefore religion found a chance to acquire a political identity and equip itself with a political function more than ever during the Republican period (Kurtoğlu, 2011, p.214). However, it should be remembered that one of the main justifications for the military coup was the rise of the MSP labelled as an extremist Islamic threat for the regime. That is why the state tried to impose a certain version of Islam over the Muslim people through official channels. For instance, until 12 September, there were bearded muftis sitting in the religious office with turban (*sarık*) or skullcap (*takke*) and there were religious offices where shoes were prohibited. After 12 September, authorities put an end to these conventions (Kara, 2010, p.110). In terms of institutional politics, an important example was the 10 percent electoral threshold that came into force after 12 September. According to many, the objective was to prevent extreme right, extreme left-socialist and especially Islamist *Milli Görüş* parties from entering parliament. Therefore, the state defended a certain understanding of religion (compatible with secular regime) to reinforce its own legitimacy. That is why, one can say that 12 September regime tried to restore the Kemalist system by becoming more tolerant to religion, because the components of the Kemalist ideology (positivism as ahistoric reason and laicism as a liberation of the reason) was unable to fulfil its function of keeping Turkish society together. As Mardin states, this was a result of the failure to create the social

ethos of Kemalism (Mardin, 2000, p.142). In short, Islam was used as a social reinforcement for the regime. However, the religious understandings of some Muslims and the Islamic movement were subjected to demonization and stigmatized as dangerous and evil in the sight of Turkish society. Public debate between secular and Islamist intellectuals during the 1980s and 1990s took place on the basis of an othering rhetoric of secular regime. In order to consolidate their own opposite position, leftist intellectual circles often emphasize the mutual agreement between the state and the Islamic movement. It seems that this view is not totally wrong in terms of the use of Islamic rhetoric by the official authorities. However, that is not the whole story and the fundamental factor is overlooked.

Secondly, it is argued that the growth of the Islamic movement in Turkey is closely related to the socio-economic structural transformation rather than the design of “*raison d’état*”. In the post-1980 coup d’état, Islamist politics and discourses, which came out with relatively little damage from the coup, had filled the gap of socialist orientation that had widespread mass political organizations. Macro-social processes also formed a ground for the rise of the Islamic movement in the metropolises. Turgut Özal, who was the prime minister of the post-coup period, paved the way for such developments by constructing serious substructures which opened the doors of the elitist bureaucratic structure which had been closed for the ordinary man in the Republican period (Çaha, 2011, p.481). The democratization of the education and the expansion of the provincial, religious bourgeoisie through the opportunities of globalization were the structural transformations that increased the economic and the cultural capital of the Islamic community. Urbanization, internal migration, expansion of the education, transformation in the patterns of income distribution as the outputs of neo-liberal policies accelerated the mobilization of the social groups on which Islamic thought is fed and based (Çiğdem, 2011, p.30). In short, it can be said that socio-economic developments indeed have led to strengthen the Islamic movement in Turkey after 1980. However, Islamic movement substantially was an “unintended consequence” for the regime. This fact became apparent in the coup of February 28.

These structural factors constituted the ground in increasing the public effectiveness and power of the Islamic movement. It should be underlined here that the Islamic movement captured and represented the *Zeitgeist* of the 1980s and the 1990s. The demand for intervention of Islam into the public and political sphere

manifestly discussed for the first time and for this reason, Islamist party and groups were forced to confront the state. The Constitutional court and the military, which are the guardians of the regime, often intervened in Turkish democracy where the blurring of the boundaries took place with the Islamist politics on behalf of the regime. Here, let us go to the new Muslim intellectuals emerging parallel to the social development of Islamism after 1980.

The rhetoric of the new Muslim intellectuals corresponds to the fourth phase of Islamism as a distinct oppositional political movement. In the 1980s and 1990s, Islamism turned into a more urban, less provincial movement (Kentel, p.723). In this period, Islamist circles also develops an impressive, confrontational rhetoric against both Western capitalism, imperialism, technology, philosophical eclecticism, Kemalist secularism and nation-state from within Islamic movement. Muslim intellectuals⁵ are the main perpetrators who produce this challenging rhetoric and defend Islam as a real alternative by participating in public debate. A general profile of the new Muslim intellectual has been depicted by Meeker as such:

The Muslim intellectual is a critic of Republican political and cultural institutions who calls for the re-Islamization of the way of life of believers in Turkey. While he is more or less indebted to a century of Islamist criticism of Westernization, the new Muslim intellectual is very much the product of the post-1950, secular, Turkish Republic. This background differentiates him from earlier Islamist thinkers in Turkey. . . In general, the new Muslim intellectual in Turkey is always a writer who has published columns in newspapers, short articles in journals or books consisting of collections of short essays. His prose is contemporary Turkish. His writings are critical and reflective. He addresses a reading audience whose social and educational background is similar to his own (Meeker, 2004, p.271).

In this manner, İsmet Özel, a well-known poet convert to Islam from a Marxist worldview, is also one of the most prominent and influential writers among the new Muslim intellectuals after 1980 in Turkey. Now, I wil briefly summarize his biography.

2.4 A Brief Biography of İsmet Özel

Özel was born in Kayseri, a central Anatolian city in 1944. He was the youngest of six siblings and his father was a police officer in the province. He

⁵ İsmet Özel, Ali Bulaç, Rasim Özdenören, İlhan Kutluer, Ersin Gündoğan and Abdurrahman Dilipak can be considered as the new Muslim intellectuals of the post-1980 period. Especially Ali Bulaç's "Çağdaş Kavramlar ve Düzenler" (1976) and İsmet Özel's "Üç Mesele" (1978) have been the reference books that reveals the outline of ideas of that period.

grew up in a home filled with books through his well-educated elder brothers and sisters. He completed his pre-college education in Kastamonu, Çankırı, and Ankara. In the light of the information in his biography, one discerns that he was not a successful student during his primary, secondary and high school years. There were two important points in his school reports showing continuity: His math scores were low and his English scores and art lessons such as music and painting were very high (Kalkan, 2010, p.38-53). He seems to be interested in dictionaries, foreign languages and poetry from his childhood. His first poem, entitled *Kış* (Winter) was published in a children's journal when he was nine years old (Kalkan, p.37).

In 1962, he attended the Faculty of Political Science of Ankara University, but he left this school before graduating. He then completed university education in French Language and Literature at Hacettepe University in 1977. In 1963, with the suggestion of his poet friend Ataol Behramoğlu, Özel became a member of the *Türkiye İşçi Partisi* (Özel, 2010a, p.47). During this period, his first poems were published in leftist literary reviews such as *Yelken*, *Evrım*, *Dönem*, *Devinim LX* (Kalkan, p.62-85). By the mid-60s, he was recognized as a socialist poet in literary circles. His prose was yet limited to issues related to poetry and literary declarations of reviews. One of the most important events in his early period is the publication of *Halkın Dostları* review along with his revolutionary friends.⁶ This socialist literary review tried to find its own voice by criticizing its predecessor, the *İkinci Yeni* poetry movement from a collectivist point of view. After the 12 March 1971 military memorandum, the review was eventually shut down. Özel entered into spiritual distress in that process⁷ and he says he was freed from this mood keeping in mind that poetry is a place of refuge (Tüzer, 2012, p.49). As a result of his quest, he became Muslim and in this way, he converged with his ontological security that he had always sought (Kalkan, pp.244-

⁶ The leading names of the Review, which was first published on 6 March 1970, were Ataol Behramoğlu, Murat Belge, Süreyya Berfe, Özkan Mert and Nihat Behram. The dominant figure of review was Özel, which becomes evident from the debate on the review's name in correspondence with Ataol Behramoğlu. Özel put the name of the review and he did not change, despite the insistence of the others. For more information, see: Ataol Behramoğlu & İsmet Özel, *Genç Bir Şairden Genç Bir Şaire Mektuplar*, 1995, p.104-107.

⁷ In his correspondance with Ataol Behramoğlu, spiritual crisis of İsmet Özel during this period is easy to trace. In a letter he said he had entered into suicide psychosis (Özel&Behramoğlu, 1995, p.198).

A deeper transformation was announced in 1974 when İsmet Özel published his poem *Amentü* (Credo), in which he publicised his conversion to Islam in Islamic *Diriliş* review led by Sezai Karakoç. He started writing as a columnist for the Islamist newspaper *Yeni Devir* directed by Nabi Avcı from 1977 to 1979 and again from 1981 to 1984. Also in 1977, İsmet Özel joined the circle of the *Düşünce* review led by the Islamist author Ali Bulaç. A collection of articles published in the review became Özel's first book of essays, *Üç Mesele: Teknik, Medeniyet, Yabancılaşma* in 1978 (Guida, pp.121-122). He also took part in *Yeryüzü* publishing house for a while, where he translated two books named *Gariplerin Kitabı* and *Cihad: Bir Temel Tasarım* from Abdulqadir as-Sufi, the noted Scottish Sufi writer who converted to Islam in 1967. *Şiir Okuma Kılavuzu* that he wrote in 1980 to demonstrate his understanding of poetry has been considered one of the most important texts in Turkish literature from the moment of its publication. In the same period, he worked as a lecturer of French language at the Mimar Sinan University for 18 years and gave lectures on poetry at Bilgi University. In 1985, Özel started a daily column in *Milli Gazete*, the newspaper of the Milli Görüş movement, and became popular among the Muslim youth through his books compiled from these columns such as *Zor Zamanda Konuşmak* (1984), *Taşları Yemek Yasak* (1985), *Bakanlar ve Görenler* (1985), *Faydasız Yazılar* (1986), *İrtica Elden Gidiyor* (1986), *Surat Asmak Hakkımız* (1987), *Tehdit Değil Teklif* (1987), *Neyi Kaybettiğini Hatırla* (1995) and *Ve'l Asr* (1995). His autobiographical book *Waldo Sen Neden Burada Değilsin?* published in 1988 was greeted with interest in various intellectual circles. One of Özel's specific intellectual initiatives, *Cuma Mektupları* (1988-1992) published from a weekly column articles reflects a political commentary of his mature period. In these essays, Özel tries to explain the modern Turkish political history by using the world-system approach. Also his important intellectual work, *Tahrir Vazifeleri* (1994) reveals the depth of

⁸ In an interview with him, when asked by his friend Murat Belge about the reason for his conversion, Özel replied, "a man looks either after his freedom or his security, but he cannot acquire one without the other. All my life has been a search for ontological security. I am convinced that I found this security in the Qur'an. Islam is a healing for me. Those who either have no wounds or are not aware of their wounds will have no need for this healing" (Özel, 1989, p.26).

Özel's thinking as an existentialist Muslim thinker. In the 1990s, thanks to the mediatic tools and his poems, Özel became known by the masses. Between January 1995 and September 1997 he commented on the intellectual agenda in a television programme on *Kanal 7* –first Islamist channel in Turkey- named *İsmet Özel'le Başbaşa*, conducted by İsmail Kara, a well-known academician (Guida, p.125). In 2003, Özel declared a break with the Islamic community by quitting his position in the *Milli Gazete* column, because, for him, the Islamists had lost the ability to oppose the capitalist system.⁹ Additionally, in the 1990s, Özel increasingly started to move further towards Muslim-Turkish nationalism, which has resulted in the establishment of the *İstiklâl Marşı Derneği* (National Anthem Association) in 2007. Özel also declared that he would no longer write poetry in 2013. He still writes essays and serves as the chairman of this association. Now, I will go over his first and sensational book, *Üç Mesele* in the context of Islamic movement.

2.5 İsmet Özel's Intervention into the Intellectual Field: Üç Mesele

Üç Mesele indicates a turning point at the intersection of the intellectual and political field in terms of Islamist thought, because until that time, Islamism in contemporary Turkey as distinct from the right-wing conservatism could not produce works that could reveal its intellectual specificity. As mentioned above, Islamic revival in Muslim countries became visible in the 1970s. *Üç Mesele*, in this regard, carries the spirit of its own period.¹⁰ Islamic movement tended toward a differentiation both politically with the leap of 70's "key" party MSP and intellectually with translations from the Islamic world, seeking draw its trajectory during this period. When considered in relation to the Islamic movement, *Üç Mesele* was written to assist the "pioneers" in determining the course of this trajectory.¹¹ In this sense, I argue that the purpose of the text is to ensure the clarity of Muslims' ideas. Thus, for him, the Islamic movement may get into a more authentic route, because Muslims can carry out a political struggle only by having an open mind.

⁹ Çeğin and Meder interpreted Özel's sensational break as such: "Probably, with the effect of the awareness thanks to being an ex-Marxist, Özel entered a critical stance as he perceives that the Muslims have joined in a serious cohesion with market liberalization by abandoning their "protester" political identities" (Çeğin&Meder, 2012, p.268).

¹⁰ Perhaps the easy way to understand the temporality of the book is to compare it with the present: *Üç Mesele* does not lead to a similar excitement or enthusiasm for today's readers, which reveals the historicity of the book.

¹¹ In the book's preface, Özel stated that his purpose is not to the general reader, but called the pioneers who was serving in Islamic struggle (*Üç Mesele*, p.17).

In general, as emphasized by Çiğdem, Özel argues in *Üç Mesele* that the theoretical objects of a unique world of thought can only be created with its own unique conceptual framework, so that he develops a critical attitude against the dominant concepts and thoughts (e.g. technique, civilization, science, alienation) that are effective in the intellectual equipment of Islamists (Çiğdem, p.143). In *Üç Mesele*, he strongly argues that Muslims should reject conceptual tools that do not belong to themselves. However, as Özel states in the preface, *Üç Mesele* does not specify the landmarks of Islamic understanding that will be valid for our age by going beyond this refusal (*Üç Mesele*, p.18). “Technique”, “civilization” and “alienation” as the key concepts of the modern world also create fundamental problematics of contemporary societies. These, however, cannot be seen as a modern western-specific problem, because Özel rejects the quasi-solution of the conservative east-west dichotomous discourse. This theme is a decisive moment that Islamist thought distinguishes from conservatism, because Islamism usually considers active attitude in the face of modern problems.¹² Moreover, according to Özel, the privilege of the correct formula of these issues and bringing solutions to these issues belongs to Muslims only (*Üç Mesele*, p.15).¹³

At this point, it might be useful to look at his treatment of some of these prominent concepts, starting with “alienation”. By referring to Erich Fromm, Özel argues that alienation is caused by the incompatibility between the human-subject’s consciousness (transcendental dimension of the human) and physical presence of the human (concrete dimension of the human that is subjected to the laws of nature). Then Özel indicates that the current Western resources dealing with the deterioration and corruption in contemporary societies and human relationships by using the concept of alienation, and asks the following: Why has the concept of alienation come into the axis of human research in the West? (*Üç Mesele*, p.90).

¹² However, *Üç Mesele* partly continues to return the old conservative rhetoric: For example, in one of the essays, Özel claims that Prometheus represents the Western civilization, while the prophet İdris corresponds to the East and starting from this representation, he makes a categorical distinction between East and West (*Üç Mesele*, p.63-66). This schematic distinction recalls the rhetoric of Necip Fazıl and Sezai Karakoç.

¹³ The idea of ontological privilege of Muslims, which he develop in this period, persisted throughout his political thought. Since it is not objectively defined, this ontological privilege of Muslims will remain an unrealized wish of Özel. In addition, it should be emphasized that Özel already do not attempts a scientific justification for his own arguments. In *Cuma Mektupları*, he will tries to reconstruct the world-system theory by claiming the ontological privilege of Muslims and Turkey against the system. His essays are based on normative motives, rather than scientific objectivism. I will examine this point later.

After describing Hegel, Feuerbach and Marx's views of alienation, he claims that the theory of alienation is the product of the atheistic humanist philosophical tradition¹⁴, because according to him, there is an excellent, complete human model within himself in the theories of alienation. So, instead of seeing the human in connection with God, human being is treated as an entity that is cause of himself (*causa sui*). Moreover, he argues that modern society become unable to maintain any specific values of humanism (*Üç Mesele*, p.89). Consequently, in order to offer a new way of thinking for humanity, he even supports the alienation of Muslims from their age. In short, Özel points out that there is an assumption of human essence at the root of the theory of alienation and this assumption is the result of Western humanistic tradition. That is why Muslims should reject this value-laden concept.

The critique of humanism is an important theme that can be traced in his essays. Özel explicitly attempts to settle account with humanism in a philosophical manner through his essays. However, at the same time, he uses the subjectivist philosophical and social-structural accumulation of the Western culture such as the Heidegger philosophy, world-system theory and German idealist tradition. In the next chapter, I will elaborate on his "selective readings" from the West.

Secondly, Özel also sharply criticizes the concept of "civilization" which would become increasingly widespread in Islamist thought. For him, civilization is inevitably evaluated by referring to financial data (*Üç Mesele*, p.132). By reference to Ibn Khaldun's *Muqaddima*, Özel argues that

civilization and progress can have three deleterious effects: the process of civilisation creates class divisions and opens the way to men's exploitation of other men; secondly, civilisation strengthens man's subjection to the material world and to the continuous quest for material progress; finally, civilisation inevitably spoils the structure of society and of the human personality (*Üç Mesele*, p.134-135).¹⁵

For Özel, civilization is the natural result of recognition of superiority of the human mind in the regulation of social life and of hedonistic tendencies in the

¹⁴ In the critique of alienation, Özel could have benefited from critical efficiency of the post-structuralist school.

¹⁵ "a) Medeniyet, sınıflaşmayı ve insanın insanı sömürmesini öngörür ve elbette sınıflaşma ve sömürü medeniyeti doğurur. . b) Medeniyet, insanların madde karşısında zaaflarının ve maddi gelişmeye mahkûm olmalarının somutlanmış halidir. . c) Medeniyet, toplum yapısını ve insan kişiliğini karşılıklı olarak bozar, kokuşturur."

selection of satisfaction ways (*Üç Mesele*, p.137). Thus, he thinks that in the concept of civilization, there is both a hidden secularism and a class division. He also draws attention to another danger in the concept of civilization: history should not be seen as an integral part of religion without considering certain principles. He gives the example of a classical book, *Kabusnâme* that contained non-Islamic elements. Özel thus demonstrates that Muslims should be more selective in their own historical experiments. At this point, Özel seems to use the critical possibilities of Islamism against conservative conception of history. His civilization critique also partly devalues the Ottoman experience that is attributed great importance by mainstream Islamism and the conservative imagination in the country. I can say that in Özel's critical reading of history, religion is considered with an essentialist approach in abstraction from the whole of history and society.¹⁶

The third concept he criticizes is "technique". At the beginning of his technology analysis, he indicates that there are two ways of thinking about the technique in the context of Turkey: "1-Is technology a material element alongside economic-political-cultural conflicts, 2-Or is technology a specific form of an embodied spiritual structure?" (*Üç Mesele*, p.171). For him, socialist and nationalist views actually advocate the same argument: technology is seen simply as an instrument and material element. However, for Özel, "technology is an extension of the idea of absolute dominance of the human being" (*ibid*, p.172). In other words, for him, it is a specific form of embodied spiritual structure. Phenomenological philosophy and perennial traditionalism might have provided a critical philosophical grounds for *Üç Mesele*.¹⁷ However, beyond that, Özel makes a more socio-historical

¹⁶ I will handle his religious approach and his views regarding western philosophy in *Üç Mesele* in the next chapter. I will also examine and compare his religious and philosophical views in his later work, *Tahrir Vazifeleri*.

¹⁷ A constant rumour the impact of Heidegger in İsmet Özel's views concerning technology circulates in intellectual Islamist milieus. However, analogies established between Heidegger and Özel are usually inattentive in mediatic circles. For instance, Heidegger's political engagement with Nazi movement is easily associated with Özel's Turkishness thesis. This issue is outside the scope of this dissertation; however, I should demonstrate the differences between Heidegger's understanding of technique and Özel's critique of technology in the context of *Üç Mesele*. First of all, Heidegger's effort is to think about the essence ("Wesen") of the technique. Heidegger actually insistently tries to separate his own critique from anthropological or cultural critique of science. This point will always continue in the basic routes of Heidegger's later works such as technology, language and art. In his works, he proceeds with questions concerning the essence of any issue by using possibility of language. That is why, his analysis method of tracing the essence of the technique is

analysis related to technology. He argues that technology is a derivative force in accordance with the ideals of Western civilization, in order to serve the bourgeoisie (*ibid*, p.180). Moreover, by referring to Yves Lacoste, he claims that technical inventions did not lead to industrial revolution. On the contrary, the requirements of economic conditions has determined technical inventions (*ibid*, p.181). Citing example from Edison, he indicates that technicians thus enter directly into the service of capitalists.

He also distinguishes technology from science. The attempt to grasp the wisdom of the order was established by God in the universe is a scientific endeavour. Furthermore, for him, science actually is not a part of mankind's power, rather it is a fortune or possibility that is granted to human beings (*ibid*, p.177). Özel emphasizes an important role of intuition and emotion in the history of science. Moreover, by noting the importance of the mental leap in the progress of scientific knowledge, he argues that this leap can be interpreted by the idea that knowledge is given due to wisdom (*ibid*, p.176). He brings examples from the scientific discoveries of scientists. (*ibid*, p.154).¹⁸ Science, in fact, even be considered as a form of worship.

idiosyncratic. To summarize simplifying and reducing, I can say that he describes the essence of modern technology as "Ge-stell" (enframing). Moreover, for Heidegger, the dominance of technology is the destiny of our times. In Heideggerian understanding, authentic history (Geschichte) that is, in fact, the history of Being, appears as totally destiny. He grasps the essence of technique within this fatalistic historical understanding. He also believes that the essence of technique is serious threat to human existence (Dasein). This threat is more fundamental than widespread sociological critique of technology. For him, authentic art and poetics is a possibility to get rid of this fundamental threat for humanity. (For more information, see: Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, Garland Publishing, 1977.) On the contrary, Özel does not deal with technology in this way. Rather, his critique concerning technology is based on socio-economic analysis. For him, technique is an extension of the bourgeoisie's interest. That is why, I argue in the context of Üç Mesele that contrary to common sense, the critique of technology in Üç Mesele has almost nothing to do with Heidegger's questions concerning the essence of the technique. However, the influence of Heidegger in Özel's thinking clearly seen in his existentialist book, *Tahrir Vazifeleri*, in a different context. I will elaborate on this context in the next chapter.

¹⁸ The sociohistorical analysis of technique has led Özel to sociologist Sombart and historian of science Kuhn. By referring to Werner Sombart, Özel argues that technology, in essence, not a social necessity, but a spiritual goods (Üç Mesele, p.178). Against the transcendence meta-narratives of science, emphasizing the historicity and leaps (paradigm shift) in the progress of science, Kuhn also influenced Özel's ideas concerning science. Kuhn argues that the selection of theory of the scientific community during the scientific revolution is a "socio-psychological process" (Kuhn, 2010). By using the results of Gestalt psychology, Kuhn describes this process as transformation of vision. Kuhn's theory of science was very influential in many academic disciplines such as history of science, sociology of science and anthropology. It should be emphasized that Özel was very likely influenced from Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. The idea of importance of mental leap in the

However, for him, the Western humanist understanding distorted the real meaning of science by claiming the conception of absolute knowledge and the dominance of the human beings. Technique is thus based on the understanding different from science. While science tries to understand the essence of objects, technology is the product of practical concerns and selfish motives (*ibid*, p.174-178).

Özel also establishes a connection with the modernization process of Muslims to criticize technology within this framework. For instance, he defends the historical fatwa in Ottoman period that eating with iron spoon is a sin, because the purpose of this fatwa is to protect the economies of Muslims against Western exploitation. Thus, by highlighting the dimension of the economic exploitation of technology, Özel appreciates Islamic scholars resisting Western technology on behalf of the responsibility of the Muslim community (*ibid*, p.157-162). He is therefore based on historical ground in his technology critique. In short, he strongly tries to demonstrate that technology cannot be seen separately from the socio-cultural, historical and economic context.

Ultimately, Özel's critique of technology is based on the thesis that technology is a natural extension of the culture from which it springs. Thus he has rejected the distinction made by the late Ottoman intellectuals and Islamists in the early 20th century between culture and civilization.¹⁹ For this distinction, civilization representing the achievement of humanity in science, technology and industry has an objective (neutral) and universal characteristic. The products of civilization such as developments in science and technology are the common heritage of humanity. In contrast, culture consists of spiritual values. Thus, the modern formula, "adoption of Western technique and preservation of Islamic culture", was adopted commonly by the first generations of Islamist intellectuals. For Özel, however, Western techniques

progress of science is a clear example of Kuhn's impact on Özel. Also Özel uses some concepts of Kuhn, for instance when he argues "normal science" nourishes the Western technology (Üç Mesele, p.154). According to Kuhn, sciences go through certain phases: pre-paradigm phase, normal science phase as solving puzzles in dominant paradigm, the period of crisis, scientific revolution and post-revolution phase. Özel uses Kuhnian concepts and terms such as normal science, mental leaps and revolutions.

¹⁹ Ziya Gökalp, who is regarded as the first sociologist in Turkey, formulates the distinction between culture and civilization for the first time in Turkey. He attempts to Turkish-Islamic culture harmonize with Western civilization. Özel benefits from Sombart by rejecting this historic distinction. By referring to Sombart's work named "Der Bourgeois", Özel explains technology as an offspring of bourgeois culture. Thus, for him, criticizing the technology becomes identical to criticizing the bourgeois mentality.

are inseparable from Western culture, because technique arise through a culture.²⁰ So every culture produces its own technique. He, therefore, develops a critical stance against civilization and technology.

2.6 The Importance and the Effect of Üç Mesele

Özel is well aware that his critical stance can be interpreted as a utopia or radicalism. That is why, at the epilogue of *Üç Mesele*, he tries to take measures against radical and utopian proposals. By formulating technology as wildness (*azgınlık*), civilization as decay (*çürüme*) and alienation as pride (*gurur*), he acknowledges that this thought can pave the way for such a radical solutions:

When we consider technology, civilization and the idea of alienation as evils to be avoided, necessarily we find ourselves in a radical position. The denial of technology, civilization and the idea of alienation push us to exist in a place out of the world where we dwell both in terms of values and conditions. In other words, the place that radicalism will take us is nowhere but utopia. If we fall into the clutches of radicalism and utopia, we would imprison the Three Matters largely into deadlock; because the experience has shown that to propose radical and utopian solutions to the problems of the modern world is to invite every defeat beforehand (*Üç Mesele*, p.187).

For him, modern ideologies go beyond the limit by proposing radical solutions in the face of all problems, because “to propose a radical solution is a claim for Lordship” (*Üç Mesele*, p.188). Thus, instead of radical solutions and utopias he calls faith and prayer for his followers. By Michael Meeker’s words “he recommends radicalism in concept but condemns radicalism in practice. The argument may strike the non-Turkish reader as unpersuasive, but it is a significant step in Islamist polemics. Özel takes a stance that is not at odds with the mainstream of Turkish society, accepting the majority norms of pragmatism and tolerance. At the same time he poses the question of a private, personal identity uncompromisingly centered on Islamic belief and practice” (Meeker, p.285). He also leads to questioning the power and politics oriented discourse of mainstream Islamism by asking a critical question: “To arrive at an Islamic society first, and then to try to strengthen it, or, to arrive at a strong society and then to try to Islamise it?” (*Üç Mesele*, p.185). By recommending morality against worldly power, he adopts a critical stance inside Islamic

²⁰ In *Zor Zamanda Konuşmak*, Özel gives example the water flow techniques. In Western culture, water is collected and then, this accumulated water is used. In Eastern culture, people use water flowing. From here, he draws the following conclusion: technique can be understood in the context of culture (Özel, 2009, p.174-175).

movement²¹. As Aktay and Özensel pointed out, his harsh critiques regarding Islamist circles in the future can be a result of this concern (Aktay & Özensel, p.788). In this regard, he makes a serious contribution to the self-reflexivity of Islamic movement. This theme will continue between Özel and Islamist circles. It can be said that thanks to Özel's critical stance, this relationship has become tense and nourishing as well.²²

I argue that with *Üç Mesele*, Özel attempts to shape the intellectual future of the Islamic movement. His rejection of Western concepts such as civilization and technology points to a novel orientation for contemporary Turkish Islamism, because until that time these concepts were evaluated as only positive aspect in Islamist thought. By criticizing these concepts, Özel tries to make an important intervention into the Islamist thought: he symbolizes the sharp break from a civilization-centred route constructed by mainstream Islamists during both the late-Ottoman and Republican periods. That is why, it can be said that *Üç Mesele* meant a turning point that shake the dogmatic assumptions in Islamist tradition. From this point of view, I can say that this questioning attempt has expanded the intellectual horizon of Islamism.²³

Üç Mesele was also the subject of fundamental critiques. Critiques can be collected in two points: 1) the claims of the book remain as a radical and utopian, because, *Üç Mesele* also develops a strong ahistorical rhetoric against the historical accumulation and experience of Islam by criticizing the peak periods of Islamic civilization, 2) although it invites Muslims to return to the Quran and Sunnah, epistemologically *Üç Mesele* is based on Western sources. For instance, Kutlu emphasizes that “he does not explain how to build this link [between Muslims and fundamental sources], in other words how he would sift the patrimony of tradition” (Guida, p.124). Toprak argues that “the social model that

²¹ The idea of morality has always been very significant for Özel. In his autobiography, he points that one of the major questioning leading to religious conversion is the idea of morality (Özel, p.92-93).

²² In the next chapter, I will criticize his critical stance in the context of his rejection of the Cartesian distinction between the theory and the practice.

²³ According to İsmail Kara, what İsmet Özel meant was understood with time. Guenon and his disciples were translated, the discussion of scientific revolution came in the country, the critique of enlightenment was transferred and the intellectual level of Islamists increased considerably. Therefore, for Kara, one can be make a distinction between pre- and post- İsmet Özel within the framework of Islamist thought. Quoted in *Ben İsmet Özel Şair*, 2010, p. 253.

they (İsmet Özel and Ali Bulaç) propose is utopian. As all the utopias, it pretends to be true every time and everywhere, it is outside history, and it does not accept reality” (Toprak, 1985, p.150). In addition to this, “there is talk of a political struggle, but exactly how this struggle will be carried out remains unclear; there is to be a transformation in the course of which modern technology and industry will be destroyed, but what precisely is to replace them is unclear” (Toprak, 1993, p.254). To me, the critique of Toprak seems to look for a new design in Özel’s mind about socio-political issues. In fact Özel separates himself from the fundamentalist or utopian understanding through the emphasis on praxis and concrete life. I argue that, contrary to the implication of Toprak, the objective of Özel’s essays is not to build a new society or ideology, because he criticizes the positivist designs of society in his essays. Also he constantly warns that Islamic movement should not impose an Islamic model or project on Turkish society. Rather he seems to promote critical thinking as an opportunity against the modern Western civilization among Turkish believers. This theme actually constitutes one of the central concerns in his entire intellectual career. For example, his critiques of technology and industry is based on mental concerns, and by sharing his critiques, he thinks that Muslims also should reach the same state of mind. Moreover, he believes that this critical Islamic consciousness itself is a possibility for the liberation from Western domination, and Muslims should use their own possibilities to the utmost. Özel also asks his followers to lead an Islamic life by calling them prayer and authentic faith. Therefore it is safe to say that he is not a utopian Islamist writer, rather he seems to an intellectual who wants to open the way to an alternative thinking by criticizing the given world.

Nonetheless, Toprak’s critique is partly correct from a different angle. At political and societal levels, Özel does not provide a concrete context for his followers about the political and practical consequences of his cultural and mental critique. Rather, in order to support the Islamic movement he seems to play the role of a mentor, warning the Muslims through his essays. He thus acts in the manner of omniscient about political issues. That is why, when he analyse social issues, he generally thinks and writes at an abstract and macro-level for seeing the whole picture. His intellectual ambition can be associated with his using the world-system theory, which I will explain later. Here, I briefly should stress that at the political level, Özel’s attitude is based on a defensive reflex of the moral correctness by

neglecting practical solutions. As I mentioned above, his moral sensibility has made a significant contribution to the self-reflexivity of Islamic movement. In addition to this, Özel uses courageous critical language about capitalism by taking advantage of rich vocabulary of Western critical social science. His explicit stance against capitalism distinguishes him from the prevalent rhetoric of critique of modernity of his conservative counterparts. On the other hand, his negative attitude in the face of practical solutions also makes it inefficient his anti-capitalist orientation.

Secondly, I should also emphasize that Islamic resources are scarcely used in *Üç Mesele*, which creates an epistemological tension with his major claims. On the one hand, he rejects philosophical eclecticism and modern values and proposes to return to the Islamic resources by arriving at a real solution in the face of contemporary problems. On the other hand, Özel gives references to more Western culture than Islamic resources. This contradiction is often emphasized in the “new Muslim intellectual” literature. However, I will argue in this dissertation that this epistemological tension in *Üç Mesele* has evolved as an opportunity to restore dialogue with the contemporary Western philosophy in Özel’s existentialist work, *Tahrir Vazifeleri*. So, in order for his claims partly developed, this epistemological tension between his claims and his proposes become diminished or more sophisticated than in *Üç Mesele* as I will elaborate in the concluding chapter.

Also *Üç Mesele* has been read as a rejection of Karakoç’s idea of building an Islamic civilization in Islamist circles (Aktay&Özensel, p.786). However, as pointed out by Duran and Gencer, the effects of this rejection has not been sufficient to undermine the mainstream Islamist discourse of civilization (Duran, p.152), (Gencer, 2013, p.90). Özel’s critique of civilization seems to be an extension of his former socialist sensitivity. Shariati’s critical analysis of civilization also facilitated the adoption of Özel’s analysis by Islamist circles (Aktay&Özensel, p.786). Özel’s critique of civilization may be embraced by Islamists who are sympathized with social egalitarian Islamist thinkers such as Sayyid Qutb and Ali Shariati, because this critique focuses on class exploitation, splendour and conformism. This orientation, however, remained a weak dissident voice within the mainstream developmentalist Islamism. Özel’s significant influence on intellectual circles does not mean a transformation of the dominant conservative discourse in Turkey. In this regard, for example, it can said that

although the effect of Necip Fazıl's rhetoric has declined in Islamist intellectual circles of the 1980s and 1990s, Necip Fazıl continued to influence on both middle-class conservatives such as Islamist-conservative politicians, bureaucrats and the religious entrepreneurs and the lower-class conservative majority. As contrary to this position, it can be said that Özel's ideas has been appealing in intellectualist milieus such as Islamist reviews and well-educated youth.²⁴ Now, I will try to describe Özel's impact on Turkish Islamism.

2.7 The Effect of İsmet Özel as an Islamist intellectual from 1980s to the 2000s

It could be argued that *Üç Mesele* has contributed to the development of challenging discourse among Islamist intellectual circles until the late 1980s. As I mentioned earlier, the confrontational and challenging discourse in intellectual Islamist circles has dominated in parallel with the rising Islamic movement. Common themes shared by Islamist intellectuals can be listed as such:

- 1) The challenge against the inferiority complex and eclecticism
- 2) The challenge against Western science and technology
- 3) The challenge against capitalism and imperialism
- 4) The challenge against Western liberal democracy (Özçetin, p.115).

In short, it can be said that revolutionary and transformative discourse was dominant in the Islamist intellectual circles of the 1980s.²⁵ By analysing the change in the Islamic movement from 1980s to the 1990s over the Islamist reviews, Kentel comes to the following conclusion: in the 1980s while Islamist reviews largely reflected a general project toward "Islamic society" or "Islamic state", in the 1990s reviews has been the channel for a quest and discussion (Kentel, p.724). From this viewpoint, it can be said that *Üç Mesele* may have influenced the rhetoric of Islamist circles of the 1980s, because Islamist reviews and

²⁴ In order to prove claims here, it needs to be make a study on the Islamist intellectual field of the 1980s and 1990s. Unfortunately, empiric and theoretical studies on "the intellectual field" in Turkey are very limited. That is why, I have to note that my claims here are substantially based on the interpretations of academicians such as Michael Meeker, Ahmet Çiğdem and Yasin Aktay. I also benefited from Ferhat Kentel's comments in the context of Islamist reviews on the Islamic movement of the 1980s and 1990s. The arguments put forward here will naturally open to refutation and confirmation by empiric studies.

²⁵ Güneş-Ayata demonstrates this challenging discourse on *Girişim* journal, an important Islamist review of the 1980s: "Pluralism versus Authoritarianism", in *Turkey and the West: Changing Political and Cultural Identities*, (eds.) Heper and Kramer, I.B. Tauris: London, 1993.

intellectuals used challenging discourses similar to *Üç Mesele* in that period.²⁶ However, the 1990s was a period in which Islamist intellectual circles became plural.²⁷ In this period, Islamist circles went into intellectualist and pluralistic orbit that also criticized their own rhetoric and Islamic movement. The *Tezkire* review founded in 1991 in Ankara by a group of academicians and intellectuals that attracted attention with its intellectualist in-depth analysis and self-reflexive effort constitutes a good example in this regard. Moreover, during this period, Islamist intellectuals started a dialogue with different intellectual milieus, especially liberal-leftist intelligentsia in the reviews. For instance, some Islamist intellectuals such as Ali Bulaç and Abdurrahman Arslan published their articles in *Biririm*, a socialist review. Similarly, liberal-leftist intelligentsia took part in Islamist reviews. This democratic initiative corresponded to the intellectual searching of the 1990s. For instance, in another important review, *Bilgi ve Hikmet* led by Islamist author Ali Bulaç, debates on “The Medina Document” and coexistence can be seen as an Islamic foundation seeking for a pluralistic social theory. Özel, however, did not participate in these intellectual formations and alliance. I will discuss his attitude in the next chapter, but I should underline here that in the intellectual climate of the 1990s, any Islamist intellectual did not dominate the intellectual field, because there was a more egalitarian and pluralistic atmosphere than the past. That is why, together with this atmosphere, the effect of “the institution of mentorship” partly has declined in intellectual Islamist milieu. Thus the position of Özel’s mentorship or mastery began to dissolve within Islamist circles during the 1990s.

In the 2000s, he has become more controversial figure with his nationalist thinking in intellectual circles. In addition, it can be observed about the Islamist intellectual field in the 2000s that as a result of the coming to power of

²⁶ Here, I do not mean that all critical Islamist discourse in the 1980s has evolved through his influence. I can only mention that İsmet Özel is the one of the founding figures of this challenging discourse and perhaps become the most impressive public Islamist figure in the 1980s and the 1990s. For instance, as stated by Meeker, Özel also had been inspiration for other Islamist intellectuals such as Ali Bulaç and Rasim Özdenören (Meeker, p.235).

²⁷ Many Turkish intellectuals such as Abdurrahman Arslan, Ahmet Çiğdem, Yasin Aktay, Murat Güzel, Alev Erkilet, Dücan Cündioğlu and so on, wrote the Islamist reviews such as *Bilgi ve Hikmet*, *Tezkire* and *Umran*. In addition to this, many prominent social scientists and philosophers’ essays or interviews such as Heidegger, Gadamer, Kant, Peter Berger, Wallerstein, Feyerabend, Baudrillard, Jung, Levinas, Montgomery Watt, Abdullah Laroui and Hasan Hanefi took part in these reviews. It can be considered that this fact is a good indicator for intellectual accumulation of Islamist thought in that period.

the AK Party and the need for concrete and practical solutions in the face of social problems, the type of expert came into prominence against the total intellectual figure. In this sense, Foucault's (2000) distinction between the "universal" and "specific" intellectual can be illustrative for this case. For him, whereas the universal intellectual corresponded to the classic image of the engaged men of letters, the specific intellectual was rather an expert whose work was more narrow and local, yet served as a basis for intervening in the public sphere (Eyal& Buchholz, 2010, p.119). The former type of intellectual, who was generally a writer or jurist, associated with the universal common values such as justice and equality. The 'universal intellectual' was therefore the spokesperson for the whole of humanity. Edward Said and Jean Paul Sartre represent exemplars of the 'universal' intellectual. However, the latter type of intellectual is not a bearer of universal values but rather someone who occupies a specific position is able to produce global effects such as the atomic scientists led by Oppenheimer. The transition to specific or expertise intellectual from the total intellectual figure can be observed in the context of Islamist intellectual field. The formation of expertise through quality education and political exigencies such as September 11th events may have led to this transition in the intellectual field. For instance, international relations experts, especially Middle East experts who know Arabic have gained importance in Islamist circles and public sphere during the AKP era. That is partly why, I can say that discursive domination of the total intellectual figures such as Özel has decreased significantly in the intellectual field.

On the other hand, thanks to developments in technology, information and communications systems, Muslim intellectuals are able to reach and influence more people than before. Paradoxically the enlargement and proliferation of mass media contributed to the strengthening of Islamic discourse rather than weakening it (Karasipahi, p.196). Özel's discourse also become widespread in public argumentation through his columns, TV channels, panel discussions and radio programmes in Turkey. Moreover, new Muslim intellectual such as İsmet Özel and Ali Bulaç has become spokesmen for the Islamic movement in public forums and in the mass media, because "the cultural problems he addresses, the historical incidents he cites and the stereotypes of Turkish society to which he refers fall within the boundaries of the political and cultural discourse of the urban, educated Turkish elite of the 1960s and 1970s" (Meeker, p.273). Thus, they began to be perceived as public

representatives of the Muslims:

When such a reporter wants to know, “What are the Muslims thinking?” he naturally consults the Muslim intellectual who is able to represent the Muslim viewpoint, not only in language that the secularist can understand but in a way that speaks directly, even if more or less antagonistically, to the secularist. Neither the neighbourhood *imam* or *hoca*, who may be in closer contact with the ordinary believer, nor the believing religious scholar, who may have a more perfect mastery of Islamic tradition, can play such a role, but the Muslim intellectual is more or less comfortably in his element in the public forums and mass media of Istanbul (Meeker, 2004, p.273-274).

Özel was also an impressive figure for the well-educated youth Muslims, because his poetry had created an existential aura around him. His also intellectual aspect and distinctive analysis was addressed to educated young people living in urban areas very well, because his discourse was appropriate to their life experiences and intellectual demands. By focusing on the Western modern culture, philosophy and social sciences, he uncovered the problems of secularism and modernity. In this way, Özel paved the way among religious youth for the spread of a fresh, venturesome attitude: Instead of being isolated from Western products, he encourages educated youth Muslims to grasp the essence of Western science, art and philosophy. He seems to believe that as one more closely familiarizes oneself with Western culture, one can better understand the specific values of Islam. This attitude was interesting to these youth, because he does not propose a conservative regardlessness about the Western culture. Instead of being apologetic and self-enclosed, he has a self-confident and active attitude in the face of Western challenge. That is why Özel's this attitude was compatible with their higher education which they have received, their intellectual satisfaction and living environment.²⁸ Özel, therefore, posed as an original and provocative Islamist intellectual, who has attracted interest among educated Muslim youth.

To recapitulate briefly, Özel follows an elitist intellectual trajectory with

²⁸ Meeker's depiction of İsmet Özel as Muslim intellectual explains partly why he left a charismatic impression on the believer youth: “He writes, not as a representative of traditional Islam citing Quran and Hadith, but as an insider to Republican society, enabling him to make provocative comments on art, music, literature, and history in Turkey. He may be at his best in his essays when he addresses the secularist criticisms of Islamic institutions by unmasking the hypocrisy, condescension and authoritarianism that oftentimes motivates them. He is also a master of the Muslim intellectual tactic of ridiculing secularist predictions of a coming social utopia by counting up the losses that were occasioned by the suppression of Islamic institutions” (Meeker, p.280).

Üç Mesele. It can be said that instead of being a moderate intellectual affecting the masses, he seems to be an unusual mentor for a selected group of educated Muslims which he sometimes made explicit. Collocutors of this guidance efforts appears in his book with different names: the “pioneers” who will serve the Islamic struggle (*Üç Mesele*), “companion” (*Cuma Mektupları*) and “you” - whoever is outside the majority- (*Tahrir Vazifeleri*). As Meeker pointed out, “in his essays, the scene of writing is the writer speaking to the reader” (Meeker, p.238), because his style of writing is direct, frank and sincere. From this point he seems uncomfortable to address his readers from within the print culture. Özel’s concern and writing style actually was appropriate to transmission of traditional, Islamic knowledge. In Francis Robinson’s words “Muslims were always in doubt about writing. The truth they got at in speech. What this means is that person to person transmission was at the heart of the transmission of Islamic knowledge. The best way of getting at the truth was to listen the author himself” (Robinson, 1993, p.237).²⁹ Perhaps that is why, Özel had chosen the title of “Conversation” (*Konuşmak*) for his column in *Yeni Devir*. He therefore tries to flee from the deceptiveness and formality of printing culture. Özel appears to speak to the reader in his essays, because he does not want to be an “opinion producer” through making analysis, rather, he wants to protect a mutually nourishing possibility by establishing a special relationship with his reader. This style of intimate relationship with the reader can be read as a writing strategy for being an influential intellectual. More importantly, as I will argue in the next chapter, by ignoring a self-reflexive effort, Özel seems to build an epistemological authority over readers through connexion of this special relationship.

²⁹ Moreover, he briefly argues in his articles that “printing attacked the very heart of Islamic systems for the transmission of knowledge; it attacked what was understood to make knowledge trustworthy, what gave it value, what gave it authority” (Robinson, p.234).

CHAPTER 3

THE CONSTRUCTION OF POLITICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL WEST WITHIN THE ESSAYS OF İSMET ÖZEL

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will mainly examine the outline of Özel's thought. Firstly, I will deal with his essays on major political issues such as world-system approach, Islamic movement, modern state, nation and democracy in the context of Islamist discourse in Turkey. In this way, I will examine how "political West" as an absolute other entity against the Islamic worldview was constructed in his discourse within *Cuma Mektupları* (1989-1992). Secondly, I will examine his existentialist essays on contemporary philosophy and science located in his book, *Tahrir Vazifeleri* (1994). Here, I will basically question how he takes a stand in the face of contemporary Western philosophy. My main aim is to "cultural" or "philosophical West" was constructed in his discourse within his essays. At the end of the chapter, I will attempt to reread Özel's ideas from a comparative perspective in the axis of distinction between "philosophical" and "political" West: world-system theory and existentialist philosophy, scientific-objective perspective and intersubjective phenomenology, cynical and humanitarian point of view. Finally I will partly examine Özel's thought chronologically in terms of continuity and rupture by comparing his first and sensational book, *Üç Mesele* (1978) with *Cuma Mektupları* (1988-1992) and *Tahrir Vazifeleri* (1994).

3.2 The Political Project of İsmet Özel

The first five volumes of Özel's *Cuma Mektupları* has been formed by the compilation of weekly newspaper articles between the years 1988 and 1992 in *Milli Görüş* newspaper, *Milli Gazete*. In the international arena during this period, two interrelated events occurred that had symbolic importance: the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. In the Middle East there was an Islamic resurgence and political movements gradually became more active in the public sphere. In connection with the collapse of real socialism on a world scale, Islamism as a political alternative to capitalism has come into question especially in the Middle East. Turkey's political climate was affected by these developments and the Islamist Welfare Party (RP) became more

assertive in the political arena. In these socio-historical circumstances, Özel treats Islamic movement as the most serious alternative to the world-system by bringing a new outlook for Islamism.

In *Cuma Mektupları*, he attempts to analyze predominantly the Republican and world political history of the 20th century by using the world-system theory. His main themes, including all long evolution of political history; Ottoman and Republican modernization process, Kemalism, the Motherland Party (ANAP, the ruling party in that period), the specificity of Turkey and Islam, environmental movements, political experiments in Germany, Italy and Soviet Union, and the future of Islamic movement are evaluated in the light of the connection with the world- system.³⁰ Moreover, he also analyzes the current political issues such as Turkey's election results, Gulf War and the political position of ANAP. Below, I will summarize his world-system discourse, before I will deal with his major political themes such as the state, nation and democracy in the context of Islamic movement. In first place, I should point out that his analysis not only in tends to show how the "system" works, but he also dedicates himself to promote the will of Muslims to resist the system. Moreover, one interesting purpose of his aforementioned articles is finding a fellow sufferer (Kara, 2006, p.239). However, for him, the precondition for being able to oppose the system is to know the functioning of the system. Thus, his readers should follow a route together with the author for not being a servant to the system. In this manner, the system represents the "other" that should be against by Muslims in his writings. This understanding refers to an important moment in the formation of political self-identity of Islamism. Aktay elaborates this point as follows:

Actually, İsmet Özel has made the Islamists familiar with a new terminology concerning body politic and political self-identity. In the early period of the postcaliphate condition, the "other" of this self-identity had represented by the Republican cadres. This "other" sometimes was indicating the "West", sometimes the "Republican

³⁰ In his depth analysis on *Cuma Mektupları*, Tahsin Görgün argues that these letters are de facto existence, vitality and act through the style of essay. That is why, they do not consist of "scientific" writings or metaphysical, philosophical discourses. Rather, these letters in pursuit of "right" questions, instead of ready answers. So, for Görgün, *Cuma Mektupları* has a distinctive logic, language and spontaneity through its dynamic, fluid state of being (Görgün, 2003, p.46-47). However, although I largely agree with his consciousness-expanding views, here, I made a thematic examination on *Cuma Mektupları* for revealing his political project and political engagement. For me, Özel's books that have not been composed of scientific articles does not preclude a scientific examination.

regime” as the representative of the West, sometimes the “modernity”, and sometimes solely the regime itself...Now, what concerns İsmet Özel is the “system” (Aktay, 1997, p.238).

In the light of these considerations, it can be said that his world-system analysis is based on his strong normative ideals. That is why, it would be misleading to see him as an objective analyst. Rather, I will try to examine his essays in the context of his “ethical-political engagement”.

3.2.1 İsmet Özel’s Discourse of the World-System

First of all, I should indicate that for Özel, the world-system is not a fictionalized macro category for better understanding the social space in nominalist sense; rather, it is an entity having an ontological reality. For him, “the world system is a financial superiority which controls the international political relations” (Özel, CM3, p.97). Özel adopts the analysis of exploitation between the core and the periphery in the world-system theory. Like world-system theoreticians, Özel argues that there is a surplus appropriation toward the core from the periphery. To protect the superiority of circulating capital is vital for the continuation of the system.³¹ Therefore, whenever any element becomes more important than capital, that element is perceived as a danger for the system. For instance, he argues that

The world-system supported nationalist currents with money by considering the aristocratic values as a hostile during the *ancient regime*. Then, in the face of venture of nationalist currents that is based on unmeasurable values (especially due to rising totalitarian regimes between two wars) world-system took place against the nationalism by giving financial support to bourgeois internationalism. In short, every sphere that circulating capital could not come to grips

³¹ In this respect, Özel’s analysis is very consistent with world-system theory. According to Wallerstein, the international division of labor of the capitalist-world economy divides production as the core and periphery. The core-periphery is a relational concept, which refers to the degree of profitability of the production process. In core regions, the production process is controlled by a partial monopoly. In order to depend on the patronage of the strong state apparatus, partial monopolies are positioned in a powerful state. Conversely, in peripheral regions, the production processes are competitive processes. Therefore, in certain regions of the world, the production process has resulted in a higher profit rate. On the other hand as a result of the same process in certain regions quite a low profit has been obtained. When the exchange takes place, products in the peripheral regions are much weaker than in the core regions. Consequently, the system has a continuous flow of surplus appropriation toward the manufacturer of core products from the manufacturer of peripheral products. This is called the “unequal exchange”. Core countries such as the US, Britain, and France have great control over world trade and economic agreements. They purchase raw materials and cheap labor from peripheral countries. Important industrial products primarily are in circulation around only core regions. For more information, see: Immanuel Wallerstein, *World-System Analysis: An Introduction*, Duke University Press.

was considered a sign of death for world-system (Özel, CM3, p.98-99).³²

Furthermore, he distinguishes the world system from the concepts of capitalism and western civilization, because the system not only cannot be reduced to these concepts, but also encompasses them. His understanding of the system will tries to make comprehensible the complex social space. For him, social events do not occur in vacuum. Rather, there is a discoverable mechanism of social events, which is driven by human will (CM1, p.42-43). It seems that the system is the mechanism itself and this mechanism has a brain. His conception of the world-system includes the idea of an absoluteness that can design every state all over the world and can absorb the challenging elements through the “brain” of the system, because the system, for him, reproduces itself by making people dependent on itself through persuasion strategies³³. For instance, according to him, the “brain” of the system invents and supports the idea of environmentalism for distracting and misleading people (CM1, p.45-50). Briefly, for him, system is not only an indivisible totality on a global scale, but also it is a super subject knowing and penetrating into all the details of social life. Therefore in his analysis, the system as a subject becomes an inconceivable entity. This is somewhat problematic, because Özel’s powerful system imagination *a priori* makes any opposition impossible against that super subject (Fındıklı, p.112).

Nonetheless, Özel carefully builds a unique alternative to this system imagination: Islam, he argues, is the only real alternative to the world-system. The main reason of this specific position of Islam does not arise from the characteristics of Muslims, rather is related to Islamic credo, because for him,

while all authentic traditions includes a potential of resistance against the system, none of them has a "convictional" supporting/reference for excluding the system completely except the Islamic religion. Because it is only Islam that is able to provide a content for the

³² “Dünya sistemi ancient regime döneminde aristokratik değerleri kendine düşman kabul edip, milliyetçi akımları paraca destekledi. Daha sonra milliyetçi akımların paraca ölçülmeyen değerlere yaslanma girişimi karşısında (özellikle iki harp arasında doğan totaliter rejimler dolayısıyla) burjuva enternasyonalizmine mali destek vererek milliyetçilik karşısında yer aldı. Kısacası, mütedavil sermayenin iş bitiremediği her alan dünya sistemi için ölüm işareti veren bir alan sayıldı.”

³³ This systemic tricks can be explained different concepts in critical social science tradition such as De Certeau’s “strategy”, Gramsci’s “consent”, Marx’s “ideology” or Lukacs’ “false consciousness”.

word "*kufr*", which means infidelity in the terminology of Islamic theology (Özel, 2009 p.125; quoted in Aktay).

That is why, for him, the way to counteract the system should begin to reject the values of the system. He illustrates his argument with the major political developments in the 20th century. For instance, he argues that the main reason of the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the defeat of Germany and Italy in World War II was that they had adopted the core values of the world-system (CM5, p.236-239). However Islamic values, for him, are in absolute incompatibility with the system. Islam, therefore, is the most serious alternative to the world-system on the macro level, because only Islam has the potential that can open the "living space" for humanity. For Islam is an inclusive religion, Islamic revival can hit a fatal blow to the world-system. For him, since "lords of the world-system" are well aware of this fact, they have taken special precautions in the region of Muslims in recent centuries. For instance, despite the success of Muslims in the democratic elections, they are not allowed to come to power because of the dominance of the system in Middle East countries.

His analysis also puts Turkey to the specific position in the world-system. Actually one of his assertive arguments throughout *Cuma Mektuplari* is the matter of special occasion of Turkey and the Islamic movement in given context. He acknowledges that Turkey *de facto* is a country under the yoke of the world-system. However, for him, there are two important aspects that distinguishes the status of Turkey from other Muslim countries: the independence of Turkey and the distinctive identity of Muslims in Turkey. Firstly, he emphasizes that "Other than Turkey, all Muslim countries were countries which were either directly colonized during the nineteenth century or countries which were set up by colonialists who occupied Ottoman lands at the end of the First World War" (CM1, p.58, quoted in Meeker). [This fact is very crucial, because] "to say that a country has been colonized is to say that the country has accepted a foreign population which has penetrated into the very recesses of that country. The very horizons of such a country have been limited by ideals sketched out by colonialists" (CM1, p.58). [However, in Turkey] "A foreign population has not penetrated into the recesses of the country, and a governing cadre, even while according the recommendations of foreigners full respect, is not a board of proxies, but rather carries out its duties as a segment of the majority in the society" (CM1, p.58).

That is why, an Islamic revival in Turkey can achieve a structure which will not be subject to manipulation by foreigners. Secondly, Turkey has a different life experience from other Muslim countries with regard to Islam. For him, of all those Islamic countries that endured the colonial epoch, an Islamic identity of the state was never so openly rejected as in Turkey.(...) Nonetheless, in the same countries, just as was the case in Turkey, everything was done in the interests of preserving the world system (CM1, p.59).

That is why, in other Muslim countries, Islamic thesis more easily can be used for manipulation than in Turkey. These factors also give the historical meaning of being Muslim in Turkey. For him, in Turkey

To be a Muslim is the manifestation of an identity which sketches the framework of an historical outlook, a social approach, a political position and a cultural preference. Because of this, there is a possibility of seizing the opportunity of saving ourselves from the deceptive practices of both right and left (CM1, p.60).

For all of these reasons, Turkey has a unique position in the face of the world- system. Moreover, Özel goes beyond this seeing Turkey as the last bastion to defend not only Islamic world, but also all humanity against world-system:

Non-Muslims under the domination of the system can see that walking out the dominance of the system allows Muslims to do their Islamic duties. Only the Islamic style of life has the ability to reconstruct itself outside of the standardized and homogeneous effects of world system. This is an opportunity for humanity, an opportunity for those who can see. Then, a development happening anywhere in the world that secures the possibilities of Islamic way of life is an opportunity for all people who are in search for the purpose of their existence. Therefore, every Islamic experience of life has an international validity. However, regarding the experiences of the world, it can be seen that only Turkey seems to be suitable to use this opportunity. Thus, we must accept that national cause of Turkey is significant in an international level (CM5, p. 20)³⁴.

Thus, according to him, the Islamic transformation in Turkey will have a

³⁴ “Sistemin tahakkümü altındaki gayrimüslimler, müslümanların kulluklarını yerine getirmeyi en uygun hale sokan düzenlemesinin sistemin despotluğunun dışına çıkma olduğunu görebilirler. Dünya sisteminin homojen ve standart düzenlemesinin dışında yalnızca müslüman hayatının kendini yeniden inşa etme gücü var. Bu imkân gören gözler için insanlığın imkanıdır. O halde dünyanın neresinde olursa olsun islâmi bir hayatın korunabilmesini mümkün kılan bir gelişme bütün insanların kendi varoluş gayelerini arayıp bulma için kullanmaya muhtaç oldukları bir fırsatı işaret eder. Bu yönüyle her islami hayat deneyimi beynelmilel bir geçerlilik taşır. Ancak anlaşıldığı kadarıyla dünyanın geçirdiği tecrübeler bu fırsatı kullanmaya sadece bir ülkenin, Türkiye'nin müsait olduğunu gösteriyor. Bu yüzden Türkiye'nin milli davasının beynelmilel bir önem arzettiğini kabul etmeliyiz.”

universal moment by constituting a model for the liberation of other societies. The emphasis of Turkey's special path recalls the German concept, "Sonderweg", which is a serious debate axis between liberals and conservatives in the historical process of Germany. It can be argued that there is a similar axis of public debate about the future of Turkey (Çiğdem, 1992). In this framework, Özel situates himself against the universalist liberal-left discourse in Turkey since the late 1980s.

Özel differs from the world-system theorists in terms of both the description of the system, the actual interpretations on politics and a specific value attributed to Islam and Turkey. Firstly, contrary to the world-system theorists, Özel constructs the system as a political metaphysic rather than a socio-historical entity (Findıklı, 2014, p.111), because his depiction of system indicates an absolute power rather than a historical fact. To be designed macro-social structure with produced conspiracies through the "brain" of the system constitutes a good exemplary for Özel's metaphysical understanding of the system. Also his system imagination focuses on the exploitation rather than functionality. Özel does not elaborate the functional and relational aspects of the system, because he seems to want to reveal the power and exploitation of the system against the Islamic world and particularly Turkey. Moreover, it can be said that Özel does not always embrace the historical materialist conception of world-system theory.³⁵ It seems to me that he adopts a flexible attitude when using a historical materialist theory, because emphasizing mentality and values also comports with his normative concerns. That is why; his world system analysis corresponds to a moment in which the phenomenological approach is intertwined with structural functionalism. I will elaborate this point later.

Secondly, in terms of political developments of the 20th century, he is also comparable with world-system theorists in some aspects. For instance, like Wallerstein, Özel thinks that the Soviet Union was a servant of the world-system since its establishment. Moreover, in this context, Özel and Wallerstein see the cold war between the US and the USSR as a great conspiracy of the world-system. Rather than a real opposition that can destroy the system, the system generates the

³⁵ For instance, in his critiques of technique in *Üç Mesele*, he emphasizes culture and the bourgeois mentality. However, he also specifies that thoughts cannot change the world (CM3, p.44). Therefore, it is evident that his thought cannot be reduced as classic idealistic or materialistic position.

opposition to consolidate itself. Özel calls the “conservative” in *Cuma Mektupları* as defenders of the status quo established after World War II in parallel with Wallerstein. However, they have a different interpretations from each other on how the system can change. Özel indicates that there are three expectations about the collapse of the world-system. Firstly, some believe that the system will collapse because of its structural defects. This approach points out the economic predicament of the system or social disaster for proving the collapse of the system. For Özel, system can survive by turning its defects to the advantage since the 16th century. That is why, the system will not collapse by itself. Secondly, the system can be destroyed by a rebellion that arise from the metropolitan countries. For Özel, only Germany has this potential. However, if Germany succeeds in doing that, only the center of the system can change. Third expectation is about the challenge of the periphery countries. It is Turkey, for him, that can only break this chain of hegemony (CM5, p.93-94). However, Wallerstein makes more structural and economic interpretations about the collapse of the system. That is why, his analysis includes contradiction with Özel’s expectations. Wallerstein seems to believe that system will collapse because of macro-economic deadlocks. Nevertheless, both of them try to analyze the world-system with normative motives.³⁶

Thirdly, as I explained above, Özel attributes an ontological privilege to Islam and Turkey against the world-system. The objective basis of Islam and Turkey taken as a focus of resistance on the macro scale seems to be quite a controversial issue. Moreover, despite his all efforts, it can be said that the questions of “Why Islam” and “Why Turkey” is not an objective justification of answers. Further, when privileged positions of Islam and Turkey in Özel’s essays are evaluated in terms of the world-system theory, it can be said that this privilege does not have a concrete

³⁶ Actually, on the other hand, there are serious differences in the interpretations regarding the 20th century world politics. For instance, according to Wallerstein, system has experienced its golden age from 1945 until the late 1960s. However, then system entered the decline phase with some symbolic events. The terrorist attack of September 11 is a concrete indication of the decline of the system. Today, for Wallerstein, human will can change the system ever than before and may even led to destroy the system. In short, Wallerstein draws very optimistic picture of the systemic point of view concerning the future of humanity. For more information, see: Wallerstein, *The Decline of America Power: The U.S. in a Chaotic World*, 2003, The New Press. Unlike this hopeful picture, Özel believes that by the end of the cold war the center of the system, US has been further strengthened. For him, September 11 is a conspiracy of the world-system and system makes people loyal to itself with such events. Actually, his hopes about Islamic movement were shattered and this fact can be a serious impact on his extreme pessimism.

meaning, because religions and cultures have quite partial importance for world-system theorists, for the dominant and determining factor is the economic structure. Socio-cultural factors are not significant in themselves. For instance, according to world-system theory, historical independence (in this case, the relative independence of Turkey) without an actual economic basis or Islamic or Christianity values do not constitute a danger to the system. That is why, the possibilities of “Muslim Turkey” against the world-system explicitly are inconsistent with world-system theory.

3.2.2 Major Political Concepts in the Context of World-System

Islamic Movement

Given the fact that his normative project is incompatible with the world-system theory, so, for Özel, the question arises how the Islamic transformation will be realized in Turkey. Firstly, his analysis is based on the liberating offer of Muslims for a new life to the world. For him, outstanding Muslims in their own everyday lives act in accordance with Islamic values. Thus, the system will be forced to withdraw from everyday life practice and social life:

A liberating offer coming from Turkey will first humanely enrich our daily lives. Building on this base, it will secure the environment that enables our society to reach out for higher values. In order to sail the shipwreck of Turkey, Islamic values must be in the center of the social life. The liberating offer is just to know your identity and own it (CM4, p. 45)³⁷.

On the basis of a new way of thinking based on the Qur’an and the Sunnah, for him, this offer only can provide equipment with original studies in intellectual and academic field:

What Muslims offered is a breakthrough that will begin with construction of world of thought unique to the Muslim from understanding of science, cosmology to the history and social norms. Muslims suggests a new way and order of life as an inevitable extension of this offer. They would not surrender to the technological civilization, rather they intend to take part in a healthy relationship without feeling inferiority complex in the face of technology (CM2, p.53)³⁸.

³⁷ “Türkiye’den doğacak özgürleştirici teklif önce günlük hayatımızın insan haysiyetine yakışan bir tarzda zenginleştirilmesiyle başlayacak ve bu temel üzerinde toplumun daha yüksek değerlere ulaşmasının ortamını güvence altına alacaktır. Karaya oturmuş Türkiye gemisini yüzdürmek ancak İslâmi değerlerin toplum hayatının eksenine yerleştirilmesiyle gerçekleşebilecek. Özgürleştirici teklif, kişiliğini tanıyıp ona sahip çıkmaktan ibaret.”

³⁸ “Bilim anlayışından kozmolojiye, sosyal düsturlardan tarihe kadar müslümanlara has bir düşünce dünyasının inşasıyla başlayacak bir atılımdır müslümanların teklif ettiği. Bunun kaçınılmaz uzantısı olarak yeni bir yaşama düzeni, yeni bir hayat biçimi öneriyor

One can say that he indeed expects for worldwide breakthrough from outstanding Muslims in Islam settling account with the system. Actually, his idea of pioneering Muslims refers to the actors that should play an important role against the world- system. For instance, in the result of the 1987 elections, he claims that only 6 percent of Turkey's population who voted for Islamist *Refah Party* are Muslim pioneers. So, for him, true conscious Muslims are a minority in Turkey. Moreover, a new elite in the political arena will emerge from among the Muslim majority and will give performances in favor of Muslim majority (CM4, p.40). In this way, Muslim pioneers can take the support of the vast majority of Muslims³⁹ :

The movement in Turkey that is a candidate for Islamic government may be authentic in many ways. It may derive the power to effuse to masses from elite cadres, and this may also increase its reality of doctrines (CM4, p. 51)⁴⁰ .

As I mentioned second chapter, considering the dual legitimacy problem of Islamic movement, Özel develops an original strategy for Islamic movement. On one hand, he does not exclude the religiosity of the majority Muslims. This approach can prevent Islamism from being labeled as separatist before the society and, thus can interfere with the tricks of secular intellectuals and official ideology on the views of the Sunni masses. Thus, Özel both gives utterance to Islamic demands against secular regime in the public sphere and also helps to consolidate the rhetoric of Islamic movement by establishing a positive relationship between the majority Muslims and the Islamic movement (Muslim pioneers). In the light of these considerations, it can be said that new liberating living offer will be realized through the practice of everyday life, intellectual and academic studies and the initiative of Islamist cadres. From this point, his Islamic transformation offer consists of everyday, intellectual and political aspects that seems to have relational character. Ultimately this transformation strategy as a method predicts to change society from bottom-up through the Islamization of

müslümanlar. Teknolojik medeniyete teslim olmayı değil, bununla hesaplaşmayı ve teknoloji karşısında aşağılık duygusuna kapılmadan sağlıklı bir ilişki içinde yer almayı düşünüyorlar.”

³⁹ By Meeker's words “even if the true Muslims are a small minority in Turkey, he declares, Islam is indeed a latent dimension of belief and practice of the vast majority of the people of Turkey. An Islamic movement can, therefore, potentially act in the name of the people insofar as it is representative of these deeper, cherished values” (Meeker, p.281).

⁴⁰ “Türkiye’deki İslami yönetime aday hareket birçok bakımdan özgünlükler taşıyabilir. Çoğunluğa açılma gücünü seçkin kadrolarından alabileceği gibi, çoğunluğa yöneldikçe de doktrinindeki gerçeklik payını artırabilir.”

everyday and social life, because Özel is opposed to the change of society from top-down with a positivist despotism. In an interview, Özel replies to the question

-What is the envision for the society in your mind? - As I wrote before, it is dangerous and harmful to have a project only in your mind. To draw a plan for the society and to impose it afterwards is a mistake that some Marxists made. I would not want Muslims to fall into this mistake. 'This kind of a society...' No! People learn the Islamic norms and construct a life accordingly. Whatever this life produce becomes the society (Özel, 2010b, p. 232)⁴¹.

However, this does not mean that Muslim pioneers carrying out Islamic movement does not have an important task. On the contrary, for Özel, Muslim pioneers are very crucial in the realization of Islamic movement. It can be said that the idea of pioneering in Özel's essays covers both political and intellectual endeavors that will reconstruct Islamic life. In other words, for him, the venture of Islamic movement will carry a constructive character rather than doctrinal rigidity. As indicated by Aktay, to be the focus of the Islamic resistance against the system has much to do with the construction of everyday practice:

Özel's position is strengthened at best through a phenomenological point of view which would insist on the construction of reality through consciousness and values. In spite of all possibilities Özel insists on the point that to try to construct a social body as alternative to the existing hegemonic one would almost necessarily articulate you tragically to the system. But this doesn't mean that one has not to act in accordance with some prophetic suggestions, namely sunnah. Sunnah organises the everyday life, even under the hegemony of the system and if it is to be considered as a constituent of a political identity it has a strong potential to constitute a resisting site against the system (Aktay, 1997, p.245).

At this point, rather than an objective or godlike viewpoint, Özel's analysis seems to draw on phenomenological and constructivist approach. That is why, I can say that actually in his offers against world-system, his eclectic orientation become evident. As I emphasized earlier, this approach explicitly contradicts with the world-system theory. He already writes for supporting the Islamic movement with normative ideals rather than conducting a scientific activities. Actually, when

⁴¹ “-Kafanızdaki toplum tasavvuru nedir? -Bir tasarımın kafada bulunmasının tehlikeli ve zararlı olduğunu daha önce yazdım. Önceden bir toplum plânı çizip, sonradan bunun içinin doldurulması gibi bir hataya, belki dünyada bir kısım Marksistler düşmüştür, Müslümanların da böyle bir yanlışa düşmelerini istemem. Şöyle bir toplum...Hayır... İnsanlar İslâmi ölçüleri öğrenirler, bu ölçülere uygun bir hayat kurarlar. Bu hayat neyi üretiyorsa öyle bir toplum olur.”

he talks about the system, he is usually in a stimulant position where he informs and warns Muslims about what they are confronted with. With this warning Özel points out that Muslims should take responsibility in their own lives. By taking a phenomenological viewpoint to Islamic values, he attempts to reveal how Islam is very effective in the practice of everyday life. Therefore he defends and presents Islamic values as an offering to the modern human by using contemporary language. It seems to me, his constructive analysis has allowed his Islamic offer to become more sophisticated than his cynical attitude about systemic conspiracies. I will criticize his cynical approach later. Now, in Özel's analysis about the Islamic movement, I will deal with his discourses such as the emphasis of third way and specificity of Islamic movement, the critique of Turkish modernization history and its relationship with *Milli Görüş* movement.

Firstly, it can be said that his effort is to demonstrate the inevitability of the Islamic movement. Thus, he both seems to encourage those engaged in Islamic movement and tries to persuade secular readers.⁴² He constructs Islamic movement as a third, special way beyond the left (socialists) and right (nationalists). Moreover, he places the Islamic movement against the Turkish history of modernization. For him, only Islamic movement has an active attitude in Turkey regarding the compensation for the losses of modernization history:

People who embrace Western thoughts whether left winger or right winger are not more than claimants of showing Turkey's unsuccessful history of Westernization as successful. They draw their attentions to so far awry, defective, and unhealthy adventure of Westernization, not to a new formation. Even though they cannot find any point to defend in this adventure, they defend the adventure itself and to be in it. Muslims on the other hand, have solid ground on the matter that Islamic cause worldwide is in fact Turkey's essential cause. Furthermore, Muslims have the power of harmonization of their own future as individuals and the future of Turkey in a positive way. Consequently, the aim of a Muslim becomes the aim of Turkey, and the consciousness of a Muslim becomes the consciousness of Turkey. The chance to offer the course of Muslims as the course of the country is again in Muslims' hands (CM2, p. 18-19)⁴³.

⁴² At the beginning of Cuma Mektupları, Özel is talking about a shield against the world-system. However, for him, there are Muslims and non-Muslims in the shield on both sides. His desire and purpose is that those who are resistant to system are only Muslims.

⁴³ "Sağcı veya solcu olsun Batıcı düşünceleri taşıyanlar Türkiye'nin batılılaşma yolunda geçirdiği başarısız tecrübeleri birer başarı imiş gibi göstermekten fazlasına talib değiller. Dikkatlerini yeni bir oluşuma değil, şimdiye kadar çarpık, kusurlu ve hastalıklı olarak gerçekleştirilmiş batılılaşma serüvenine çevirmişler. Bu serüvende savunulacak hiç bir nokta

That is why, he believes that a concrete ground for the expectation of Islamic transformation is in the failure of the Turkish westernization process. In other words, the specific potential of Turkey against the world-system is ironically due to the failure of Turkish modernization, not through the achievements of modernization:

There is a chance of transformation in our country, not because we got westernized, but rather we could not have fully westernized; not because we got separated from our traditions, but rather we could not have; not because we achieved economic success under the financial hegemony of the world-system; but rather we have seen the loss of this hegemony (CM3, p.102)⁴⁴.

Moreover, his analysis seems to construct the counter-hegemony of Islam within Turkey. For him,

Consensus in Turkey cannot be achieved through mutual compromises between Islamic demands and secular policies. What can provide consensus is to show that some achievements are identical with the interests of the country. Wise and courageous Muslims can take this responsibility (CM5, p.232)⁴⁵.

He thus claims that an Islamic movement that takes initiative on behalf of the interests of Muslim people and Turkey is the only real political choice for Turkey. That is why, he often implies in his political essays that contrary to the interests of the people of Turkey, rival ideologies such as socialism and liberalism can only exist in Turkey by serving the system. Another example is that in an interview with him, Özel, who has a master user in metaphorical language thanks to his poetry, uses the sea and the wave as metaphors for describing the position of Islam and Turkish society (Özel, 1988, p.160). For

bulamaları bile bizatihi böyle bir serüvene atılmış olmayı savunur haldeler. Müslümanlar ise, dünya ölçüsünde İslâm davasının bizatihi Türkiye'nin aslî meselesi olduğu konusunda sağlam dayanaklara sahip ve üstelik bir ferd olarak da ülke geleceğiyle kendi geleceğini olumlu yönde kaynaştırma gücünü ellerinde tutuyorlar. Böylece müslümanın hedefi Türkiye'nin hedefi, müslümanın bilinci Türkiye'nin bilinci haline gelebiliyor. Müslümanların sahip oldukları istikameti ülke bütününe istikameti olarak teklif etme şansı yine müslümanlarda.”

⁴⁴ “Batılılaştığımız için değil, tam batılılaşmadığımız için, geleneklerimizden koptuğumuz için değil, kopamadığımız için, dünya sisteminin mali hegemonyası altında bir iktisadi başarı elde ettiğimiz için değil, bu hegemonyanın zararını gördüğümüz için ülkemizin bir dönüşüm yaşama imkânı var.”

⁴⁵ “Türkiye’de consensus islami taleplerle laik politikaların karşılıklı tavizler vermek suretiyle bir noktada anlaşmaları suretiyle elde edilemez. Türkiye’de consensus’u sağlayacak olan belli insanların başarılarının ülke çıkarıyla özdeş olduğunun gösterilmesidir. Bunun altından kalkabilecek olan bilgili ve gözüpek müslümanlardır.”

him, muslims in Turkey are like waves of the sea. Where the waves of the sea begin and where they end? Not known to anyone. That is why, the advent of the Islamic movement is as natural as the wave of the sea. Islam, in his political project, thus becomes a “counter-hegemony” in Turkey against world-system. In other words, in his political project, competing ideologies such as socialism or liberalism, rather than regarded as a political current or offer, are considered as an ‘operational’ movement against Turkey. That is why, he did not participate purposely in dialogue that started in the 1990s between Islamists and the liberal-left intellectual circles. He interprets this dialogue as a ‘breakwater’ in the face of advent of the Islamic movement. At this point, in order to better position him in the Turkish intellectual field, I should mention a useful analysis of Göker on the intellectual field after 1980 in the context of Islamic movement. With the 1980 coup, the two poles of the tension between artistic/intellectual production and the ethical-political engagement were broken antagonistically and two of the valid positions gained clarity:

- a) Those who believed the coordinates of the intellectual production should be determined completely on the *benefit* of construction of the political positions,
- b) Those who proposed to focus the act of criticism on individual production and initiative by moving away as much as possible from the organized engagements in the political field (Göker, 2004, p.16; quoted in Çeğin & Meder, p.261).

In Özel’s essays within *Cuma Mektupları*, he seems to engage with ethical-political motives. Özel’s political discourses, indeed, have parallel with the rhetoric of *Milli Görüş* movement. For instance, as I mentioned above, Özel emphasizes the specificity of Islamic movement, a theme that is very familiar with in the *Milli Görüş* tradition. *Milli Görüş* parties such as MSP and RP have always wanted to put forward their uniqueness and authenticity in the face of other political parties. The popular political motto, “*Milli Görüş* and others” constitutes a good exemplar in this regard. In *Cuma Mektupları*, Özel tries to rationalize this rhetoric with historical background in the context of world-system and Turkish modernization. Secondly, as I will explain later, Özel’s formal understanding of democracy is similar to the politics of *Milli Görüş*. Islamic movement has tried to overcome traditional tension with Kemalist regime by referring to a vague notion of democracy. Therefore, *Milli Görüş* movement has not value the

institutional democracy in Turkey. In this sense, it has maintained a medium ignoring the self-reflection of democratic principles (Çiğdem, p.30).⁴⁶ This understanding is compatible with Özel's formal understanding of democracy. In short, Özel's political discourse should be considered in the context of *Milli Görüş* movement. Beyond his views being parallel with *Milli Görüş* movement, Özel also has an expectation regarding an Islamic transformation in the first half of the 1990s. He believes that it has come to a critical juncture in the 45 year history of Turkish democracy. Özel seems both to support the Islamic movement and to provide guidance on the course of the Islamic movement. In this manner, for instance, on the eve of 1991 general elections he implies that he deliberately keep silent on some issues (CM5, p.111). He actually had disapproved of RP's electoral alliance with nationalist parties. However he did not explicitly voice his opinion at that moment, because he did not want to damage the Islamist *Refah Party*. It seems that in the second half of the 1990s, Özel increasingly lost his political hopes about the Islamic transformation and then, he explicitly criticized the electoral alliance in 1991 between Islamists (RP) and the nationalists (MÇP and IDP). For him, with this alliance RP has lost its own uniqueness claim.⁴⁷ Özel's critiques of RP also demonstrates his faith regarding the specificity or authenticity of RP. In short, I argue that Özel's political project in his essays within *Cuma Mektupları* can be understood only by focusing on the first position on the axis of the aforementioned polarization. In that period, he strongly wants to intervene political arena. On the other hand, as I will explain later, his elitist orientation and the idea of autonomous intellectual, it is evident that Özel is also disposed to the image of the aristocratic intellectual in the Ivory Tower, which creates a dualistic tension that I will discuss later.

Democracy, State and Nation

İsmet Özel's views of democracy are in line with a perception of democracy as a means for Islamic movement to use when encountered the secular

⁴⁶ Arguably, through the intellectual inquiry starting in the 1990s and particularly the influence of AK Party experience in the 2000s, democracy as a cultural value has more internalized among Islamist circles than the past (Tekin & Akgün, 2011, p.663).

⁴⁷ As far as I can detect, one of his critiques about *Milli Görüş* relates to the positive statement of Erbakan about secular leader, Atatürk. In his column, Özel criticizes this statement in April 1996 (Özel, 2010, p.175-176). Also, after 28 February process, in an interview with Ruşen Çakır, Özel publicly criticizes the Islamist RP about his disappointment (Özel, 2010, p.218-221).

state, and also a matter of legitimization for itself in order to participate in the public argumentation. He argues that the wide currency of the idea of democracy and its *de facto* power are inseparable from the fact that US has predominance on the world political system. Like many other radical-dissident intellectuals, Özel is also inclined to regard democracy as an extension of the West's power relations established with non- Western countries (CM2, p.68). In this regard, democracy according to him, is the champion of a particular understanding (bourgeoisie), a specific historical process (modernity), industrialism, and technological revolutions rather than an equitable system for mankind. Moreover, he suggests that democracy cannot be an "ideal" system by showing its internal discrepancies in operation (CM2, p.71).

In the context of Turkey, Özel explains the formal and substantive conceptions of democracy. In terms of formal conception, democracy is a preferable system since it makes various values possible to exist. Though, in terms of normative conception, democracy is itself a set of values (CM2, p.76). In parallel with the orthopraxis of Islamic movement, Özel assumes democracy only as a means and form. According to him, what must be expected from democracy to provide an equitable environment where right and righteous would win. He also seems to believe that there is a positive correlation between the democratic tendencies and the Islamic demands in Turkey. That is why, he criticizes the method of radical Islamists that fundamentally refuses democratic system. Moreover, he defends the existence of an Islamist party and democratic race as a method against the views of radical Muslims within *Cuma Mektupları* (CM1, p.129-137). At the same time, by criticizing those who see democracy as the ultimate goal, Özel therefore takes a position consistent with the orthopraxis of Islamic movement. As argued by Çiğdem, "the democracy conception of Islamic movement has above all consolidated around the effort to participate in the public argumentation" (Çiğdem, 2011, p.30). This argument is also pertinent to Özel. In an interview, to the question "would you say you are a democrat", Özel replies: "I am not a democrat. However, if you ask me: 'would you like a democratic political system exist in Turkey?', I would say 'yes'" (Özel, 2010, p.256). In brief, democracy in Özel's mind has an instrumental meaning for Islamic movement. In other words, unlike the fundamentalists, he sees democracy as a legitimate method for Islamic struggle, in accordance with the practice of *Milli Görüş* tradition.

His views on the relationship between state and nation are in fact an extension of his world-system approach. Özel claims the social disturbances, political struggles, economic problems, and depressions people experience exist because of the gap between the state and the nation (CM2, p.103). According to him, this gap is a result of a mechanism that inactivates the element of people through technology and finance systems. What is called world-system operates benefitting from this gap (CM2, p.107). Furthermore, Özel suggests in line with Wallerstein's theory that the states also operate as a substation of the world system (CM2, p.117). Thus, there is not a case where the relationship between the state and the nation is organic in the world. To close this aforementioned gap is possible only through "turning back to human" which can be achieved and thus the organic relation between the state and the nation arises and consolidates. To Özel, nation emerges from a set of relationships and the state emerges from a common goal (CM2 p.123). According to him, it is enough to have a common goal and an agreement on how to do a specific "job" for a state to emerge and exist, which implies a dynamic understanding of the state. As for the nation, Özel describes it through the set of values it is affiliated with, emphasizing that the common goals of a nation can be achieved through state. In this regard, Özel points out that Islam has had a decisive role in Turkey on how the nation continues to exist. As a matter of fact, his analyses of the concepts of state, nation, and democracy are a part of his idea on a confrontation between Islamic movement and world-system, which Özel thinks soon to come. Through these concepts, therefore he constructs Islam as a counter-hegemony in Turkey.

3.2.3 The Limits of Özel's Political Project

Here, I will discuss the three points that shows the limitations of Özel's political project. First, I will argue that in spite of his sincere efforts, his political essays do not create an accessible concrete context for his followers. Secondly, his system analysis inevitably leads to a cynical approach that trivialized the political arena, agreement and conflict processes. Moreover, his cynical attitude has the potential to destroy mutual communication with his readers. Thirdly, this potential in Özel's essays has caused him being a "self-enclosed" intellectual type.

Firstly, I argue that when I take into account his essays in the context of political project, Özel's analysis does not provide a concrete ground. As I

mentioned above, Özel only defends Islamic values as a new offering for humanity by using constructive language. However, for instance, what kind of attitude Muslims should adopt in the face of institutional modernization is not explicitly discussed in his essays. Similarly, Özel has not discussed in detail the issue of concrete initiatives on how to resolve the problems and contradictions of modern society. Contemporary sociological and ethical problems related to capital-labor contradiction and technological issues can be considered in this context. Actually, he is aware of the fact that these problems are crucial and complicated not only for “modern” westernizers, but also for Muslims. He seems to believe that ground-breaking studies to be conducted by Muslim pioneers on issues such as science, technology, labor etc. can create a solid foundation for these problems. Nevertheless, he does not propose a concrete programme which these goals can be achieved. To me, his attitude along with his other essays could lead to a misunderstanding from his Muslim followers: his essays produce a perception that to be a Muslim can solve *a priori* all modern problems. However, in the face of these problems, “there is no different cosmos or different world or a different society for Muslims” (Çiğdem, p.86). Therefore, if the privilege of being Muslim does not correspond to a social and concrete achievement or improvement regarding the problems of modern society, particularly against capitalism, this privilege objectively can only be meaningful within the inner world of individuals. However it is difficult to say that this would be an achievement for Islamism, because, for me, Islamism cannot be reduced to the demand for freedom of religious life. The emphasis of Islamism on the societal, emancipatory potentials of Islam for all humanity is crucial for its very existence. Moreover, if Islamism is unable to perform its own discourse in the material and social life, its basic claim will be doomed to become a conservative demand. Çiğdem’s critique regarding the political discourse of Islamism can be considered in the context of Özel’s essays:

Islamism has followed probabilities which have become generally impossible in the history of Turkey, has constantly inclined towards the anachronic targets, and instead of creating an accessible context as a political project it has followed a line which was concretized by remaining either against or part of macro formations, it could not provide its carrier subjects with a permanent space. Due to this fact, it could easily be integrated into other movements, and has always been open to manipulations (Çiğdem, 2009, p.121; quoted in Çeğin&Meder, 2012, p.269).

It can be said that his distanced approach to concrete proposal is related to his system analysis. He constantly emphasizes the asymmetrical relationship between the limited opportunities of Muslims and the power of the world-system. His powerful system depiction can be read as a discursive strategy in connection with his wish to keep Muslims vigilant in the face of systemic power (Fındıklı, p.113). His essays leave a strong impression of trying to provoke the reader to resist the system. Moreover, it can be said that he seems to call the Schmittian “moment of decision” for his audience: either being servant of the system or to resist the system. He wants to put a sharp choice in front of his followers within macro formations. Therefore at this point the fundamental question inevitably reveals in his essays: What can Muslims do against this extremely powerful system? Özel does not offer any concrete proposals related to this question in his essays. He always calls Muslims to individual piety: “We should understand that those who are looking for the solution of all issues at the true creed and worship have the capacity to show the way to resist the system by just walking” (CM5, p.240)⁴⁸.

In short, Özel only puts the Islamic values against the power of the system. Actually, this is not a new theme for his readers. In his first book, *Üç Mesele*, he, too, proposes morality against worldly power, which shows the continuity in his essays. At this point, however his rejective attitude about the Cartesian distinction between the theory and the practice encounters with a serious deadlock: even though for him theory and practice constitute an inseparable whole, he is forced to separate thinking and practice in order for he is quite pessimistic about any practical solution in the face of world-system. This theme, seems that, creates a serious problematic in his political essays. In the face of material power, he expects a prophetic or heroic stance from “special” Muslims. For him, Muslim pioneers must defend morality under any circumstance whatsoever. He seems to believe that Muslim pioneers should undertake this difficulty on behalf of the Islamic Ummah or *Millet* (Turkish term, nation).

Secondly, the world system theory provides a safer place for the author on the political arena, because the system is considered as an agent that already explains everything in this approach. The basic problem of the structural-

⁴⁸ “Bütün meselelerin çözümünü itikad ve ibadette arayan kişilerin yalnızca yürümek suretiyle sisteme karşı koymanın yolunu görüp gösterecek yeterlikte olduklarını anlamamız gerek.”

functional political theory is reduced to a single dimension in the phenomenon of the structure of a complex modern society. With this reduction, theory grasped as a dogmatic substance may obscure the facts. Özel's using the format of theory also brings him to be the subject to these methodological critiques. It seems to me that Özel's political analysis sometimes makes a "short-circuit" through systemic conspiracies, because systemic explanations oversimplify the complexity of societal phenomena. Beyond this methodological problem, his system analysis inevitably leads to a cynical approach that trivialized the political arena, agreement and conflict processes.⁴⁹

In Özel's essays, with his cynical attitude he seems to want to tell the truth against hegemonic ideology. It can be easily observed that Özel assumes an aggressive and sarcastic tone (Karasipahi, p.57). For instance, he uses a powerful political rhetoric by his cynical approach in his essays on Turkish laicism. As Meeker pointed out that, "Özel may be at best in his essays when he addresses the secularist criticisms of Islamic institutions by unmasking the hypocrisy, condescension and authoritarianism that oftentimes motivates them" (Meeker, p.280). However, beyond this positive cynic attitude or sarcastic style, it can be said that Özel always wants to make in-depth system analysis in the face of political events. Because of this attitude, he seems to spend his time and effort to solve systemic conspiracies. A consequence of this state of vigilance is to underestimate the political struggle, because cynic stance is inclined to see political events as systemic conspiracies with a pessimistic mood.

Thirdly, and related to this, Özel's cynicism has led to him "self-enclosed" intellectual type. His disdainful attitude can also render mutual communication meaningless, because there remains little to discuss with him anymore. He seems to disbelieve that he can learn something from another person through mutual communication at the political level. For instance, his didactic style about the presence of the world-system and the understanding of democracy does not leave any space for an interactional discussion with his followers. Özel expresses and transfers his precise judgments to his readers in his essays. That is where, asymmetrical and hierarchical relationship between him and

⁴⁹ Özel's cynical attitude can be examined in the context of Peter Sloterdijk's significant philosophical study, *The Critique of Cynical Reason*, 1983. Also Tanıl Bora examines the cynical attitude of left-wing intellectual circles after September 12: *Sol, Sinizm, Pragmatizm*, 2010.

his readers emerges. His attitude reveals more clearly in his late Turkishness thesis. In Turkishness discussions, Özel appears as a “self-enclosed” intellectual figure, because he defends his view by neglecting the consensual dimension related to a historical and social identity. In this way, distorted mutual communication can prevent the truth to be shared among people. On the other hand, Özel always emphasizes the informal and friendly relationship with his reader against hierarchical and formal relationships. As I will demonstrate, in his existential work, *Tahrir Vazifeleri*, Özel adopts an interactional and relational perspective that contradicts with his attitude. For him, the truth can only take place in the relationship between “I and Thou”. Briefly, I can say that his attitude seems to be incompatible with ideals in his mind. Thus, the tension arising from the conflict between his cynical systemic analysis and his existential perspective reveals his tragic and dual dimension in his career.

3.2.4 The Construction of Political West

To recapitulate briefly, in his political project, he depicts world-system as an absolute other for Muslims. Moreover, in his essays, the concept of the system ultimately indicates the imperialist and capitalist Western hegemony. He considers world-system and Islam as two enemies in an absolute showdown within his political essays. At this point, I should specify that he situates Islamic resurgence as a “revanchist” movement against the world-system (CM5, p.228). However, in his essays in *Cuma Mektupları*, there is another “West” that Muslims should interact with. By criticizing fundamentalist attitude against systemic structure, he points out that Muslims have to deal with the Western science, philosophy and arts (CM2, p.30- 31). Moreover, Özel sees a special role for those Muslims who, like himself, have received Western-style modern education. For example, these Muslims can reject democracy as an ultimate purpose with their self-confidence and knowledge from the modern education they received. However, Muslims, who have received traditional Islamic education, most probably does not assume a similar attitude in the face of Western deceptions (CM5, p.172). At this point, Özel considers as instrumental to be informed about the modern West, because he believes that one can struggle with the Western challenge only by understanding the nature of the modern world. From this point, I can say that world-system theory is the key conceptual equipment used in his political essay for understanding the condition of modern world. However, beyond this instrumental perception, I will

argue that he sees contemporary Western thought as a potentiality for Muslims. Özel, in fact, implies the importance of building a genuine relationship with the “cultural West” at the intellectual level:

If we are stuck in the exploitation mechanism of the system and are excluded from it without a chance to benefit from the fruits of Western culture, it is quite absurd to talk about the organic reactions and internal dynamics of Turkey. However, if we choose to stay outside of the system because of our Islamic values, though did not lose our touch with the cultural values of the West, it means we can tend towards the way out with an Islamic transition (CM5, p.82)⁵⁰.

Here, Özel emphasizes two points in the context of Islamic movement concerning the West: to stay out of the system (political-hostile West) and to get in touch with the values of Western culture (cultural-philosophical West). In other words, while at the political level Özel assumes a dismissive attitude against the Western hegemonic power, he also takes a dialogical and inclusive stance in the face of Western thought at the cultural and intellectual level. Although Özel emphasize interacting with Western thought in *Cuma Mektupları*, he actually attempts to deal with the possibility of Western thought for Muslims in his existentialist work, *Tahrir Vazifeleri*. Now, I will examine Özel’s thought in the axis of existentialism, religion, modernity and science within *Tahrir Vazifeleri*.

3.3 Philosophical Discourse of İsmet Özel

In this part, I will address Özel’s ideas on human, religion, Western philosophy and science, and modernity in his major intellectual work, *Tahrir Vazifeleri* (1994). However, at first I have to present the context of the issue in order to understand and put Özel’s essays into a historical context. First of all, I should mention that rather than being a founder figure of modernity, Turkey has largely been exposed to modernity. This situation, in fact, constitutes the fundamental problematique of non-Western societies in their relationship with modernity. With the modernization process, these societies including Turkey have experienced a cultural split whose effect continues today. One can either argue that this hybrid

⁵⁰ “Eğer sistemin içine bir sömürü mekanizması içinde tıkmış ve Batı kültürünün besleyici ürünlerinden yararlanamayacak biçimde sistem tarafından dışlanmışsak Türkiye’nin organik tepkisinden ve iç dinamiğinden söz etmek bizi gülünç duruma sokar. Ama eğer sahip olduğumuz İslami değerler dolayısıyla sistemin dışında kalmayı başarmış ve buna mukabil Batı kültürünün bizim için kayıp deve mesabesinde olan değerleriyle bağlantımızı kurabilmişsek gerçekleştireceğimiz İslami dönüşümle birlikte çıkış yoluna adım atabileceğiz demektir.”

modernization can be transformed into a positive possibility or it can be put forward this hybridization can only reveal inefficient and absurd outcomes. Nonetheless the non-Western intellectuals historically were forced to take an intellectual position on this ground.

In the context of Turkey, the dominance of the Kemalist positivist ideology has facilitated the adoption of an anti-positivist trajectory for intellectuals of excluded political formations in the periphery. In the 1980s, significant translation activities that were carried out on the philosophy of science has created a new wave of excitement by breaking the official positivist hegemony in the intellectual field. For instance, Thomas S. Kuhn's "*The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*" was translated into Turkish in 1982, functioning as a milestone in this regard. Liberal-left (or non-Kemalist socialist milieu) and Islamist circles introduced and advocated alternative paradigms against the positivist-official discourse such as hermeneutics, phenomenology and existentialism. This stance of dissident intellectuals in the periphery largely seemed as an extension of political antagonism against Kemalism (Balkız & Ögüt, 2010, p.22). In the 1990s, mobility in the intellectual field increasingly gained speed and postmodernist wave was significantly effective in the intellectual field. Translation and publishing activities present a major indicator for the observing of opposite waves in Turkey. "Ayrıntı" (a post-modern socialist-oriented publisher) and "Paradigma" (anti-modernist conservative publisher) publications provide a good exemplary in this regard. Thanks to these activities, the critiques of positivism, Western rationalist tradition, enlightenment and the questioning of the authority of reason and science become current issues in the Turkish intellectual field. In the 1990s, Islamist and socialist-liberal circles discussed the major political issues such as the nation-state, Kurdish issue, the question of laicism and class contradictions by criticizing the official rhetoric. In this regard, for example, Fikret Başkaya's *Paradigmanın İflası* published in 1991 reflects a challenger discourse of that period against official ideology. Islamist intellectuals also were one of the important political and intellectual actors of this "counter-attack" period. At the political level, Islamic movement reached the height of its visibility in the Turkish public sphere. Moreover, as I mentioned, Islamist reviews in the 1990 such as *Tezkire* and *Bilgi ve Hikmet* illustrate the intellectual accumulation of Islamist circles. Through the political motives or orientation of the periphery, new

discussions and inquiry areas was included in the public argumentation. These developments constitute part of the context of Özel's existentialist essays. I will take into account this context when analysing his work, *Tahrir Vazifeleri*.

First of all, I should emphasize on the fact that the literature on Özel's work is more to do with his political texts rather than his existentialist ideas. That is to say, it is not quite possible to get a more complete picture of his ideas based on existing studies. I would like to analyze his existentialist ideas under specific themes in order to have a better picture of Özel's work. First, I will analyze his ideas on human, religion and existence. Then, I will continue with drawing a correspondence between his existential ideas and the German philosopher Heidegger. Secondly, I will discuss his critique of modernity, modern culture and science that will allow me to delve deeper into his analysis of modernity and delineate the existential attitude that Özel proposes as alternative. I will discuss his views regarding science in relation to sociology of science and Jewish philosopher Martin Buber. Lastly, I will introduce how the "philosophical West" is constructed in his work as a result of a positive engagement with the Western philosophy.

3.3.1 Human, Religion and Existence

Compare to his other books, in *Tahrir Vazifeleri*, Özel focuses more on spiritual matters such as truth of human, religion and existence. According to Özel, human cannot be described, because any description presupposes a claim to 'what' is human. However, for him, human does not have a complete essence. Özel stresses mankind's servitude (*kulluk*) by describing him as a "medium" (*ortam*). In this sense, servitude is a medium that indicates the conditions and limits of human (*Tahrir Vazifeleri*, p.128). Therefore, in his thought, man's servitude does not claim to any descriptive constant:

When we try to define human as if we know "what" is human, we realize that it does not fit into the boundaries of our definition. However when we define it as a servant instead of object or subject, we refer to its limits of conditions instead of defining it. First among these conditions is that human acknowledges its death (*Tahrir Vazifeleri*, p.127)⁵¹.

⁵¹ "İnsanı "ne" olduğunu biliyormuş gibi yaparak tanımlamaya kalkıştığımızda kısa sürede tanımımız içinde kalmadığını görüveriyoruz. Eğer insanın nesne değil, özne değil; ama kul olduğunu söylüyorsak böylece onu tanımlamış olmuyor şartlarının sınırlarına bir atıfta bulunmuş oluyoruz. Bu şartların başında insanın kendi ölümünü tanıyan bir yaratık oluşu geliyor."

He also criticizes Western philosophical tradition that conceptualizes human as a 'subject' or 'object'. For him, human is not a subject because he needs to direct towards an essence; he is not an object either, because human is within the field of interest (*ibid*, p.73). What man contains is a medium of servitude that solely tends toward becoming and demise. Özel describes this medium as:

a medium that the concept of nothingness finds a place.... A unique medium in which concept of existence can have a meaning on its own. A medium which allows existence to be known and found beyond mere appearance. In short, it is a medium of becoming in which the creation among the created can be recognized (*Ibid*. p.128)⁵².

In fact, Özel's description of a medium corresponds with Heidegger's analysis of human existence (see below). According to Özel, this medium of existence is the fundamental quality that differentiates human beings from animals and other living beings because human beings are the only ones who experience the 'severity' of change between existence and nothingness. In other words, humans can either take responsibility of being human or disavow it through the decisions they make (*ibid*, p.128).

Moreover, Özel argues that in order for the reality of religion to be understood properly it should be only related to human in the axis of existence. According to him, there are two obstacles in the mind of modern man that prevents him from understanding religion: first, religion forms its own particular "axiomatique" system and people are in position to whether to get into its frame or not. When the issue at hand is stated as a matter of difference between the convictions of believers and nonbelievers, one is reminded of "oppressive" models of societies in which one conviction dominates over the other. The second obstacle is the view that religion is a moment in history of mankind (*ibid*, p.89-90). Though both views are pro-religion, neither of them offers a proper understanding of it, because religion refers to a field of existence. Moreover, it refers to a space of meaning and destination for man. In this sense a believer enters into the space of meaning (*ibid*,

⁵² "Yok kavramının içinde yer bulduğu bir ortam. Var kavramının kendi başına anlam kazanabildiği yegâne ortam. Varlığın görünenin ötesinde bilinip bulunabildiği bir ortam. Kısacası, yaratılmışlar içinde yaratılışın an be an farkedilebildiği oluş ortamı. Kazanmanın ve kaybetmenin birer değer katına yükseldiği ve fakat kimin kazandığı ve kimin kaybettiği belli olmadığı için sürekli canlı kalmanın mümkün olduğu bir ortam."

p.188). Here the 'afterlife' becomes a perceptible reality for the man who enters into this space of meaning rather than a thought or a category of mind. Therefore, for Özel, the reality of religion can be properly understood only in existential terms. In his analysis, the reality of religion is placed right at the heart of human existence which is in an ontological relation with Being:

Relating the reality of religion with human in existential terms means that the human leaves its own existence unmediatedly into space of Being; it means that we realize that there is no reasonable ground to connect with or attach to Being and that finding an excuse for existence leads to departing ways with Being. In other words, at moment when we realize beings are separate from Being, "existence" begins. Up until the point where humans relate to religion in terms of existence they can have many opportunities from "space of existent". These opportunities lead one to existence yet they do not ensure it. What ensures it is tie of Being and it is this tie that renders the relation between being and non-existence tasteable (Ibid, p.91)⁵³.

That is why Özel remarks the inaccuracy of the discourse that turns to secluded nature in order to present the reality of religion. In this discourse, the reality of religion is placed outside of human and the intervention of human to nature is treated as if it is has an autonomous space (*ibid*, p.41). However, religious life does not owe its validity neither to nature nor to the history because it is the most proper way of living one's life in accordance with human's existential breakthrough.

These existential themes, in fact, will resonate a familiar content and style for those who are accustomed to Heidegger's philosophy. I will limit the discussion of Heidegger's philosophy to particular themes that can be related to Özel.⁵⁴ Then, I will point the parallelism between Özel's existentialist ideas and Heidegger's philosophy. As it is well known, in his *magnum opus* Being and Time, Heidegger explores the question of Being. He argues that, Western

⁵³ "Din gerçeğinin varoluş ekseninde insanla irtibatlandırılması demek insanın kendi varlığını aracısız biçimde Varlık alanına bırakması demektir; Varlık'la bağ kurmanın, Varlık'a bağlanmanın, Varlık bağı içinde kalmanın hiçbir gerekçesi olamayacağını, varoluşa bir bahane uydurmanın Varlık'tan kopuşa götürdüğünü ve Varlık'tan gayrisıyla anlam kazanma mazeretinin geçersiz olduğunu bilmektir. Yani varolanların Varlık'tan ayrıldığını farketme sınırında "varoluş" başlar. İnsanlar din gerçeğiyle varoluş ekseninde irtibatlandırıldıkları sınıra varıncaya kadar "varolanlar alanı"ndan birçok vesile edinebilirler. Bu vesileler insanı varoluşa sevkederler, fakat varoluşu sağlamazlar. Varoluşu Varlık bağı sağlar ve bu bağ var ile yok arasındaki ilişkinin ne idüğünü tadılır kılar."

⁵⁴ In order to summarize Heidegger's ideas I have made use of his two booklets and a major book: Letter on Humanism, What is Metaphysics and Being and Time.

metaphysics not only forgot the question of Being since the time of Plato, but also it forgot that it has forgotten this issue. This metaphysical tradition conceive of Being as a whole of beings which causes Being and beings to be confused with one another. Heidegger makes a radical critique of Western tradition and argues for an “ontological difference” between Being and beings. In order to analyze Being, he starts from Dasein (human being) and tries to expose its existential form. In contrast with Western metaphysics that regards human a “speaking”, “intelligent” or “thinking” animal, for Heidegger human has an “existence”, a privilege that makes him incomparable with any other creature. The existence is not only human’s essence but also forms his original link to Being.⁵⁵ This sort of ‘being’ is exclusive to human. Human can pursue his essence as long as it is demanded by Being. In other words, in order to understand the existence of human properly one has to look for its connection with Being. Western metaphysics (in a broadest sense, humanism) not only disregards the essential linkage between human existence and Being, but also conceals this linkage. That is why metaphysical tradition thinks human in its “animalitas” aspect instead of “humanitas”.

So far, I have discussed Dasein in relation to Being. Now the question is how does Dasein encounter with the experience of existence and the connection with Being? According to Heidegger, the answer is a state of mind; a state of fear in its most basic form.⁵⁶ Fear completely derails beings, because when faced with fear, everything loses its meaning and distances itself away from human. Moreover, fear pulls off Dasein from its state of absorption into the world which causes its daily familiarity to collapse. Thus, Dasein experiences its basic existential character: being-in-the-world. For Heidegger, human comes face to face with nothingness at the moment of fear. In other words, man in fear experiences nothingness. (Heidegger, 2009, p.35). In Heidegger’s philosophy, “authentic” existence is built upon this experience of nothingness because through this experience artificialities shatter and the world loses its significance. Thus, Dasein realizes that it is not protected or directed by any objective meaning (Safranski, 2008, p.241). Unauthentic existence should be considered as a basic ontological

⁵⁵ In Heidegger’s philosophy “essence” does not refer to a given. In his thought, ahistorical concepts such as “absolute”, “substance”, “truth” and “god” are deconstructed. Heidegger uses “essence” (Wesen) in order to explain becoming.

⁵⁶ I draw upon the 40th paragraph of *Being and Time*. Also he elaborates more on fear in his piece, *What is Metaphysics*.

form of Dasein rather than accidental or distorted state, because in the beginning Dasein is not himself but rather it is anyone and most of the time it remains to be so. Dasein is thrown into the world of potentialities, in fact it is scattered and dispersed within this thrown (Heidegger, 2011, p.136). In most cases Dasein is in state of inauthenticity; because when Being is manifested as a burden with Dasein in its primary state of mind such as boredom and weariness, Dasein's tendency to break away from such state with the help of daily occupations is manifested as inauthenticity. Moreover, public life encourages inauthenticity of Dasein by enabling its existence in a broader and general setting. Nonetheless, authenticity is in fact negation of negation; that is, authentic existence stands out against Dasein's tendency towards inauthenticity. The matter for Heidegger is the possibility of Dasein's transformation from this general anonymity into a separate individual whole and embracement of its own existence. This possibility arises only with death. Death should be thought with the most basic character of human existence that is "temporality". Heidegger conceives temporality at a radical level and recounts human as "being-towards-death". In facing death Dasein recognizes its finiteness which causes "anxiety". If Dasein does not avoid this by occupying itself with daily pursuits, it ends up committing itself to its own death. Inauthentic and daily existence refers to a mentality that death and living excludes each other. However, for Heidegger, when faced with death Dasein catches a glimpse of what belongs to it. At this moment of sparkle, Dasein's particular possibilities are brought into light. That is why, freedom as the last possibility of existence is realized with taking responsibility for death. Everyone has to die its own death. This is how, Dasein ceases to be anyone which is an inauthentic way of existing.

Lastly, for Heidegger, "language" residing inside of man is where Being preserves its Truth. What is meant here is not social function of language as a means of communication, but a revelation of its primary meaning. In order to understand this meaning, Heidegger explores possibilities of language in his studies on poetics especially in his later period. In fact, in Heideggerian perspective language is not an "object" of study. On the contrary, it is a possibility that arises through application of phenomenological method. In other words, man acquires knowledge by applying to "language" because it is not a manmade means of communication. In short, in Heideggerian philosophy there is an ontological relation between human existence, language and Being.

There is a significant correspondence between Heidegger's philosophy and Özel's existential thought. As a matter of fact, it seems that Özel's analysis of existence is greatly influenced by Heidegger's philosophy. Like Heidegger, Özel also criticizes Western philosophical tradition that defines human with reference to animal (*Tahrir Vazifeleri*, p.127). Özel also seems to agree on Heidegger's distinction between authentic and inauthentic state.⁵⁷ He mentions "authentic" and "inauthentic" death (*ibid*, p.88)⁵⁸. Özel's emphasis on the existence of human between being and nothingness and his views on death resonates with Heidegger's analysis of "authentic" existence. However, because Özel does not write with academic and professional concerns, his existentialist ideas do not constitute an integral whole. For example, Özel does not say anything on how the Dasein shall experience the connection with the Being. For this reason in his essays, the basic state of mind such as fear, anxiety and boredom emphasized by Heidegger are not discussed. Furthermore, there is no interpretation on how he envisions or experiences "Being" and how "Being" can be positioned between God and the universe. One can only discern that Özel makes a Heideggerian analysis of human existence. Furthermore, he places "the religion" in the axis of existence. In this issue, I have to point out that Heideggerian philosophy may also present a fertile soil for those who adhere to religious traditions, because, by attempting to criticize the Western metaphysical tradition hitherto him, Heidegger attempts to overcome it. Hence Heideggerian thought presents an interesting perspective on demonstration of the problems of the Western philosophical tradition and also the conclusions of this perspective can contribute to freedom of the religious world views from the burden of the metaphysical tradition. Here, Özel also reveals the problems of the Western philosophy with the possibilities of Heideggerian thought. In this manner, for

⁵⁷ In spite of the fact that his differentiation of authentic and unauthentic is ontologically based and despite of his warning against reading differentiation as "moral" or "anthropological", this approach is prevalent among conservatives (especially in interwar Germany) who defy modernity with strong convictions and used as an argument for a critique of modernity. In this sense, it can be claimed that Heideggerian philosophy is affected by the era of crisis ridden Weimar era (Safranski, p. 236). In Turkey, the rethoric of aforementioned authenticity has always been an important part of Islamic discourse. In this sense, as in Davutoğlu's discourse of civilization, all Islamist tradition with its different variation is, in fact in a search for an "authenticity" and an "alternative" modernization (Ardıç, 2014, p.86). It can also be claimed that Ozel too has developed a particular rethoric in terms of the pursuit of "authenticity" of Islamism.

⁵⁸ As a matter of fact Ozel directly quotes Heidegger: "Only man dies, the animal perishes" (*Tahrir Vazifeleri*, p.88).

example, in a lot of places he emphasizes the boundaries of daily logics, Cartesian philosophy and traditional philosophical categories such as object and subject (*Tahrir Vazifeleri*, p.98). He believes that this metaphysical tradition narrows down the perspective of the human being. Secondly, it seems that ideas of Heidegger bears a quality that can be translated into a religious world. In this regard, Safranski argues that “in a nonreligious age, Heidegger held the perspective for a religious experience broader than any other person is able to accomplish” (Safranski, p.22). His venture to think on finiteness, temporality, death and destiny establishes a fertile possibility for a religious perspective. A possibility to construct a positive relationship between Heideggerian thought and religiousness can be better understood when compared with the existentialist approach of Sartre. However, because Sartre’s existentialism bears an atheistic humanist basis, he completely rejects “destiny” and emphasizes that the mankind constructs its own essence through its decisions and thus acquires its own freedom. So even though Sartre’s philosophy rejects modern essentialism, it turns back to “modern subject”. On the other hand in Heidegger’s ideas, Dasein can only be free when he submits to his own destiny. That is why, in Heidegger, in contrast to the rational systems, the possibility of freedom cannot be built by a dichotomous relationship with the destiny. Moreover, in Heidegger’s thought, Dasein designs himself towards the future. The existential decisions Dasein makes as a design heralds us from his future. In this regard, contrary to the assumptions of modern subjectivist philosophies, Dasein does not construct himself by his choices, but he chooses on his existential state. For this instance, in one of his writings Özel makes such comparison (without any references to Heidegger and Sartre) and states that:

The idea of existence defends that the mankind is not confined to its boundaries, it can transgress itself with the aid of its own choices and converge into another selfness. On the other hand “Existence” idea underscores that the human being may become what it is. While both of them explains the composition of the man, one of them seeks the transformation in an unknown “outside”, the other one seeks it in a known “inside”... In the former, self-centered individual builds himself, in the latter becoming actualizes into being. The result in each case is “formation”. While in the idea of “existence”, man gains himself, in the idea of “Existence” human only takes part from the Being. Existence is *kismet*. (*Tahrir Vazifeleri*, p. 94-95)⁵⁹.

⁵⁹ “Existence düşüncesi insanın şu anda ne ise ona mahkum kalmadığını, yaptığı seçme yardımıyla kendinden çıkıp bir başka kendiliğe kavuşabileceğini savunur. “Varoluş” düşüncesi ise insanın ne ise o olabileceğinin imkânını vurgular. Her ikisi de insanın

It is without any doubt that Özel, as a religious intellectual, emphasizes the clear possibility Heideggerian thought gives way to religiousness. He correlates the existence analysis in the Heidegger thought with the “religious” thought. As I have explained above, he demonstrates the uniqueness and superiority by designating “religion” as an existential sphere. It may be concluded that this existential religion analysis may have assisted Özel to adopt a mentality of religious truth that is not apologetic stance towards science, philosophy or arts:

Science, philosophy, art may have a helpful function to the human being as long as long as they do not emerge as a coercion of its own existence, meaning that they hasten the rise of an esoteric wave from the human being. Unfortunately, this aid is confined to remind human being that there is a place to reach. It is only religious sphere that has the power and softness to inform where the place to be reached is and to make it have a taste of the reality of the possibilities of the heart (*Ibid*, p.78)⁶⁰.

Lastly, I would like to assert that in his essays on language too, Özel is in close connection with Heideggerian idea. As a poet and a master of using words, he does not only share Heidegger’s ideas on language⁶¹, he also attempts to produce possibilities in Turkish, adopting a Heideggerian style. For example, in some of his writings he examines language by dividing words such as *özne* (*öz-ne*), *nesne* (*ne- ise-ne*), *özgür olmak* (*özü-gür olmak*). At this point, he attempts to bring his existence in front of the language, learn from the “language”, and hear the speech of the “language” just like Heidegger did, implying that Özel internalized Heideggerian thought in his approach towards language.

To sum up, instead of adopting Heideggerian philosophy as simply a tool to criticize Western metaphysical tradition, Özel tries to build up an existentialist religiousness in his essays. Instead of the neutral or silent stance of Heideggerian

oluşumundan söz etmekte ve fakat biri olunacak şeyi bilinmeyen bir “dış”ta, diğeri ise bilinen bir “iç”te aramaktadır. . . Birinde benmerkezci birey kendini bina eder, diğesinde oluş var’a doğru gerçekleşir. Sonuç her ikisinde de birer “oluşum”dur. Ne var ki “existence” düşüncesinde insan kendini elde ederken “varoluş” düşüncesinde insan Var’dan ancak nasibini alır. Varoluş bir kısmettir.”

⁶⁰ “Bilim, felsefe, sanat da insan için bir takıntı, kendi mevcudiyetinin bir dayatması olmadıkları yerde, yani kişiöğlundan bātını bir dalganın yükselmesine hız kazandırdıkları ölçüde yararlı bir görev üstlenebilirler. Ne var ki bu yarar insan için ulaşılabacak yer olduğunu hatırlatmakla sınırlıdır. Ulaşılabacak yerin neresi olduğunu bildirme, gönül imkânının sahiciliğini tattırma gücü ve yumuşaklığı sadece din alanındadır.”

⁶¹ For example Özel agrees wholeheartedly to Heidegger’s ideas on language in his essays titled “Dilden Ötürü İnsanlaşılır”, “Söz Vermek, Palavra Atmak”, “Dil Konuşursa Maneviyat Konuşur”.

thought on issues such as religion and God helps such an attempt to emerge. As I will demonstrate further, Özel does not in all times adopt a Heideggerian perspective. Especially the critique of science and his emphasis on humanitarian relations, he is more connected to dialogic philosophy, which was initiated by Buber. For this reason, I will emphasize that Özel has an “eclectic” intellectual attitude as his critique of modernity and science indicates.

3.3.2 Modernity and Culture

Modernity and its critique is one of the main themes of Özel’s essays. In *Tahrir Vazifeleri*, Özel, as an Islamist intellectual, attempts to enquire modernity and to develop a realistic attitude against it. To begin with, I should that Özel uses “western civilization”, “world system” and “bourgeois civilization” instead of “modernity” in his essays. According to him, the main characteristic of modernity is that it is “one-worlder” (*tek-dünyalılık*). Without hesitation, technological mechanism, which bears an important function in continuation of the human life, and capitalist markets, which directs the human relations are also important elements of the Western civilization. But, according to Özel, the primary character of modernity relies on subtraction of the after-life from the human life and restraining of the mentality of the people to being a “one-worlder” (Tahrir Vazifeleri, p.189). “Modern culture” emerged as a result of this perverted mentality. In this culture, human relations are reduced to only one value (money, ability to pay). Furthermore, in this culture, language is functionalized only as a means of communication and loses its essential meaning. In the bourgeois culture, humans do not perform “*zikr*” nor do they “pray”, for the reason that the language turned into barren. This process is closely related to withdrawal of the human from its own existence. By this way, human is pulled away from its main existential place and becomes one-dimensional in the modern culture. The system continues this cultural medium and mechanizes human society. In this direction Özel claims that there is a radical differentiation between the capitalistic hegemony or modernity and the traditional world. In the pre-modern world, only obstacle for the human to penetrate into its existential mystery or wisdom was deviation and abuse from the societal functions. Societies had an organic totality in themselves, whereas, in the modern world, system has inserted itself as a whole between the solitary human and the truth. Human relations are reduced into a sole value that can be evaluated with money, and the societies have turned into mechanic totalities.

Özel suggests an existential attitude against this mechanism. But here the suggested 'disposition' bears a personal property and differs from a societal alternative, because the system has sufficient apparatus to conjoin the alternatives. He submits "asceticism" (*çile*), a sufi method required for human development, as an existential attitude against the mechanism. For him, the period of asceticism is the period in which mankind left with itself posing the question what is the value of life (*Tahrir Vazifeleri*, p.147). At the end of this process human fulfills its ascetic experience (*çilesini doldurmak*) by understanding its existential wisdom and becomes confident on what the purpose of the life is. Furthermore, man completing its experience gives up the search for ways of satisfaction and means of consumption and acts in the meaning field emerging from the asceticism. Then, what may be the practical implications of this? According to him, people who fulfilled their experience act just for the sake of establishing their actions, and thus acknowledge the function of the act in the mechanism is repressed and the general harmonious operation of the mechanism malfunctions. Those also who fulfill their suffering halt being "anyone", because fulfilling the ascetic experience, acknowledgment that the mechanism produces cruelty and emancipation from being anyone corresponds to the same acknowledgment level (Ibid, p. 148). In this instance, I can say that Özel criticizes the majority who do not question the common conviction of their era similarly like the "anyone" depiction of Heidegger⁶² as a critique of its own age. For example, he begins his book with a quote by the American poet e.e. Cummings: "You and I are human beings; most people are snobs". Özel, actually attempts to appeal to the "special" people who want to protect their uniqueness against the modern world and pay attention to their existence. In this manner Özel, who attempts to create an elitist insight beginning from the *Üç Mesele*, attempts to establish an existential base to this attempt with *Tahrir Vazifeleri*. As Çiğdem explains, the elitist component of the idea of Islam in Özel is not that the apologetic aim of establishing his own individuality in a community but his attitude to comprehend Islam as a personal trait and a situation of sufficiency (Çiğdem, p.143). In an interview, he explicitly explained that Islam is in all cases a religion belonging to the elites, and there is a huge difference between understanding Islam with a developed mind and

⁶² While Heidegger rejects this rigorously and claims that he makes ontological depiction instead of ontic criticism, the "anyone" analysis can be understood as the critique of the modern ages.

just adhering to it (Özel, 2010, p.184). In this manner, it may be concluded that in order to justify his elitist views Özel attempts to implement the terminology of the modern philosophy, especially existentialism.

It is clear that in *Tahrir Vazifeleri*, Özel draws the image of the aristocratic intellectual in the Ivory Tower, because, he seems to defend the elite, pure culture by criticizing the vulgar culture of the majority. He leaves the strong impression that his texts appeal to a small number of conscious human beings. In *Tahrir Vazifeleri*, thanks to his artist personality and the idea of autonomous intellectual, he is disposed to the image of the aristocratic intellectual. However, earlier I showed his political engagement with Islamic movement, especially *Milli Görüş* parties. This is the point, where Özel's dualistic tension emerges. On one hand, he wants to intervene in the public sphere with political and ethical motives, while he wants to live in his mental, peaceful world within a distinguished culture transcending the political agenda. This tension between political-ethical engagement (partisan) and the idea of autonomous intellectual (proud poet) has always been permanent for him. Bourdieu also explains the two-dimensional character of the intellectual:

The intellectual is a bidimensional being. To be entitled to the name of intellectual, a cultural producer must fulfill two conditions: on the one hand, he must belong to an autonomous intellectual world (a field), that is, independent from religious, political, and economic powers (and so on), and must respect its specific laws; on the other hand, he must invest the competence and authority he has acquired in the intellectual field in a political action, which is in any case carried out outside the intellectual field proper (Bourdieu, 1991, p.656).

Özel's proposal may thus be summarized as a religious/sufi existential attitude against modernity. Furthermore, he underscores that this attitude has to be renewed for the reason that there is a radical differentiation between traditional world and the modern world. According to him, people used to display their attitudes by "kicking to the world". While explaining the new attitude, Özel expresses that "we shall dribble past the world". Meaning that "we shall set a trap to the world implementing the ways of science, philosophy and the arts" (*Tahrir Vazifeleri*, p.109). As I stressed in the previous chapter, he supports an active attitude especially against the Western cultural products. Furthermore, he attempts to display again that instead of adopting West conservatively (modernist-liberal attitude) or ignoring the West (fundamentalist attitude) the correct attitude is to "settle account with the

Western civilization”. In his thought, this shall be accomplished by the vanguards (elites). Now, I will examine his ideas on modern science and his relationship with the dialogue philosophy.

3.3.3 Science

Indeed, in *Tahrir Vazifeleri*, he has written his longest and most detailed essays on science compared to his short columns.⁶³ Özel deals here with science as an institution. “Science world”, according to him, is the most closed world in our age, because only a handful of scientists construct the scientific world and one has to have great accomplishments in order to be able to be part of this elite community. Underneath such a handful of scientists, there is a world of candidates with a larger number of members. Even getting in the world of candidates are bounded with strict limitations and this hardship does not exist in any other world. Today, millions of people in this world do not live in the “science world” but instead live in the “world of science” created by the waves of effects established by the science world. Beginning from the 17th century onwards, the world of science has emerged from Western Europe by destroying the world of knowledge and ruling the human lives by establishing its own dominion; then has spread step by step across the globe. To live in the world of science means living in the world of quantities. Human beings live in the world of science today, because the presumptions and proposals that enable the science has become the presumptions and proposals of the ordinary human beings. In the world of science, it is proposed that human beings do not hold a special position in the universe. Furthermore, the globe as the homeland of humankind dispatch from being a special place and turns into an ordinary planet. Lastly, in the world of science, it is claimed that the occurrence of existence within the universe can only be grasped inside the limits of our mental mechanisms, and for this reason is deemed as a ordinary phenomena. In summary, according to Özel, “we, living in the world of science, ‘especially’ do not exist in this world, we are not ‘especially’ humans and things happening around us do not ‘especially’ occur” (*Tahrir Vazifeleri*, p.223)⁶⁴.

⁶³ I will summarize some of his essays published in *Tahrir Vazifeleri*, namely “Bilim Dünyasından Bilginin Dünyasına”, “I. Bilginin Dünyasında Değil; Bilimin Dünyasında Yaşıyoruz”, “II. Bilimin Dünyasından Bilginin Dünyasına Geçmek Mümkündür”, “Müslüman ve Bilgi”.

⁶⁴ “Bilimin dünyasında yaşayan bizler bilhassa dünyada bulunmuyoruz, bilhassa insan değiliz ve bizimle ilgili çevremizde olup bitenler bilhassa cereyan etmiyor.”

After explaining the world of science, Özel emphasizes on the historicism of this world arguing that its life may be expired in the near future. He puts forward “the world of knowledge” as a wish and an alternative.

Before dealing with his comparatively description about the world of knowledge and the world of science, I will here discuss Özel’s views about science in the context of sociology of science, since he comprehends the science together with its members as “an institutionalized community”, even if he does not directly deal with the sociology of science. In short, Özel states that the “science world” is a world closed to everyone except for a handful of scientists and a world not open to sharing. In other words “science world” is discussed as an isolated community closed in itself. The position of Özel in this issue may be regarded as close to conventionalist and relativistic approaches, as these approaches do also take the science community as an isolated culture. According to these approaches, the science community builds scientific knowledge by using its own specific cultural resources. Özel doesn’t bring into question about scientific knowledge, as he doesn’t deal with the “science world” in depth. Furthermore, it is observed that Özel’s attitude towards science is not as “relativist” as the aforementioned approaches. He persistently tries to analyze science as a matter-of-fact. For example, he states that by putting belief forward against in science, one would not be able to achieve any efficient result, since belief cannot be reduced to a historical category as science, and the gains provided by science should not be sacrificed either (*Tahrir Vazifeleri*, p.233). Therefore, Özel questions the philosophical grounds of modern science and its positivist and ahistorical position, on one side; and maintains a more constructive attitude in comparison to the critical stance of relativist-postmodern spheres towards science reaching up to nihilism, on the other side. Yet here it is important that Özel does not make any references to the socio-economic context, since he only deals with the “science world” as a closed community in itself and connection with the modern science idea within frame of it. In other words, Özel’s discussion of science does not utilize the yields of Marxian critical approaches. Hence it can be said that Özel attempts to make a critical analysis of modern scientific thought from a philosophical perspective, instead of establishing an efficient and useable correlation between the “science world” and the interest of “bourgeoisie”.

Özel applies the possibility of “language” in order to discuss the world of knowledge and the world of science comparatively. The language provides us

three words to explain or understand everything: I, Thou, It. The child born begins with a “Thou-I” integrity. Then, as “Thou” and “I” break up, “Thou” is recognized; because a perceiver is required to express a sign. Indication is the first meaningful behavior of a human being and can be made towards “Thou”, for “Thou”. Thus, following the “Thou-I” integrity, “Thou” is distinguished from “I”. As “Thou” diverges away from “I”, “It” can be recognized. As “I” diverges away from “Thou”, “I” starts to see “Thou” and “It” at the same distance. Here, a distinct parting of the ways exists according to Özel: The way to “I-It” reaches to “science”, and the way to “I-Thou” reaches to “knowledge”. In the “I-It” relation “I” is an isolated and abstracted “I”, and for this reason “I” divides, separates and grades “It”. “I” is the knowing subject and “It” is the known. This is solely the way of dominance and “I” is a tyrant in this relation. As this tyrant sees all other “I” as “It” gradually his own “I” turns into an “It” as well. For this reason, in the “I-It” relation, only a reality of “It” is revealed. On the other hand, in the “I-Thou” relation, the “knowledge” reveals within an “I- Thou” connection. In other words, the two “I” addressing each other as “Thou” are in connection with each other, and knowledge arises as the result of this connection. Here “I” does not seek any objects to experiment with or elements to be utilized, for the “I” within this connection is tied to the elements connected with his own existence and experiences the knowledge together with them.

According to Özel, as the science is not used as a tool of dominance, but as an element of the knowledge, passing from the world of science to the world to the knowledge of world will be possible. For this to happen, the “I-It” relation has to transform into a “Thou-I-It” relation. First of all, “I” has to reach to an openness enabling him to address “It” as “Thou”, that is “I” has to start to open up and to open, allowing penetration into “I”. By this manner, “I” leaves the knowing subject in search of himself in “Thou”, and “It” reveals only as a specific knowledge for those establishing the “I-Thou” relation. In the world of science, the real knowledge is assumed to be independent of the knower. Whereas in the world of knowledge, one can reach to knowledge only in connection with the knower. For this reason in the world of knowledge,

The existence of harmony, understanding and affection between the elements transmitting the knowledge and receiving the knowledge is a prerequisite for learning. The treatment occurs by means of transmission of vitality among two living creatures. The

doctor suffers together with the patient (*Tahrir Vazifeleri*, p.230)⁶⁵.

According to Özel, there are two ways to pass to the world of knowledge by transforming this relation: Religion and Art. In both ways, a “Thou-I” relation occurs. By this means, one get rid of the problems of Western philosophy forgetting “Thou” and enabling science and its “knower-object” fiction. In the world of knowledge, it reveals that the “knower-object” is an invention of the philosophy and the all-knowing is only Allah. Knowledge is not possible without “Thou” and every “Thou” represents the recognition of the divine intervention in the creation. And the ultimate thou is Allah.

At this point, I can move to the relationship he establishes with Buber in the linguistic analysis used by Özel to describe the worlds of science and of knowledge.⁶⁶ Buber’s philosophy defines two essential terms, “I-Thou” and “I-It” as antipodal opposites of each other, in terms of the relationship of the man being with the world. As the essential term “I-It” establishes a world of experiences, the essential term “I-Thou” establishes a world of relationships. In the world of experiences, “I” deals with “It” as an object, “I” investigates, classifies “It”, compares it to other “It” and possesses “It”. “I” is not in a real relationship in the world of experiences, because here a reciprocal participation is not the case. “It” is in fact only an imagination of “I”. In the world of experiences, “I” is lonely in an imaginative reality created by itself, as it is never in a real relationship. The reality in the world of experience consists of an imaginative fiction. “I” is egocentric in the “I-It” relationship and possessing is its essential passion. According to Buber, as for that the “I-Thou” relationship is a real relationship; because in this relationship “Thou” cannot be reduced to any imagination of mine, “Thou” is an entity with its entire spontaneousness and unpredictability. In this relationship, the two entities are within an unmediated coincidence with each other. According to Buber, the eternal “Thou” is God.

In general, the interesting point here is that Buber’s philosophy takes the material human existence as its starting point (Tüzer, 2013, p.16). At that,

⁶⁵ “Bilginin dünyasında öğrenim yapılabilmesi için bilgiyi aktaracak ve bilgiyi alacak olan unsurlar arasında bir uyum, bir anlaşma ve sevginin bulunması ön şarttır. Tedavi iki canlı arasında hayatıyetin aktarılması biçiminde olur. Hekimin canı hasta ile birlikte acır”

⁶⁶ Buber develops in his work “I and Thou” an original relationship or dialogue philosophy. Here I will very briefly summarize this work of Buber. For detailed information, please see; Buber, I and Thou, 2008, Hesperides Press.

Buber basing its philosophy on “relationship” and “dialogue” points at an extraordinary path within the history of philosophy; since Western philosophy has been established, as Levinas also indicates, throughout its own historical process on the perfection of self or unity, but against multiplicity (that is “Thou” or the “Other”) (Levinas, 2010, p.259). In addition to this, Buber’s depiction of the world of experience (“I-It”) may also be interpreted as a criticism of modern age. According to Buber, the inevitable consequence of a world of experience, where “Thou” does not exist, would be the alienation of man, and lack of freedom and meaning. Buber, as a religious Jewish scholar and philosopher, sees the man moving away from the eternal Thou (God) as the source of modern problems (Buber, 2013). Meanwhile, he criticizes the modernity and the rationalist, scientific thought at philosophical level.

To indicate clearly first and foremost, Özel’s “I-Thou” and “I-It” analysis used to describe the worlds science and knowledge exactly corresponds to Buber’s philosophy. Merely, Özel uses the term “world of science” for the world of experience (I-It) and thus expresses a philosophical critiques of science. On the other hand, Özel points at the development of “knowledge” from the “I-Thou” relationship. Further, the “I-Thou” relationship is one of the dominant themes in Özel’s several essays in *Tahrir Vazifeleri*. I can say, Özel tries, by using the yields of dialog philosophy, to suggest that knowledge, reality even inner truth can materialize under the framework a human relationship. For this reason, the human relationship has a major weight within Özel’s thought. Özel thus seems to adopt an eclectic attitude towards the contemporary Western thought. In this manner, I dare say, if Özel had a more orthodox Heideggerian attitude, he would be expected not to be influenced by the dialog philosophy. For as indicated by Levinas, Dasein in Heideggerian thought is a being interested in his own existence. In a sense, in Heideggerian philosophy, “I” is prioritized and for this reason as in dialog philosophy “Thou” or “the other” do not have a decisive status. Hence, Özel is observed in his texts to be impressed by several philosophers, rather than to stand for a specific discipline or philosopher in an orthodox manner.

3.3.4 The Construction of Philosophical West within Özel’s Essays

As mentioned before, it would not be a reasonable approach to regard İsmet Özel as a professional philosopher or academician. He endeavors to

develop the existentialist thought from his own perspective of Islam, in his short essays many of which are published in newspaper columns. Indeed, beyond this it cannot be claimed that Özel asserts a new philosophical paradigm or world view in the axis of religion and existence. For this reason, I have attempted here only to deal with his texts of philosophical content, around specific themes and reach to limited evaluations. In general terms, one of the prominent matters in his essays is the fact that the problems of philosophy in texts and the fields of discussion around such problems can only be comprehended on the grounds of contemporary Western philosophy. As demonstrated above, Özel attempts to construct a religious discourse making use of the thoughts of existentialist philosophers such as Heidegger and Buber. Furthermore, he does not avoid making positive references to other prominent Western philosophers. In his several essays, introductions are made with quotations from Western philosophers like Kant, Schopenhauer and Lessing. On the other hand, any citations or references from Islamic philosophers or theologians (Kalam scholars) are not found in *Tahrir Vazifeleri*. Özel only refers to the verses of Quran and concludes many of his texts by interpreting verses from the point of view of existentialist religious discourse. Özel thus develops his thought based on the grounds of contemporary Western thought. Ahmet Çiğdem's important observation on contemporary Islamist thought is also relevant in this context:

The dominant element in contemporary Islamist thought is the modern tension. Whatever their intends and political preferences, political goals are – from the most radical to the most liberal – all forms of thoughts, the way of expressing such forms and hence their epistemology and sociology are determined in fact by the modernity itself. When the traces of modernity within the concept “Modern” Islamic thought are removed – only estheticized traditional-discursive stereotypes of historical products of Islamic thought remain (Çiğdem, p.80-81).

This observation is also valid for Özel, because the ground he is based on and where he is active when attempting to create novelties from his own Islamic point of view is the modern ground. What makes Özel's thought dynamic and up-to-date at the same time is this ground where the possibilities of contemporary philosophy and social sciences are used. As I mentioned before, Özel seems to adopt an interactional and questioning attitude towards the West. In other words, he tries to develop a critical base by using the possibilities of Western thought.

Indeed, for him, only Muslim pioneers can settle account with West. In this context, for example, in an interview with him, Özel claims that the Muslim majority may be entered into a dialogue about the fallacy of positivist August Comte, and in this manner overcoming the defect of Turkish Westernization process can be possible. Nonetheless, discussing with the same majority - about which points the Christian existentialist philosopher, Kierkegaard may be right - would be impossible according to him. (Özel, 1989, p.224). At this point, for him, only well-educated Muslims among the Muslim majority can settle account with West as such by their virtue of pioneering characteristics. From this point of view, though the majority of the texts in *Tahrir Vazifeleri* are in form of short essays and thus have their limitations, these should be assessed as an attempt by Özel himself to utilize the facilities of Western thought. He gets in contact – within the rationalist modern Western philosophy tradition with whom Muslims can maintain an authentic relation and enter into a fruitful dialogue – with “odd” and “marginal” philosophers like Kierkegaard. I have attempted to exemplify such endeavor of Özel in the cases of philosophers Heidegger and Buber.

In brief, he makes efforts to avoid a reactionary attitude towards West in the fields of philosophy, art and even science and hence to overcome the defensive reflex of Islamist thought. Even though the name of İsmet Özel within Islamist thought does not constitute a distinct course or stream, the attitude of Özel may have contributed to Islamism in reaching beyond a form of just self-enclosed provincial movement. In conclusion, it should be noted that Özel himself is a self-confident Muslim intellectual seeking for wisdom commonly perceived as “the lost property of believer” due to a Hadith frequently referred to by Özel.

At this point, it might be useful to review my two major arguments in this study. First, I argue the fundamental tension of Özel’s thought is based on the axis of the distinction between “philosophical” West and “political” West. Second, I will demonstrate the transformation of his philosophical, religious and political ideas. Now I will discuss these two arguments.

3.4 The Evolution and Change of Özel’s Thought

Here, I will briefly discuss the evolution and change of Özel’s thought from the philosophical, religious and political dimensions. In philosophical and religious level, Özel is seen to demonstrate a tough attitude in *Üç Mesele* refusing any interaction with the philosophical heritage and movements of thought outside

the realm of Islam. For him, many Islamist authors under the influence of certain thought systems in the modern era, have sought for the counterparts in Islam. As a result of such efforts, non-Islamic thoughts have started to determine the conception and interpretation of Islam. Thus, the judgements of modern era have been internalized and legalized by attributing them a religious content. At this point, we see that Özel tries to reject the modernist Islamist attitude and adopts a critical approach questioning Islamist rhetoric internally emphasizing that Islam should be understood within its own authenticity. Furthermore, for him, when analyzing diverse philosophical streams available in recent times, a Muslim thinker should learn about which aspects and the reasons why these are concerned as a matter, but should not scrutinize the meaning of such matter from the fundamental resources of Islam. Otherwise, even if the philosophical these are rejected one would enter into their problematique and an eclectic attitude occurs (*Üç Mesele*, p.50). Özel demonstrates a similar questioning attitude in the religious matter and indicates that the positioning of Islam regarding the geographical (for example, the thought of desert), historical (for example, Islamic civilization) or tribal (for example, the thought of Arabs) assessments made by people based on their comparative judgments is an extension of modern-scientific mindset. In contrast to such understanding, Özel emphasizes the universality of Islamic principles and the transcendency of religion beyond the historical dimension. Özel thus has refused the modernist perspective in his thoughts on philosophy and religion, and brought in a radical perception towards West in his earlier career during the late 1970s. Such rhetoric, as I mentioned before, may have influenced the development of the Islamist intellectual thought after 1980. Furthermore, in the sight of many researchers such as İsmail Kara, the questioning of Islamism internally in Özel's *Üç Mesele* is deemed as a "paradigmatic break".

However, I have to point that *Üç Mesele* deals with religion as an essentialist content isolated from historical and spatial dimensions. In other words, the transcendency of decretals was emphasized, but the relation of religion's reality with that of human was not discussed. Furthermore, a Muslim's attempt at dialogue with other religions, cultures and philosophies preserved as a Muslim was not discussed, either. On the other hand, in *Tahrir Vazifeleri*, Özel positions the religion's reality in the axis of material human existence instead of content of vague essentialism. Thus he argues that religious life does not owe its existence

solely to nature and history, by demonstrating the transcendency of religion's reality. At the same time, in interaction with existentialist philosophers like Heidegger and Buber, Özel adopts, as a Muslim intellectual, an interactional attitude towards philosophical heritage of contemporary West. In *Üç Mesele*, Özel rather attempted to show that he refused the main stream rationalist Western philosophy and the modernist-accommodationist attitude in accordance with the West. In *Tahrir Vazifeleri*, however, beyond the attitude of accepting or rejecting West, he attempts to get in contact with Western thought in order to establish a fruitful course.

The issue with the evolution of Özel's thoughts in the political sense is being discussed frequently in the public sphere in recent years. Here, being concerned for keeping distance to a public argumentation (as I mentioned, such concern has determined the methodological choice of the dissertation), I will demonstrate his political evolution only focusing on Özel's texts within the aforementioned books. In *Üç Mesele*, Özel argues that a local or native approach would be the product of a narrow understanding in the conception of Islam. He appears more to adopt a perception of Islam putting emphasis on Ummah, in parallel to the universality stressed by translation movements. Furthermore, the questioning of history lying underneath Özel's critique of civilization can be deemed as an evidence of that he is fed by a challenging Islamist rhetoric, in contrast to rigid argument on behalf of history by conservative-nationalist discourses. Meanwhile, the publisher *Düşünce* where the first edition of *Üç Mesele* was published, and the circle of Islamist review *Düşünce*, gives an import clue about Özel's political orientation. *Düşünce* review founded by Ali Bulaç with a group of friends in 1976 is noticed by its characteristics differing from *Hareket* review, which is a rather Turkey oriented review that can be described as a Turkish Muslimism, whereas *Düşünce* has adopted a more Ummah-oriented, internationalist or anti-nationalist line. Among other things, *Düşünce* can be seen in its own era, as a first systematic epistemological break from the nationalism within Islamism (Ünsal & Özensel, 2011, p.736). The fact that Özel joins the circle of such a review, as well as the lack of any concern in *Üç Mesele* about matters related with Turkey's specificity and "being native" (*yerlilik*) indicate that he is closer to the Ummah perspective. Nevertheless, as I pointed at before, Özel starts to develop a Turkey centered political discourse emphasizing Turkey's specificity and

potentials, in his predominantly political essays named “*Cuma Mektupları*” published in his column towards the end of 1980’s. In fact, at this point it is worth mentioning that the discovery of a sociological element making a country specific, making considerations on this element and acting accordingly can be regarded as an attitude that should be adopted by every reasonable individual (Çiğdem, p.74). However, converting this into an ideological form or a cultural position, in other words making belonging to a geography turning into a political identity would lead to different political associations. I dare say, Özel’s Turkey centered discourse could also be read as an evolution of or contribution to the sensitivity of “nativeness” from the Islamist angle, by an elitist Turkish conservative represented by Yahya Kemal and Tanpınar. At the same time, such discourse could assist an Islamism suffering from an universalism that can be deemed as unfruitful and utopic, in establishing a relation and facing with the social reality, thus in overcoming a doctrinarian inflexibility and gaining a more pragmatic orientation. Nonetheless, starting from 1990’s, Özel is observed to have tended towards an idiosyncratic nationalism, by politicizing this nativist discourse. I can say that by transferring his elitist views into Turkishness, he has undertaken an advocacy of the construction of a Turkish identity distant to Turkey’s reality in a radical tone. This nationalist orientation of Özel and its causes and effects is a topic worth to discuss elsewhere.

Actually, there is a fundamental tension and paradox in his orientation. At philosophical level, Özel has evolved from anti-modernist attitude to the interactional dialogue with Western culture. On the other hand, at political level, he followed a path from the universalist Ummah understanding to the nationalist views. In other words, while he responds with a rigid political identity against the “political” West, he also develops the interaction with Western culture. At this point, I will argue that the fundamental distinction between the “philosophical” and the “political” West has become apparent in the 1990s. Therefore, I will analyze his opinions in the 1990’s as the period, in which Özel’s thought is crystallized, in the axis of the distinction between “political West” and “philosophical West”.

3.5 An Attempt to Frame on İsmet Özel’s Thought

In this dissertation, I have concentrated on his political project as presented in *Cuma Mektupları* and his religious existentialist perspective in *Tahrir Vazifeleri*, based on Özel’s attitude towards Western civilization. Özel’s attitude towards against West’s challenge resembles neither the liberal-modernist approach

passively assimilating West, nor the radical-fundamentalist approach refusing West on the whole and struggling with it. He suggests that one should settle account with the Western civilization and utilize its yields. Here, I will describe this attitude of Özel by comparing his views on the “political” and “philosophical” West. In this manner, I will demonstrate the strengths and weaknesses of his thought, to be able to evaluate Özel’s experience in settling account with the West in his texts.

Firstly, on the political level, there is a certain “mechanism” steering the modern world and determining its socio-economic structure, according to Özel’s thought. This mechanism is expressed in his texts as a “world-system”. According to him, the system creates an exploitative mechanism by controlling the economic structure through its global finance and trade network, as well as manipulate people’s views through scientific organizations in order to legalize the exploitation and to ensure people’s obedience. Özel’s system analysis seems to decode the quite complex and multi-dimensional socio-economic structure of the modern world. Furthermore in his texts woven by a refined language, this system is depicted as an absolute and limitless entity that can absorb everything within itself and comes out as the ultimate reason for social events. On the other hand, Özel positions Islam right across this system both as a solution to the socio-economic problems present in the contemporary world, and as a way of life best suitable for humankind’s existence. In *Cuma Mektupları*, he suggests Islam as the most significant politic alternative against the system. Whereas in *Tahrir Vazifeleri*, he attempts to elucidate the existential grounds his suggestion is based on in the context of the reality of religion. In short, religion stands as “wisdom of existence” as opposed to a “mechanism” ruling the modern world, according to his thought.

Taking the references comprising Özel’s thought into account, although he adopts the world-system theory in political matters, in the fields of philosophy and religion he is observed to be influenced by the existentialist philosophy. Here, I will put forward two main arguments.

First, this fundamental distinction between political and philosophical ones appears to weaken his thought, because I can say that his political normative project is evidently in conflict with his Heideggerian perspective. When analyzing the mechanism, Özel employs a structural-determinist perspective and an analytic

language. That is, he tries to understand the external world in the light of world-system theory and to develop arguments. Accordingly, at the same time, Özel attributes the system an almost transcendental content, by fictionalizing it in form of a political metaphysics rather than seeing it as a historical entity. Özel expects from his readers to believe in the presence of the system without a shadow of a doubt, since he is confident that his own imagination of the system explains everything. At that point, a fundamental tension arises between Özel's imagination of the system and his existentialist perspective. Özel's deterministic, metaphysical imagination of the system surrounding human life entirely comes out to be damaged with a structuralism encircling the entire society making all existentialist decisions in either good (*rahmani*) or evil (*şeytani*) direction irrelevant. In other words, his concept of mechanism reflects such a theoretical integrity that does not leave any freedom allowing for human existence. This conflict may be interpreted as a natural consequence of the eclectic intellectual attitude adopted by Özel.⁶⁷ Nevertheless, Özel not only does not attempt to synthesize different disciplines and theories, but also adopts both a strict structural and schematic theory and an existentialist thought paying more attention to vitality, temporality and experience, instead of rather

⁶⁷ The reason of this ontological tension and conflict is the radical differences existing between the world system approach as a Neo-Marxist theory and the matters problematized by Heidegger's philosophy. First of all, as it is known, whereas the world system approach defined as a sociological theory, existentialism is a philosophical movement. However, even under such circumstances, this does not mean that they cannot be compared with each other, for as much as a sociological theory is always based on an ontological and epistemological ground. The world-system theory roots in Marxist philosophy, so to say in historical and dialectic materialism. This approach advocates for that one has to focus on material-economic patterns rather than on ideas, in order to be able to make sense of the world and the history of humanity. Heidegger's philosophy on the other hand, is fed by phenomenological traditions and "life philosophy". Heidegger's philosophy does not discuss whether the conscience or the nature has priority. Heidegger open a new way with "being-in-the-world". That is to say, the human being perceives neither himself first nor the world first, rather both are given simultaneously in an insoluble link in the experience. Even though Heidegger's perspective has radically questioned and displaced conventional subjective and objective philosophies, in the final analysis the human existence prioritizes its experience and subjectivity. In this manner, Heidegger's thought can be categorized as a radical subjectivist philosophy based on experience and material human existence. Contemporary social theorists like Giddens and Bourdieu tried to establish a more relational and flexible theoretical ground taking phenomenological tradition and Heidegger's idea into consideration, also including matters such as intentionality of conscience and temporality of human. In this manner, in spite of all challenges of contemporary philosophy, world system theory has remained too dependent on its Marxist roots, as well as sustained a rigid and macro theoretical ground. Against the theoretical ambiance trying to explain and besiege everything dominating in world-system theory, Heidegger's thought revealing that the most deeply rooted questions have not been answered yet, invites us to make a modest attempt.

senseless concepts; that is he adopts simultaneously two approaches opposite to each other. Because of this incompatibility between the “political” and the “philosophical” in Özel’s thoughts, creating an integrated perspective by associating together his opinions in different subject matters becomes impossible.

Secondly, however, this tension between two opposite perspectives paradoxically makes his thought attractive. Because his existential perspective prevents his world-system approach to be at completely cynical and pessimistic structuralist frame. He has always stressed the importance of Islamic moral values and everyday life practice with a phenomenological language. He also does not take a culturalist positioning by emphasizing the economic structure in the context of world system. Thus, his political ideas fits into a more realistic and materialistic framework. At the point where the realism evolved from pessimism, he recalls the importance of existential faith. In this manner, for example, he claims in his another important book, *Taşları Yemek Yasak*

The way of modern life cannot have a corrupting effect on Muslims who can draw a firm line between profanity and faith. Those who corrupt are the ones that have never take this line seriously in their lives before encountering the modern lifestyle (Özel, 2010c, p. 100)⁶⁸.

At this point, he indicates that in spite of power of the system, true faith protects the believers against the corruption of our age. In a nutshell, this tension makes his thinking seem sophisticated and comprehensive.

However, lastly I should mention that the eclectic attitude making Özel’s thought impressive and comprehensive also prevents a deepening of his discourse. For example, he introduces a religious existentialist discourse to a more limited extent yet instead of tackling contemporary philosophical, political and cultural issues from this perspective. Moreover, as Özel has not written any distinct book by its own, his entire discourse is present in a scattered form, which this might have led ultimately to that he did not deal with any matter in depth. In addition, Özel’s free attitude from scientific and academic concern causes that such scattered form of thoughts is underlined more. Nevertheless, despite everything, he could interact with the Western thought preserving his Islamic

⁶⁸ “Modern yaşama biçimi küfür ile iman arasına çizgi çekmeyi bilen hiçbir müslümanı yozlaştıramaz. Yozlaşanlar modern yaşama biçimiyle karşılaşmadan önce de böyle bir çizgiyi hayatlarında önemli saymamış olanlardır.”

stance, at least at philosophical level, by demonstrating from his limited position as a columnist in a newspaper. At this point, as an intellectual, he is distinguished with his original aspect within Islamist thought: He has first refused the modernist Islamic understanding and accommodationist attitude with *Üç Mesele*; and then could maintain a dialog with other cultures and thoughts at a critical level, with his maturing thought in time. In summary, Özel's thoughts enriched by settling account with contemporary Western thought, represents a fruitful initiative and opportunity within Islamist discourse, despite the inconsistencies in his thought.



CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

In this dissertation, I have discussed İsmet Özel's thought in the context of Islamist movement. The object of the dissertation is to analyze the discourse of Özel has built up against "the challenge of the West" as one of the major issues of Islamism. In this manner, I have analyzed his thought as a discursive construction on "the West" in the axis of the distinction between "political" and "philosophical" West in his essays. I have asserted that his intellectual effort and essential resources can be elucidated in this context. We encounter Özel expressing himself both as a columnist both making inciting comments on political issues and as an intellectual trying to construct an existentialist religious view in philosophical matters. In this dissertation, I have demonstrated that this dualism is the element making Özel's thought both embracing and also weak and scattered. In short, I dare say, the tension characterizing Özel's intellectual efforts is created by the oscillation between the system analysis and the existentialist perspective. Özel adopts a cynical approach when making systemic analysis, underestimating political and social processes from a theoretical point of view, 'from the top'. On the other hand, in his philosophical and religious essays he adopts a more humanitarian perspective. For this reason, Islam is both constructed as a "counter-hegemony" on the political level and regarded as an ontological security on philosophical level, in Özel's essays.

In the second part of the dissertation, I have primarily dealt with the Islamism context and particularly concentrated on the era with a conflicting, challenging and revolutionary rhetoric designated as the "Islamic movement" beginning towards the end of 1960's and progressing until 28th February. I have taken notice of "New Muslim intellectuals" and Islamic movement especially after 1980 as the background and context of the views analyzed in this dissertation. I have attempted to maintain the methodological balance between Özel's texts and the sociological context. In other words, I did not deal with the texts as an entity isolated from the sociological context and tried not to simplify reducing them to the circumstances of the related era. At the same time, I have attempted to keep distance to the argumentation about a disputable public figure, by limiting the

sources of the dissertation solely with Özel's texts. In this chapter, after presenting a brief biography of Özel, I summarized *Üç Mesele* and then explained the discussions on *Üç Mesele* and the influence of Özel as an intellectual on the 2000's coming from the 1980's.

In the third chapter, I have demonstrated my main argument on the aforementioned distinction through an exposition of his key texts. I have analyzed firstly the political essays in *Cuma Mektupları*, and described his political project in the context of world system theory and his views such as Islamic movement, democracy, nation and state. Furthermore, I have demonstrated that the "political West" was constructed as a world-system in his texts. Then, I have analyzed the philosophical discourse in Özel's *Tahrir Vazifeleri* in the context of major themes. I have also demonstrated the decisive influence of Heideggerian thought on his analysis of humankind, religion and existence. Then, I have described Özel's criticism of modernity and the alternative existentialist attitude suggested by him. Finally, I have discussed Özel's critique on modern science in the contexts of sociology of science and Buber philosophy, and shown the construction of the "philosophical West" in his texts.

One can say that a number of difficulties have arisen during the studies on İsmet Özel's intellectual formation. First of all, Özel's presentation of his views as a columnist on media-oriented and speculative grounds was a complicating factor in the systematic analysis of his thoughts. Secondly, Özel's prose style and his presence as a disputed figure made an objective assessment of him difficult. In addition, one can say that the lack of any study solely drawing the boundaries of Turkish intellectual field, introducing its course, determining its problematic fields, processing continuities and ruptures, makes it difficult to do a descriptive study about an individual intellectual's place and role within the intellectual field. For this reason, instead of describing Özel's intellectual and cultural circles in depth, I have analyzed in this dissertation key texts of Özel in the context of Islamic movement, with respect to limitations of time and space.

Although this thesis has attempted to analyse Özel's key texts by using the different approach and put forward the integrated picture of his intellectual career, it has limits. First, I have not analyse his entire texts within the limitations of time and space. In this manner, his other texts can be compared in different contexts such as the change of Özel and the style of his writings. Moreover, the

main argument of this dissertation can be supported or refuted in his another important books such as *Zor Zamanda Konuşmak*, *Taşları Yemek Yasak* and *Tehdit Değil Teklif*. Also I have to admit that in order to grasp his intellectual career whole, his prose and poetry should be examined together. Second, I have not attempt to employ a theoretical framework describing the network of relations in the Turkish intellectual field. In this manner, one can say that there is need for structural study examining the Turkish intellectual field. That is why, I could not analyze Özel's intellectual career by employing structural-historical method.

Last but not least, this analysis could contribute to the understanding of shortfalls in the prevailing discourse in the literature of "New Muslim intellectuals", including Özel. This literature deals with the Islamist intellectuals after 1980 in an absolute opposition to the Western thought. Actually, the literature reveals the how new Muslim intellectuals differ from the first generation of modernist Islamists. This fact is valid for Özel, because there is no doubt about that Özel has constituted a dissident discourse against modernity, capitalism and mainstream scientific Western thought. For that matter, Özel may be considered to have an exceptional case, in contrast to many conservative intellectuals adopting a culturalist standpoint in the face of economic problems, with his tough stance against capitalism in the political arena. However, it is also true that the resources of his thought are products of Western thought, as I have exemplified, in the cases of existentialism and world-system theory. Therefore, it would not be correct to label Islamist intellectuals rejecting West entirely in a radical manner as seen in the case of Özel.

I hope that this dissertation, with its subject matter on İsmet Özel's thought as an Islamist intellectual, will make contributions to Islamism studies in general, to the studies about İsmet Özel in particular and provide the benefits of the studies to be conducted in the future.

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