Cemil Meriç's Search of Personal and Social Identity

Cemil Meriç'in Kişisel ve Sosyal Kimlik Arayışı

Bahtiyar Aslan[1]

ABSRACT

Cemil Meriç is one of the important figures of Turkish literature and intellectual life in the 20th century. He made a breakthrough in essay form and influenced Turkish literature with his unique style in late century. One of the important features of his works is mentioning about search of personal and social identity. The circumstances he lived in have pushed him to question the culture and identity of his own nation and while this process was going on, he tried to create his personal identity. In this search of identity, he firstly turned his gaze upon West and its culture. But literary works that he read guided him to India and he had an interest in Indian philosophy and literature, also he has written about those. Yet again, India was not the answer of his search of identity. Finally, he finished his search of identity by coming back to where he escaped from, the home, his own culture. This search of his that he personally lived includes a social suggestion. Because his search of identity isn't independent or unattached from community. He, as an intellectual, did this search for his own community either. Thereby, his point of arrival carries an attribution of a solutional offer to search of social identity. Meriç has referenced constant literary works in this phase of search and pointed out the importance of those for building the identity. In this regard, he has an exceptional place in late century Turkish literature. In this article, we tried to determine his search of identity and its' main points and qualifications.

Keywords: Cemil Meriç, Identity, "The Other", Personal Identity, Social Identity

[1]Dr., Türk Edebiyatı Dergisi Genel Yayın Yönetmeni

Sorumlu yazar/Corresponding author:
Bahtiyar Aslan,
Türk Edebiyatı Vakfı Türk Edebiyatı Dergisi Divanyolu Cad. No: 14 Sultanahmet, İstanbul - Türkiye
E-mail: bahtiyar.aslan@hotmail.com

ÖZET

Cemil Meriç, 20. yüzyıl Türk edebiyatı ve düşüncesinin önemli simalarından biridir. Deneme türü eserleriyle bir çığır açmış, kendine has üslubuyla son yüzyıl Türk edebiyatına etki etmiştir. Meriç'in eserlerinin önemli yanlarından biri de bireysel ve toplumsal kimlik arayışını dile getirmesidir. Yaşadığı şartlar onu mensubu olduğu milletin kültürünü ve kimliğini sorgulamaya itmiş, bu süreçte bir yandan da kendi bireysel kimliğini oluşturmaya çalışmıştır. Bu arayışta yönünü ilk olarak Batı coğrafyasına ve onun temsil ettiği kültüre çevirmiştir. Ancak okuduğu eserler onu Hindistan'a yöneltmiş, bir süre Hint düşüncesi ve edebiyatı ile ilgilenmiş, yazılar yazmış ve bir eser ortaya koymuştur. Ancak Hint de onun kimlik arayışını bir çözüme kavuşturamamıştır. Sonunda bir bakıma kaçtığı yere, evine, kendi kültürüne dönerek kimlik arayışını sonlandırmıştır. Onun bireysel olarak yaşadığı bu arayış, toplumsal bir öneriyi de içermektedir. Çünkü onun kimlik arayışı toplumdan bağımsız bir arayış değildir. O, bir aydın olarak bu arayışı kendi toplumu adına da yaşamıştır. Dolayısıyla vardığı nokta toplumsal kimlik arayışı için de bir çözüm önerisi niteliği taşımaktadır. Meriç, bu arayış süreci içinde sürekli edebi eserlere göndermelerde bulunmuş, kimlik inşasında onların önemini vurgulamıştır. Bu bakımdan son yüzyıl Türk edebiyatında müstesna bir yere sahiptir. Bu çalışma onun kimlik arayışını, bu arayışın duraklarını ve niteliğini tespit etmeyi amaçlamıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Cemil Meriç, Kimlik, Öteki, Bireysel Kimlik, Sosyal Kimlik

GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET

Cemil Meriç, yirminci yüzyılda kaleme aldığı eserlerle Türk edebiyatı ve düşünce hayatında seçkin bir yer edinmiş isimlerden biridir. Meriç, hayatı boyunca kişisel/bireysel kimlik ve toplumsal kimlik sorununun muhatabı olmuş, bir yandan bireysel kimliğini oluştururken, yani "ben kimim?" sorusunun cevaplarını ararken, bir yandan da toplumsal kimliğin oluşumu için yani "biz kimiz?" sorusunun cevaplarını bulmak için adeta savaşmış bir Türk aydınıdır. Cemil Meriç, Dimetokalı bir ailenin çocuğu olarak 1916'da Reyhanlı'da dünyaya gelmiş, o dönemin demografik yapısının bir sonucu olarak dilini bilmediği, kendisine benzemeyen bir toplum içinde yaşamak zorunda kalmıştır. Buna, bölgenin kısa süre de olsa Fransız egemenliği altına girmesi ve bunun sonucu olarak eğitim dilinin Fransızca olmasını da eklersek, çocuk yaşta yabancılığın, yalnızlığın ve öteki olmanın sancılarıyla tanıştığını söylemek kaçınılmaz olacaktır. Esasen eserlerinde de sık sık bu gerçeğe vurgu yapar. Meriç'in kimlik arayışı daha o yaşlarda başlar.

Cemil Meriç'in kimlik arayışı tek yönlü değildir. Adeta şartlar bu arayışın iki yönlü olmasını zorunlu kılmaktadır. Bireyin aynı zamanda toplumsal bir varlık oluşu gerçeğini de göz önünde bulundurarak söylemek gerekirse, o bir yandan bireysel kimliğini, bir yandan da toplumsal kimliğini aramak, oluşturmak hatta kurmak mecburiyetini erken yaşlardan itibaren yaşamaya başlamıştır. Meriç'in kimlik arayışı, hayatının neredeyse sonuna kadar devam eden bir süreci işaret eder. Başlarda kültürel birikim ve gençliğin bir sonucu olarak bu arayış içinde sağa sola savrulmuş, el yordamıyla yönünü bulmaya çalışmıştır. Bu arayışın ya da savruluşun ilk durağı Batı olmuştur. Meriç, okuduğu eserlerin de etkisiyle dikkatlerini –tabii Fransızcanın da etkisiyle- önce Batı ve Batı kavramının temsil ettiği değerlere çevirmiştir. Ancak Batı'yı ararken yine Batı'nın içinde Doğu ile karşılaşmış ve böylece öncelikle Hint edebiyatını keşfetmiştir. Xavier de Montepin'i, Alexandre Dumas'yı, Dostoyevski'yi, Victor Hugo'yu, Andre Gide'i, Chateaubriand'ı ve Balzac'ı okuyan yazar, Schopenhauer ile Schelling vasıtasıyla Hint edebiyatına, Vedalar Çağı'na yönelir. Bunun tam anlamı Doğu'yu Batı üzerinden tanımaktır. Meriç'in Doğu'yu Batı üzerinden tanımasının birden fazla anlamı vardır. Bunlardan biri rehbersiz oluşudur. İkincisi yaşadığı toplumun aydınının psikolojik durumudur. Tanzimat'tan beri Türk aydını, Batı'nın aydınlığında(!) gözleri kamaşmış bir haldedir ve ışığın şiddetinden(!) başka hiçbir şeyi görmesi mümkün değildir. Onun Hint edebiyatına büyük bir açlıkla eğilmesinin gerisinde de bütün Türk hatta Doğu'lu aydınların yaşadığı aşağılık psikolojisinden kurtulma sevinci vardır. Hint dünyasını keşfedince adeta bir rahatlama ve bir özgüven duygusuyla buluşmuştur. Artık kendi dünyasına, ait olduğu kıtaya daha bir saygı ve rahatlıkla bakabilecektir. Meriç, uzun yıllar boyunca büyük bir iştah ve hayranlıkla, kimi zamanda kompleksle düşüncesini ve edebiyatını incelediği Avrupa'nın karşısına koyabileceği bir şey bulmuştur. Bir süre Hint edebiyatı ve düşüncesinin etkisinde kalan yazar daha sonra bunun kendi kimlik arayışına bir çözüm olmadığının farkına varacaktır.

Cemil Meriç, tıpkı Yahya Kemal ve aynı kaderi paylaşan diğer Türk aydınları gibi "eve

dönen adam"dır. Bir Konya seyahati sırasında içinde yaşadığı ama fark etmediği bir dünyanın varlığını keşfeder. Bu sırada ilk defa *kendi insanıyla temas* eden yazar, bir anlamda milli kimliğin ve kültürün diriltici, yaşatıcı iksiriyle buluşur.

Cemil Meriç, sonunda bir bakıma kaçtığı yere, evine, kendi kültürüne dönerek kimlik arayışını sonlandırmıştır. Yazarın bu arayışı ve yaşadığı bir süreç içinde bireysel ve toplumsal önermeler içermesi bakımından son derece önemlidir. Çünkü yazarın yaşadığı arayış süreci, hem bir aydının, hem de bir toplumun kimlik arayışına denk gelmektedir. Bir bakıma Meriç, bu arayış sürecini hem kendi, hem de toplumu adına yaşamıştır. Bu bakımdan geçirdiği süreçler ve vardığı nokta toplumsal kimlik arayışı için de bir çözüm önerisi niteliği taşımaktadır.

Cemil Meriç'i edebiyatımız açısından önemli kılan hususlardan biri de bu kimlik arayışı sürecinde belirginleşir. Meriç, bu arayış boyunca sürekli edebi eserlere vurgu yapar, yazılarında sık sık onlara göndermelerde bulunur. Bunun bir anlamı da kimlik inşası ya da arayışı sürecinde edebi eserlerin önemli bir role sahip olmasıdır. Meriç, hemen bütün eserlerinde bu kimlik arayışı ve inşası sürecini konu edinmiştir. Bu süreci anlatırken ve gerçekleri dile getirirken kullandığı üslup, kendi neslini ve sonraki kuşakları çok ciddi bir şekilde etkilemiştir. Meriç, arayışıyla da, üslubuyla da başka kimseye benzemeyen bir düşünür ve edebiyatçıdır. Bu çalışma onun kimlik arayışını, bu arayışın duraklarını ve niteliğini tespit etmeyi amaçlamıştır.

"I would like to be a bridge connecting a magnificent past to a magnificent future. A bridge made of words and love" (Cemil Meric)

Theoretical framework:

Identity is one of the concepts which are used in different fields of social sciences and consequently to which different meanings are attached. The simplest definition of the concept may be made as the self-definition and self-positioning of the individual. It is clear that such a definition comprises only individual identity. However, we see that the meanings attached to the individual by other individuals or by the society are ignored. However, an individual's name which is the most important indicator of his/her identity is given by somebody other than himself/herself. It seems inevitable to speak of a given identity just from the very beginning. In case of the adoption and contentment with this given identity it will not be possible to speak of a search for identity. It is obvious that one must be dissatisfied with his/her given identity, considers it insufficient and resists against it and tries to changes it in order to speak of a search of identity that identity which is gained as a result of that search. Despite the fact that identity is a concept which is rather adopted by the science of psychology, we see that it is also frequently used in the field of sociology and social psychology. Bozkurt Guvenc defines the concept of identity as *"the answer that individuals and social groups of various sizes and types give to the question "who are you, to which group do you belong?"*[1] In another place the same concept is defined as "… the expression of self-definition and positioning of a human being"[2] in its simplest sense. The same definition is further unfolded as follows: "More clearly the concept of identity reflects the manner in which one defines himself and positions himself in his social world; It is an answer about who he is and where he stands. Departing from this point, identity may be defined as the entirety of the distinctive features which distinguish an individual or group from other individuals or groups."[3] What draws attention in this definition and explanation is the fact that the concept of identity has not only an individual but also a social dimension. Thus the individual must take into consideration the society in which he lives and the identity of that society when he defines himself or defines his identity. It is impossible to speak of a totally isolated phenomenon of identity. In other words, the individual is obliged to define and position himself in and together with the society despite the society. On the other hand, it is also impossible to think of the individual or social identity independently from time and environment. Indeed, Nuri Bilgin makes the following statement in one of his other works: "The need for individual and collective identity is a need that develops and is experienced in relation to the social structure and organizations, environmental norms and values and the atmosphere of the world and epoch rather than being a need which an individual or group feels for himself and tries

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1   Bozkurt Güvenç, *Türk Kimliği*, Ministry of Culture Publications, Ankara 1993, p. 3.
2   Nuri Bilgin, *Sosyal Psikoloji Sözlüğü-Kavramlar, Yaklaşımlar*, Bağlam Publications, İstanbul, 2007, p. 201.
3   ibid., p. 201.

to announce to the society."[4] Consequently, different meanings shall be attached to the concept of identity in different ages and environments.

It is only possible to construct individual identity by seeking an answer to the question "who am I?" while the question turns from singular to plural form with regard to the construction of the social identity. However, the question which is asked during the construction process of individual identity has a psychological depth. On the other hand, individual identity may also contain the answer or answers which are given to or found for the question "Who are we?" during the construction process of the social identity. We may point out to a much more challenging process in this respect. In defining the concept of identity Nuri Bilgin also points out to its social dimension; "I define identity as the self-definition of an individual or group and as their self-positioning among other individuals or groups. In this statement identity is defined as a picture and an address. Because the first part of the definition points out to the picture which an individual or group has about himself/itself while the second part refers to their place among other individuals or groups. The Picture which is mentioned here is not an image which has been shot objectively as a photograph from outside or an image which we create about ourselves by looking at the mirror; It is the product of the tension between the images of the person(or group) which we believe ourselves to be on one hand and the image belonging to the individual or the group that the others attribute to us; i. e. it is a picture that is formed in interaction with others; as far as the address is concerned, that address does not refer to a place which is determined within the framework of a system of coordinates on a geometrical or geographical space but to a psychosocial space. The address of the individual or the group is related to whom the individual or the group considers himself close to or away from. It is the position of the individual or group that in an area of pull and push; sympathy and antipathy to the opponents, rivals or enemies as well as the allies or friends of that individual or group are reflected on identity".[5]

In search of an answer to that question, the individual must emphasize his/her features that distinguishes himself/herself from his/her counterparts. For that reason, it becomes necessary to emphasize the concepts of ego or personality too while speaking of individual identity. And this is a situation which is rather related to the psychological dimension of identity. Indeed, Selcuk Budak defines the concept of ego as follows: ". . . The state of feeling oneself consciously as a unique whole as distant from everybody and everything else."[6] The individual may look for answers to the same question and problem from the ontic, epistemic, ethical and aesthetic points of view and this constitutes the philosophical dimension of identity.

Formation of Identity, i. e. self- definition and/or self-positioning of individual or society points out to a definite process.

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4   Nuri Bilgin, *Kimlik İnşası*, Aşina Kitaplar, İzmir, 2007, p. 14.

5   ibid, s. 11.

6   Selçuk Budak, *Psikoloji Sözlüğü*, Bilim ve Sanat Yayınları, Ankara, 2003. s. 123.

Time is needed for the self-definition and self-positioning to take place. In some cases, it may be observed that this process is not completed. Both this process and the external factors which initiate that process must be analyzed correctly in order to analyze the problem of identity both in individual and social terms accurately. Süleyman Yildiz tries to determine the equivalent of the concept of identity in different disciplines by making reference to the question "who am I" that initiates the process of the acquisition of identity. "The source of the question "who am I?" which is asked by those, who come face to face with that question, to themselves is either a form of problematizing of a life (i. e. philosophy) or their being face to face with the influences which will urge them to ask that question (i. e. social). The recognition and definition of ego which is the basis of the question "who am I?" points out to the social psychological basis of identity. We may call this personal identity as a subjective feeling that comprises all the meanings (values) related to the being of the individual."[7]

Cemil Meric who is one of the leading figures of the Turkish intellectual life is one of the most prominent thinkers and authors of Republic of Turkey. In his entire life Meric had to deal with the problem of personal/ individual and social identity and he is a Turkish intellectual who created his own individual identity, i. e. sought for the answers to the question "who am I?" on one hand and struggled for finding the answers to the question about the formation of social identity, i. e. to the question of who we are on the other hand. When we have a look at his life from this point of view we see that these two types of search for identity are continuously intertwined with and speeds up to each other. The question "who am I?" posed by Cemil Meric to himself brings about the question of "who are we?" at each step. In that respect, examination of the search of Meric for identity firstly means witnessing the search for identity of the Turkish Society and then the search for identity of the Eastern societies. Because he is an intellectual who had preferred to think and speak in the name of all eastern societies instead of only in the name of the Turkish society. This is the reason of Cemil Meriç's importance risen up.

Marginalization and loneliness

Cemil Meric was born in Reyhanli as the son of a family from Dimetokha in 1916. His birth is meaningful both from historical and geographical point of view. The meaning of being born in Reyhanli as the child of a family from Dimetokha is inevitable loneliness. The alienation which begins in the childhood shall be one of the most distinct features of his life. According to Vefa Tasdelen, it is even possible to explain all his intellectual world on the basis of this concept: "Alienation is the main theme of Cemil Meric's works. All of his works are either directly or indirectly based on that main theme."[8] During that period, the predominant majority of the population of Reyhanli were the citizens of Arab origin of the Ottoman state. This meant for him to grow in a foreign environment both in terms

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7   Süleyman Yıldız, "Kimlik ve Ulusal Kimlik Kavramlarının Toplumsal Niteliği", *Milli Folklor*, T. 10, V. 74, p. 9.
8   Vefa Taşdelen, "Cemil Meriç'te Yabancılaşma Sorunu", *Hece- Bir Entelektüel Tedirgin-Cemil Meriç*, Y. 14, V. 157, January 2010, p. 94.

of language and culture. Moreover, he has been marginalized by the very society in which he lived. "Child borned in December 12th is a battered one, grown up without a friend in an hostile world. Forever different, forever stranger... A prejudicial pride, a spirit which closes down its windows to outside world...."[9] "I'm alone. My father is always looks tough, my mother is always looks grouchy. Kids of the villiage are always terrible. I'm taking a beating a lot, suffering from insults a lot. There is nobody to tell this. Kids are playing at school garden. I'm alone and a stranger again, a stranger, also an enemy. My language is different and I have glasses. I ashamed myself".[10] Loneliness was naturally another result of this situation. In his comprehensive study on the author Murat Beyazyuz explained the distressful situation suffered by the author in psychological terms as follows: "While having a look at the childhood experiences which are shown section by section in front of us, we come across with a parnassian narration of a tragedy. It is as if Cemil Meric exposes the photography album in his memory to us and transmits information about each of those photographs to us. The little child is lonely. This is not the kind of loneliness of a man who pursues a solitary life on an island. This is a loneliness experienced in the presence of other people around and it is a psychological tragedy especially if that loneliness is experienced during childhood. Huseyin Cemil who is condemned to loneliness at home and pulls back the bridge that he had streched out to the outside world as a result of that loneliness is also unable to open those bridges outside his home."[11] Loneliness and marginalization has one more meaning: that is the definition and positioning of Hüseyin Cemil, who is in his childhood period, by the outside world. His acknowledgement of this definition and positioning shall mean that a process of identity formation shall not be possible. However, Huseyin Cemil shall try to establish another world in order to create an alternative to the world in which he is marginalized, in other words in order to resist the identity which is imposed on him by the society. He will have the chance to define and position himself as he wishes in this new world. "I unwillingly escaped to books from a hostile environment. In other words, I didn't tend towards the world of thoughts and literature as a result of my own preference. I had to build a world of my own in order to live."[12] But this may also be interpreted as cutting off the relations of Hüseyin Cemil with reality. Because the meaning of seeking refuge in the world of books is to escape from the reality which he is exposed. And this is nothing more than an utopia. The tragedy of Cemil Meric which shall surround him like a destiny begins in this way.

Social tragedy

The years during which Cemil Meric went through his individual tragedy were also the years which had coincided with social tragedy. In this sense he was born into the identity crisis experienced by the Turkish Society. It has been tens of years since the Ottoman state

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9   Cemil Meriç, *Bu Ülke*, İletişim Publications, İstanbul, October 1992, p. 20.
10   ibid, p. 21.
11   Murat Beyazyüz, *Cemil Meriç'in Psikobiyografisi*, Timaş Publications, İstanbul 2016, p. 175.
12   Cemil Meriç, ibid, p. 21.

has lost its superiority against the western civilization and even lost its power to resist it, which loss is the first stage of defeat, and even officially accepted that defeat. Tanzimat (political reforms proclaimed in 1839) meant the acceptance of total westernization as a program by the state apart from being the official acceptance of defeat.

Ottoman state has adopted or, more precisely, was forced to adopt the principals of a civilization which threatened its existence and would even annihilate it within the course of time.

The psychological counterpart of deciding to look like a society or civilization which one has regarded as the "other" against which one has defined one's identity is nothing other than Stockholm Syndrome. This syndrome and impact of its trauma has not come to an end in Turkish society even today. Although the Ottoman state has decided to change its type of civilization, the Western states which it has been in warfare for centuries, they were determined to disintegrate and even annihilate the Ottoman State. The period in which Meric was born and spent his childhood corresponds to the years of the first World War. Indeed, the plan for sharing the Ottoman territories was already made long ago in his year of birth. Southeastern Anatolia, Hatay and consequently Reyhanli also belongs as well as Syria was occupied by the French army as a result of Armistice of Mondros in the year 1918. Turkey would have to wait until 1939 for the annexation of Hatay to Turkey. After a while, Cemil Meric would experience what it means to live under the rule of the French state which was a totally foreign and enemy state in a geographical region to which he has come as the son of an immigrant family and in which he was excluded by that social environment. The region was under the French rule when he began going to primary school. He becomes a Turkish like every Turkish young man as a reaction against being under the occupation of the "other". However, the adoption of this attitude could not go beyond the theoretical level. "I have come to adopt the Turkist ideology mainly by reading books during the high school period. I was alone and I didn't like socialism very much. I came from the Turkish race and consequently I chose the Turkist ideology. Turkism was a new search and a hope for a new integration (. . .). My adherence to Turkism had also a theoretical nature and it was a miserable theory. It had no roots. Indeed, there were almost no Turks in the province and the majority of the populations were Arabs."[13]

An additional waiting period would be required for the annexation of Hatay to the motherland. However, Ottoman state has collapsed in the meantime and Republic of Turkey as a national state has been founded instead on a small piece of territory. The objective of the new Turkish state was to become a western state with all its institutions, laws, style of dressing, forms of thoughts and understanding of science and culture. It would be necessary to cut off the entire link with the past, i. e. the traditions and the big cultural accumulation in order to realize that objective. The social life begins undergoing a very rapid change along with the foundation of the Republic. It was impossible for the culture, social life and the

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13 İbid, p. 31.

natural speed of change to adapt themselves to such a dazzling speed. At this point it would be useful to point out to the character of the cultural change in Turkey.

The cultural changes in Turkey have been directed and guided by the bureaucracy since the period of Tanzimat. The changes which have been introduced had no social basis. What is at stake was not a change demanded by the society but on the contrary a changed imposed from the top. A series of changes have been put into effect from the alphabet to the Civil law within a short period of time. The social reflex had from time-to-time difficulty in adapting itself to that speed. It was also not very easy to cut off all the ties with the past. Cemil Meric describes this situation succintly as follows: "The keyword for civilization is accumulation. Both improvement and revolution is a transition from quantity to quality. Memory is the factor which makes man a man and nation a nation. Thought means embracing the whole and connect yesterday with tomorrow. Can we ever conquer "what will be" without knowing "what is"? Healthy societies are those which change while remaining themselves at the same time. Social organism develops according to two opposing laws: continuation and renewal. Creating a balance between these two inclination is the distinctive feature of a sane Society. We have been seized by the malady of distancing ourselves from our culture since the period of Tanzimat. We are like crazy and spoiled grown babies who runs after a new toy everyday."[14]

Vefa Tasdelen summarizes alienation with the following statements in his article mentioned above: "alienation does not only mean leaving one's own culture and civilization sphere.; it is at the same time the inability of consciousness to produce and understand itself. Consciousness becomes alienated to itself and to its own products, because it cannot establish a dialogue with its own sources, cannot have access to its own field of nutrition and becomes unable to recognize its own culture and civilization codes. It becomes alienated to its own nature because what is called its own nature has been broken and lost its content. This is the loss of memory"[15]

The situation which becomes apparent in the statements of Tasdelen above is not only related to individual alienation but also a sharp summary of the situation into which the whole Turkish society has been drawn beginning from the period of Tanzimat. There is an acceptable and understandable aspect of the alienation of the intellectual to its own Society throughout this process. However, the society has been alienated, more precisely forced to be alienated, to itself, its own culture and civilization, memory and past. Conscious of his responsibilities as an intellectual Cemil Meric has not only sufficed to make efforts to remove his alienation and create his identity but also tried to warn the Turkish society and even all the eastern civilization about the extent to which they have been alienated to themselves. The view of Meric on the phenomena of identity is a very comprehensive and multi-layered one in this sense.

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14 Cemil Meriç, *Kırkambar*, Ötüken Publications, İstanbul 1980, p. 450.
15 Vefa Taşdelen, ibid, p. 95.

A theoretical life or an excursion in the world of books

Both atheism and socialism of Cemil Meric is theoretical just like his Turkism. Because he almost had never contacted the real world and life by getting out of the world of books. Meric who sticked to reading the collected poems of Fuzuli, Nedim and Nabi and memorized their couplets and poems as soon as he learned reading meanwhile reads Namık Kemal and then Xavier de Montepin, Alexandre Dumas, Dostoyevsky and Victor Hugo. He was, so to speak, being driven among the books without guidance. "*Crime and Punishment* is the first foreign book which I had read from beginning to the end, of which a large part I have translated or believed to have translated. (...) ... Semseddin Sami's *Kamus* was the only lantern the light of which I trusted in the dark gallery ... How much had I understood *Crime and Punishment*?

I was not at an age at which I could ramble around in this world of whirlpools and peaks, I watched the ocean from the shore... My world was the world of novels, the world of *Baker Woman* and *Simon and Mary*... A world full of puppets."[16]

He was subscribed to the magazine Claire published by Andre Gide as well as a rightwing Magazine named Gringoire and Novelles Literaires'Elcab Cable. After Balzac he discovers Chateaubriand and Hugo. Meric was a fan of Balzac to the extent that he would say "I was in love with Balzac". Even the empathy that he establishes with the novel heroes of Balzac indicates the extent to which he was outside the real life. "Then Balzac came across me. I lived a whole century in Balzac. From time to time I became Vautrin and then Rastignac. Living for 4000 times in 4000 novel heroes."[17] He then mentions Zola as "one of the Gods of my youth". All these show that his curiosity was always directed at the western culture despite the fact that he had read some of the Turkish authors and poems from time to time like, for example, Nazim Hikmet, Suleiman Nazif and Ahmet Mithat. Some sentences that he wrote about Balzac and Balzac is a clear expression of the intensity of his self-dedication to reading the western authors and poems.

Meric encounters Buchner during these readings and takes his book "Substance and power" from the school library when he was in the 11. class and becomes an atheist. He then reads Marx and, in his own words, his apostles. "First I had a chance to read Anti-Duhring of Engels during high school period. It was a book with 3 volumes. All the problems related to socialism are dealt with in this book. I read it very carefully and even made an approximately 100 pages summary of it."[18] His home was searched by the police and he was put in jail in the year 1939. However, as I have emphasized above his being a socialist is also theoretical in nature like his Marxism. : "he hadn't shaken hands with a single worker when he cried out that he was a Marxist before the court. He just wanted to be honest and not to let others say "He kept quite out of fear". He was already in an

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16   Cemil Meriç, *Mağaradakiler*, Ötüken Publications, İstanbul 1980, p. 311-312.
17   Cemil Meriç, *Jurnal II*, İssue 1, İletişim Publications, İstanbul 1993, p. 54.
18   Cemil Meriç, *Bu Ülke*, p. 30.

unlivable world, sexual crisis, spiritual crisis etc… there wasn't the slightest sparkle in his life. Marxism was a shelter and a means of escape for him, a reason for living, Maybe he believed in Marxism. He was oppressed and consequently side by side with all those who were oppressed… He had learned socialism through books. How much had he understood it, could he ever understood it? There was no class struggle in Hatay because there was no class consciousness. Marxism was indeed an escape from reality to the unknown, i. e. to the dreams".[19]

Cemil Meric completed primary and secondary education in a school where the language of instruction was French. It was confirmed by many different people that he knew and spoke French very well. In an interview made with him he had said that he was indebted all his culture to French and added that "he also learned Arabic, albeit not as good as French."[20] As I have mentioned above his main source of cultural nutrition was the works written in French despite the fact that he had also read some Turkish authors. He was searching his identity in the world of these books which were sometimes fictional, i. e away from the real life as well as in the ideological discourses of those books. However, he was never able to make a definite decision about and finalize that search.

Perception of the Western World by Cemil Meric

Westernization is one of the important stops along the path of search for identity both by Cemil Meric and the Turkish society. The simplest meaning of westernization process which has been officialized since Tanzimat period is the change of the sphere of civilization. We know that this inclination has become fully clear especially after the collapse of the Empire and the foundation of the new Republic of Turkey. Change of civilization mean doing away with the values, i. e. perception of the world, universe, man and God of the civilization to which one belongs and replacing them with the perceptions of the new civilization which one has adopted.

Indeed, the Western World which we call the western civilization and refer to in terms of the concepts like modern, contemporary and civilized was suggesting a totally new understanding of the universe, man, world and God. Almost all the moral values were being redefined and reinterpreted under the guidance of rational mind. The world was being reinterpreted in the light of empirical positivism and rationalism. The reactions of the non-western societies against this new and modern situation has taken the form of admiration at the beginning. Just thereafter what was to be done was to make the best effort in order to adapt to this new situation, in other words to modernize. The shortest path to modernization first of all passed through the import of the modern values and concepts. Indeed, modernization in Turkey has first of all started with the import of concepts.

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19 İbid, p. 34.
20 Ahmet Turan Alkan, *Doğu ve Batı Karşısında Cemil Meriç*, Akçağ Publications, Ankara, 1993, p. 20.

In his work titled "Turkey in the modernization process" Murat Tazegul says the following: "According to the western social scientists modernization is the name given to the process through which the society passes from the stage of agricultural production to the stage of industrial production, from self-closed rural economy to outward looking urban market economy, from the use of men and animal power to the use of machine power, from a repressive social structure to the free and independent individual and freedom of the expression and organization of thought. Modernization assumes that the society shall evolve towards representative democracy and all the developing societies shall pass through the same processes that have been passed through by the western societies and shall reach a similar level with them at the end of that process."[21]

In this context the emphasis must be on the phrase "in a manner similar to the Western societies". For that reason, the meaning of modernization for the non-western societies is the realization of the process through which the efforts directed at looking like to Western societies, adapting their values, entrenching the Western institutions and understanding in the society end putting the practices required by those institutions and understandings into practice. At this point it is obvious that the psychology of modernization of the non-western societies shall be different from the psychology of modernization of the western societies. While modernization was an expression of a conflict within the society in the western societies, the process of modernization in the non-western societies refers both to a conflict within the society itself as well as to a conflict with the west as the "other" and the concepts and values that it represents. As far as non-western societies and especially the Ottoman and Iranian societies which have a strong tradition are concerned, modernization means transformation into the "other" which one has identified for its self-definition. Consequently, in that type of societies modernization has an aspect that points out to a necessity like looking like the "other". This psychology is the psychology of a process which contains within itself a conflict which is impossible to be solved and consequently keeps a permanent conflict alive separately from the conflict between the traditional and the modern.

Modernization is not a phenomenon that exists on its own. It is a phenomenon which directly or indirectly influences all the institutions and segments of society. The fact that difference meanings are attached to the concept of modernization by the different institutions of society is a very natural situation in this context. Consequently, modernization has a series of objectives from the political, cultural, economic and social point of view. In this context modernization from the political point of view involves the development of the political parties and parliament which support and strengthen the process of the development of political participation. From the cultural point of view it is determined by secularization and adherence to national ideologies. From the economic point of view on the other hand, it puts forward the basic economic changes determined by the increase in division of labor and specialization, the use of advanced technology and facilitation of trade. From the social point of view modernization emphasizes the decline

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21   Murat Tazegül, *Modernleşme Sürecinde Türkiye*, Babil Publications, İstanbul, 2005. p. 23.

of traditional authority and the increase of literacy and urbanization.[22]

For non-Western societies modernization means "westernization" in the widest sense of the term. Because the historical evolution has taken place in favour of the western world. Consequently, non-western societies have delayed and, in the words of Daryush, are experiencing a state of "Holiday in history"[23]. Departing from this point, we may say that westernization "has established itself as a compensating ideology and a means of eliminating the historical delay"[24]. Being aware of the historical delay, believing in the necessity of closing that gap and engaging in some intellectual and social activities in order to realize that goal corresponds to what is meant by westernization. As far as the Turkish westernization is concerned the definition of westernization must be made as follows: "The approach which emerged during the Ottoman Empire and gained new Dimensions in the Republic of Turkey and considers the social and intellectual composition of Western Europe as an objective to be attained."[25]

Since modernization is a concept which takes the developed Western societies as a center it will be inevitable to classify other societies as undeveloped, underdeveloped or developing societies. These societies shall follow the path that was already followed by the developed western societies and they shall pass through the stations which the latter has already passed through. Consequently, the concept of modernization refers to the structural changes that will take place in these undeveloped, underdeveloped or developing societies. Theory of modernization which dates back to Max Weber has taken its present form in the USA after the World War 2.[26] At this point it would be useful to state that the differences of meaning of the concept of modernization not only appear from society to society but also throughout the course of the historical process. The understanding of modernization in the Turkish society during the period of the Ottoman Empire as contrasted to the republican period reflects two different understanding of modernization. Likewise, during the period of Republic of Turkey the understanding of modernization during the first years of the Republic and understanding of modernization in the 21st century is different from one another in many respects.

If we think this social procedure, Cemil Meric's point of view to Western culture gains more specific meaning. Ahmet Turan Alkan determines Cemil Meric's idea as West's borders could be more visible with West's understanding of East. Alkan, gave proof of this idea with citation from one of the Cemil Meric's book named Kırk Ambar:

22 See, Ahmet Cevizci, *Felsefe Sözlüğü*, p. 1185.
23 Daryush Shayegan, *Yaralı Bilinç*, Metis Publications, İstanbul, 2002, p. 21-25.
24 Ahmet Çiğdem, ""Türk Batılılaşması"nı Açıklayıcı Bir Kavram: Türk Başkalığı Batılılaşma, Modernite ve Modernizasyon", *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasî Düşünce, V. 3, Modernleşme ve Batıcılık*, İletişim Publications, İstanbul, 2007, p. 68.
25 Şerif Mardin, *Makaleler 4, Türk Modernleşmesi*, (Derleyenler: Mümtazer Türköne/Tuncay Önder), İletişim Publications, İstanbul, 1992, p. 9.
26 Tazegül, ibid, p. 23.

"Western border is very clear in the West: Pacific shores of Northern America (and they relations) If we talk about East borders it is more open to discuss. Let's leave aside (America's view of West, sometimes has finished at Rokiler(Mississippi); for New Yorkers at Hudson). In general when we said West it means both sides of Northern Atlantic. And this concept also contain Europa; a border which changes with different times and different purposes. West could be more easily described depends on relations to East."[27]

As was stated by Cemil Meric West and East are two concepts which can be defined by looking at their interrelationships. Consequently, it is obvious that a geographical concept is not in question in this context. The field of meaning of the concept is determined by the cultural values which have been adopted and are defended. When we approach the problem from this point of view we may easily say that many states which are geographically located in the east are western states from the sociological point of view.

Indeed, Cemil Meric asserts that Europeanness (being western) is a cultural concept, departing from a citation that he has made from Spengler: "Europe is not a geographical concept but a historical and cultural whole. It is the field of a German-romantic civilization, more precisely it is that civilization itself. European civilization is not the global civilization of mankind but only one of numerous civilizations. Even the Roman and Greek civilizations were not European but a Mediterranean civilization"[28]. This approach of Meric, especially keeping the western civilization apart from the Roman and Greek civilizations, his restriction of the scope of the western civilization and his considering it only as one of many civilizations may be interpreted as an indicator of a definite antinomy because this is a view which is contrary to the manner of self-presentation of the western civilization.

If we accept "being western" as a cultural concept the most predominant aspect of westernization inevitably appears as the cultural change for the Turkish society. Westernization is a process which has been carried out by the bureaucratic elits and intellectuals both in the Ottoman State and Republic of Turkey and it is in a sense a process imposed by the state on people. This process has led to a split and even a dualism between people and intellectuals. Modernization has turned into a mechanism through which the intellectuals have been alienated to their own society and culture. Cemil Meric is against this approach of Turkish intellectuals which blesses the west. Since the problem has a cultural nature one must approach all concepts of the western civilization with suspicion and determine their definition and meaning very well. Cemil Meric is aware of the fact that the technological and economic superiority of the western civilization is based on exploitation. Concealing this reality of exploitation is only possible by glorifying some concepts of the western culture.

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27   Alkan, ibid, p. 117.
28   Cemil Meriç, *Umrandan Uygarlığa*, Ötüken Publications, İstanbul, 1977, p. 117.

It is no doubt that this is a deception. "Since Tanzimat the destiny of Turkish intellectual centered around two words; Deceiving and being deceived. This scenario was written by others and we were only actors in the play"[29]. Thinking that one is only an actor in a scenario written by others is the psychological starting point of a fight against others. Indeed, Cemil Meric has also determined his position against the western civilization on the basis of this psychology after a definite period of his life.

Westernization has also a meaning from the point of view of the Europeans; it means the westernization of the non-western societies. Cemil Meric describes the approach of the western world to the phenomenon of westernization as follows: "What is Europeanization? It is the invasion of the Asian, American and African cultures and civilizations by the social systems specific to Europe"[30]. The concept of which real meaning is invasion for the west is presented to the non-western societies along with concepts such as civilizing and modernization. Consequently, the most distinct characteristic of the western civilization is its hypocrisy. "The phenomenon of west is a complicated reality. The hero of this phenomenon is Europe; but there is not only one but two Europes. The first Europe is in love with humanity, is libertarian, has set its heart on justice and improvement and is up to ensure the welfare of humanity. The second Europe is merciless and has no concern other than its own interests and gains…"[31].

Westernization for the non-western societies has sometimes been expressed with different concepts or westernization has been presented to them accompanied by different concepts. One of those concepts is modernity. Meric says the following about that concept: "Modernization is a new export commodity of Europe like cocaine and LCD. It is a poison that paralyzes the consciousness. "Defamation of anachronism is the meanest and most foolish of all defamations. Various epochs exist side by side in the same epoch…

Is this not getting out of one's skin, denying one's own sacred beings and accept slavery in advance? We are the children of a completely different civilization; a hostile civilization which has completely different criteria and is much older, nobler and humanitarian."[32]

Meric has examined many aspects of the western civilization from the thought processes up to the economic and social systems and even its historical process and the phases that it has went through and made his judgment accordingly. Meric who makes a negative critique of the actual situation of the western world and finds it dangerous for Humanity, culture and civilization tries to put forward that this is the result of a historical process. The consciousness of the western intellectual who belittles and humiliates the non-western societies has been shaped by means of this process. According to Meric the Western world is egoist. It considers the exploitation of other societies in favour of its own

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29 Cemil Meriç, *Kırk Ambar*, p. 173.
30 Cemil Meriç, *Bir Facianın Hikâyesi*, Umran Publications, Ankara, 1981, p. 99.
31 İbid, p. 77.
32 Cemil Meriç, *Bu Ülke*, p. 97.

interests as its natural right. It makes the propaganda of Christianity under the shadow of concepts such as civilization, modernity and democracy and creates a perception according to which modernization is only possible by being Christian. Indeed, this propaganda has been successful to a certain extent.

Recognition of Indian culture and its aftermath

Let's lend an ear to Cemil Meric once more at this point: "Europe was the pole to which my curiosity was directed up to the 1960s. Asia was out of the question. Indian culture has been the discovery of Asia for me. It was the Asia seen from Europe and European eyes but it was Asia in the final analysis. I want to say that my guides in this new world were Europeans. My first teacher was Romain Holland... However, the spell has been reversed. I had understood that there were other Europeans as well."[33]

The destiny of the contemporary Eastern intellectual is maybe to discover the East through the intermediary of the western culture because even the denotations like "east" and "west" belong to the western culture.

Cemil Meric has been aware of the Indian literature through the intermediary of the western authors and has seen that everything which he sought for as western in the West already existed in the Indian literature. He is the man who found East while searching the West. He says "India came across me while looking for Olemp. Colomb has discovered America while seeking Asia. Likewise, I met London while examining Europe. It was Schopenhauer and Schelling who attracted my attention to the shores of Ganj river. I had to examine the age of Vedas in order to understand the 19th century."[34] The fact that Meric has understood the eastern culture through the intermediary of the western culture has several meanings. One of them is the lack of any other guides. The second is the psychological state of the intellectual of the society in which he lives. Since Tanzimat the eyes of the Turkish intellectual was dazzled by the so-called enlightment of the west and it is impossible for him/her to see anything other than the intensity of this artificial light which is believed to be magic. For that reason, he/she is unaware of the beings inside and around himself/herself. He would be able to see even their being with the help of the west. The joy of getting rid of the inferiority complex experienced by all Turkish and even eastern intellectuals lie behind his examination of the Indian literature with a great intellectual hunger. He felt himself very relaxed and gained self-confidence when he discovered the Indian world. He could now look at the continent to which his own world belongs with more respect and ease. He has finally found something which he could put against Europe of which thought and literature he had examined with a great appetite and admiration and sometimes with inferiority complex throughout many years. For the author who says "I had understood that there were other Europeans" India was the first

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33   Cemil Meriç, *ibid,* p. 45.
34   Cemil Meriç, *Kırkambar*, p. 451.

country to which those who attempt to conquer the world of thoughts must come by. According to him Indian civilization is the name of a civilization which recognizes the right to speak of all beliefs and the contemporary Europe is a continuation of the Indian culture with its most enlightened aspects.

Meric was, so speak, fascinated by the Indian culture. However, during a trip to Konya he becomes aware of another world in which he actually lived but has not noticed before. He tells how he discovered his own civilization as follows: "I contacted another person for the first time during the trips to Konya. Another person, i. e. my own people. The young university student which the destiny has put across me said "You are not one of us. You are not one of us… Yes, I was not one of them. But who were they? I was waking up near the abyss. It seemed that I had suffered a lot and get tired for nothing. This judgement was the reality itself. Since Tanzimat the destiny of the Turkish intellectual centered around two words: being deceived and deceive… How shall we get rid of this circle of damnation? It is possible to see the reality only by experiencing the fault up to the end. The intellectuals must be Turkified while the masses must be Europeanized. And I began studying. Spinoza has died at the age of forty-four and Nietzsche also went mad at the age of forty-four. And I have found my path at the age of forty-four."[35]

The search for identity of Cemil Meric that continued years has come to an end by turning back to his own culture and civilization in this way. He sees himself as an Ottoman in the remaining part of his life. He cries out that the intellectuals must become Turkified and remain a Turk while the society becomes westernized with a great speed.

CONCLUSION

Western civilization has been transforming the world and letting it look like itself with a big speed especially during the last two centuries. Liberalism and consequently capitalism which is the ideology of the contemporary western civilization not only lets people get used to consume material objects, the other face of capitalism consumes the cultures and languages as well. Humanity is moving towards a unicolored world with a big speed. Hundreds of languages have been lost in the world in the last hundred years. Those languages are no more spoken and not a single written text belonging to those languages has survived. Many original cultures have also disappeared along with the languages. The living cultures are also losing their originality with a big speed. Everything from style of dressing up to eating and drinking habits are losing their colors. Big narrations are being left rapidly. Rationality makes it impossible for humanity to have dreams. Fairy tales and legends are getting out of our lives rapidly. Humanity massacres its own myths for the sake of rationality. Yes, in short, the world is losing its color and transforming/ being forced to transform into a unicolor world. Nobody can assert that the spirit can continue to exist at a place where the colors have been lost. The world is becoming languished and increasingly

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35 Cemil Meriç, *Mağaradakiler*, Ötüken Publications, İstanbul, 1978, p. 449.

turning into a more mechanical place. These are all striking examples of the fact that we have been transformed into societies and individuals without any identity.

Cemil Meric is an eastern intellectual who has been aware of this danger much earlier than us and noticed that the search for individual identity and the search for social identity coincides with each other and decided to adopt his own civilization after a long search. His experiences are exemplary for the intellectuals of all the eastern societies.

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