

INDIVIDUALİZM, PERSONALITY AND CULTURE IN GÖKALPIAN THOUGHT FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF EDUCATIONAL SOCIOLOGY

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SUMMARY

This article copes with Gökalp's sociological explanations about individuality and personality. Those concepts have been very valuable to evaluate an educational decisions in a cultural settings. Thus, the differentiation of those concepts have been explored in order to enlighten how collective consciousness has become influential on the members of society. And, the concluding remarks have been drawn and, outcomes of those were examined to contribute educational sociology.

ÖZET

Eğitim Sosyolojisi Açısından Gökalpçi Düşüncece Bireycilik, Kişilik ve Kültür

Bu makalede Ziya Gökalp'in bireycilik ve kişilik ayrımının kavramsal temelleri, O'nun düşünce eksenini oluşturan kültür ve medeniyet ikilemi açısından analiz edilmektedir. Bu kavramlar ile eğitime dayalı tercih ve kararların kültürel ortamları ilişkisi de analiz edilerek; bireyin toplumun bilinçli bir üyesi haline gelişi, kişilik ve kültür bütünleşmesi üzerinde durulmakta, sonuçlar eğitim sosyolojisi açısından değerlendirilmektedir.

Ziya Gökalp (1874 - 1924) who had been the most influential thinkers and was one of the great intellectuals of modern times. Philosophically he sought to synthesize what he felt to be conflicting value systems held by three groups within the Empire: The uneducated mass, the *medrese* graduates and the graduates of the modern schools by focusing on three currents related to these. Though, the accepted and rejected parts of his thought whatever they were, it was of influence especially in a transitional period in Turkey. In this article, there fore, Gökalp's writings on Individualism, personality and culture will be closely examined and his ideas will be explained in the demarcated frame from the perspective of educational sociology.

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The area related to culture and personality is a common ground where anthropology, psychology, sociology and social psychology come together. "Serving as a bridge between ethnology and psychology, the field of culture and personality is concerned with the ways in which the culture of a society influences the persons who grow up within it"¹. However, as the variety of research done suggests, there are various conceptions about the nature and definition of both "culture" and "personality" According to Gökalp these different conceptions are the result of thought and their original ideas. For example: American academic psychology has been much influenced by the behaviorist viewpoint. On the other hand, the American anthropological school has been influenced by psychiatric and psychological schools of European origin². In Gökalpian thought they all discuss the same issue. Desire, want, lack and need are taken to be primary necessities to initiate action and maintain all life. Broudy discusses³ four major principles to describe the essential working of the human personality. These are competitive principles which provide motor power to all life, and principles of self-determination, self-realization, self-reliance and self-integration.

These principles describe the strivings of man as he tries to fulfill his essential nature. The power of symbolization which furnishes the basis for thought, imagination, and memory introduces a new factor into these strivings. They are no longer automatic, predetermined struggles... The symbolic power puts us into a realm of the possible... they became... indeterminate, risky and problematic. We have to search for our essential natures and ends because they are so overlaid by acquired desires and the means of achieving them⁴.

References to personality or character or the self may be found in older books on psychology, but are of a philosophical nature⁵, until 1918; this was so in Gökalpian thought; it is rather different from psychological explanations.

The major thesis in Gökalp's theory of culture and personality differs dramatically from that which prevails among Americans. For the Americans, education is much more self-centered, an individual issue, and aims at the development of individuality. The main issues are also characteristically pedagogical. On the contrary Gökalp's approach is a sociological one because he describes "what it is", Gökalp states his aim is "to study ... scientifically ... what it was in the past and is at the

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- 1 Victor Barnouw, *Culture and Personality* (Illinois: The Dorsey Press, 1973), p. 3.
 - 2 Ibid., p. 9.
 - 3 Harry S. Broudy, *Building a Philosophy of Education* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1965), pp. 42-74.
 - 4 Ibid., p. 12.
 - 5 Percival M. Symonds, "Personality Dynamics and Personal Adjustment", in *Human Dynamics in Psychology and Education*, ed. by Don E. Hamacheck, (Boston: Allyn and Bacon Company, 1968), p. 580.

present⁶. Indeed, the past differs in American experience⁷ in that the emphasis upon individualism in American education draws support from the self-reliance and self-determination of the early settler, the overemphasis of personal responsibility of protestant theology and the monopoly of psychology in the educational practice and theory.

II

In order to cast light on the subject, some questions need to be answered. Which type of individualism did Gökalp attack and which type did he defend? What was Gökalp's conception of the role of the individual in society? And how are these questions related to Gökalp's key distinction and dialogue of culture and civilization?

The specific type of individualism which Gökalp attacked was excessive individuation and Gökalp saw utilitarianism as the ideological legitimation of extreme individualism; for him utilitarianism was contradicted by everything history and ethnography showed us⁸.

The role of society and symbolism in human life depended on social structure and collective conscience. Both were aspects of the same reality. In the normal society, institutionalized norms and values would be both objectively structured and subjectively internalized. Thus, "Mefkure" was born in a state of collective enthusiasm and resulted in the conversion of the self of the individual into the "social personality"⁹. The individual forgets his private interest and devotes all his efforts towards the good of his society. As Durkheim pointed out: "Institutions impose themselves upon us, but we are attached to them; they constrain us, and we find our welfare in their functioning and their constraint"¹⁰.

Gökalp says:

Moral rules, although they are obligatory and supported by sanctions, are observed in most cases without a conscious awareness of their character and constraint because of their desirability to ourselves, A virtuous person in most cases does not think of the approval or disapproval of public opinion; he is virtuous for the sake of virtue... Therefore, that which shows the attraction towards moral rules is not our instinctive life but our social consciousness. It is the society to which we belong which becomes interiorized in our soul and makes us attracted by moral rules. From the day we begin to experience social life, we have not only a physical organism but also acquire a personality

6 Ziya Gökalp, *Turkish Nationalism and Western Civilization*: Translated by Niyazi Berkes (New York: Columbia Univ. Press. 1959), p. 193.

7 Ziya Gökalp, "İhtilat ve İçtima" ("Intercourse and Meeting"), in Z. Gökalp, *Türk Ahlakı* ("Turkish Morality"), ed. M. Görgen (İstanbul: Toker Basımevi, 1975), pp. 10-11.

8 Uriel Heyd, *Foundations of Turkish Nationalism* (London: The Harwill Press, L.T.D., 1950), p. 53.

9 Emile Durkheim, *The Division of Labor* (New York: McMillan, 1964), pp. 64-65.

10 Gökalp, *Turkish Nationalism and Western Civilization*, op. cit. p. 150.

made up of our organism plus a social consciousness... while our social consciousness leads us towards moral behavior ...¹¹

The individual becomes aware of the sacredness of society and feels that its spirit gives him superhuman strength¹². Therefore, the basis of duties towards the self is sacrificing individuality for society. That which is the object of morality is not the individual but a social concept.

... As a matter of fact the word "personality" does not mean individuality, but signifies "society" as it exists in the individual¹³.

If it is so, the object of morality is society; the great men attain prominence due to their high degree of socialization through their personifying society in themselves. Therefore, Gökalp concludes, the highest moral aim of man is to turn his individuality into personality¹⁴. Individuality lies in the complex of man's physical constitution.

... The individual becomes a personality by throwing off the shackles of these material factors and by learning to think and act in accordance with the ideas common to the members of his society. That parts of man which is not directly subject to material forces was in the past called soul. But this was only a symbolic expression for personality which can be defined as the totality of the thoughts and feelings existing in the consciousness of society and reflected in the consciousness of the individual in short, the ideals¹⁵.

To reduce the origin of personality to individuality is not possible¹⁶, because they belong to two different stages of existence. Gökalp says in "Ferdiyet ve Şahsiyet":

Individuality and personality have been the product of the same soul in two different systems of the two different organizations. The center of the individuality is, in the organic nature of individual, consciousness. The center of the system of the personality, the social elements of the social consciousness, is conscience. Because, it is the only ability of animals to represent their own kind. They have only individuality or consciousness. Whereas mankind is the representative of both his kind and his society; therefore, they have not only individuality (consciousness) but they also have personality and conscience. Hence, psychology of individuality can explain the consciousness, but there is a need for psychology of personality to comprehend the incorporeal man in both his aspects of personal inclinations and the system of his personality¹⁷.

11 Heyd, op. cit., p. 53.

12 Gökalp, op. cit., p. 152.

13 Z. Gökalp, "Ferdiyet ve Şahsiyet" ("Individualism and Personality"), *Yeni Mecmua*, I, (July 1917), p. 2, in Gökalp, *Terbiyenin Sosyal ve Kültürel Temelleri*, pp. 193-195.

14 Heyd, op. cit., p. 53.

15 Gökalp, op. cit., p. 2.

16 Ziya Gökalp, op. cit., p. 2.

17 Gökalp, op. cit., p. 239.

Psychology is not able to cope with religious, moral, aesthetic, linguistic and economic functions. All these social phenomena are manifestations of the culture in individual minds which can be studied by sociology¹⁸. The relevance of personality for the functioning of social systems concerned Gökalp. He directed his attention toward inferring the influence of culture and personality as part of a causal claim within Turkish society. It is sufficient to say that, recently, the reciprocal impact of personality and social structure is receiving increasing attention¹⁹.

In his article, "Şahsiyetin Muhtelif Şekiller"²⁰ ("Various forms of the Personality"), Gökalp divided personalities into two kinds - positive and negative personality. The rise of higher ideals and strong faith in a particular society where individuals live in a powerful social gathering creates positive personality. For example, with the appearance of Islam, the desert had trained warriors and heroes who all had positive personalities. In this period of Islam, the social conscience appeared as religion. Yet politics and law, morals and aesthetics, science and philosophy, economy and technology were not separated from religion. All institutions necessarily sprang from religion and acquired from it their source of sacredness. As a result of strictness and solidarity in this particular society, the various mentalities were framed by a religious mentality, zuhti (asceticism). It was like being an ascetic or true-believer of the religion.

Gökalp argues that when the Abbasides reached the developed stage, the appearance of the Islamic state was changed. The division of labor imposed changes in almost every field, including law, economy, philosophy, language, aesthetics, technic, politics.

The emergence of a more differentiated society coincides with the introduction of social division. An individual who belonged to different social groups acquired a different consciousness and social role in accordance with each group's determined political, religious, occupational, and recreational expectations. These are the origins of the individual personality, opinions and tastes. Naturally social conscience is able to observe the collective conscience. For example, in the Islamic world a sensitive revolt against the universality of asceticism emerged with the development of social division in the Islamic state. Ascetics are not specialists in any field but in religions. Thus when man became a politician, poet, philosopher and economist he would no longer be an ascetic. This situation was criticized by Ebul'Ala and Khayyam²¹. They raged against the principal of the universality of asceticism which created hypocrisy. They had negative personalities. In short, Gökalp argues that the ideals disappear and faiths collapse, the milieu forces individuals both to obey fossil traditions and to seek to satisfy individual passions. If the individuals who do not have personality are not absorbed in culture, they will be lost within these conflicting currents.

18 Stephan P. Spitzer, *The Sociology of Personality* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1969), p. 2.

19 Ziya Gökalp, "Şahsiyetin Muhtelif Şekilleri" ("Various Forms of the Personality"), *Yeni Mecmua* (Aug., 1917).

20 *İbid.*, p. 102.

21 Heyd, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

One who has had social training in childhood, but who resists and revolts against those traditions and insists upon individualism, has negative personality. Gökalp praised the negative personality only as far as it was suited to destroy the fanatical sides of thought, and dogmatism as well as Islamic dogmatism.

As Heyd points out Gökalp is a collectivist and strict follower of Durkheim's principle of supremacy of society over the individual. However, this society is an idealistic one which represents the true meaning of ideas and feelings of the people. That this society is a national society, the latest stage of development, has far-reaching consequences. It is not only that whatever society wills is done, but also that all that society desires is morally good. Society is the model of highest ethical conduct; for contrary to the selfish individual, society is prepared to make every sacrifice for the realization of its ideals. If there are no higher values than society, then why is society subject to any moral obligations regarding its relation to other societies? Within the restrictions of the realities of the dialogue of culture civilization, Gökalp says, there is no contradiction between individual and social in the field of economy, nor between nationalism and internationalism in the political field. These four normal currents are the products of four kinds of solidarism²². The only duty Gökalp imposes on the individual is faithfulness. If the beliefs, traditions, and aspirations of the group were extinguished from individual's minds, if these "social representations" were destroyed²³. Gökalp and Durkheim believed that the society would die. However, in this case society is a national one. With his interpretation of individual personality, Gökalp attributes negative characteristics to individualism which denotes lack of ideals and causes scepticism, moral instability, frustration and despair. His faith in collectivism was rooted in the Islamic tradition of fraternity and equality among believers that fits the ideas taught by "Tabariya"²⁴, an Islamic school which denies freedom of will.

The endeavors of the "sufi" (mystic) to submit himself fully to the divine will become full subjugation to the society²⁷ in this doctrine of social mysticism.

In conclusion, under the enlightenment of Gökalp's view about individualism and personality within a relationship may be said that Gökalp accepts that education is the inculcation of the ideas of the older generation to youngsters. Thus, this happens in two ways: a) The older generation may become models of behavior unconsciously in society; b) They consciously impose certain ideas, behaviors and senses through organized education. The real source feeding personality is non-formal education which is nothing other than culture of the society. Therefore, formal education has to utilize the components of the non-formal education. Yet the real dilemma has not been solved from the perspective of culture.

22 (M. Marlan) Michael, op. cit., p. 91.

23 Heyd, op. cit., p. 56.

24 Ibid.; See also, Kaplan, Mardin, Tunaya, *Ziya Gökalp ve Türk Düşüncesi*, p. 146.