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Takiyettin Mengüřođlu and Intercultural Values: Turkey as Common Ground in the East-West Conflict

*Takiyettin Mengüřođlu ve Kültürlerarası Deđerler: Dođu-Batı
Çatıřmasında Ortak Zemin Olarak Türkiye*

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Abstract

Takiyettin Mengüšođlu, within the framework of his philosophy of values, comprehensively examines the value systems of Eastern and Western cultures, offering a comparative analysis of the two. Before delving into this comparison, he explores the debates surrounding Westernization in Turkey, presenting his perspective and outlining an ideal roadmap. Mengüšođlu analyzes the value systems of the East and the West within a historical and anthropological framework, aiming to uncover how similarities and differences in these systems influence societies' achievements, cultural development, and modernization processes. In explaining these value systems, Mengüšođlu employs his philosophical approach, categorizing values into "higher values" and "instrumental values." Through this classification, he examines the underlying reasons for both societal successes and failures. This article will first analyze the debates on Westernization and modernization in Turkey, drawing upon Mengüšođlu's ideas. Subsequently, it will explore the value systems of Eastern and Western civilizations, shaped by historical continuity, traditionalism, and perspectives on life. This study aims to shed light on the role of values in intercultural interactions, highlight the importance of cultural awareness, and contribute to understanding Turkey's potential as a bridge between Eastern and Western civilizations.

Keywords: Takiyettin Mengüšođlu, westernization, philosophy of values, eastern civilization, western Civilization

Öz

Takiyettin Mengüšođlu geliřtirmiş olduđu deđer felsefesinden hareketle, Dođu ve Batı kültürlerindeki deđer anlayışlarını kapsamlı bir şekilde ele alarak aralarında bir karşılaştırma yapmaktadır. Bu noktaya varmadan evvel kendi ülkesindeki batılılaşma tartışmasını serimleyerek kendi bakış açısını ortaya koymakla beraber ideal yol haritasını da gözler önüne sermektedir. Mengüšođlu bu iki kültürün deđer sistemlerini önerdiği tarihsel ve antropolojik çerçeve içinde analiz ederek, deđerler arası farklılıkların ve benzerliklerin toplumların başarılarına, kültürel gelişimlerine ve modernleşme süreçlerine etkisini ortaya koymaktır. Söz konusu deđer sistemlerini açıklarken kendi felsefesinden yola çıkıp, yüksek deđerlerden ve araç deđerlerden söz ederek, hem başarıların hem de başarısızlıkların arka planını bu deđer türleriyle doldurur. Makalede öncelikle Mengüšođlu özelinde Türkiye'de batılılaşma ve modernleşme tartışmalarının analizi ardından Dođu ve Batı medeniyetlerinin tarihsel süreklilik, gelenekçilik ve görüş tarzı ekseninde şekillenen deđerler sistemi incelenecektir. Bu inceleme, kültürlerarası etkileşimde deđerlerin rolünü, kültürel farkındalığı ve her iki medeniyet arasında bir köprü konumunda bulunan Türkiye'nin mevcut durumunu anlamaya katkı sağlamayı hedeflemektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Takiyettin Mengüšođlu, Batılılaşma, Deđer Felsefesi, Dođu Medeniyeti, Batı Medeniyeti

Introduction

Throughout history, Eastern and Western civilizations have maintained their existence through distinct ways of life, modes of thinking, and unique value systems. Despite their differences, these two civilizations have been in constant interaction and dialogue. This interaction has at times been marked by conflict and competition, and at other times by mutual learning and enrichment. As such, the value systems of Eastern and Western civilizations have played a pivotal role in shaping human history. While both have made significant contributions to science, technology, and intellectual systems, the modern era has seen the West taking a leading position, prompting a critical examination of the value systems within Eastern societies. In societies like Turkey, which historically bear the influences of both Eastern and Western cultures, understanding the relationship between these two value systems is central to the quest for modernization and identity. In this context, Takiyettin Mengüşoğlu's philosophy of values provides a crucial framework for analyzing Eastern and Western cultures. Mengüşoğlu emphasizes that humans are historical and cultural beings and argues that a society's success is closely linked to its value system. Building on the idea that East and West are not merely geographical distinctions but represent two distinct "worldviews," Mengüşoğlu explores how these worldviews shape the values, historical perspectives, and individual-society relationships underpinning societal achievements. According to him, while examining the historical domains of these civilizations, the West prioritizes the "objective human" type and scientific-philosophical achievements, whereas the East places metaphysical and religious values at the center (Ketenci, 2008, p. 5-10).

When we consider the problem of value as a field of study, we see that it emerged in the period of modern philosophy after the industrial revolution. Since it is still a new field, it has been discussed quite frequently in the social sciences and humanities (Bircan & Dilmaç, 2015, p. 7). Discussions on values continue on issues such as definition, source, whether they are absolute or relative, order of importance, and the right method for their protection and internalisation (Yazıcı, 2014, p. 209-223). The word value generally represents abstract or concrete things that we value and care about (Yaran, 2010, p. 309). It also means the measure that gives importance to something. When we examine the origin of the word, although it was expressed with the words 'value' and 'ore' in the Ottoman period, the word 'value', which means 'to touch' in Turkish, has come to mean the equivalent, value of an object with the expansion of meaning (Bircan & Dilmaç, 2015, p. 11). In Latin, the word 'valour', which means being rich and strong, has been translated into English as 'value', into French as 'valeur' and into German as 'wert'.

The value that people attribute to objects and events finds a different response at each stage of life. In terms of economy, it means ‘value or the worth of something’, while in terms of daily life, it is the institution we use to make sense of our lives (Cevizci, 2006, p. 51; Hançerlioğlu, 1976, p. 275). If we take a look at the literature of social sciences, it is noticeable that the concept of value is handled from different perspectives. When we refer to the common definitions, value means an abstract measure used to determine the importance of something, the response that something indicates (Turkish Language Association, n.d.). The definition made in terms of moral behaviour is the criterion of evaluating various people, qualities, wishes and intentions of people, and behaviours (Güngör, 2000, p. 29). In the definitions dealing with the psychological dimension, it is what we want to be the purpose of our life, even the purpose of someone else's life, and the criteria that individuals use to qualify both themselves and other people and events, to choose and legitimise their actions (Güngör, 2000, p. 84). In social life, it represents the importance attributed to events and phenomena by the society. At this point, there is a two-way relationship and causality link between the individual and society (Hazlitt, 2006, p. 196-197).

When we look at it from a philosophical perspective, value is the attribution that people make to an entity in line with their wishes, needs and purposes when they encounter a situation or object. Some thinkers have defined value as the field of meaning in the relationship between human and being. In this context, human actions express the dynamic world of the network of relations rather than the field of being and knowledge. Value emerges precisely in attitudes or behaviours in this dynamic field (Cevizci, 2006, p. 52). In another sense, value functions as the most valuable assistant of our decision-making mechanism. It has the quality of a light that signals when one has to make a decision or a choice. In this way, people turn towards an entity or a phenomenon and want to obtain it. However, rather than functioning only in the theoretical field, value is a part of the practical field, a motive for action. In this context, D. H. Parker states that value is a continuous state of experiencing and living and is never an object or phenomenon in itself (Cevizci, 2006, p. 51-52).

In addition to all these various equivalents of the concept of value, according to Mengüšoğlu, our understanding of value lies at the basis of what we do, our attitudes, our productions, our connection with the past and the future, and our being a person as a whole. Our understanding of value is determined by our understanding of human being. People may refrain from making a decision in the face of the value problem they are exposed to, but this can only be on the basis of thought. This is because human being, in Mengüšoğlu's words, is a ‘doer’, an acting being,

and life does not recognise the right to inaction and condemns him/her to make decisions in any way whatsoever. Therefore, human beings are obliged to make evaluations, take and make decisions, take a stand and behave (Kuçuradi, 2016, p. 5-6).

As an acting and transforming being, human beings have transformed the world they live in by producing meaning and value. Historically, we see that human groups have woven a web of values throughout the ages and societies. The creative power and free will of human beings have established and adopted many values and replaced the old ones with new ones over time. The human ability to look at what is and determine what should be has endowed the world with meaning and value by giving new dimensions to existence (Günay, 2002, p. 265-269). When we consider the system of values in our country and the change of this system over time, we see that the Westernisation activity is quite effective and has caused radical changes.

The topic of Westernization in Turkey has been a persistent area of debate since the late Ottoman period and continues to evolve in various dimensions to this day. Westernization is generally understood as the adoption of Western scientific, technological, and cultural elements, but opinions differ on how this process should unfold. At the core of the debate lies the question of whether the adoption of Western science and technology alone is sufficient, or if incorporating its cultural aspects is also essential. Another perspective argues that the West's success was shaped by inspiration drawn from the East. This view suggests that Western scientific and philosophical advancements were achieved through knowledge and insights acquired from Eastern civilizations (Ketenci, 2008, p. 5-10). When examining the specific meaning attributed to the concept of Westernization within these discussions, it sometimes appears to carry an exclusively economic connotation, referring to industrialization. However, more broadly, it denotes modernization—a cultural transformation aimed at reaching the cultural level of the West. The core of the debates over whether such a transformation is necessary revolves around what is understood by "Western culture" or, more precisely, how Western culture is perceived. As Kaygı (1992) notes, "The necessity of Westernization, or opposition to it, largely depends on what is understood by culture and Western culture" (p. 19).

Mengüşoğlu was actively engaged in the debates surrounding Westernization in Turkey, demonstrating a keen interest in their implications and significance. Sent from Anatolia to Germany in 1929 for his education, Mengüşoğlu addressed the East-West problem not merely through theoretical frameworks but also through insights gained from his firsthand observations and experiences. He argued that the terms "East" and "West" go beyond geographical

boundaries, representing distinct "modes of thought." What fundamentally separates these two modes is their "perspectives on history," or the ways in which they interpret and engage with their historical narratives. This distinction shifts the East-West divide from a spatial to a cultural dimension, emphasizing their differing approaches to history. The sum of a society's achievements constitutes its historical sphere of existence, which is passed down to future generations, shaping their worldview. These achievements, tied to a society's collective identity, fill the framework of what Mengüšođlu terms the "mode of vision" (Kaynardađ, 2017, p. 73). This concept refers to the way individuals perceive life and nature, influencing their attitudes and actions. The success of a society is deeply intertwined with its members in a reciprocal relationship. While the actions and achievements of individuals influence the society they inhabit, the existing conditions of that society simultaneously shape its members.

Mengüšođlu states that many nations strive for Europeanization, but achieving this goal is far from easy. He argues that resembling another society can only be achieved by attaining its level of success. The connection between action and success, however, depends on numerous factors. The achievements of a society are not merely the result of individual efforts but are also a reflection of that society's historical, cultural, and value systems. Actions are shaped by the social structure in which individuals exist, and this structure serves as a fundamental factor directly influencing success.

However, finding this connection between human actions and the achievements that are the product of these actions, and revealing this relationship, depends on many factors: 1. the cultural environment in which a certain group of people exists; 2. the actions of the nation at the time in which the link between human achievements is to be uncovered; 3. the level of knowledge of this group of people; 4. the sense of value of this group of people, i.e. what is considered valuable and what is considered worthless at a given time; 5. Whether the same community has a scientific-philosophical tradition; 6. This community's view of nature, the world, man himself, freedom, the state, religion, life; 7. The level of development of the existence-conditions of this nation and whether there is a balance of development between these existence-conditions (Mengüšođlu, 2015, p. 106).

According to Mengüšođlu's words, if a society does not even pass by the development path of the society it wants to emulate, if its value characteristics are of a different character and if it has completely different views, it does not seem possible to achieve its goal. Societies generally want to imitate technical success, which is the centre of attraction of Western culture. However, according to Mengüšođlu, an achievement cannot simply be stripped from the conditions of

existence in which it exists. Therefore, it cannot be easily taken away from those conditions, and even if it is, no success can be expected from things imported in this way. Because the current success has a background woven with values, and nothing that is taken away from those values can give the expected effect (Mengüşoğlu, 2015, p. 107).

Mengüşoğlu's thoughts on East and West are in a direct and close relationship with his philosophy of values. To paraphrase his views on the subject, a society's relationship with philosophy, science and art is based on the values that are determinant in that society. Whether the main determinant of a society is 'high values' or 'instrumental values' is shown by the achievements of that society in the fields of philosophy, science and art. If a society is equipped with instrumental values, it would be surprising to find philosophical or scientific achievements there. Because such a society is static and indifferent to production. Mengüşoğlu believes that the importance a society attaches to such activities depends on the 'value horizon' of that society. Accordingly, every successful endeavour is governed by values and is related to the existing value horizon of that period (Mengüşoğlu, 1965, p. 31). In order to better understand what high and instrumental values mean, it is necessary to briefly mention Mengüşoğlu's understanding of value:

- 1. High Values:** The group of high values includes values such as knowledge, love, hatred, right and injustice, truth and falsehood, honesty, innocence, purity, justice, friendship, trust and distrust, honour, respect, belief, promise, compassion, virtue and vice, good and evil, and values related to beliefs and developing ideals. This group is the one that Mengüşoğlu attaches the most importance to. Because everything worth noting about life is within the boundaries of this value group. Many rights belonging to the personal sphere such as honour and dignity, moral values and rules that ensure the existence of social unity are high values (Mengüşoğlu, 1965, p. 33).
- 2. Instrumental Values:** Mengüşoğlu's second value group is the group of instrumental values. This value group includes all kinds of material existence values based on interest and benefit. Thus, this group can also be called the utility value group. The group of instrumental values includes all kinds of material values, including utility, health, obedience, power and authority, ambition for fame and glory, self-interest, suspicion, jealousy, envy, envy and vital values, which concern the interests and interests of the individual human being. According to Mengüşoğlu, who also says that this group of values is essential for life, human life depends on the realisation of these values. The fact that this group is different from higher values does not mean that it is the opposite

of them (Mengüşođlu, 2015, p. 164). However, ‘this value group, in general, does not stay within the boundaries of its own field; it interferes in the doings and actions of the first value group field. It tries to manage the actions of the first value group. But there is no authority that can dictate the sense of value to human beings’ (Mengüşođlu, 2015, p. 165). Therefore, the fact that instrumental values become the main determinant in society causes the formation of backward societies by removing them from being a part of life.

Mengüşođlu, human beings, as historical entities, exist within a three-dimensional framework of time. Actions originate in the "now," which serves as a midpoint between the past ("yesterday") and the future ("tomorrow"). Consequently, humans are intrinsically connected to the past, present, and future. Thus, the phenomenon of human historicity is revealed. ‘The fact that man is a historical being means that man knows the past, the achievements of the past, and lives the present based on the achievements of the past and taking the future into account. This means following the successes of the past, eliminating mistakes and establishing a continuity’ (Mengüşođlu, 1968, p. 115-116). Mengüşođlu, who comes to the concept of ‘ahistoricity’ after mentioning the fact that man is a historical being, states that it is ‘ahistoricity’ for him to be stuck in ‘now’ or ‘yesterday’ among the three dimensions of ‘anthropological time’. This means that the past replaces the present and haunts that society, reaching a level of obsessive traditionalism. The state of traditionalism and ‘yesterdayism’ expressed here is far from a critical attitude and is rote memorisation. In line with this attitude closed to change, everything in the past is carried to future generations as it is. However, Mengüşođlu argues that this form of carrying the past resembles a form of portage, as it represents merely a burdensome weight without offering any meaningful benefit to society. In contrast, true historicity transcends such a stagnant state, involving a dynamic and constructive engagement with the past.

“To be a historical being means neither to regard the past as dead on condition that it will never be revived, nor to faithfully inherit the elements of the past. On the contrary, historicity means transferring what happened in the past to the present by passing it through a critical filter, including religion” (Mengüşođlu, 1968, p. 116-122).

According to Mengüşođlu, man, who is a historical being, needs to benefit from yesterday's achievements in order to develop today. However, he says that this is not an easy thing and that the person who wants to go back to the past is the person who lives today. The person who is in the present, on the other hand, should explore the past by moving from the conditions of

existence he is in, but what is hoped to be found in the past is only the things that revitalise and develop the present. If yesterday cannot provide such an effect, it has become a 'yesterday' that must be eliminated (Mengüşoğlu, 1968, p. 122; Kuçuradi, 2017, p. 116).

Mengüşoğlu states that there are 'three historical views' in our country that try to establish links between our past and present. These also provide a summary of the Westernisation debate that has been going on since Tanzimat. If we take them in order:

1) Static, Traditionalist View: The traditionalist view is a way of thinking that represents the conservative way of thinking and finds the possibility of development in analysing the past and living it. According to this view, along with the ideas of the past, institutions should also be revived and kept alive. However, according to Mengüşoğlu, the members of this view are too blind to realise that the proposal put forward is not possible. Asserting that the past can only be utilised to the extent that it can advance the present, the thinker says that if the past tries to block the present, it should be abandoned. However, the traditionalist view's failure to observe this distinction has led it to ahistoricism. Because, according to Mengüşoğlu, this way of thinking tries to confine human beings, who have three-dimensional time, to a single dimension. There cannot be a single representative of such an idea; it only points to a group of people who try to abuse people's pure feelings, and such people reappear in different appearances in every period (Mengüşoğlu, 1968, p. 124).

2) The Conciliatory (Copyright) View: The conciliatory perspective advocates for a balanced approach, seeking to preserve traditions while incorporating new elements into them. This perspective reflects a mindset that desires to adopt the scientific and technological advancements of the West while deliberately distancing itself from Western cultural influences. However, according to Mengüşoğlu, such a trade does not seem possible. Because the science and technique in question is not a fruit waiting to be plucked from its branch, but rather the branches of a tree that has spread its roots deep into its soil. These roots are tightly wrapped in the "conditions of existence" and the way of thinking of that society. "Conditions of existence" refers to the phenomena indicating the concrete integrity of cultures (Mengüşoğlu, 2014b, p. 12-13). Therefore, even if a technical invention is imported, it will not have the same effect and will atrophy over time. Because although inventions can be imported, the conditions of existence in the society in which they are produced cannot be imported (Mengüşoğlu, 1968, p. 126). The conciliatory perspective seeks to reconcile 'historicity' and 'ahistoricity'; however,

Mengüšođlu asserts that these two modes of thought are fundamentally incompatible and cannot coexist effectively.

3) Progressive View: The perspective Mengüšođlu deems progressive is rooted in the approach initiated by Atatürk, which perceives humans as beings embedded within three-dimensional time. Mengüšođlu regards this as the first realistic mode of thought, reflecting a genuine "view of history." He emphasizes that Atatürk's reforms were aimed at combating ahistoricity. This vision, which emerged with the establishment of the Republic, advocates for the creation of an environment conducive to advancements in science and technology and underscores the necessity of instilling a Western mode of thinking throughout society (Mengüšođlu, 1968, p. 126). He argues that Atatürk correctly evaluated his own society and tried to change it for a higher level.

One of the expressions that should be analysed in order to comprehend what Mengüšođlu says about the East and the West is 'style of view'. The style of view expresses 'individuals' attitudes towards life, human beings and nature, and their comprehension of them'. The achievements of human beings, which constitute the sphere of historical existence, depend on the way of thinking, and the way of thinking depends on the existing value elements and value experience. However, there can be cultural interaction and transfer of achievements between societies whose views are close to each other. Because in order to appropriate the achievements of a different society, it is necessary to have that society's perspective on life and nature. Achievements in science, art, and philosophy have arisen within distinct value systems, and those who wish to benefit from these advancements must adopt the corresponding way of thinking inherent to those systems. Therefore, to fully benefit from Western culture, it is essential to adopt and align with the perspective and worldview underlying that culture (Mengüšođlu, 2014, p. 217-218).

The 'way of seeing' is revealed in the phenomena that reveal the structure of society with its values. In this case, if a society is theocratic, we see loyalty; if it is rational, we see freedom. The structure of the society presents us with the way of seeing, and even if a feature for which this structure is not ready is presented to the society, no response can be obtained. For example, in a society where freedom is restricted, if the 'opinion greyhound' is not ready, even if freedom is granted by law, this does not mean anything. First of all, the limit in minds must be removed because only then can change be possible.

According to Mengüşoğlu, an anthropological analysis of the concepts of objectivity and subjectivity is essential for a clearer distinction between Eastern and Western perspectives. He argues that objectivity establishes order in human actions by grounding them in rational principles, whereas subjectivity introduces arbitrary freedom, which can lead to disorder. According to Mengüşoğlu, a subjective individual is one who prioritizes personal gain, making decisions primarily based on emotions and self-interest. Consequently, such a person's actions are often unpredictable and lack consistency. On the other hand, the objective person is the type of person who can make decisions without relying on instrumental values that are in line with his/her own interests and who can think rationally. Therefore, it is also possible to predict the actions of the objective person (Mengüşoğlu, 1957, p. 105-110). Building on this analysis, Mengüşoğlu concludes that the objective human type, characterized by rationality and order, is predominantly found in nations with advanced cultural development. In contrast, the subjective human type, marked by self-interest and unpredictability, is more prevalent in less developed nations.

1. Western Civilisation and Western Values

Mengüşoğlu argues that man, as a historical being, has to constantly come to terms with yesterday's achievements, and that we can find an example of this reckoning in Western nations. He argues that this confrontation is the basis of the achievements we see in Western culture and that the present is based on the past. He states that the Western way of thinking is a way of thinking that “reckons with the past and evaluates it, perceives its positive and negative aspects correctly, sees the present as a connection point between the past and the future, and thinks that the initiative for the future will be in human achievements and acts accordingly, that is, is conscious of historicity” (Anđ, 2017, p. 44).

However, Mengüşoğlu also emphasizes that the Western cultural milieu did not emerge fully formed. Instead, it is the outcome of a long and complex process of achievements in science, philosophy, technology, and art. While this development occasionally followed circuitous or erroneous paths, it ultimately arrived at correct conclusions through a process of trial and error, thereby establishing a coherent worldview. Of course, such a world view cannot be expected to be static. This schematised way of seeing has an active and dynamic working integrity. According to Mengüşoğlu, this integrity is intertwined with values and adorned with value elements (Mengüşoğlu, 2015, p. 107).

Mengüšođlu, pointing to Antiquity in terms of how the West formed the first links in the chain of success, says that although the heritage of Antiquity is open to everyone, Western culture has received the highest yield from it. Answering a reasonable question that may come to mind at this point, the philosopher explains why the West has benefited the most from this open and common heritage with their education system. This education system is founded on experimentation and observation as its primary methods, with research and critical thinking serving as its core principles. Within this framework, centuries of research and the resulting contributions have underpinned the West's achievements in areas such as nature, art, philosophy, and science. Consequently, the distinctive "way of thinking" characteristic of the West has naturally evolved in alignment with these developments. This 'way of seeing' is not a quote from previous civilisations, but the result of many years of work. In this context, the point that Mengüšođlu wants to draw attention to is the education system of the West, because according to him, this is a gateway for other nations (Mengüšođlu, 2015, p. 112). According to Mengüšođlu, the transmission and continuity of the 'way of seeing' to new generations through the education system is based on value determinations. It is education itself that determines which will be the dominant value group in society. Although different values may be adopted among individual people, education determines the value group of the majority. Education plays a leading role in the 'way of seeing' and the system of values to be adopted by a growing generation (Kaynardađ, 2017, p. 78-79).

Mengüšođlu describes the life of a Western individual as a result of the education he has received and the values he has adopted, and explains his 'predictable' behaviour. Accordingly, a Western person fulfils his responsibilities by taking care in his work as if he is being supervised by someone. At the same time, Mengüšođlu argues that he struggles against the difficulties he encounters without giving up, and states that he does not intend to be ready. This situation stems from the understanding of values of that nation. The 'high values' that dominate the society in general ensure that justice, truthfulness and honesty are widespread among people. According to Mengüšođlu, there is also a consciousness of equality in the 'way of seeing' that includes Western value elements, and thanks to this consciousness, people defend the idea of 'equality for all'. The thinker, who asserts that the autonomy of the Westerner is grounded in scientific and philosophical justifications, argues that science has permeated all aspects of life and is regarded as the ultimate solution to all problems (Mengüšođlu, 2014, p. 161).

Mengüşođlu says that personal interests are kept in the background in Western society, which is epistemologically presented as a society where objectivity prevails, and discusses the world of work in the West. Mengüşođlu, who sees that knowledge is recognised as superior and that work is a value in itself, mentions that there is a natural ‘weeding out’ in the Western world of work. Accordingly, lazy and useless people are eliminated and the work is given to the competent. According to Mengüşođlu, this attitude is peculiar to nations where objectivity prevails. On the contrary, in subjective societies, the importance given to knowledge disappears and the work is handed over to unqualified people, often equating those who know with those who do not know. In such a situation, people cannot be sure of their future and hand over their lives to coincidences. Only with an objectivity like in Western societies can the future of individuals and societies be protected. Because subjectivity reaches the field of ‘instrumental values’ by pursuing utility values. Objectivity, on the other hand, is in the realm of ‘high values’ such as being honest and virtuous, keeping one's word, having compassion and responsibility. Mengüşođlu argues that people who live their lives in the realm of instrumental values and cannot move up one step from here are approaching animal behaviour, and likens the pursuit of only personal interests to animal life. In this context, the thinker, who concludes that injustices can be experienced at the lowest level in nations where objectivity prevails, says that they are at the highest level in subjective societies. Because a society with high values reacts by not remaining silent in the face of injustice and thus ensures the elimination of that injustice. However, a society formed by people who submit to instrumental values and calculate only their own benefit is pregnant with injustice. Of course, there are people who take objectivity as a starting point in such societies. However, although they are unfortunately in the minority, they always encounter difficulties in such a society (Mengüşođlu, 1957, p. 113-115).

Analysing the West and Western values, Mengüşođlu argues that the reason why our Westernisation efforts have been fruitless since the Tanzimat was ‘always because of half measures’. He argues that Atatürk made successful attempts in this regard for the first time and took the right path both formally and internally. However, our efforts to emulate the Western understanding of science and history were not successful because the changes introduced were left to time instead of being fed by new ideas. Mengüşođlu is of the opinion that only an education imbued with high values can open the door to doing science and philosophy like the West, and that through this education our society can transform into a Western culture (Mengüşođlu, 2014, p. 217-218).

2. Eastern Civilisation and Eastern Values

Mengüşođlu, in addressing Eastern and Oriental values that differ significantly from the Western cultural tradition, underscores the relationship between culture and a specific "way of seeing," as each cultural milieu is grounded in a distinct perspective. While Eastern culture has been shaped by the values it has embraced, Mengüşođlu contends that this cultural formation is not particularly conducive to progress or encouragement. According to him, the main problem is the 'ahistoricity' in the 'way of seeing' that dominates Eastern culture. The thinker, who argues that Eastern civilisations live in a single dimension of time, says that this situation reduces human beings to a single dimension by removing them from three-dimensional time. According to him, the basis of this situation lies in the inability of Eastern people to deal with 'yesterday' with a critical approach and the lack of long-term plans for the future. This way of thinking, in which the logic of 'today is today' prevails, tomorrow is seen as distant and life is considered to consist of the present, is the dominant view in society (Mengüşođlu, 1968, p. 17).

Mengüşođlu contends that such a way of life represents "ahistoricity," which he attributes to a static traditionalism and a disconnection of the present from both the past and the future. He claims that such a way of thinking prevails in the East, and that this is why no success has been achieved. According to Mengüşođlu, the secret of development and success is not to make transfers, but to be involved in the production process, but Eastern culture tries to survive by making transfers (Anđ, 2017, p. 44).

While critiquing Eastern culture, Mengüşođlu feels compelled to offer an explanation and makes the following statements:

All of these ideas are very easy to misunderstand. With these comparisons we are not suggesting that all people in the East are like this; we are emphasising the majority, because the majority determines the direction of the way of thinking. There is no lack of people here and there who work in the full Western sense and have such a way of thinking. But they are doomed to become passive sooner or later, because the general atmosphere cannot provide what they want (Mengüşođlu, 2014, p. 220).

Mengüşođlu identifies the ahistoricity in Eastern culture as stemming from a "lack of continuity" and "frozen traditionalism." He observes that in the East, the past is preserved uncritically and without confrontation, attempting to maintain it exactly as it is. This, he argues, reflects the static nature of Eastern traditionalism. Moreover, the absence of planning for the future and the lack of efforts to establish continuity highlight how disconnected the culture is

from the concept of temporal progression. According to such a 'way of seeing', yesterday, with all its achievements and accumulations, is 'dead, never to be revived'. Therefore, there is no continuity in Eastern studies and institutions. According to Mengüşoğlu, the primary reason for the East's failure to progress lies in this lack of continuity. He further highlights that another significant obstacle to achieving continuity is the strong inclination among Eastern societies to disrupt the established order. This tendency to pursue change, he argues, is often mistakenly regarded as a mark of success. He says that the first thing that Eastern people, who want to show that they have achieved something and who think of their own interests rather than the progress of their institutions, do is to change the whole system (Mengüşoğlu, 1968, p. 117-120).

Mengüşoğlu asserts that the East can be understood as the West turned upside down, with the concept of ahistoricity corresponding to being Eastern. He identifies the dominance of "instrumental values" in Eastern societies as the primary reason for this condition. Instrumental values are subjective and fluctuating, primarily centered on individual interests and personal gains. As long as 'instrumental values' remain at the centre of the consciousness of individuals, the benefit of society will not be able to override personal interests. In such a structure, the concept of 'work' is a chore for the Easterner and the construction phase of the work is in need of constant supervision. Otherwise, it is neglected because there is no such thing as loving one's work and giving oneself to one's work in an Easterner (Mengüşoğlu, 2014, p. 220). Mengüşoğlu observes that the Eastern "way of seeing" manifests across all fields, including scientific studies. He argues that, unlike in the West, there is a tendency in the East to avoid citing sources. While this practice constitutes "plagiarism," or intellectual theft, he asserts that the Eastern world remains indifferent to it, as this attitude has become habitual (Mengüşoğlu, 1965, p. 41). To cite a work is to acknowledge that previous contributions have played a role in shaping the current work. However, according to Mengüşoğlu, the Easterner struggles to accept this notion because they fail to establish a meaningful connection between the past and the present. In fact, even when such a connection exists, it is often deliberately severed, as the Easterner lacks the intention or objective to contribute to an ongoing intellectual tradition. However, the thinker, who says that the opposite is experienced in the Western world, asserts that no one tries to explain the present without going into the past and that the connection with the past is not weakened (Mengüşoğlu, 1968, p. 119). According to Mengüşoğlu, human actions and events are not separate from achievements. Events are the factors that affect achievements, and achievements are the factors that shape events, and therefore they exist in the same process. A society's shaping of the events it experiences depends on its certain achievements. Mengüşoğlu

says that reaching the desired destination can only be in the measure and direction of achievements, otherwise collapse is inevitable in that society (Mengüsoğlu, 2014, p. 254).

According to Mengüsoğlu, the difference in the ways of thinking between the East and the West is evident in how each culture perceives human beings. He asserts that in the East, "human beings have not yet gained intrinsic value." This lack of value stems from the absence of a reflective attitude, as individuals in the East do not feel compelled to think critically about themselves. Consequently, an autonomous consciousness has not emerged in Eastern societies. It is very easy to meet with despotism in the East because of the lack of value of human beings, because Eastern people, whose consciousness of freedom has not developed, are inclined to be ruled and therefore can easily be turned into tools (Mengüsoğlu, 1968, p. 119). According to Mengüsoğlu, even if some successes are achieved in Eastern culture, which does not value human beings, there is no continuity in these successes, but there is continuity in failure. This is a situation that needs to be overcome and according to Mengüsoğlu, the way to overcome this is to 'think like the Westerner, to value science and knowledge like him, to do science and philosophy like him. Without the adoption of such a view, the steps taken in every field will remain coincidental. That is why, in the East, successes, even failures, are based on coincidence' (Mengüsoğlu, 2014, p. 223). Mengüsoğlu, who sees in education the remedy to get rid of being an Easterner and to philosophise like a Westerner, declares education as the determinant of the historical sphere of existence. This is because a 'way of seeing' is not something that arises and emerges spontaneously; it is the education and value system of societies that determine it. The way to reach the Western 'way of seeing' is through the establishment of a deep-rooted education system. This system should enable people to blend objective values and subjective values, that is, 'high values' and 'instrumental values' and use them in harmony (Mengüsoğlu, 1965, p. 31). According to Mengüsoğlu, solid achievements can only emerge in an age where both value groups participate in historical determination. The determination that enables the emergence of a genuine work is a determination based on high values. If there is a determination based on high values at the centre, then the works can be a signature in the field of philosophy, science or art (Mengüsoğlu, 2014, p. 244-247).

Conclusion

Takiyettin Mengüsoğlu's effort to uncover the distinct developmental trajectories and outcomes of Eastern and Western cultures is particularly significant for its focus on "worldviews" and the societal value systems that underpin them. His emphasis on education systems as the foundation

of a society's success further highlights the critical role of structured learning and values in shaping cultural and intellectual progress.

Mengüşođlu's analyses suggest that the West's cultural and scientific progress is driven by its strong sense of historical consciousness, which promotes innovation and forward-thinking. In contrast, the East's adherence to static traditions and its rigid approach to historical processes and societal values significantly impede its development. On one side, there is a continuously evolving culture and civilization; on the other, a society trapped in "ahistoricity." In this dichotomy, the value system underlying progress and innovation is characterized by a high value horizon, while stagnation is associated with instrumental values. These conclusions offer a significant perspective on Westernization debates, as Mengüşođlu not only identifies the problems but also suggests potential solutions.

However, if the situation is as clear-cut as Mengüşođlu suggests, why has Turkey, despite numerous Westernization initiatives since the late Ottoman period, failed to achieve the desired outcomes? Although Mengüşođlu provides an answer from his perspective, its adequacy is debatable. Another question arises: Could Mengüşođlu's strict East-West dichotomy, which offers a rather reductive framework, overlook the complexities of historical development? For instance, by placing Ancient Greek thought at the foundation of Western philosophy, Mengüşođlu seems to neglect the influence of Greek philosophy on Islamic thought, as well as the significant contributions of translation and original works within Islamic philosophy. Such a dynamic intellectual environment seems at odds with the instrumental values upon which Mengüşođlu situates Eastern civilization.

Furthermore, while metaphysical and spiritual perspectives are largely dismissed, the potential for societies with mystical beliefs and teachings -such as Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Taoism- to achieve social harmony through individual spiritual development and inner peace is overlooked. Mengüşođlu highlights the incompatibility of Eastern values with the scientific and individualistic thought embraced in Western societies. Yet, a more holistic approach that considers both the material and spiritual dimensions of human existence could foster a view of individuals not only as isolated beings but also as integral parts of society, culture, and nature. This perspective could encourage individuals to embrace their responsibilities toward the external world, aiming for societal peace and a harmonious coexistence with nature.

Over the centuries, a dynamic process of interaction and exchange has occurred between Eastern and Western civilizations. However, Mengüşođlu's conclusions may be viewed as

reductive, as they seem to underrepresent the complexity and significance of these historical interactions.

Although it is clear that there is a conflict between the East and the West, we see that both civilisations share basic searches such as the search for human meaning, human dignity, rights and freedoms. Despite the existence of cultural differences, the fact that all people have a value phenomenon reveals the possibility of meeting at a common point. At this point, Turkey's geopolitical position is very important. Because Turkey is not only a geographical crossroads but also hosts a rich cultural heritage as the intersection of both cultures.

In this context, a 'human' centred value philosophy can be put forward to represent both cultures. Turkey, as a common ground in the conflict between east and west, can create a holistic philosophy of values by synthesising both eastern metaphysics and western scientificity and modernisation dynamics. In this sense, Mengüſođlu's views are guiding for the realisation of this philosophical study. According to the conclusion we draw from his ideas; establishing intercultural dialogue, creating a human-oriented education model, adopting scientific methods and methods, and embracing cultural diversity are the elements necessary to create a human-centered philosophy of value.

In conclusion, Mengüſođlu's approach to a human-centred philosophy of value provides a strong common ground for overcoming the conflict between Eastern and Western civilisations.

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Makalenin yazarları, bu çalışma ile ilgili herhangi bir kurum, kuruluş, kişi ile mali çıkar çatışması olmadığını ve yazarlar arasında çıkar çatışması bulunmadığını beyan eder.

Destek ve Teşekkür

Çalışmada herhangi bir kurum ya da kuruluştan destek alınmamıştır.
