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Modern psychology's spiritual past in the late Ottoman Empire

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# Searching for the Soul in Shades of Grey

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Seyma Afacan

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To write a history of psychology is to write a  
history of the soul, which is no less than the story  
of humankind from its beginning.

Otto Rank (1996: 193)

When İbrahim Gövsa, a psychology graduate with a diploma from the Rousseau Institute of Geneva, and a professor of psychology at the *Darülfünun* (today's Istanbul University), was introduced to Mustafa Kemal [Atatürk] in 1928, the first question the founding father of the Republic of Turkey asked was about the essence of the soul from the point of psychology. In response, Gövsa explained that psychology was no longer dealing with the essence of the soul and enquiring into such metaphysical questions. Well-known for his keen sense of humour, Atatürk laughed and ridiculed psychology for not doing anything substantial, as it neglected the essence of the soul: after all, psychology was the science of the soul (Gövsa 1966: 17-20). Laughing together at a yacht club, they engaged in a conversation about psychology's transition from the house of philosophy to the team of the sciences due to its new interest in mental processes, brain functioning, and human behavior. As someone with a great interest in popular science literature and the philosophical doctrine of materialism, Atatürk recognized Gövsa's scientific expertise and celebrated the foundation of modern psychology. Despite Gövsa's wishful thinking, however, psychology and its place in the newly founded modern academic institutions did not lead to an overnight break from

the whole body of philosophical and theological knowledge built around the concept of the soul. Even in 1933, Albert Malche (of the Rousseau Institute) criticized the quality of psychological education at the *Darülfünun* for being theological (Gülerce 2012: 560). While the field went through a long process of redefining its methodology and interests, the subject of the soul continued to attract academics and others, like Atatürk, who were drawn to these debates for what the soul represented philosophically, theologically, and politically. Indeed, academic and intellectual interest in psychological thought stemmed from the popularity of the question of what the essence of the soul was, which carried a number of political, cultural, and ideological meanings.

This paper intends to explain the rising academic and intellectual interest in psychological thought, following the 1908 Revolution, by reference to late Ottoman cultural, ideological, and political dynamics. Methodologically, it focuses on texts and discussions promoted by the *Darülfünun*, a state-funded institute of higher education, and questions its spiritual interpretation of psychology, which relied on a great deal of theological and metaphysical elements. During the foundational years of academic psychology, the *Darülfünun* body sponsored scholars whose understanding of psychology revolved around the concept of the human soul (*ruh*) and emotions such as honour (*mükerremiyet*) and passions (*ihtiras*) in the face of scientific questions about human nature, spurred by the philosophical doctrine of materialism and the theory of evolution. This interpretation enabled scholars, who were critical of scientific determinism, to integrate into scientific discussions. In an environment where vital questions about science and religion – such as if the soul existed separately from the body – were suppressed, the *Darülfünun* faculty's academic and intellectual interest in psychological thought was generated by the popularity of the concept of the soul, which signaled human authenticity and honour, as the paper argues.

In questioning the uses and implications of an alliance between spiritualism and psychology under the roof of the *Darülfünun*, this paper includes three sections. The first part of the paper revisits the secondary literature on the history of psychology with a critical eye on the foundational myths of the field, the most important one being the establishment of psychology as an independent science of the human mind, separated from theology and philosophy right after the foundation of the first experimental psychology laboratory in 1879, at the University of Leipzig. The second part of the paper shows the state's support for the development of a *Darülfünun* orthodoxy as an official shelter for promoting psychology and philosophy with a spiritual tendency in the early 1910s under the leadership of Filibeli Ahmed Hilmi (1865-1914), and the state's limiting of the development and free expression of some claims of materialism, such as the negation of the soul. The last part of the paper moves on to the war period (the Balkan Wars between 1912 and 1913, the First World War between 1914 and 1918, and The War of Independence between 1919 and 1922) and conveys how the interplay between Bergsonian spiritualism and psychology resonated with many intellectuals and professors, primarily Mustafa Şekip Tunç (1886-1958), at the *Darülfünun*. Against the backdrop of the War of Independence, the human soul came to signify human authenticity and inner strength. Emphasising human authenticity and the special position of human beings in the universe, spiritual interpretations of psychology transcended the grasp of one-sided narratives of a conflict between religion and science and involved various shades of grey. Ultimately the paper shows the ways

in which the human body and the soul emerged as sites of contestation and knowledge in the late Ottoman Empire.

## Psychology in Continuity: The Science of the States of the Soul (*İlm-i Ahval-i Ruh*)

In the Ottoman Empire, there were various sources of information about the essence of the soul (*ruh*).<sup>1</sup> The concept of *ruh* corresponds to the concepts of the soul and spirit with religious connotations in Abrahamic traditions such as “breath of life” which Allah blew into Adam when giving life to his body (Netton 2012). In the Quranic usage, *ruh* means “special angelic messenger”, “special divine quality” and *nefs* means “self” or “person” (ibid.). In post-Quranic literature, *nefs* and *ruh* were often used interchangeably to refer to the soul, human spirit, angels, and djinns (Calverly 1943: 254). Post-Quranic perspectives of *nefs* and *ruh* were developed by leading philosophers who benefited from a rich corpus of materials from translations of ancient Greek texts into Syriac, Arabic, and Persian on top of the Islamic tradition. This long process resulted in the accumulation of a large number of opinions about the human soul, which drew on diverse foundations and encompassed a significant number of related loaded terms.<sup>2</sup> The field of Science of the Soul (*İlm-i Nefs* or *İlm-i Ruh*), as a sub-section of the Science of Morals (*İlm-i Ahlak*), was a traditional venue for developing different understandings of the relations between body and soul, free will, and the powers, faculties, as well as “illnesses of the soul” (*Emraz-ı Nefsaniye*) (Oktay 2005: 104).

In the late Ottoman Empire, *ruh* was a bridging term between psychological studies and the debate between materialism and spiritualism. The topics of materialism, spiritualism, and spiritism directed attention to psychic and psychological phenomena. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, medical schools became a major venue for the promotion of biological materialism (*maddiyyun mezhebi*, *materyalizm*, and *dehriyyun*) with a major focus on the works of Ludwig Büchner (1824-1899) (Akgün 1988; Hanoğlu 1981 and 2005; Poyraz 2010). The publications of Abdullah Cevdet (1869-1932) on brain physiology, which emphasised the statement that consciousness was a function of neural matter, formed the basis of psychological studies in the 1890s (Afacan 2016: 116). One of the most ardent supporters of materialism, monism, and evolutionism, Baha Tevfik (1884-1914), publicised evolutionism much more extensively in the relatively freer atmosphere of the Second Constitutional Era (1908-1918). Soon the subject of anti-materialism captured the attention of state bureaucrats and intellectuals who developed and publicised their versions of spiritualism (*ruhiyye*, *ruhiyyun mezhebi*, and *spiritualizm*).<sup>3</sup> These writers combined the elements of Sufi metaphysics, such as the unity of existence (*vahdet-i vücûd*), with diverse Western philosophical views, which assumed the existence of immaterial reality (Toku 1996: 11). During the same period, spiritism (*ispiritizma*) – in the form of psychic séances to communicate with spirits – attracted the interest of the Istanbul literati and the Ottoman press (Türesay 2018: 178). The idea of communicating with spirits was also a subject of refutation for men of medicine, and a common topic of ridicule in satirical magazines (Brummett 2011: 218-220). Abdullah Cevdet’s preface to *Fenn-i Ruh* (*The Sciences of the Soul*) starts with his disappointment with his educated, close friends who participate in séances, which were now so absurdly common as to prompt him to write about the soul from the point of science (Abdullah Cevdet 1327 [1911]: 4-5). An

advertisement published in *Hande (Laughter)* – a satirical magazine that Baha Tevfik wrote in – satirises the false expectations of approaching the issue scientifically: “*Hande* predicts the future scientifically. Every Friday we conduct magnetism experiments in our Magnetism & Mental and Spiritual Clinic. Every problem is to be solved through communicating with the spirits.”<sup>4</sup>

The debate between materialism and spiritualism, revolving around different understandings of the soul, nourished psychological thought. With the foundation of *Darülfünun* in 1900 and the start of the first psychological lectures, several textbooks were published.<sup>5</sup> Intellectuals to a large extent translated the soul, *âme*, as *ruh*, and psychology, *psychologie*, as *ilm-i ahval-i ruh*, *ilm-i ruh*, or as *ruhiyat* and seldom as *ilm-i nefis*. Albeit some intellectuals in psychological writings opted for the usage of *nefs* rather than *ruh*; *nefs* and *ruh* were generally used interchangeably, and intellectuals usually formed new terms around the concept of *ruh* in the late Ottoman Empire. Their efforts to develop a standard philosophical and scientific terminology encompassing psychological terms in Ottoman did not bear much fruit.<sup>6</sup> However, failure to form a standard terminology ran alongside a degree of flexibility which authors enjoyed in choosing different perspectives to be adopted and themes to be included in their books.

There are a good number of articles that follow the trajectory of the foundation of modern psychology as an academic field in the late Ottoman Empire, with an exclusive focus on the names of the courses and instructors at the *Darülfünun* (Batur 2003). Leaving major methodological problems aside, these articles provide substantial foundation for further analytical research. However, this narrative often has an overwhelming focus on the early Republican era, in which psychology’s Ottoman past is presented as a transitional phase between traditional psychological perspectives and the post-1930s period. The lack of historical contextualisation often leads to misinformation and the adoption of a problematic approach to psychology’s Ottoman past, often caused by the problem of presentism, i.e., anachronistic search of present-day ideas and perspectives in the past. This narrative inevitably overlooks late Ottoman intellectuals’ efforts for redefining the field, based on the interpretation that their standards fall below what we expect today. This problem is mostly seen in writings of interested psychologists whose training lacks historical methodology and whose audience is not limited to historians, understandably so.

One common tendency is to adopt a dismissive attitude to the direct relationship between the late Ottoman social and cultural context and psychological knowledge. For instance, Vassaf, in his article “A Fight for Independence”, makes some hasty conclusions and states that psychology in Turkey was “rather a product of our dependence on the West, than a product of our own needs” (Vassaf 1987: 486-487). For him, the story of the years of development of psychology in Turkey reflects the lack of any organic relation between science and society or “a dialectical interaction between science and society” (Vassaf 1987: 487).

In a similar attempt at presenting modern psychology as a Western import discontinuous with its deep roots in older forms of psychological theorising, a handful texts on the history of psychology in Turkey provide us with a foundation myth based on the arrival of George Anshütz, a German émigré professor who taught experimental psychology briefly at the *Darülfünun*, such as that of Kağıtçıbaşı (1994). In 1915, Dr Georg Anshütz (1886-1953), a professor of experimental psychology, who had worked with Alfred Binet in Paris in 1909 and Wilhelm Wundt in Leipzig in 1912,

started working at the *Darülfünun* (Dölen 2013: 146-159). However, to what extent Anschütz took his position seriously and deserved to be labelled as the founder of psychology in Turkey is controversial. Batur challenged this “original myth”, however, by showing how little a mark Anschütz’s short stay left on psychological education in the Ottoman Empire, and how very little we know about the history of psychology therein (Batur 2005). The number of interested students in his psychology classes was very low and the language barrier was an important obstacle. During his stay for three years, he did not produce more than a single article and, due to the language barrier, his courses were ineffective (Batur 2005).

Central to the choice of Anschütz as the founding figure of modern psychology in the Ottoman Empire is the overemphasis on the teaching of experimental psychology of the mainstream history of psychology. In depicting the transition from the “science of the mind” rooted in the philosophy of mind and metaphysics to “scientific psychology” with observational, empirical, and experimental methods, mainstream historiography has often produced a narrative of overnight transition based on a simple distinction between old and new. This foundational myth was to a large extent established by Edwin Boring (1886-1986), the founding father of experimental psychology as well as its historiography, in his foundational text *A History of Experimental Psychology* (Boring, 1961 [1929]). There was a degree of resistance to experimental psychology worldwide, however, which extended the transitional period of psychology. In some old, established places, such as the University of Oxford, there was no teaching of experimental psychology until 1936 (Hearnshaw 1987: 125).

Recent scholarship raises important concerns about the foundational myths of experimental psychology, such as the strict division between experimental and intuitionist methodologies. Vidal traces the history of the term “psychology” to its invention in the sixteenth century as a “discipline” (Vidal 2011: xii). In his account, the discipline of psychology was redefined at the end of the seventeenth century and institutionalised in the eighteenth century. Hatfield, for example, blurs the line which American experimental psychologist Boring drew between Western psychological thought of the eighteenth and the mid-nineteenth centuries. For Hatfield, “psychology was considered by a great many eighteenth century authors to be a science” (Hatfield 1994: 7). Therefore, the Western psychological legacy of the eighteenth century is to be seen as an effort for “remaking the science of mind” instead of being dismissed by orthodox historical definitions of science. Similarly, Dixon challenges the assumption that “religiously motivated views about mental life and the soul were not part of a psychological enterprise” and displays various ways in which religious and scientific traditions interacted throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Dixon 2003: 8). By the same token, *Gestalt Psychology in German Culture, 1890-1967*, by Mitchell Ash, draws attention to the co-existence of old and new methodologies and the multiplicity of methods available to psychologists at the turn of the twentieth century. In doing so, it depicts the world of psychologists as rich and multifarious. Taking up the subject of the development and reception of holistic thought from the angle of the social history of ideas, Ash highlights “a middle path between idealism and positivism, represented most prominently in America by William James, John Dewey, on the Continent by Henri Bergson, Dilthey and Edmund Husserl’s *Logical Investigations*” (Ash 1995: 68).

Contrary to what mainstream historiography suggests, there were several scientists and thinkers who saw the soul, spirit, and conscious experience as accessible to scientific scrutiny. At the turn of the twentieth century, psychic studies and

parapsychology were considered parts of psychology, best captured by the first international congresses of psychology between 1889 and 1905. These congresses put together a wide range of “psychological studies” from parapsychology, mesmerism, spiritualism, phrenology, and physiognomy to experimental psychology. The fifth congress, organized in Rome in 1905, was the last one to which psychics were accepted as presenters (Benjamin, Baker 2012: 2-5). Given this complexity, a deeper understanding of psychology’s trajectory in an international perspective requires a careful historical analysis of local contexts and deeper international insight, as Baker maintains (Benjamin, Baker 2012: 616-619).

In the English case, for example, a good number of influential thinkers promoted spiritualism as opposed to scientific materialism, and perceived spiritualism as being in harmony with scientific thought in England (Turner 1974). Alfred Russel Wallace (1823-1913), the British naturalist, biologist, and anthropologist, who is known for developing a theory of evolution before Darwin, is a good example of this synthesis. For Wallace, as Turner argues, “spiritualism was actually scientific because the spiritualistic experiences were immediate and empirical” (Turner 1974: 88). Similarly, the English economist and philosopher Henry Sidgwick (1838-1900) founded the Society for Psychical Research with other eminent philosophers to undertake scientific research on psychical or paranormal activities. Notable philosophers and psychologists such as William James (1842-1910), Henri Bergson (1859-1941), and Carl Jung (1875-1961) cooperated with the society (Turner 1974: 55).

To give another example, France played an important role in bringing together “French spiritualist philosophy” and psychology. At the end of the nineteenth century, French psychology brought together spiritualistic/philosophical psychology, nourished by Victor Cousin’s theory of “spiritualisme/eclecticism”, and Théodule-Armand Ribot’s experimental psychology (Carroy, Plas 2000: 231-240). Victor Cousin (1792-1867), one of the representatives of French spiritualism, developed his own philosophy named “spiritualisme” or “eclecticism” in an opposition to the “evil philosophies” of his time such as empiricism and materialism (Goldstein 1968: 260). His “spiritualist psychology”, developed by Hippolyte Taine (1828-1893) and Paul Janet (1823-1899), continued to enjoy influence over psychological studies even long after the start of experimental studies by Ribot (Parot 2012: 232-3). When experimental psychology as a term began circulating, it actually involved “experimental methods” of psychic séances during the last quarter of the nineteenth century (Carroy; Plas 1996: 74). Henri Bergson, as a latecomer, contributed to the interplay between psychology and French spiritualist philosophy with his concept of *élan vital*, “a vital impulse or life force” and “an original impetus of life supposed to have brought about the variations which during the course of evolution produced new species.”<sup>7</sup> This started a revival of French spiritualism and *vitalism* at the turn of the twentieth century, which lasted for a while.

In contribution to a large corpus of literature on entangled relationship between science, magic, spiritualism, and religion, Josephson-Storm brings our attention to the theory of disenchantment. Exploring various forms of interaction between science, magic, and religion in Europe, Josephson-Storm in his seminal work *The Myth of Disenchantment: Magic, Modernity and the Birth of Human Science* proves “why that account of modernity as despiritualization is itself a myth” (Josephson-Storm 2017: 2). Psychological studies played a major role in merging spheres of science, morality, and art and had a large degree of influence on European and American modernism

(Halliwell 1999: 1). Constructing “a tradition of romantic science” Halliwell shows “a reassessment of romantic thought and its applicability to the development of a more flexible scientific method” through the works of the American psychologist and philosopher William James; the Viennese psychoanalyst Otto Rank; the Swiss psychiatrist Ludwig Binswanger; the Danish/German child psychologist Erik Erikson; and the British neurologist Oliver Sacks (Halliwell 1999: vii). Along similar lines, Doostdar shows the ways in which occult, unseen, and metaphysical phenomena have been justified and conceptualised as rational practices, instead of irrational or superstitious, by the participants and practitioners in modern Iran since the late nineteenth century. Confronting widely held assumptions about Islam, rationality, and the relationship between science and religion, he argues that “the metaphysical inquiries of occult experimentalists and spiritual explorers like the Cosmic Mystics are best understood in terms of attempts to rationalize the “unseen” (*gheyb*) - that is, to grasp the phenomena like sorcery and jinn possession in reasoned, scientific and nonsuperstitious terms” (Doostdar 2018: 4).

Discussion in recent historiography of science has come to a dynamic understanding of the relationship between science and religion in the late Ottoman Empire. Calling into question the modernisation paradigm’s supposition of an allegedly conflictual relationship, the literature shows that any one-sided interpretation which necessarily and unquestionably opposes science and Islam would be misleading (Asil 2017, Poyraz 2010, Yalçinkaya 2011 and 2015). Similarly, the secondary literature provides a more nuanced picture of the debate between materialism and spiritualism, in which the generalisability of “materialist typology” is questioned (Yalçinkaya 2015). The central focus of the secondary literature on the late Ottoman materialism is shifted from political or religious agendas to the culture of productivity and more immediate down-to-earth concerns about economic and technological deterioration (Afacan 2021). Nevertheless, our understanding of how Ottoman intellectuals from different backgrounds viewed psychology’s status as a scientific discipline is largely unknown.

Fortunately, there is a large degree of awareness on the need for showing greater attention to local factors to engender interest in psychological thought in the historiography of the late Ottoman Empire. For example, Batur and Aslıtürk argue within the framework of “critical psychology”, that drawing clear lines between the West and the “receiving” culture of psychological knowledge neglects “the direct relationship between psychology and the needs of social politics of the ruling classes” (Batur, Aslıtürk 2006: 22). Aydan Gülerce also proposes paying more attention to “indigenous psychological phenomena” and “socio-cultural constructions of personhood and subjectivity” in future studies (Gülerce 2012: 555). A closer look at socio-cultural phenomena requires sufficient historical knowledge about the time period and attention to the danger of anachronism. For these reasons, as Kılıç argues, the subject of psychology needs more attention from historians who are better equipped for making sense of the rising interest in the field in the late nineteenth century and for answering terminological questions about the soul (*ruh*), consciousness (*vicdan*), and will (*irade*) with respect to contemporary intellectual currents (Kılıç 2015: 34). Fortunately, there is a growing academic interest in the field of the history of psychology in the late Ottoman Empire, which would help us gain a better understanding of the terminology and background (Afacan 2016, Gözütok 2013, Köse 2013, Turan 2010). By surveying the titles of psychology courses and departmental classifications between 1860 and 1940 at the *Darülfünun*, Sarmis also concludes that



psychological studies were subjected to theological classifications and the field remained a branch of philosophy during this period (Sarmis 2019); hence the need for sensitivity to the problem of presentism in approaching the primary sources.

In contribution to the secondary literature, the rest of this paper intends to make sense of an alliance between spiritualism and psychology under the roof of the *Darülfünun* in relation to the cultural, ideological, and political context of the time. It puts emphasis on a degree of continuity between Filibeli Ahmed Hilmi (1865-1914) and Mustafa Şekip Tunç (1886-1958) in problematising the scientific views of man under the roof of the *Darülfünun* in the 1910s and the early 1920s. In the mainstream historiography, Filibeli Ahmed Hilmi's spiritualism has been categorised as religiously oriented; Mustafa Şekip Tunç has been categorized as a Bergsonian spiritualist whose spiritualism was by no means motivated by religion.<sup>8</sup> Instead I would rather present them as *Darülfünun* professors and Istanbul intellectuals who followed the symbiosis between spiritualism and psychology, despite the differences in their stances on religion. Focusing on the *Darülfünun* would add an institutional dimension to the dissemination of spiritualism and perhaps be a less loaded way of "indicating the continuity and change of approaches by providing an overall picture of intellectual movements and tendencies with their impact on Istanbul as the central cultural city, without generalizing the issues," as Özervarlı suggests (Özervarlı 2013: 534).

## The Human Soul and Honour (*mükerremiyet*)

In the late Ottoman Empire, dealing with the concept of the soul in relation to religion, psychology, and physiology was a hazardous and difficult task. During the Hamidian era (1876-1909), the foundation of new schools and science education were balanced by an increased Islamic theology content in the curriculum (Deringil 1998: 94-95). "Disciplining" of new generations entered the state agenda to preserve the Islamic identity of the empire and to promote the "Islam as science friendly" model. Books about science and religion were checked regularly and those supporting reconciliation were allowed (Yalçinkaya 2015: 174). The Sultan gave awards (*taltif*) to authors in support of this theory, such as Al-Jisr (Elshakry 2013: 132-7). In this process, Yalçinkaya argues, the typology of the "confused materialist" as a newly emerging, problematic character in the eyes of the state served as a disciplinary tool (Yalçinkaya 2015: 165). New religious courses were introduced, antireligious remarks were prohibited, and the palace asked for the names of the students with weak morals (Yalçinkaya 2015: 174). Texts pertaining to the soul were subjected to close state examination. Negating the eternity and ancience (*beka ve kadim*) of the soul was considered to be sufficient reason for a book to be banned, and Haralambos Efendi's *Mevcudiyet-i Ruh (The Existence of the Soul)* failed to pass the censor in 1900 specifically for this reason.<sup>9</sup> Delving into the concept of the soul was considered illicit by some Quran interpreters, on the basis of the verse: "They ask thee (O Muhammad) about al-ruh (soul), and say: *al-ruh min amri rabbi* (the spirit is from the divine command), and you are brought but little knowledge" (Netton 2012). According to some theologians, this verse rendered the soul forever mysterious, and studies of the soul unnecessary or fallacious.

Even though the first few years of the Second Constitutional Era witnessed a degree of change in educational policies, religion was soon integrated into the mainstream again with the outbreak of the Balkan Wars in 1911, as a co-worker with rising nationalism

(Alkan 2010: 64). As Eğribozi remarked in the preface of *İlm-i Ahval-i Ruh* (Psychology), the aforementioned Quranic interpretation still exerted control over authors in 1911, to some extent (Eğribozi [1327] 1911: 3-5). There are a good number of examples indicating that the works of French philosophers with more spiritualist tendencies, such as Émile Boirac (1851-1917), Paul Janet (1823-1899), and Georges Fonsgreive (1852-1917), were systematically promoted as *Darülfünun* policy during this period. In my interpretation, this hints at a degree of state support and encouragement for the development of a *Darülfünun* orthodoxy as an official shelter for promoting psychology and philosophy with a spiritualist tendency. In an environment where burning questions about science and religion - such as if the soul existed separately from the body - were silenced, the *Darülfünun* enabled scholars contribute to scientific discussions within certain limits.

The first known dedicated psychology textbook taught at the *Darülfünun*, *İlm-i Ahval-i Ruh*, was published by Filibeli Ahmed Hilmi in 1911. This book was based on a French textbook *Cours Élémentaire de Philosophie (Elementary Courses of Philosophy)* written by Émile Boirac (1906).<sup>10</sup> Filibeli Ahmed Hilmi was affiliated with the Ministry of Education as a philosophy teacher. He claimed that he had been asked to write a psychology book (Filibeli Ahmed Hilmi 1327/1911: 1) and to be one of the spokesmen of the commission which was planned by the Ottoman government to write refutations of Abdullah Cevdet's *Tarih-i İslamiyet*.<sup>11</sup> When the commission could not be gathered, Ahmed Hilmi decided to write a refutation individually. His refutation was soon accompanied by many other refutations. Babanzade Ahmed Naim (1872-1934), a member of *Dar-ül Hikmet-il İslamiye* (The Academy of Higher Islamic Studies) and a professor at the *Darülfünun*, published Paul Janet's articles against scientific determinism in *Darülfünun Edebiyat Fakültesi Mecmuası* (The Journal of the Faculty of Literature).<sup>12</sup> Babanzade Ahmed Naim's translation of Fonsgreive's *Psychology (İlm-i Nefs)* was published at the Imperial Printing House (*Matbaa-ı Amire*) as part of the Ministry of Education Library of General Education (*Maarif-i Umumiye Nezareti Telif ve Tercüme Kütüphanesi*) (Fonsegrive 1333/1915). Theologian and another member of the Academy of Higher Islamic Studies Elmalılı Hamdi Yazır (1878-1942) published *Metalib ve Mezahib, Metafizik ve İlahiyat (Demands and Doctrines, Metaphysics and Theology)*, his translation of *History of Philosophy* by Paul Janet and Gabriel Séailles, thanks to donations by those he called "science lovers with great virtue (*ilim dostu bazı fazıl kimseler*) who were sent by God" (Elmalılı Hamdi Yazır 1978 [1341/1922]: XXIX). Mehmet Ali Ayni (1868-1945) was a professor at the *Darülfünun* and translated a text written by an unidentified author upon the ministry's special order. This text included Ayni's and the original author's remarks about the harms that positivism ("*ispatiyye, positivisme*") and pessimism ("*bedbinlik, pessimisme*") inflicted on society, and the need for an alliance between spiritualism ("*ruhiyye, spiritualisme*") and psychology (*ruhiyat*) (Ayni 1331 [1915]: 3).

Filibeli Ahmed Hilmi wrote the first edition of *İlm-i Ahval-i Ruh* in 1910 as a textbook. In 1911, he published a revised second version, to be read by the general public. He added a new chapter on physiology entitled "*İlm-i Ahval-i Ruh-ı Umumi*" (*General Psychology*), having decided that "a good understanding of psychology requires at least a basic knowledge of physiology" (Filibeli Ahmed Hilmi 1327 [1911]: 1). Aside from the first chapter, which Filibeli Ahmed Hilmi added - and with which this paper primarily deals - the book largely derives from a Western psychology school textbook: the psychology section of *Cours élémentaire de Philosophie (Elementary Courses of Philosophy)* by Émile Boirac.<sup>13</sup> In the chapter "*İlm-i Ahval-i Ruh-ı Umumi*" (*General Psychology*), Filibeli Ahmed

Hilmi addressed the key questions of his era in a self-reflective manner. For example, Filibeli Ahmed Hilmi described psychology as a scholarly discipline which should take over the task of maintaining an elusive and superior image of human beings, in response to the gradual removal of classical Islamic theories and the loss of the sacred view of humanity as an ‘exempted’ creature. For him, Sufism and psychology were actually parallel to one another, as both of them placed “man” at the centre of the Universe. In his first reference to Islamic philosophy in *İlm-i Ahval-i Ruh*, for example, he drew an analogy between Gazali’s formulation “from the work of art to the artist (creator)” (*eserden müessire usulü*, in Islamic philosophy) and Victor Cousin’s statement, “the first step I took to understand, it was my soul that I came across” (Filibeli Ahmed Hilmi 1327 [1911]: 19).

As a representative of the “Islam as science friendly” model, he criticised the theory of evolution and delved into the concept of the exempted creature (*müstesna mahluk*):

The conceited understandings of man – as an exceptional creature governed by its own laws and exempted from the universal laws [*kavânîn-i alem*], are no longer accepted from the point of science and philosophy [*fen ve hikmet*]. These sort of conceited understandings were replaced by more scientific and real ideas. These [scientific and real ideas] are also accepted and have basis in Islamic philosophy [*hikmet-i İslamiye*] in accordance with their importance. It is indisputable that human beings (who are capable of being moral, who distinguish arrogance, who search for the reality of being [*asl-ı vücut*], and who acknowledge the unity (*vahdet*) and the truth (*hakk*) are more special and honorable than animals. However this speciality and honorableness do not mean that he/she is exempted from being a part of a totality of being [*cümle-i vücut*] (a part which declares the ever self existent [*kayyümiyyet-i zatîye*] and the eternal [*daimî*]) and exempted from the laws and their implementation. [*kavânînin hüküm ve tasarrufundan*].<sup>14</sup>

Filibeli Ahmed Hilmi did not delve further into the concept of an “exempted creature” as a product of a “conceited understanding of human nature”, but it would be wrong to assume that by “conceited understanding of man” he was referring to theological or Islamic philosophical understandings of human nature. On the contrary, he made it clear that “more scientific and real” ideas were compatible with Islamic philosophy (*hikmet-i İslamiye*).<sup>15</sup> What he is referring to here is the neglect of the universal laws and classifications which he saw as rooted in the past. With respect to the gradual removal of Islamic philosophy and theology from the domain of science, Filibeli Ahmed Hilmi stated that the sacred importance attributed to man, which distinguished it from other living beings, had lost its credibility. To find a middle path, Filibeli Ahmed Hilmi developed his formula as a representative of the “Islam as science-friendly” model. In his formula, human beings were not exempted from the universal laws. Yet they were still more special (*mümtaz*) and honourable (*mükerrem*) than animals, contrary to the claims of evolutionism. Psychology was thus viewed as a scholarly discipline which should take over the task of maintaining an elusive and superior image of human beings, in response to the gradual removal of classical Islamic theories and the loss of the sacred view of humanity as an “exempted” creature.

For others, with fewer connections to the “*Darülfünun* circle”, publishing psychology textbooks was not so easy. In issue 17, *Piyano* (*Piano*) magazine, published by Baha Tevfik, asks readers whether they would be interested in having a psychology book designed and requests interested readers to contact the magazine.<sup>16</sup> The magazine needed five hundred copies of the psychology book to be sold to cover the expenses, otherwise it could not afford to publish the book. The magazine would rather not be a

spokesman of a rich publisher, the advertisement concludes. In the end, Baha Tevfik together with Ahmed Nebil managed to publish *Psikoloji, İlm-i Ahval-i Ruh* (Psychology, the Sciences of the States of the Soul), with the *Teceddüd-i İlmi ve Felsefi Kütüphanesi* (Library of Scientific and Philosophical Renovation), the publishing company they founded in 1910.<sup>17</sup> As someone who expressed his concerns about the old fashioned content of philosophy and psychology textbooks (Baha Tevfik 2014 [1331/1915]: 14-21), Baha Tevfik was not content with *Psikoloji, İlm-i Ahval-i Ruh*. By Baha Tevfik's standards, *Psikoloji, İlm-i Ahval-i Ruh* did not include the most cutting-edge research and knowledge in psychological studies and therefore was not as modern as it should be (Baha Tevfik 1331 [1913]: 4-5). The book utilises the works of Émile Boirac, Alfred Fouillée, Élie Rabier, Théodule-Armand Ribot, and René Worms, and is only slightly different from Filibeli Ahmed Hilmi's version in its approach. However, this was the norm of scholarly material, which they needed to confirm to (Baha Tevfik 1331 [1915]: 4-5). Only a careful reader would see materialist and monist remarks, which were placed very subtly on page forty-one:

As it appears today psychology is divided up into three main branches: emotions, free will, and thoughts. These are called faculties of the soul [mental faculties]. This division and the terminology are used for practical purposes only. These are traits and faculties of the body, which consists of matter and there is no such metaphysical essence called the soul.<sup>18</sup>

In taking biological materialism born in the medical schools as a necessary step towards founding a medical ground for the sciences of man, it is important to take into consideration that it did not go so far in Abdullah Cevdet's hands as to negate the existence of the soul explicitly. As for Abdullah Cevdet's stance on the existence of the soul, I disagree with Hanioglu's interpretation that Abdullah Cevdet in *Fenn-i Ruh* took a step that was so forceful as to imply that "to believe in the immortality of the soul, for example, was absurd" (Hanioglu 2005: 43). What he rejected clearly in *Fenn-i Ruh*, however, was Spiritism (*ispiritizma*). Accordingly, he started *Fenn-i Ruh* by ridiculing the "delirium of *ispiritizma*" in Istanbul in 1911 (Abdullah Cevdet [1327] 1911: 4). He continued with a certain symbolic discussion in Islamic theology, which I do not think is tantamount to claiming the "absurdity of the soul". In this discussion, he gave an example of the Sufi understanding of the unitary nature, in which the human soul becomes one with God after death:

He who knows his soul, verily knows his Lord'and 'know your self to know the God.' For how long are we not going to develop and show any signs of consciousness and common sense to a mature degree that is required to grasp the wisdom behind these words. Emin el-Amt'e Ebu 'Ubeyde bin al Cerrah, a companion of prophet Mohammed, answered the question of 'What happens to the soul when one deceases?'with a counter question: 'What happens to the light of the candle when its oil freezes?'The soul is immortal. Like the eternality of the light of the candle in every place and time when the conditions of the light are met... It is not correct to say that the universe has come into being with life. Life does not contain or is contained. The universe is a totality of the life and the life itself. Aren't eternal existence in the past and the future, life and permanency the names of the eternality, immortality of the being? Then what is to gain from occupying one's mind with looking for some other exclusive immortalities and externalities? I curse the circumstances which led me to speak about the sciences dealing with the Brain and The Soul, and Consciousness whose relevance to social matters are only indirect.<sup>19</sup>

I would interpret this passage as an effort to avoid confronting the existence of the soul, and as a delicate way of dismissing metaphysics as time-consuming and inessential. Similarly, on the equation of the soul and matter, as the backbone of materialism, he avoided taking a clear stance. He maintained that: “These examples [of a clock and a train, i.e., the symbols of mechanistic view of human nature] might show that the soul consists of matter. [But] delving into something and digging up are not so important. It’s enough to say that the soul is by all means related with the body” (İbn-i Ömer 1308 [1892-3]: 46).<sup>20</sup> Concerning the motto of biological materialism: “the brain secretes thought as the stomach secretes gastric juice, the liver bile, and the kidneys urine”, that appears in the secondary literature to depict the vulgarity of Abdullah Cevdet’s understanding of materialism, Abdullah Cevdet toned down his assertion of this sentence. Instead, his translation goes as: “Yes! All psychic [psychological] manifestations are dependent upon mental faculties of the brain. The brain doesn’t secrete thought. It would not be licit to draw an analogy between an act of cognition and secretion” (Abdullah Cevdet, 1308/1892-3: 14).<sup>21</sup> In 1923 he presented recent scientific findings in favor of metaphysical phenomena in a journal article entitled “Mabede’r-ruhiye: Le Metaphyschisme”. He advised science lovers to keep an open mind about such new fields and expect the unexpected in the world of science, instead of being appalled (Abdullah Cevdet 1923: 3159-3160).

In sum, the ideological and religious side of the debate between materialism and spiritualism in the late Ottoman Empire remained limited with various shades of grey. Intellectual thinking became home to a variety of opinions and syncretic thinking, transcending the grasp of one-sided narratives of a conflict between religion and science. The business aspect of publishing textbooks and state involvement in textbook selection encouraged homogenisation of the content. These limitations enabled scholars, who were critical of scientific determinism, to integrate into science discussions. Within these limitations, psychology served as a round table for the intellectuals to discuss a number of questions that they saw as related: the relation between body and soul, the role of religion in understanding man, the nature of science, whether science should be used in governing societies, and so on. The question of if the soul existed separately from the body remained a taboo subject to discuss openly, despite its popularity, while the conflict model between science and Islam was dismissed altogether.

## The Human Soul, Authenticity and Passions (*ih̄tiras*)

Towards the fall of the Ottoman Empire, the war literature generated further interest in spiritualism, science discussions, and psychology. As Zafer Toprak aptly puts it, for the Ottoman Empire, the First World War in reality lasted for a decade and consisted of three phases: the Balkan Wars between 1912 and 1913, the First World War between 1914 and 1918, and The War of Independence between 1919 and 1922 (Toprak 2002: 45-46). The Istanbul intelligentsia was in “a greatly intensified emotional state of mind”, as reflected by the sentimental tone of articles pertaining to politics (Köroğlu 2007: 48). Under occupation, the city became a nest of rising social movements, protests, and gatherings. This ushered in a new cultural era in which a patriotic, nationalist, and anti-Western framework dominated intellectual products, and these were being used as a means of war propaganda. Psychology, for example, became a part

of open lectures at the military school to teach students how to be mentally and emotionally tough.<sup>22</sup>

In this environment the term “spiritual” – in inherent opposition to “material” – came to represent the inner strength against Western powers and modernization within a Bergsonian framework. Bergson’s promotion of the concepts of freedom, creativity, vitality, and authenticity against materialism and mechanism was appealing to some Ottoman intellectuals, particularly the *Dergah* (The lodge) writers.<sup>23</sup> “Politicized Bergsonism” was, as İrem argues, used “as a liberation philosophy heralding the victory of the creative nationalist forces against the mechanical civilization of the West, represented by the occupying forces” (İrem 2011: 873). Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar (1901-1962), for example, depicted the war of independence as a war between vitality, the Bergsonian concept of human dynamism, and “statistics”. Peyami Safa (1899-1961) equated the tension between the material/rational and spiritual/mystical to the Western and the Eastern when narrating the warfare and foundational years of the Republic of Turkey in hindsight (Safa 2010 [1938]: 5-6). For him the solution was to find the equilibrium and to compensate by giving more importance to the spiritual side.

The psychological literature resonated with several academics and students for what it represented culturally and politically amidst the warfare. The *Darülfünun* became a venue for developing a rhetoric of individual freedom, emotions, and spiritualism. İsmayil Hakkı Baltacıoğlu (1886-1978), for example, told his students to look out of the window of a *Darülfünun* classroom, and asked whether they were able to see the spiritual power, the energy going beyond the material limitations. And he continued: “one day the power of ‘meaning’, [the spiritual power], is going to combat material emptiness” (Baltacıoğlu 1998: 240). In 1921, Mehmet Emin Erişirgil (1891-1965), a professor of philosophy and sociology at the *Darülfünun*, penned a journal article in *Dergah* magazine concerning a conversation he had overheard between a philosophy student and a medical student. In this conversation, the medical student, in response to the former’s protestations that psychological phenomena could not be explained solely through brain physiology, was recklessly and repeatedly asking: “What difference would this make?” (Erişirgil 1337 [1921]: 4) For Erişirgil, discerning the separate existence of psychological phenomena (*ruhi hadiseler*) would make a significant difference to the sciences, as well as to nurturing political and social life, and to one’s worldview. The denial that psychological phenomena had an existence separate from physiology would have serious consequences, such as overshadowing the separate existence of the soul, subordinating freedom to instincts, casting altruism as unnatural to human beings, and stigmatizing beliefs and ideas arising from psychological needs (*ihdiyacet-ı ruhiye*).

A new trend in psychological thinking, putting together psychology and Bergsonian spiritualism, was spearheaded by Tunç. Mustafa Şekip Tunç, an intellectual, academician, journal writer, and painter, was one of the first intellectuals to receive an education in psychology abroad and was one of the founding fathers of the discipline. He went to Geneva on a government scholarship to study psychological sciences at the Jean Jacques Rousseau Institute. In 1919, when he returned to the Ottoman Empire, he started working as a tutor in psychological studies at the *Darülfünun*. Tunç translated into Ottoman Turkish more recent psychological literature by Théodule-Armand Ribot (1839-1916), William James (1842-1910), Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), and Henri Bergson (1859-1941) in addition to writing several psychology textbooks with a more up-to-date

view of psychology. These were accompanied by a number of journal articles – mixing psychology, spiritualism, and philosophy with political and social affairs.<sup>24</sup>

In the final years of the Ottoman Empire, Tunç used psychology in an inherent opposition to Ziya Gökalp's alleged scientism, which Tunç called *ilimcilik*.<sup>25</sup> Soon after running into Şevki Bey, the Minister of Education, at the Committee of Union and Progress headquarters and accepting his offer to start working at the *Darülfünun* in 1913, Ziya Gökalp stated that educational principles should be determined by sociology – and no longer by psychology (Ülken 1992: 187). Ziya Gökalp (1876-1924) was not the first intellectual to immerse himself in the makings of society, but he was the first intellectual to develop a strong theory of Turkish nationalism by using a “scientific” discipline, sociology (*hikmet-i ictimaiyye, ilm-i hikmet-i ictimaiye, ilm-i ictimai, ictimaiyyat* in Ottoman Turkish). Ziya Gökalp's formula formed the basis of the discipline in a Durkheimian fashion, by taking collective units (instead of individuals) as objects of science (Toprak 2013: 32). Alongside Ziya Gökalp's efforts to supplant psychology with sociology, the question of where to set the boundary between the individual and the collective came to be discussed in psychological terms.

In Tunç's understanding, psychology was strongly connected to spiritualism, these being two siblings dealing with the same subject from different angles: the soul (*ruh*). He wrote several journal articles mixing psychology, spiritualism, and philosophy with political and social affairs – some of which were compiled later in his career in *İnsan Ruhu Üzerinde Gezintiler (Journey to the Soul)* and *Ruh Aleminde (In the Domain of the Soul)* (Tunç 1943, Tunç 1945). He held a very romantic, elusive understanding of the soul, best captured by his poem *The Soul*: “A fairy with no shadow / Different than anyone else / Bathing in a thousand pools / An ardor in flutter. / ...Am I shrine to you? / Or are you a burial robe to me? / I would not know, but you would / If I belong to you or to myself.”<sup>26</sup> For him, due to this elusiveness, the soul had to be approached in many ways – from art to philosophy, spiritualism to psychology. The major routes of his intellectual journey to the soul were through psychology, philosophy, and Bergsonian spiritualism. Spiritualism's duty in this framework was to provide psychologists with “non-mechanical tools of reflection” in order to be able to understand “pleasures, hopes, creative forces, orders, goals, plans” in life, seen as the proofs of why an exclusively scientific, mechanistic, and physiological methodology was inadequate to understand human nature (Tunç 1922: 128-52).

For Tunç, the major technological and scientific improvements taking place between the 1870s and the 1890, such as the invention of the telephone and dynamo, or the development of the first rabies vaccination, revealed that science was indeed capable of shaping life and society entirely (Tunç 1928: 165-66). This caused metaphysics to fall from grace, and in some interpretations founded the basis of “scientism” (*ilimcilik*) (Tunç 1928: 166). In Durkheim's and Comte's understandings, according to Tunç, linear progress was taken for granted due to such technological and scientific development; but in doing so they reduced humans to the level of animals, and thus took the human element out of progress. Psychological phenomena – primarily instincts, passions, and desires – were the major driving forces behind human progress, which could in no way be explained by such mechanistic views:

What we know for sure is that man in no way agrees to conceptualize himself as an extension of a mechanistic unit – be it in a single or collective form. Even if he accepts this in theory, his sensations and volition always act contrary to this presupposition. It's because of this that man in no way is able to sacrifice his wishes

and desires for a mechanistic theory of human nature, life and collective units, which is not even verified. That's why no historical narrative, no philosophical doctrine and no sociological analysis would silence the forces of desires and thoughts.<sup>27</sup>

In Tunç's interpretation, belief in science's ability "to govern society" and "to give a normative orientation to the evolution of the nation" was a misuse of science, which men of letters should be careful about (Tunç 1337/1921b: 27). In 1921, he penned a series of articles about passions in his column *Ruhyat (Psychology)* in *Dergah*, such as "Passions in Politics", and "The Benefits of Passions". In these articles he mixed the psychology of Ribot and the spiritualism of Bergson with his opinions about everyday politics. He began his series of articles with a note to the readers intended to explain his agenda:

Because passions have lately become a major subject of complaint in political discourses, it is necessary to untangle them for the reading public as much as possible. It is such a vast subject that one single article would not be enough to cover it all. Yet I am convinced that this subject is of great interest to all of us. Therefore, I decided to write a series of articles about passions, which I hope you enjoy reading.<sup>28</sup>

Tunç ended each article with a message to the reader to approach passions from the angle of psychology, the modern science of human beings, to be able to see the benefits of passions for collective purposes as well as to overcome the old-fashioned commonsensical disapproval of passions. For Tunç, passions were the most immediate products of the human soul, the source of human authenticity and uniqueness:

Scientific knowledge is limited to our interactions with the external world, therefore is analogous to intelligence, the concrete and deceased form of the soul. However, the soul goes beyond the boundaries of intelligence. Beyond these boundaries there is such a dynamic, feverish universe, which could never stand still. If there was no fever and dynamism on the basis of the soul, how could intelligence come into being? ... It comes as no surprise to see men of science who are addicted exclusively to intelligence and logic condemn ambition and passions. They attack ambitions and passions to eliminate ignorance and spread knowledge. But who on earth could really get rid of ambitions and passions?<sup>29</sup>

Questions pertaining to the psychological phenomena and scientific explanations of the soul continued to interest intellectuals for a long time stretching out to the early Republican era. The visit of Keyserling to the *Darülfünun* on March 3, 1927, to deliver a speech about the side-effects of modernist discourses and to promote his book *The World in the Making*, hints at a continuing interest in spiritual subjects at the *Darülfünun*. According to Mustafa Şekip Tunç, the ideas of the Baltic German philosopher Count Hermann von Keyserling (1880-1946) were listened to with "an unprecedented interest and excitement" by *Darülfünun* members and were absorbed by the readers of *Hayat (Life)* magazine via Mustafa Şekip Tunç's pen in an article series.<sup>30</sup> The "world in the making" revolves around the metaphor of the chauffeur as "the technicalized savage" (Keyserling 1927: 229) the embodiment of a "modern mass spirit" (Keyserling 1927: 132) wherein old cultural types disappeared, meaning vanished, and tradition died out.

In 1933, a major educational reform involving the closure of the *Darülfünun* was implemented, following another education report by a Swiss educationist, Albert Malche. Upon Malche's report, the *Darülfünun* went through a reform, and it was replaced by Istanbul University. Hans Reichenbach (1891-1953), the author of the rise of



scientific philosophy, proponent of empiricist philosophy and an exile from Nazism, came to the university together with thirty-two other German professors. Reichenbach stayed in Turkey until 1938, when he moved to the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). Upon his arrival, the department went through certain changes directed towards establishing a more empiricist philosophy (Ülken 1992 [1966]: 464-467). For psychological studies, Wilhelm Peters, a German psychologist from Jena University, was hired. This resulted in the foundation of the first experimental psychology institute with a laboratory and a library in Turkey, in 1937 (Gülerce 2012: 560). This enabled the birth of institutional and applied psychology in a significantly different context after the foundation of the Republic of Turkey in 1923, which deserves to be analysed on its own terms and would be the subject of another project.

## Conclusion

This article has examined the rising intellectual and academic interest in psychological thought in the late Ottoman Empire with respect to ideological, cultural, and political dynamics. As opposed to the foundational myths of the field of psychology, such as the notion that there was an overnight break from a whole body of philosophical and theological knowledge built around the concept of the soul, the soul continued to attract late Ottoman academics and intellectuals, even with the foundation of modern academic institutions. During this time, the field went through a process of redefining its methodology and interests. With a focus on debates and texts promoted by the *Darülfünun* faculty, the paper has drawn our attention to the uses and implications of the alliance between spiritualism and psychology. The *Darülfünun* faculty sponsored intellectuals and academics whose understanding of psychology emphasised the human soul (*ruh*) and emotions such as honour (*mükerremiyet*) and passion (*ihiras*) as opposed to scientific questions about human nature initiated by the theory of evolution and the philosophical doctrine of materialism. This suggests a degree of state support for the development of a *Darülfünun* orthodoxy as an official shelter for advertising psychology and philosophy with a spiritualist tendency.

In detailing our understanding of the interplay between psychology and French spiritualist philosophy under the roof of the *Darülfünun*, this paper has displayed a continuous effort for criticising scientific views of man between 1910s and 1920s, with a focus on the psychological writings of Filibeli Ahmed Hilmi and Mustafa Şekip Tunç. Following the 1908 Revolution, the works of French philosophers with more spiritualist tendencies, such as Émile Boirac, Paul Janet, and Georges Fonsegrive, were systematically promoted as *Darülfünun* policy. The first known textbook dedicated to psychology taught at the *Darülfünun*, *İlm-i Ahvali Ruh* by Filibeli Ahmed Hilmi, designed psychology as a scholarly discipline of promoting a superior image of human beings, in response to the gradual removal of classical Islamic understandings of human psychology and the loss of the sacred view of humanity as an “exempted” creature. With the outbreak of the First World War, the psychological literature resonated with a number of academics and students for what it represented culturally and politically. The term “spiritual” represented the inner strength against Western powers within a Bergsonian framework. A new trend in psychological thinking, putting together psychology and Bergsonian spiritualism, was spearheaded by Mustafa Şekip Tunç in the early 1920s. For Tunç, passions were products of the human soul, the source of human

authenticity and uniqueness, which went beyond the boundaries of scientific investigation. His writings suggest that the *Darülfünun* became a venue for developing a rhetoric of individual freedom, emotions, and spiritualism amidst the warfare.

In an environment wherein burning questions about science and religion, such as if the soul existed separately from the body, were suppressed, academic and intellectual interest in psychological thought was nourished by the popularity of the notion of the soul, which for a while symbolised human authenticity and honour, as the paper has argued. The interaction between French spiritualist philosophy and psychology integrated scholars, who were critical of scientific determinism, into scientific discussions. Ultimately, the human body and the soul surfaced as sites of knowledge and contention following the 1908 Revolution and remained so in the final years of the late Ottoman Empire.

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## NOTES

1. To avoid terminological ambiguity this paper sticks to the term "soul" and eschews some of its equivalents such as "psyche" and "spirit". "Psyche" in particular is a loaded term, with more up-to-date psychological connotations, especially after its conquest of psychoanalysis with the help of conscious and clear usage by psychoanalysts. See for example: Jung 1976, VI: 463. Spirit is a related term but has a lot to do with the question of communicating with spirits. As we will see it was an important question for Ottoman language, but the first question one had to deal with whether the soul existed, this article is more interested in this question, hence I chose the term the soul. Spirit is "the animating and vital principle in man (and animals), that which gives life to the physical organism, in contrast to its purely material elements, the breath of life". "Spirit", in Oxford English Dictionary, 3rd edn. Accessed online on 13 June 2016. <http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2355/view/Entry/186867?rkey=TvpRBe&result=1#eid>

2. Post-Quranic perspectives of *nefs* and *ruh* were developed by leading philosophers such as Kindi (801-873), Farabi (872-950), Avicenna (980-1037), Gazali (1058-1111), and Fahreddin Razi (1149-1209) who benefited from a rich corpus of materials from translations of ancient Greek texts into Syriac, Arabic and Persian on top of the Islamic tradition (Netton 2012).

In particular the Graeco-Arabic translation movement, which was pioneered by the Syriac speaking Christians and supported by "the entire elite of Abbasid society" between the middle of

the eighth century to the end of the tenth century, played a leading role in preserving ancient Greek writings, including the entire corpus of Aristotelian philosophy (Gutas 1998: 2).

3. Spiritualism is a complex notion, which needs to be employed carefully with a strong concern for historical accuracy. The equation of spiritualism with religion, and placed in an inherent opposition to science, would be narrow and incomplete. It is closely linked with conceptualizations of the universe and human nature through the concepts of the soul and spirit. To put it simply Spiritualism is defined as “a tendency towards or advocacy of a spiritual view or estimate of things” and “the exercise of the mental or intellectual faculties, or their predominance over body”. See “Spiritualism”, in *Oxford English Dictionary*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn. Accessed online on 13 June 2016. <http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2355/view/Entry/186901?redirectedFrom=spiritualism#eid>

In a general philosophical sense spiritualism is “a characteristic of any system of thought that affirms the existence of reality imperceptible to senses”, which includes a large selection of diversified philosophical doctrines. It has been compatible with different philosophical positions such as dualism, monism, theism, atheism, pantheism, and idealism, as long as “they allow for a reality independent from and superior to matter”. “Spiritualism”, *ibid*.

The most important works on cases of spiritualism, spiritism, and esotericism in the late Ottoman Empire include (but are not limited to) Sarmis 2009; Toku 1996; Toumarkine 2016; Türesay 2018; Uludağ 1996; Zarccone 2013.

4. “Hande ilmî ve fennî bir surette fala bakar, manyetizma tecrübeleri ve emraz-ı asabiye-i ruhaniye tedavihanesi idarehanemizde her hafta cuma günleri manyetizma tecrübeleri yapılmaktadır. Ervah ile istişare olunarak her türlü müşkülât hal olunur.” Anonymous (22 mart 1326 / 4 April 1910). *Hande* 1, p. 7.

5. The need for preparation of school textbook started with the mentioning of *ilm-i nefis* as a subject to be taught in a modern university, specifically the *Darülfünun*, in the Ottoman Education Regulation of 1869 (Dölen 2009: 87). There is no evidence that psychology began to be taught as a separate discipline in the *Darülfünun* when opened for a year in 1870 (Dölen 2009: 43-62). Soon after that the *Darülfünun* was closed down again. In 1900 the *Darülfünun* was reopened. Up until the start of the psychology course at the *Darülfünun* in first decade of the 20th century, and the subsequent boom in psychological publications the decade after that, only a handful psychology books were published (Turan 2010). In 1900 Emrullah Efendi, a well-known Ottoman intellectual who would become later minister of education, was given the task of teaching *hikmet-i nazariyeden ilm-i ahval-i nefis* (psychology as part of philosophy) (Kara 2005: 98). Shortly after that, psychology was removed from the program, although Emrullah Efendi continued teaching *ilm-i hikmet ve tarih-i ilm-i hikmet* (philosophy and the history of philosophy) (Emrullah Efendi 1327/1911: 81-160). There is no mentioning of psychology in 1902 and 1903 programs (Dölen 2009: 282-283). Emrullah Efendi’s name however is mentioned as a tutor of philosophy courses in 1908 curriculum even though *ilm-i nefis* is not on the list (İhsanoğlu 2010: 546-547). In 1913 curriculum psychology is mentioned as *ilm-i nefis* together with logic, morality, philosophy and pedagogy under the umbrella of philosophy (İhsanoğlu 2010: 548). These suggest that the first known dedicated psychology textbook taught at the *Darülfünun* was *Ilmi Ahvali Ruh* written by Filibeli Ahmed Hilmi in 1911. Accordingly, this paper pays a special attention to *Ilmi Ahvali Ruh* by Filibeli Ahmed Hilmi.

6. In 1913, *Istilahât-ı İlmiye Encümeni* (The commission of scientific terminologies) was founded to create a standard terminology for scientific and philosophical concepts in Ottoman Turkish. While taking part in the commission, Babanzade Ahmed Naim, Mehmet Ali Ayni, and Elmalılı Hamdi made important contributions to the accumulation of psychological terminology in Ottoman (Kara 2001: 40-9). Others such as Baha Tevfik started writing philosophical dictionaries individually. See Baha Tevfik (5 Mart 1328 / 18 March 1912).



7. “Élan vital”, in *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. Accessed online on 15 June 2016. <http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2355/view/Entry/60105?redirectedFrom=elan+vital#eid>
8. The continuity between Filibeli Ahmed Hilmi, and Mustafa Şekip Tunç was first mentioned by Hilmi Ziya Ülken in a short piece about Mustafa Şekip Tunç with a focus on the difference they had in their approaches to Islam. This is important to remember. But it starts a long discussion as to their personal interpretations of and devotion to Islam, something this paper is not interested in (Ülken 1944: 32-36).
9. BOA. MF MKT 528/42 (13 Cemaziyelevvel 1318 / 8 September 1900).
10. Boirac was a French philosopher and parapsychologist, whose studies contributed to mesmerism and hypnosis at the height of spiritualism in late nineteenth century France. He came to be very popular in the Ottoman Empire, even though he does not seem to have had a big impact on French spiritualist psychology, unlike Paul Janet and Victor Cousin. This book became such a popular book that its different chapters were translated into Ottoman a number of times. This might be explained as a matter of practicality, given that Darülfünun library held a copy. However, I see a more continuous and systematic interest in French spiritualistic psychology and philosophy going beyond the influence of Boirac. For some other translations of Boirac: (1330[1914a]); (1330 [1914b]); (1341 [1923]).
11. *Tarih-i İslamiyet* is a translation of Reinhart Dozy’s *Het Islamisme (Islamism)* by Abdullah Cevdet, which caused serious reactions based on presenting the prophet as mentally deranged. As a result, the ministry of education intended to form a commission to write refutations. See Filibeli Ahmed Hilmi (2005 [1326-7/1911-2]): 25-31. Filibeli Ahmed Hilmi’s claim for being a part of this commission is supported by an archival document: BOA. MF MKT 1149/4 (15 şubat 1325 / 28 February 1910). For more information on Dozy’s work and its influence on late Ottoman intellectuals see Hatipoğlu 1999; Yılmaz 2017.
12. See for example Babanzade Ahmed Naim (1332 [1916-7a]); (1332[1916-7b]); (1333 [1917]). For more information about Babanzade’s translations see Kara 2001.
13. So far *İlmi Ahvali Ruh* by Filibeli Ahmed Hilmi has been treated as an original contribution of Filibeli Ahmed Hilmi and the chapters taken from Boirac have been unknown to the literature. *İlmi Ahvali Ruh* consists of three parts: an introduction, six chapters for which he mainly utilized the psychology section of *Cours Élémentaire de Philosophie* as the original source, and a separate chapter on physiology, namely General Psychology. The copies that we have today at Süleymaniye Yazma Eser Kütüphanesi and Milli Kütüphane are incomplete, either because he did not finish writing this book or the complete copy has gone missing. The sixth chapter External perception (*Alem-i haricînin zabt ve fehmi, La perception extérieure*) ends abruptly on the sixth page. The original source from Boirac includes four more chapters *La vie affective et active, Les inclinations, La volonté et le caractère, Le physique et le moral* in which Boirac studies volition and ethics in detail. Unfortunately, the copies that Süleymaniye Yazma Eser Kütüphanesi and Milli Kütüphane hold do not give any reference to Boirac. Recently a transcription of *İlm-i Ahval-i Ruh*, into Latin alphabet was made by Hicret Osta. Şehbenderzade Filibeli Ahmed Hilmi (2019 [1327/1911]).
14. “İnsanın kavânîn-i âlem haricinde ve kavaid-i vücud ve hudûsaşâz bir şekilde müstesna bir mahluk olduğuna dair evvelleri deveran eden efkâr-ı mağruranenin bugün huzur-u fen ve hikmette hiçbir yeri kalmamıştır. Bu gibi müteazzimâne efkâr yerine daha fennî ve hakiki fikirler kaim olmuştur ki: Bunların hikmet-i İslamiyece de kıymetlerine göre cây-ı kabulleri vardır. Şüphe edilemez ki: Ahlak-ı hasene ile müzeyyen olmak istidâdını taşıyan, idrak-ı bâlâpervâzî asl-ı vücudu aramaktan korkmayan, vahdet ve hakkı ikrar eden insan, küremizde yaşayan hayvanattan mümtaz mükerremdir. Lakin bu imtiyaz ve mükerremiyet, onun cümle-i vücuda dahil olmaması ve (kayyûmiyyet-i zatîyetin huzur-ı daimîyesini mulen olan) kavânîninin hüküm ve tasarrufundan hariç kalması demek değildir.” (Filibeli Ahmed Hilmi 1327/1911: 26).

15. Similarly, he did not explain what he meant by ‘a part which declares the ever self-existent (*kayyûmiyyet-i zatîye*) and the eternal (*daimî*)’. It would not be farfetched to think that he might have been referring to God, given his religiosity, which he might have seen as a source of human’s specialty. However, as he left this term open, this cannot be taken for granted. What he explicitly stated is only limited to human beings’ superiority to animals regardless of the source of it.

16. Anonymous (15 Teşrin-i Sani 1326 / 28 November 1910).

17. *Psikoloji, İlm-i Ahval-i Ruh* is a 203 pages course-book, consisting of four sections – sensibility (*hassasiyet*), volition (*iradat*), thought (*fikret*), and the relations between the soul and matter. Even though it is hard to be conclusive about when it was published, it must have been published between 28 November 1910 and 28 July 1911. On 28 November 1910 *Piyano* readers were asked their interest in ‘the first book on psychology, not even inadequate or misleading’ in *Piyano* 17, (15 Teşrin-i Sani 1326 / 28 November 1910), pp. 200-1. On 28 July 1911 *İctihad* readers were informed about this book as ‘the first scientific book on psychology’ – the earliest advertisement of this book I have seen: Anonymous (15 Temmuz 1327 / 28 July 1911).

18. “Artık anlaşılmuştur ki psikolojide yalnız üç büyük şube vardır: Hissiyat, İrade, Fikret. Bu üç kuvvete "melekât-ı ruhiye" namı verilir. Fakat bu taksim, bu melekât yalnız kolay anlaşılma maksadıyla ihdas edilmiştir. Yoksa bunlar maddeden müteşekkil olan cismimizin evsaf ve kuvvetleri olup ruh namıyla bir cevher-i mâfevkettâbiyye yoktur” (Baha Tevfik, Ahmed Nebil, undated: 41).

19. “Man arafa nafsahu fekat arafa rabbahu ve arifi nefsike taarifi rabbın. Hikmet-i bâliğasını idrak edecek bilâğ-ı şuur ve büluğ-ı akli ne zamana kadar izhar etmeyeceğiz veya edemeyeceğiz? Ashab-ı kirâmdan Emin el-Amt’e Ebû Ubeyde bin al Cerrah (r. a.) hazretleri: “İnsan öldüğü vakit ruh nereye gider?” diye vârid olan bir suale: “kandilin yağı donduğu vakit şule nereye gider?” cevabını vermiştir. Ruh ebedîdir: şerâit-i iştiâlin müctemian mevcut olduğu her zaman ve mekanda şulenin ebediyet-i mevcudiyeti gibi. “Kainat, hayat ile tûlûdur” demek doğru değildir. Hayat ne zarftır ne de mazrûftur. Kainat külliyet-i hayat ve mahz-ı hayattır: Kıdem, beka, hayat, subût, zat-ı vücud olan bu lâyetenâhiyetin, bu ezeliyetin, bu ebediyetin, lâyüzâl sıfatlarından değil midir? Bu halde başka küçük münhasır ebediyetler, lâyefeneiyetler [lâyetenâhiyetler] (sic) aramakla it’âb-ı zihin etmekte ne münâsebat, ne faide vardır. Dimağ, ruh, vicdan, elh mebahisi gibi menafi-i içtimaiyesi dura-dur olan doğrudan doğruya bir menfaat-i ameliye-i içtimaiye tezmin etmeyen bir bah-i ilmi ile iştiğale beni sevk eden ahvale lanetler ederim” (Abdullah Cevdet 1911: 7-8).

20. “Bu misal ruhun terkihi-i maddi ile teşkil ettiğini gösterebilir. İstiknâh-ı meseleye girişmek az mühimdir. Şu kadar teykin etmek revadır ki ruh ile beden murtabit bir halde bulunmaktadır” (İbn-i Ömer 1308 [1892-3]: 46).

21. “Evet! Bütün tecelliyât-ı ruhiye Manifestation Psychique dimağın cevahiri asabiyesinin vücut ve faaliyetleriyle kaimdir. Dimağ, tefekkür ifraz etmez. Bu fiili idrakî bir madde-i müfrezeye teşbih asla caiz olamaz” (Abdullah Cevdet 1308/1892-3: 14).

22. *İlm-i Ahval-i Ruhtan Bir Parça (A Glimpse into Psychology)* for example is consisted of an open lecture at the military school given by military schoolteacher İ. Hakkı (1924). Even though in Nuri Bilgin’s bibliography (1988) İ. Hakkı is presented as İzmirli İsmail Hakkı, this information seems misleading given that İ. Hakkı signs the book as military schoolteacher and colonel.

23. The *Dergah* magazine was published between 15 April, 1921 and 5 January, 1923 every other week and had 42 issues in total.

24. For a list of Tunç’s publications see Altıntaş 1989: 11-23.

25. Ziya Gökalp (1876-1924) was an ideologue of Turkish nationalism and the holder of the first chair of sociology at the *Darülfünun*, whose formulation of Turkish nationalism constituted a real turning point in the crystallization of a national identity in his time. He entitled his social-political theory ‘Turkist, Islamist, Westernist Modernism’, which he summed up as: “We are of the Turkish nation [*millet*] of the Islamic religious community [*ümmet*], of Western civilization

[medeniyet]" (Parla 1985: 24). For Ziya Gökalp's influence on the *Darülfünun* see Dölen 2009: 363-366.

26. "[...] Gölgesiz bir perisin / Kimseye benzemezsin. / Bin havuzda yıkanan / Çırpınan bir hevessin. / Ben mi senin türbenim, / Yoksa sen kefenim mi? / Ben bilmem sen bilirsin, / Senin miyim benim mi?" quoted in Altıntaş, 1989: 121.

27. "Muhakkak olan vakia şu ki, insan kendini gerek fert ve gerek cemiyet halinde mihanikiyet aleminin bir cüzi gibi addetmeye bir türlü razı olamıyor. Buna fikren razı olsa da his ve iradesiyle behemehâl aksini yapıyor. Çünkü hayat, insan ve cemiyetlerin mihanikiyetleri - eğer varsa - tamamen malum olmadan insanın canlı arzu ve emellerini bir nazariye uğruna feda etmesi mümkün olmuyor. İşte bunun içindir ki hiçbir terki-i tarihi, hiçbir felsefe, hiçbir morfolojik içtimaiyat, arzu ve mefkûrelerin insiyakî kuvvetlerini susturamıyor..." (Tunç 1928: 168-169).

28. "Son zamanlarda siyaset-i dahiliye münakaşalarında daima ihtiraslardan şikayet edildiğine nazaran bu babda efkâr-ı umumiyeyi mehma imkan tenvir etmek icab ediyor. Mevzu hayli vâsi olmak itibarıyla bir makaleye sığacak gibi değildir. Yalnız meselenin hepimizi şiddetle alakadar edeceğine kani olduğum için mevzuyu bir kaç makale tahsis etmenin can sıkımayacağını ümit ediyorum" (Tunç 1337/1921a: 162).

29. "İlim, alem-i hariciyle münasebetimizden teşekkül ettiği için ruhumuzun katılmış ve ölmüş tıpkısıdır ki biz buna "zeka" veya akıl diyoruz. Halbuki ruh yalnız akıldan ibaret değil. Bu kabuğun altında öyle bir alem var ki her dakika kaynıyor ve bir saniye bile değişmeden yaşayamıyor. Ruhun temelini teşkil eden bu ateş ve hararet olmasaydı zeka hangi kuvvetle ve hangi saikle vücut bulacaktı?... Akılperest ve mücerred mantık mübtelası ahlak âlimlerinin hırs ve ihtiraslara hücum ederler. Fakat hangi baba yiğittir ki bunları ortadan kaldıracak?" (Tunç 1337/1921c: 52). In this part Tunç refers to some ideas of Ziya Gökalp, as the quotation continues with a reaction to Gökalp's motto "No individual but society" (Afacan 2016: 273).

30. Tunç 1927a: 7-8; 1927b:6-8; 1927c: 7-8; 1927d: 5-6.

## ABSTRACTS

The years between the 1870s and 1920s have been considered a transformative period for psychology, during which it prepared to leave the house of metaphysics, religious thought, and the moral sciences to join the team of the sciences. In depicting the transition from the "science of the mind" to modern psychology, the mainstream historiography has produced a narrative of linear and overnight transition from a whole body of philosophical and theological knowledge built around the concept of the soul, beginning with the foundation of modern academic institutions. In the late Ottoman Empire, however, the soul continued to attract Ottoman academics and intellectuals under the roof of the *Darülfünun* (today's Istanbul University), contrary to the foundational myths of the field of psychology.

With a focus on the debates and texts promoted by the *Darülfünun* faculty as a state-funded institute of higher education, this paper explains the rising academic and intellectual interest in psychological thought following the 1908 Revolution in relation to late Ottoman cultural, ideological, and political dynamics. It draws our attention to the uses and implications of an alliance between spiritualism and psychology during the foundational years of academic psychology in the late Ottoman Empire. The *Darülfünun* faculty sponsored intellectuals and academics whose understanding of psychology emphasised the human soul (*ruh*) and emotions

such as honour (*mükerremiyet*) and passion (*ihtiras*) as opposed to scientific questions about human nature brought by the theory of evolution and the philosophical doctrine of materialism. This interpretation enabled scholars, such as Filibeli Ahmed Hilmi and Mustafa Şekip Tunç, who were critical of scientific determinism, to contribute to scientific discussions. This paper argues that in an environment where burning questions about science and religion – such as if the soul existed separately from the body – were silenced, the *Darülfünun* faculty's academic and intellectual interest in psychological thought stemmed from the popularity of the notion of the soul, which signified human authenticity and honour. Ultimately, this paper uncovers the ways in which the human body and the soul surfaced as sites of contestation and knowledge in the late Ottoman Empire.

## INDEX

**Keywords:** psychology, materialism, spiritualism, science, soul, mind, body, Ottoman Empire, nineteenth century.

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