

A Review Of *Atatürk. An Intellectual Biography*. By M. Şükrü Hanioglu (Princeton University Press. Princeton & Oxford, 2011), xvi + 273 pp.

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Mustafa Kemal, who came to be known as Atatürk, left behind him an almost Messianic kind of legendary and mythical legacy, rather like that of Simón Bolívar, who is in some ways a virtual Christ-like figure in much of Latin America. “For many years,” writes Hanioglu, “the scholar who aspired to portray Atatürk as he really was resembled the premodern historian rash enough to attempt a depiction of the historical Jesus....Today the subject can be dealt with more openly in Turkey, but demythologizing Atatürk is still difficult....Turkish taxi and trucking associations were not particularly pleased to learn that Atatürk never uttered their organizational motto, “The Turkish driver is a man of the noblest feelings.”(2)

Another example of such apocryphal fabrication cited by Hanioglu is the story that Mustafa Kemal warned American Chief of Staff Douglas MacArthur in 1932 that an imminent war would destroy the civilized world. “Turkish scholars have credited Atatürk with having foreseen the Second World War even before the Nazis ascended to power. Recent research, however, has revealed that Atatürk told MacArthur exactly the opposite. The minutes of the meeting read, “When the possible dangers of war were discussed, his Excellency the Gazi said that the occurrence of a world war in the next ten years was virtually impossible.””(3-4)

In reality, although he was undoubtedly an “extraordinary” and “complex” person, he was certainly not a “saint”. He is likeable and admirable in some ways, but not at all in others, like most historically important national leaders. However, if modern Turkey which he founded, had turned out subsequently to be a more powerful and influential state in the world than it has been, he would undoubtedly be now as globally famous or renowned as Lenin, Mao Tse Tung, or Ghandi. For in certain ways he is just as important as these figures in relation to the modern world, as the man who “...presided over the emergence of the first secular republic in a Muslim country”(7), and thus especially in relation to the Middle East, Islam, and their relations with Europe and the West in general.

Although Hanioglu’s book is subtitled “An Intellectual Biography” (though it is quite as much a political history and biography), the author does dwell at some length on Atatürk’s

upbringing, as this bears strongly upon the intellectual influences that helped to shape his mind, his character, and his political life. But in doing this Hanioglu actually reveals the limitations in attempting a biography that otherwise “....avoided delving into the details of his (Atatürk’s) personal life...”(7) For a person’s life is finally an integral whole, however disjointed it may apparently seem, and it involves at every stage emotional experiences, social and historical context, intellectual commitments and “everything else”. In particular it is strange not to read anything in the book about Atatürk’s personal relationships with women, except for a brief mention of “....the Western-educated, elegant first lady Latife (Ussaki) to whom Mustafa Kemal was married for a brief period between January 1923 and August 1925....”(213): especially so, considering the enormous importance that the role and position of women took in his overall Weltanschauung and in his political-ideological aspirations, about which we shall speak later. It also seems odd to me that we learn nothing more about his death than that he “....died on November 10, 1938, at the age of fifty-seven”(232), in the book’s last paragraph. Fifty-seven is quite an early age to die; what did he die of, did he suffer long, did illness affect, for example, his last years or months in power?

Nevertheless, Hanioglu’s treatment of Atatürk’s early life certainly indicates its great significance to his psychological and intellectual development. He was born in the ancient Macedonian capital of Salonica, in Rumelia – the “European” part of the Ottoman world - which having been conquered finally by the Turks in 1430, became in time the most cosmopolitan city in the Ottoman Empire. After the expulsion of the Jews from Spain and Portugal at the end of the fifteenth century, Salonica became the “only sizable town in Europe with a Jewish majority.”(9) Many of these Jews converted to Islam, whilst continuing the private practice of Jewish rituals. By the end of the nineteenth century the city was made up of 49,000 Jews, 25,500 Muslims (including the Jewish converts), and 11,000 Greek Orthodox. Within these groupings there was considerable rich and fascinating further diversity, whilst outside them were some 7,000 non-Ottoman Europeans (some of whom enjoyed commercial privileges that provoked great resentment among Muslims). “Not surprisingly,” Hanioglu writes, in part sadly perhaps, partly purely objectively, “Salonica was a fertile ground for the nationalist movements that mushroomed throughout the European provinces of the empire in the nineteenth century”(10) - though the Jewish community presumably had a rather more restricted recourse to such a “nationalistic” possibility or option than some of the other groups. Elsewhere Hanioglu observes how the Young Turks generally, and Atatürk in particular, were struck by the enormous hold that nationalist sentiments could take on among certain minority, supposedly homogeneous ethnic groups, and learnt profound lessons from those experiences.

Concomitant to the various independence struggles of some of these national and ethnic minorities, as well as to violent clashes within them, an ambitious programme of imperial reforms was undertaken by the Ottoman government from the mid-nineteenth century

onwards to try to modernize the Ottoman state. “Ultimately, they sought to Westernize the Ottoman Empire and enter, as equals, into the post-Napoleonic club of European states.”(11) This led, in cities like Salonica, “to the formation of an exceedingly Westernized Muslim upper class.”(12) This was not the class into which Atatürk was born, but it set the tone for Muslims who looked for “progress”. However, particularly in Anatolia the Westernizing reforms “split the Muslim community, opening a chasm between the secular elite and the pious masses.”(12) At the same time, “The empowerment of progressive lay elements within the (non-Muslim) religious communities, combined with administrative efforts to create universal institutions for all Ottoman subjects, drastically altered life in the various communities and in society as a whole. Although one of the major aims of the Tanzimat reforms was to combat ethnic separatism by centralizing imperial administration, the effect of the emergence of secular intelligentsias with power over community affairs was, ironically, to give impetus to burgeoning nationalist movements.”(13)

Hanioğlu continues: “The reform era left a particularly strong imprint upon Salonica....because of its cosmopolitan character, which amplified the force of reforms targeting the empire’s non-Muslim communities.”(14) On the economic level there were advances in capital investment, transport and communications, and industrial growth which triggered an influx of rural populations in search of work. On the cultural-linguistic level, as one small example, “....Sultan Abdülmecid granted a personal audience “only to those Jewish notables with whom he could converse in French, leaving the rabbinate out in the cold””(16, quoting Mark Mazower, *Salonica, City of Ghosts: Christians, Muslims, and Jews, 1430-1950*). But despite all this, “....the ruling establishment of the Muslim community – in Salonica as elsewhere – kept firm control over primary education.”(17) This last fact, as Hanioğlu ably shows, played a big role in one of the most important formative influences on the young Atatürk.

Atatürk was born in either 1880 or 1881. His mother’s father worked for Muslim landowners in a small village near Salonica; she had received some basic traditional education and “....could apparently recite the Qur’an by heart. She was also literate, a rarity among Muslim women at the time.”(18) His paternal grandfather had served as a minor government official until his participation in Muslim riots, which resulted in the lynching of the French and German consuls in 1876 ended his career and resulted in his fleeing to the mountains where he remained until his death. Atatürk’s father was also a minor official, who sank into bankruptcy and died at the age of forty-seven, when Atatürk was only seven.

The important aspects of Atatürk’s family origins are provided by Hanioğlu in the following:

“His upbringing was more liberal than that of most lower-class Muslims. No one in his family’s circle of friends and relatives, for instance, practiced polygamy. Likewise, his father reportedly drank alcohol, which was abhorred by conservatives.

“The confusing dualism produced in Ottoman society by the reforms of the nineteenth century had its first imprint on Mustafa when his parents entered into a heated argument about his education....(his father) who....appreciated the advantages of a modern education for social mobility, aspired to send his son to a Dönme institution (founded by the above-mentioned Jewish converts to Islam)....which strongly encouraged critical thinking....Mustafa’s pious mother, on the other hand, preferred to send (him) to a traditional primary school, in which clerics taught a curriculum centered on religion and Arabic. The dispute ended in a peculiar compromise. In order to please his mother, Mustafa first went to the religious school (wearing a bound fascicle of the Qur’an strapped to his chest). He remained there, however, only a few days, in the course of which he managed to learn a few hymns. Then Ali Riza (his father), considering his pledge to Zübeyde (his mother) fulfilled, whisked young Mustafa away to (the Dönme school).

“There is little doubt that Mustafa Kemal’s deep-seated predilection for new institutions and practices owed much to his years as one of a handful of students in the empire who had their primary education at a private elementary school devoid of a strong religious focus....Young Mustafa appears to have thoroughly enjoyed his days at Şemsi Efendi School. The death of his father, however, cut short those happy days.”(19-20)

Perhaps we can see here signs of a paternal socialization of Atatürk that anticipates his later materialistic atheism, his disdain for many aspects of tradition, his desire for “modernization”, his exuberant lust to move into the future. Whilst on the other hand his mother’s traditional religiosity certainly must have at least educated him into an understanding of the power and hold of religion – and in due course we will see that in spite of his later fierce, uncompromising agenda to loosen and ultimately eliminate the Muslim religion from the fabric of Turkish society, he never actually abolished the veil by law. Perhaps also his mother instilled in him a certain poetic appreciation that he seems in some sense and in spite of all to have had, given that she could recite the Qur’an by heart.

With a small widow’s pension, Atatürk’s mother (now aged twenty-seven years) moved with her son to the countryside, to live under the protection of her step-uncle, a farm steward. The later-to-be-called Atatürk worked for this step-uncle, but “found little to challenge him in the simple tasks given him by Huseyin Aga, such as chasing crows off the horsebean fields.”(21) After a while he was sent back to Salonica to live with a paternal aunt and attend a school, until, “at age thirteen, Mustafa made one of the most important decisions of his life: ignoring his mother’s objections, he applied in secret to the military preparatory school in Salonica. In his reminiscences, Mustafa Kemal described how impressed he had been with the uniforms worn by military cadets and officers. He lived next door to an army major whose son attended the school; upon hearing of his acceptance, Zübeyde reluctantly gave in to the fait accompli. It was in this way that Mustafa embarked upon his military career.”(21)

From military preparatory school via military high school and then to the Royal Military Academy in Istanbul, Atatürk “worked relentlessly to gain admission to the Staff Officer College – a highly competitive elite institution within the academy widely regarded as the pinnacle of military education in the empire....In 1905, he joined the army as a staff officer captain.”(32)

The Royal Military Academy had earlier reflected strong French influence, until “the French defeat at the hands of Prussia in 1870-71 led to an increased interest in German military instruction.”(33) Colmar von der Goltz was invited to restructure the Academy, in such a way as to transform the Ottoman Empire in accordance with the ideas expressed in his book *Das Volk in Waffen (The Nation in Arms)*: “....since war in the modern age meant a struggle between entire nations, not merely their armies, it was incumbent upon the military elite to go beyond its traditional role in society and help guide the ship of state.”(34)

Goltz’s idea was to create a class of military commanders who would occupy a “superior position in the state”(34, quoted from Goltz). Ottoman rulers agreed with Goltz that their Empire cried out for the leadership of a new officer class. Presumably they had not anticipated however that “as a result of the 1908 revolution, the paramilitary Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) swept many officers into power. The Young Turk Revolution (that had followed the loss of extensive territories in Rumelia) thus provided an unexpected opportunity for the fulfilment of Goltz’s vision of a militarized nation guided by army officers. It was therefore ironic....that Goltz’s ideas gained more currency in the Ottoman Empire than they did in his native Germany. He shaped the worldview of several generations of Ottoman officers....(who) had come around to the opinion that it was their duty to transform the empire into a nation in arms.”(35) However, Hanioglu argues, “The new military....appeared as a cloistered elite; it stood apart from the masses – pretentious, Westernized, and overwhelmingly ambitious.”(37)

This was the privileged group within which Atatürk became a member, due to his hard effort and determination. Hanioglu subtly analyses the processes at work within Atatürk’s socialization into this elite’s thought and attitudes:

“Although increasingly sympathetic to Goltz’s ideas, the new Ottoman officer class had one major reservation about them: his model was Germany, an archetypal nation-state. The Ottoman state, by contrast, was a polyethnic empire coming apart at the seams. How then was the nonexistent nation to be summoned to arms? The forging of a nation in arms required an ideological framework that would cement the bond between the new rulers and the masses. But how could such a framework possibly appeal to the empire’s diverse population groups? Clearly a nationalist ideology would have much greater chances of success were the population ethnically homogeneous. This line of reasoning contributed to the rising popularity of Turkism among Ottoman officers in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

“Mustafa Kemal embraced some bold ideas in this regard. As early as 1907, he proposed that the Ottoman Empire should voluntarily dissolve itself in order to pave the way for population exchanges that would give rise to a Turkish state. Only a state undergirded by a robust national identity, he reasoned, would be capable of fielding a strong army. What he imagined was a “Turkish nation in arms” – not an Ottoman one....By 1914, Mustafa Kemal was....arguing that the fighting spirit of the army depended on the inculcation of a sound Turkish national consciousness. Soldiers not acquainted with “Hulagu, Timur, Genghiz, and Attila, who had reached the city walls of Paris with a Turkish army composed of men and women” would prove useless in combat. Turkish women who “had lived free of the veil for 5,000 years, and had been covered only in the last 600 years” were duty-bound to raise their children to become soldiers. At the same time, like Heinrich von Treitschke, who considered the Prussian military establishment the ideal spawning ground for national consciousness, Mustafa Kemal believed that the process of constructing a Turkish military would promote awareness of the Turkish national identity in society.

“....Although otherwise an ardent supporter of thoroughgoing Westernization, he was a fervent opponent of the growing foreign – and especially German – influence on the Ottoman army. He praised Goltz’s contribution to the development of the Ottoman military, but he promoted the idea of a purely Turkish officer corps, and was decidedly critical of the German reform mission dispatched to Istanbul on the eve of the Great War under the leadership of Otto Liman von Sanders. To some extent this xenophobic approach to military reform reflected Mustafa Kemal’s profound admiration for the Japanese, whose victory over Russia was perceived at the time as the triumph of indigenous modernization over the West.”(37-38)

Atatürk at the same time developed a strong aversion to Sultan Abdulhamid II, even though he and the officer class into which he had risen owed their social position to the latter’s reforms. “Along with other officers of his generation, he considered the ritualized veneration of the sultan a betrayal of the ideal of a nation in arms, which stood above any flesh-and-blood ruler....One well-known prank during official ceremonies was to shout “The sultan is upside down!” which, in Turkish, could easily be confused with “Long live the sultan!” Mustafa Kemal is said to have outdone his peers in rejecting imperial traditions through such antics.”(39)

It was in the aftermath of the Young Turk Revolution that Atatürk got his first opportunity to demonstrate his prowess in military action:

“Many of the Ottoman top brass viewed the younger generation of CUP officers with disdain, as naughty children to be tolerated but not feared. To prove that they were in fact ready to take over military affairs, the CUP dispatched a handful of its most talented staff officers to organize the Ottoman resistance to the Italians in Tripoli of Barbary in 1911-12. Mustafa Kemal was one of those smuggled into Cyrenaica through Egypt for the purpose of organizing a local militia that was to fight against the Italian invaders under the leadership

of the military hero of the Young Turk Revolution, Staff Major Enver Bey. These men scored an impressive series of victories, preventing the Italians from penetrating the interior of the country; but although their successes won them considerable fame at home, this small-scale guerrilla war was not a sufficient basis for capturing the leadership of the army. For that, an event of far greater magnitude was necessary.”(41)

It was the catastrophe of the Balkan Wars of 1912-13 which subsequently underpinned a “revolutionary change within the Ottoman armed forces....In response to the military deficiencies exposed by the Balkan Wars (which included the surrender of Kemal’s hometown Salonica to the Greeks without a fight), the Ottoman government, now totally under the control of the CUP, invited Lieutenant General Otto Liman von Sanders to rebuild the Ottoman army....”(41-42) In 1914, the year the First World War broke out, Enver Bey became minister of war; in 1915 Kemal took command of an army division. Hanioglu describes a fundamental difference between this “revolution” and that of the Bolsheviks in Russia:

“....they (the CUP) felt an uncompromising loyalty to the state. Their main goal was to revive an ailing empire and save it from collapse. In contrast to many Russian officers of revolutionary bent, populist notions of Narodism did not appeal to this generation of Ottoman officers. Although it paid lip service to the idea of serving the masses, the new officer corps was elitist at heart. In many ways, its position more closely resembled that of the military establishments in the developing countries after the Second World War. As members of a privileged group, the officers viewed themselves as being above the rest of society, which it was their natural right to lead. Like other members of the Ottoman intellectual elite at this time, and many military men since, they were profoundly attracted to Gustave Le Bon’s notions of crowd psychology, in which the military held pride of place as an indispensable part of the ruling elite. They did not aim to empower disenfranchised social elements to overthrow the established order; on the contrary, they sought to strengthen the existing order the better to exercise their leadership over the feckless masses.

“This influence of Le Bon on the senior leadership of the CUP cannot be overstated. Enver Pasha justified his opposition to representative government on the basis of Le Bon’s criticism of parliaments as gathering places for motley crowds to which the future of a nation should by no means be entrusted....Mustafa Kemal, too, found Le Bon’s ideas compelling.”(44)

The third chapter of Hanioglu’s book is called “The Scientism of the Young Turks.” Here he discusses the enormous influence upon Atatürk and the other Young Turks of “a peculiar mid-nineteenth-century German philosophy known as *Vulgärmaterialismus*.”(48) Of particular importance was the German physiologist Ludwig Büchner – essentially a scientist, though also a materialist philosopher – who wrote *Kraft und Stoff* (*Force and Matter*), and also a work whose extraordinary title translates loosely into: “*Man and his position in nature: his past, present, and future, or Where do we come from? Who are we?*”

Where are we going?” These books influenced Atatürk deeply, and Hanioglu discusses the very editions and translations of such books that Atatürk had in his personal library, often supplemented by his own annotations and underlinings.

There is no doubt that Atatürk was a self-taught kind of “intellectual” – the Military Academy was not a University – yet I wonder if Hanioglu is not a little harsh on him, very much implying his ideas were “half-baked”. (And given how busy he always seems to have been, it is perhaps astonishing that he read as much as he did.) Thus Hanioglu asserts:

“This was a vulgarized version of the doctrine of materialism, fusing popular notions of materialism, scientism, and Darwinism into a simplistic creed that upheld the role of science in society. The Late Ottoman version of this materialism was a further simplification of the German original and a medley of highly disparate ideas, the common denominator of which was the rejection of religion. The Young Turks were oblivious to the irony inherent in their own uninhibited worship of prominent German materialists....Their self-contradictory iconoclasm recalls Fyodor Mikhaylovich Dostoyevsky’s novel *Besy (The Possessed)*, in which the protagonist assaults his landowner’s Christian icons with an axe, only to replace them with candle-bedecked lecterns bearing books by Ludwig Büchner, Jacob Moleschott, and Karl Vogt. In its German birthplace, the movement had negligible philosophical and political impact. In the Ottoman Empire, however, it struck root among a particularly influential circle of disciples....It was thus by a bizarre twist of fate that the German doctrine of *Vulgärmaterialismus* came to bear its most significant fruits in a context entirely alien to its original environment, and that a further vulgarized version of its central tenets would in time form one of the ideological pillars of the modern Turkish nation-state.

“(Kemal) read parts of Ludwig Büchner’s *Kraft und Stoff*, and seemed particularly struck by the suggestion that human thinking had a material basis, as evidenced by the centrality of phosphorus in brain processes (though actually this was originally an “observation” of Moleschott’s (my addition))....Like many others in his generation, Mustafa Kemal confused the vulgar materialism popularized by the likes of Büchner with the materialist tradition of the Baron d’Holbach and Voltaire....For instance, Mustafa Kemal once commented that “since humans came from the seas like all other reptiles, our forefathers were fish.””(48-53)

Some brief comments seem in order in response to these observations. Firstly, there are and have been very many “materialist” philosophies, not merely one “sophisticated” one and another “vulgar” one. Indeed the philosophical positions of d’Holbach and Voltaire, for example, are by no means identical. Secondly, the number of philosophies (and generally, systems of ideas, including religious ones) which have arisen in one part of the world, in order to take root and become greatly modified and influential in another part of the world, is so enormous as to make it pointless even to cite examples: this is a fundamental aspect of human history and culture. But then of course, human beings are certainly not reptiles(!)

though according to evolutionary biological theory, fish came onto the land first, in the process evolving into amphibians; and these then evolved into reptiles. From them evolved the mammals, which include human beings. So in spite of his “slip-up”, Kemal’s remark was not so totally absurd.

What must have been, originally, a most striking notion that *thinking, the human mind*, which had previously been understood as part of the “spirit” or “soul” in humanity, is actually based in material (chemical and physiological) processes, may seem unremarkable and “old hat” today, but in the late nineteenth-century, in a society still dominated by the ideas of revealed religions (of whichever kind) and of a “divine spirit” unconnected with material reality, it must have seemed very exciting, as well as undeniably true. It will be interesting to consider presently other versions of “materialism” that were available at this time, which Atatürk appears either not to have been aware of or was not attracted to.

Let us not forget that those gradual intellectual developments (although they only spread among certain social groups) that had taken place in (mainly Western) Europe since the late Middle Ages, through the Renaissance, then the Reformation, the Counter-Reformation, and the Enlightenment, and which were all inseparable from the Scientific Revolution, had not occurred outside Europe (although other notable but different developments had done); and Turkey, like so much of the non-European world, was plunged into a crisis – military, economic, political, and ideological - by its confrontation with the “modernity” of Europe. If these developments had been erratic and sinuous over centuries in Western Europe, interwoven with complex social, political and economic transformations, how much more complex and confusing it must have been in Turkey, as elsewhere in the Middle East, in Russia, India, China, Africa and in many other parts of the world, when these new ideas first flew in or burst out from within, over such a concentrated time-frame. (It is also important to recognize that “European Enlightenment” notions, particularly with respect to “equality” and “justice”, were not generally applied by Europeans to non-Europeans, nor in fact to all Europeans either. What is often considered the “dark side” of the Enlightenment, is perhaps better regarded as the non-fulfilment of its supposedly universal ideals.)

So if these Young Turks were somewhat “blinded” by a particular group of “materialist philosophers” – I doubt if we can call them a “school” in any consistent sense – which today are very little known, that indicates certain rather important points. Firstly, the sheer doggedness and insistence of these (mostly young) Turkish men; also their precociousness, since they knew well that they were out of tune with the vast majority of Ottoman society, of whichever religious group. Secondly, as Hanioglu shows, they displayed an extraordinarily self-controlled determination over difficult periods of time, though also a Machiavellian, domineering arrogance:

“In 1889, a political society with strong scientific leanings called the Ottoman Union Committee was established at the Royal Medical Academy in Istanbul....In 1895, in a

reflection of the growing influence of positivism on the movement's leadership, its name was changed to the Ottoman Committee of Union and Progress. Although the subsequent transformation of CUP from a student club into a revolutionary conspiracy tended to conceal the scientistic agenda of the movement in later years, scientism remained a focal tenet of Young Turk ideology. For a long time its disciples were inhibited from expressing it too openly by the awkward requirements of staging a revolution and consolidating power in a multinational realm held together under the banner of Islam, but this constraint disappeared along with the Ottoman Empire itself in 1922, and the devotees of scientism were free once more to make public profession of their beliefs.”(53)

How “sincere”, or fanatical, some of these Young Turks were in their “scientism” (though this last term must also presently be discussed), is given by Hanioglu in the following example: one of the prominent graduates from the Royal Military Academy was Besir Fu’a, who committed suicide in 1887 “just to prove that life was an experimental “scientific” phenomenon.”(52)

There are, as mentioned above, many different forms of “materialism”. “Mechanical” or “mechanistic materialism” in particular should be contrasted with “dialectical materialism”, (a term invented by Engels, though emanating from his and Marx’s philosophical critique of idealism and mechanistic materialism). This latter need not necessarily entail (though it certainly did under Stalinist Diamat) the preclusion of any recognition of the “spiritual”, or the “divine”, for it allows of a form of *yin-yang*, spirit-matter understanding of Nature, as exists in Taoism, and in some forms of pantheism: God *is* Nature, as it was for Giordano Bruno and Spinoza, which can be approached both rationally and intuitively (or “spiritually”). (“I was serving time in the Universal Mind” – Jim Morrison). In such kinds of “materialism” the “natural” and the “spiritual” form a dialectically intertwined unity; the two apparently distinct poles mutually entail one another in endless dynamic, generative *processes*. Such “materialism” need not deny the reality of a “spiritual realm”, nor a sense of the Infinite and the Intangible, whether understood as energy, or the creative activity of the “Totality”; since “matter” turns out not to be composed of a hard, solid, indivisible, passive “thing”, even for “science” itself. Related ideas have been expressed in a great number of more recent philosophical discussions of modern, post-Einsteinian physics, ranging from those of Joseph Needham, M.E. Omelyanovsky, and Hebert Horz *et al*, to Fritjof Capra, David Bohm, Rupert Sheldrake and Gyorgy Doczi, not to mention such earlier thinkers as R.G. Collingwood, or A.N. Whitehead – and although the former thinkers came well after Atatürk and his fellow “scientistic” Young Turks, Whitehead was already reinterpreting “matter” and “materialism” in the light of Einstein as early as 1925.

The simplistic kind of “atheistic” materialism was precisely what Marx and Engels had already criticized in *The German Ideology*: Marxism was born from the dialectical critique of Feuerbach’s critique of Hegel. (Engels later evolved these critiques in respect of science in *The Dialectics of Nature*.) Through this, new ontologies for both society and nature were

born. The limitations of Feuerbach's metaphysical, mechanistic materialism crystallized, according to Marx and Engels, in his conception of Man, which was part inorganic matter, part physiological being, and part an abstract, unchanging, unhistorical "human nature". Marx and Engels thought they had exploded Feuerbach's static conception of Man with their concept of *social being*, which grasps the self-transforming history of real societies. Simultaneously, Feuerbach's mechanical materialist conceptions of matter and organic life were also implicitly exploded, so that dualistic ontologies of nature could now also, like those of human society, be seen as expressions of human self-estrangement. Dualism in thought was seen by Marx and Engels as having its basis in the alienated division of mental from manual labour in class-divided societies: it reached its apogee in Hegel's self-transformative, active, dialectical idealism and Feuerbach's passive, mechanical materialism.

A fixed "human nature" was transformed through this critique into real human practice in concrete history, whilst matter and life were transformed into natural, dialectically developing processes. Process, development, and change cannot be explained by mechanistic materialism; idealism is brought back in new guise through abstract, eternal "laws" or first causes. The separation of nature into inactive, "fixed" matter or life on the one hand, and immutable, immaterial laws (existing "externally" to evolving reality) on the other, entails the same inadequacy as do previous (theological or idealist) conceptions of reality which involve God or Absolute Spirit, separated from "matter" or human history, according to Marx and Engels: materiality is grasped passively, inertly, and mechanically (as in Feuerbach) whilst the active, self-transforming side is grasped idealistically (as in Hegel). A dialectical conception of both the universe as a whole and humanity within it, is implicitly understood now – even if it is not expressed in exactly this kind of language by Marx and Engels – as an inseparably intertwined unity in process and developmental change, a "mutual entailment" of what was previously understood as "matter" and "spirit".

Thus "Dialectical Materialism" replaces a mechanistic ontology of matter and life with one that grasps totality, dialectical process, and unity, a dynamic process of becoming, an unfolding and differentiation of forms - as Hegel had already understood it, though idealistically. It recognizes (like Hegel) the irreducible levels of reality that emerge in development. The transcendence of both mechanism and idealism in dialectical materialism claims to understand reality – both nature *and* society – as both structure *and* activity, as both objective determination *and* vital, even purposive, creativity. These insights of Marx and Engels have frequently been rejected or ignored, due partly or even largely to the abysmal levels of dogmatism and pseudo-science that were presented as Dialectical Materialism under Stalin. But Engels, in the work referred to above, in spite of its inadequacies (particularly in respect of what have been claimed to be the "positivistic" tendencies in Engels' version of "Marxism"), was centrally concerned to ask whether the natural sciences as he found them at the end of the nineteenth-century did or did not bear

out or necessitate a dialectical materialist ontology and epistemology; he concluded that they did. It is perhaps a purely escapist, though fascinating speculation, to wonder what Atatürk would have made of these ideas if someone had handed him a Turkish translation of Engels' book or other writings expressing such thoughts!

The term "scientism" has a number of different meanings within sociology and the "history and philosophy of science". It can refer to any doctrine or approach held to involve oversimplified conceptions and unreal expectations of science. Or it can mean the misapplication of "natural science" methods to the human and social sciences. Or it can mean the unsatisfactory assumption that there exists only one single mode of investigation that is "scientific", to the exclusion of any or all others, in any or all field(s) of knowledge, thus dogmatically failing to understand that any "science" has emerged within a particular society or civilization, and is therefore destined to change over time, like all other forms of thought (including religious ideas and beliefs). Established "scientific paradigms" come in time to be understood as inadequate, and no longer able to explain *all* phenomena in a particular field - the relevant "level of reality" as a whole - as Einstein's Theory of Relativity and subsequently Quantum Physics came to challenge, and in time were accepted to replace, Newtonian Mechanics.

This does not mean that earlier paradigms did not "work" at all nor that they contained no "objectivity". It means that the very notions of observation, experimentation and appropriate quantification change as part of human-social development, as does the broad idea itself of scientific knowledge being based on rational investigation and as far as possible "unbiased" preconceptions. "Positivism" was a nineteenth century creed that essentially believed "scientific knowledge" was unproblematical in these respects and "fixed" in its findings, methods, and hitherto arrived-at conclusions, and which could moreover be applied over time to all areas of knowledge. None of these assumptions can be sustained any more, but it is unclear which of them Hanioglu thinks that Atatürk adhered to, nor with which consequences for his political worldview. Sometimes it appears that it is the simplistic misapplication of "science" to all knowledge of reality to which Hanioglu refers, at others simply to the rejection of any traditional, revelatory religion, whilst at others to the rejection of any "non-material" or "spiritual" dimension. But these claims are not the same, and have no necessary, pre-given, mutual implications. Thus one can believe, for example, that some kind of pantheistically conceived Supreme Being, which is inherent in Nature, is and was responsible for the coming into being (and perhaps the continuance) of the Universe (the Big Bang scarcely provides any better or alternative explanation), at the same time as considering traditional religions generally (their theologies, not necessarily their ethical values) as essentially collections of ancient mythologies, legends, and fossilized systems of doctrines and dogmas (though it can also perhaps be recognized that such religious systems may nevertheless contain crucial elements of "truth"); whilst also accepting that "science" – physics, chemistry, biology, the social sciences etc. best

explain *now* the multiple levels of reality, though never with final verdicts, and never – so it seems – being able to explain the ultimate “why” of things, nor the ultimately “spiritual” and aesthetic “mysteries”: rather than the mere “how” of reality. Some of these points are implicated in the discussion above of the highly complex variations among “materialisms”, but there is no room here for more than these brief observations. The issues merit consideration however, just as Lenin’s “Notebooks on Hegel” from 1915 do, where he implies at times that his own earlier “materialism” in *Materialism and Empirico-Criticism* was incorrect (much of Marx’s earlier work was after all unavailable to him), and that “idealism” is partially valid, as I have suggested is the case for “Dialectical Materialism”, and as anyone might find who wished to look into the matter closely.

When Turkey entered the First World War on the side of Germany, Austria-Hungary and Bulgaria in November 1914, Enver Bey was “the preeminent military hero in the empire....Meanwhile, Mustafa Kemal spared no effort or sacrifice in his quest for heroism....Up until the Great War, he remained an obscure figure little known outside the circle of young CUP officers.

”The German-inspired reorganization of the Ottoman military on the eve of the Great War paved the way for Mustafa Kemal’s ascendance....he agreed with Colmar von der Goltz’s opinion that “to make war means to attack”....However, for the Ottomans the application of these principles was still almost impossible....The Ottoman armies had not fought a major offensive war for more than a century and they would remain on the defensive during most of the Great War.” (69-71)

Kemal advocated the Japanese attack code of “kōgeki seishin” (aggressive spirit). But Ottoman military morale was low after their defeats in the Balkan Wars of 1912-13, yet Kemal was soon able to “expect his men to charge the enemy unflinchingly even when this meant almost certain death.”(72)

It is indicative of Atatürk’s audacious and essentially uncompromising character, and of the nature of his ultimately absolute dictatorial supremacy, that after Turkey’s declaration of war, he was not immediately appointed to active duty. His rivalry with Enver Pasha (of whom there is a fascinating photograph from 1908 (70) of the hero gazing gently at the sky, holding a rifle, all in a kind of studio-created, dreamy romantic pose and atmosphere), and also his (Kemal’s) critical position with respect to the CUP leadership, taken together precluded this until January 1915. After a disastrous campaign led by Enver Pasha on the Caucasian front against Russia, the threat from the advancing Russians was augmented by an even greater threat from a British campaign, led by First Lord of the Admiralty Winston Churchill, which intended to break through the Dardanelles with a naval force, push open a supply route to the Russian army, take Istanbul, and “knock the Ottomans out of the war.”(73)

When the British began their bombardment in the Dardanelles in February 1915 a new unit that Kemal was putting together was dispatched there. This was the “moment of destiny” Atatürk was waiting for. “Snatching victory from defeat”, Kemal emerged a hero from one of the greatest and most terrible battles of modern times. The heroism and determination of the Turks in this life-and-death struggle remain legendary, as also do those of the similarly hapless, luckless, defeated British, Australian, New Zealander and other British Empire troops, as well as those of the other allies involved. At the withdrawal of the invading forces in December 1915, casualties on both sides reached “an appalling total of 340,000.”(77)

After one of the most decisive naval defeats ever at the hands of the Ottoman coastal batteries and mines, the Allies nevertheless landed troops for a ground offensive. At first this overwhelmed the defenders, but when Kemal rushed to the place where a disorderly retreat had begun”....he regrouped the panicked soldiers, ordering them to mount a bold bayonet attack against the Allied troops....then launched a series of valiant counter-offensives.”(76) Thereafter, in spite of serious run-ins with the Minister of War and other superiors, Atatürk was promoted and celebrated, and began to enjoy ever-increasing adulation. When in October 1918 the Ottoman government signed the Armistice of Mudros and withdrew from the war, he was appointed commander of all Ottoman armies in Syria in place of his former superior, the German Liman von Sanders. Now Kemal: “....regarded himself as the *beau sabreur* who had saved the empire in 1915, halted the Russian advances in 1916, and organized an orderly retreat from Syria under desperately unfavorable circumstances created by the military’s German generals.”(83-84)

The fundamental situation after the end of the First World War was that Britain and France – as is well evidenced in the insulting and derogatory speeches that Lloyd George and Clemenceau both made concerning the history and culture of the Ottoman Empire generally (of course “even”, if not “especially”, statesmen can be subject to the emotions of fury and hatred engendered by war; earlier both had held rather different views of Turkey) – wanted the dismemberment not merely of the Ottoman empire but of Anatolia as well. America did not really care about the region (after Woodrow Wilson had left power), though many Turks believed that Wilson’s declarations concerning a “just peace” and his Fourteen Points, particularly with regard to national self-determination, would ensure at least an independent Turkish Anatolia.

The result was a new war, the Turkish War of Independence, during which Atatürk became undisputed political and military leader, and after which he was the undisputed ruler of the new Turkey, in which all real political opposition was gradually abolished. It was in those years, between about 1922 and his death in 1938, that he created the Turkist state, applying his extraordinary ideas to a traditional, conservative, Muslim nation, with some considerable and remarkable successes, but also resulting in many failures. One of the interesting features of Atatürk’s career, which Hanioglu well depicts, is his frequent

pragmatism and eclecticism in respect of his beliefs and their application, at the same time as a strong, studied determination over his “Turkist thesis”: a photograph provided in this book, of “President Mustafa Kemal engaged in study at his private library in 1931”(194) shows him reading, with pen in hand, in what seems like calm and serious concentration.

“....the hope for a balanced settlement based on Wilson’s principles was an Ottoman fantasy” writes Hanioglu, and continues: “Of all the claims made on Ottoman territory – by Arabs, Armenians, Greeks, Kurds, and Zionists – the most unacceptable, from the Ottoman perspective, were those made on Anatolia, the Turkish heartland of the empire....In response to the Allied proposals for the dismemberment of the empire, they were preparing for war....Mustafa Kemal emerged as one of the principal leaders of the popular struggle against partition....(he) grasped more quickly than most of his colleagues that Allied diplomacy was pursuing objectives wholly at odds with those of the burgeoning Turkish nationalist movement.

”....starting in November 1918....councils similar to those of the Bolshevik Soviets mushroomed throughout the Turkish portion of the empire, as well as in the former Russian provinces in eastern Anatolia that were coveted by the Armenians and Georgians. These councils, convened by organizations called Societies for the Defense of National Rights, employed strong Islamic rhetoric to reject the dismemberment of the non-Arab Muslim portion of the empire and any attempt to hand out parts of Anatolia to furnish Greece and the Democratic Republic of Armenia with land....resistance spread to those parts of Western Anatolia that the Allies wished to hand over to the Greeks. But it was the Greek occupation of Izmir on May 15, 1919 that convinced the nationalists that the only option was yet another war....Although in some ways these councils resembled the soviets of Bolshevik Russia or the Spartakist *Räterepubliks* of postwar Germany, they were not organizations bent on overthrowing the existing order. Rather, their common mission was to resist partition by the Allies and fight off Greek and Armenian encroachments....threatening to take matters into their own hands in the event of an ignominious capitulation.”(92-96)

Kemal was able, within this complex and confusing situation, to turn an inspectorship in Samsun on the Black Sea, offered to him by the imperial government in order to dissolve the nationalist councils, into an acceptance of the post only on condition that he was granted “extraordinary powers that effectively subordinated the military and civilian administration in parts of Anatolia to his authority.”(97) The date of his arrival in Samsun would later be celebrated as Atatürk Commemoration Day (the poet Behçet Kemal Çağlar wrote: “O god who landed in Samsun, greetings/....The real birthday of every Turk is May 19.”(quoted 193)) Once again Atatürk defied the very authorities that had dispatched him, this time to suppress nationalist activities, by doing the exact opposite. After another muddly confrontation, he resigned and henceforth participated wholeheartly in the nationalist resistance movement.

At a congress in July 1919 the Eastern Provinces Defense of Rights Society was established, “which considered all Muslims its natural members”(99), and here Kemal’s prominence “signaled to the entire movement his intention of assuming a leading role in the nationalist struggle.”(99) A second congress “defined the geographical boundaries of the country, declaring that those areas that had not fallen under occupation....would be defended; no concessions would be made to non-Muslims.”(99) This “indivisible homeland of the non-Arab Ottoman Muslims....was to be called Turkey for the first time in 1921 in the text of the Treaty of Moscow signed between the nationalist government and the Soviet Union.”(101)

A provisional government had in effect been declared; the sultan had been outmaneuvered. The sultan agreed to elections: concerning the landslide victory for the Defense of National Rights movement that followed, Winston Churchill, in one of his characteristic quips, later held forth: “....the Turks had voted. Unhappily....almost all of them voted the wrong way.”(quoted 101)

Now we enter the extraordinary phase in which Kemal and his followers played a double game, using Islam to consolidate the new Turkish state, whilst simultaneously planning to eliminate it, institutionally and culturally. Hanioglu narrates things thus:

“The new chamber was named the Grand National Assembly to emphasize its extraordinary powers. Following the lead of Mustafa Kemal....it adopted a strong Islamic tone from the outset. The opening was deliberately scheduled for a Friday, following prayers.... Before (the deputies) entered the building, which contained a replica of the Prophet’s banner and a piece of hair from his beard, clerics completed a recitation....of the Qurán. The Islamic character of these opening ceremonies outdid any comparable solemnity in Ottoman history and gave no inkling of the secular revolution that would follow....(there were) placards displaying Qur’anic quotations....commending those “whose affairs are decided by mutual consultation”....(all this) resembled old *mesveret* (consultation) meetings at the house of the Şeyhülislâm (the chief mufti) more than meetings of the Ottoman chambers after 1877. The Grand National Assembly also issued....(laws that) surpassed any Ottoman administration since the Tanzimat in 1837 in the enforcement of Islamic morals.

“This is....not so surprising when the historical circumstances are taken into account. First was the need to challenge the imperial government, which had obtained a fatwa from the Seyhulislam declaring Mustafa Kemal and his comrades brigands and proclaiming their killing a duty incumbent upon all Muslims. In the embittered struggle for legitimacy, both sides vied for fatwas issued by religious scholars and competed to be more Islamic than the other. Mustafa Kemal shrewdly exploited this dynamic with the help of nationalist-leaning ‘ulamā’ in the assembly. For instance, instead of defending his claims on the basis of national unity or Ottoman brotherhood, he delegitimized the government’s attacks, citing the Qur’anic injunction “If a corrupt person comes to you with news, investigate it.”(102-4)

Other considerations for Kemal included the Turkish nationalists' concern to maintain the support of the Muslims in Central Asia and India, which depended on the latter's understanding of the Anatolian struggle as a jihad to free the caliph-sultan from the hands of Christian crusaders; the wish to mobilize Islam in general against the Allies; also not to annoy the Soviet Union which viewed pan-Turkism as a threat; and in addition to keep on-side such non-Turkish Muslim ethnic groups as the Kurds.

Kemal also in this period presented himself as a "Muslim communist", an ideology that attempted to reconcile Islam with socialism, arguing that the Muslim proletariat was exploited by Western colonialism. He assured Soviet envoys that he and his "comrades favour communism, but circumstances compel (them) to be silent about this fact." (quoted 106)

Hanioglu comments: "His appeal to socialist principles stemmed in part from a desire to forestall the emergence of socialist rivals." (107) Yet a pro-Soviet Communist Party of Turkey did emerge but its members were murdered, exactly by whom it is unclear, but this was an extremely welcome development for Kemal, who then ordered the formation of an official Communist Party of Turkey (for a short time). He then conveyed to the Soviet leaders that "everyone should understand that in Turkey even communism is our business." (108) Autocratic Turkist nationalism was becoming ever more firmly his ideological belief-system, and no one in Turkey was to deviate from it, yet where pragmatism demanded, he would still espouse other world-views, though according to Hanioglu:

"....he actually despised both (Islamism and Bolshevism)....and possessed little knowledge of either. For the most part, he repeated the clichés of Ottoman Islamists and the slogans of Soviet ideologues. At the same time, he avoided expounding his Turkist ideals. This pattern of dissimulation was undoubtedly part of a deliberate strategy to align the nationalists with the most powerful and broad-based ideologies of resistance while obfuscating the exclusionary objectives of the movement. This ideological mishmash was crucial to Mustafa Kemal as he performed his difficult role as political leader, diplomat, and supreme military commander....The precipitous decline in such (Islamist and Bolshevik) references after the establishment of the republic in 1923 (and even more so following his consolidation of power in 1925) speaks volumes about the opportunistic character of this policy." (109)

Hanioglu's discussion of Atatürk's general theoretical knowledge of politics, state, and administration is interesting. Once again he considers Atatürk a lightweight, referring to the latter's knowledge thus: "He knew so little about theoretical discussions on these subjects....that in his speeches he confused the Baron de Montesquieu with Jean-Jacques Rousseau. He admired the Genevan philosopher's notion that sovereignty is indivisible and inalienable, that every legitimate government is republican, and that every government in

the world, once clothed in public power, sooner or later usurps sovereign authority. He was struck by this sentence in particular from *Du contrat sociale*: “I therefore give the name ‘Republic’ to every State that is governed by laws, no matter what the form of its administration may be: for only in such a case does the public interest govern, and the *res publica* rank as a reality. Every legitimate government is republican.” This....fit the model Mustafa Kemal had in mind: a peculiar sort of republicanism in which he, as supreme leader, would strive to implement a grand program of social engineering. He repeatedly stated that in this model the motor of change would be state-sponsored populism. Thus, the names chosen by Mustafa Kemal for the official newspapers of the national movement – *National Sovereignty* and *National Will* – expressed this embrace of populism, which purported to speak for the people....Nevertheless, as an elitist sympathizer of Gustave Le Bon, he never desired a government of the people or sought to promote genuine grassroots populism. Like many intellectual members of his generation, he ignored Le Bon’s mortal antipathy for revolutions in general and the French Revolution of 1789 in particular, and thought that this pseudosociologist’s elitism and the ideas of the Revolution could be reconciled.”(109-113)

When one considers the intellectual bases of certain other dictators of this period by comparison, within Europe as well as outside it, one wonders if Kemal’s absorption of such ideas was really so feeble. (Sometimes Hanioglu refers to Kemal “skimming” through a book he read, other times to the fact that he read a particular book in one night, but at other times to the fact that he underlined nearly every sentence). Certainly he twisted all the ideas he read about to his own ends - that was a sign of the times – but some of the thoughts he took from the complex history of Republican theory for example, are perhaps quite crisp, and in terms of his purposes, apt.

But still one cannot help making comparison with other modern dictators in that age of dictatorial rule, in respect of intellectual orientation, as well as personality and political method. Though one would scarcely wish to compare Atatürk with Adolf Hitler in terms of sheer horrific evilness, nor in terms of their depths of cynical opportunism, there are parallels in terms of their racial nationalist ideologies, their cunning wiliness in political manoeuvring, their capacity at times for compromise (Winston Churchill wrote that Atatürk “was able and indeed content to wait, and capable of compelling others to wait with him“(quoted 127)), whilst at other times exhibiting extreme, audacious opposition even towards rivals with similar ambitions, in a gambling, “winner takes all” kind of brinkmanship. And intellectually, one is reminded of Hitler’s bragging that he never bothered to read a whole book, and was only interested in “gutting” it for what he found useful – although, as already suggested, Atatürk was in general a very much more “authentic thinker” than Hitler; nor does he come across as a psychopathic megalomaniac like Hitler or Stalin. He seems more similar to Lenin in terms of holding a sincere, humane wish for his people’s betterment, and though doggedly and relentlessly pursuing power,

that lust for power does not feel to be a personal obsession the same way that it does for Hitler or for Stalin: but rather the consequence of deeply held (ultimately “humane”) beliefs, however ruthless the behaviour sometimes induced by those unyielding beliefs. (Such considerations are of course extremely complex and convoluted in their implications.)

In the process of concentrating all political and military power into his personal rule as leader of the Grand National Assembly, within which political parties other than his own were not allowed to form and the 623-year-old sultanate (by now a “paper government”(136)) was abolished, Turkey became dominated by a visual landscape of photographs, portraits, statues and other images of Atatürk. His clever diplomacy with foreign powers, especially the Soviet Union, combined with the recognition forced upon all of these that he, Atatürk, and the Turks could fight, and could fight hard, resulted in the establishment of a reasonably coherent, independent Turkey, which is undoubtedly the chief reason for his becoming so deeply loved by the Turks in excruciatingly difficult times and circumstances, and in spite of many people being out of sympathy with much of his agenda, especially concerning social-religious issues. These last points are in the main well explicated in Hanioglu’s book. He writes:

“As politician, diplomat, and commander, Mustafa Kemal had fought and won a protracted and arduous struggle on three fronts. In less than four years, he had risen from being the rebel general of a dying empire to become supreme leader of a resurgent nation. He now had the unprecedented opportunity to craft a new nation-state out of the ruins of an old sultanate.”(128) The author continues:

“....(he) had become a household name throughout the Islamic world....He had stood up to the seemingly unassailable victors of the Great War....he had triumphed in a war presented as an Islamic struggle against Western imperialism....he remained a role model for the third-world intelligentsia and leaders as different as the atheist Hindu statesman Jawaharlal Nehru and the pious, anti-Western Punjabi poet Muhammed Iqbal....the much-touted anti-imperialist character of the war of independence earned (him) the lasting respect of socialists – his high-handed suppression of the Turkish Left notwithstanding....(he) continued to loom large in the Muslim world long after his radical secular reforms had made a mockery of his early Islamic posturing....When he died....his memory, the All India Muslim League declared, would “inspire Muslims all over the world with courage, perseverance and manliness.””(129-30) How deeply, surely, these observations speak of questions concerning long-term relations between the West and the Islamic world. However:

“....two paths to global leadership lay wide open to Mustafa Kemal in 1922: he could either capitalize on Ottoman possession of the caliphate in order to seize the mantle of pan-Islamic leadership, or he could set himself up as an anti-imperialist model for Asian and

African socialists. But it was at this juncture that (his) Turkist, scientific, and pro-Western leanings became manifest, leading him and the Turkish nation down an uncharted path that combined intense nationalism with an extreme commitment to Western secularism.”(130-131)

Among the books that shaped Atatürk’s views was Leone Caetani’s *Annali dell’Islam* in Turkish translation, a typically “positivist” study of Islam, whose main conclusions – that its revelations were myths, that the Qur’an was written by Muhammad, that the Prophet adopted many practices from Judaism, and that the driving force behind Islamic expansion was not religious zeal but the rapacity of the Arabs – Kemal strongly agreed with and used in a chapter he wrote on the origins of Islam for an official high school textbook. How bemused must devout Moslems have been at the following:

“In Mustafa Kemal’s vision, nationalism was to replace religion though a radical reinterpretation of Islam from a Turkish nationalist perspective. Following Caetani, he believed that Islam had become a “real religion and belief system” only when the Moslem Arabs turned to subjugating non-Arab peoples. A chapter for the high school textbook....described this process as the start of the “Arab-Turkish struggle,” in which “torrents of Bedouins overflowing from the Arabian deserts moved toward cultivated and prosperous (Turkish cities) through Iranian valleys”....Islam was an Arab faith and a vehicle for Arab domination: “The Turks too, had been a great nation before accepting the religion of the Arabs.” However, the “Arab religion....loosened the national ties of the Turkish nation” and “benumbed national feelings and enthusiasm for the nation, because the aim of the religion established by Muhammad prompted an Arab nationalist policy....Those who accepted Muhammad’s religion had to suppress their identities....the Turkish nation resembled those who commit the Qur’an to memory without understanding the meaning of a single word of it and thus become senile.””(132) (Was Atatürk thinking here of people like his poor mother!?)

The ideal model that Atatürk took for creating the new state structure “was France’s Troisième République (1870-1940), which he viewed as a genuine republic and the most successful regime in the history of humankind. He approved of official France’s militant anticlericalism, its pugnacious *laïcité*, and its idealistic *solidarité* as described by Alfred Fouillée.”(134) Atatürk had translations of studies on political parties in the Third Republic prepared for his perusal. Earlier Ottoman “scientific” blueprints were deemed irrelevant now that Turkey consisted only of Turks and Kurds, as also was the ancient institution of the caliphate, which although still respected outside Turkey, could be of little use for domestic Turkish purposes.

Hanioglu suggests that in Russia “Marxism-Leninism lent itself to the development of an effective set of tools for state building more easily than crass scientism”(133), but this ignores the fact that Marx’s original notion of “socialist revolution” was based on the

premise that the proletariat would have become a massive majority in society, which could undertake a radically democratic transformation in an advanced capitalist society, highly developed economically, technologically, institutionally, culturally, and in terms of educational awareness; not a “backward” (in Marxist terms) autocratic, semi-feudal, poor country like Russia. It can be argued that a mass-transformative, grass-roots led, socially self-determining revolution as envisaged by Marx himself was quite impossible given the conditions of Russia in 1917 (if indeed it could be possible under any real social conditions), and that the eventual Bolshevik ideology of “Marxism-Leninism” was largely a Stalinist fabrication invented while the Stalinist state was being constructed, and which completely twisted the ideas and ideals of “authentic” Marxism.

If republicanism was the supposed political basis of the new Turkish state, its ideological, social and cultural basis was “Turkism”. In one crucial speech of 1922 Kemal began by advancing certain ideas gleaned from Joseph de Guignes’s eighteenth-century study *Histoire générale des Huns, des Turcs, des Mogols et des autres Tartares occidentaux*. Kemal “extolled the magnificent past of the Turkish people....Noah had a grandson named Turk, who was the ancestor of the Turkish nation....the Turks had established major states in Central Asia over 1,500 years ago. Then came the encounter with the Arabs (with their new religion Islam and its) swift expansion....Consequently, rival sultanates laying claim....(to the sacred office of the caliphate, the successor of the Prophet) emerged throughout the Muslim world....(then) the Turks penetrated the Caucasus, Anatolia, Iran, and Iraq, and reduced the ‘Abbasid caliphs to vassalage. Thereafter, Turkish rulers tolerated the existence of the caliphate as a separate institution within their magnificent state....in 1922, Mustafa Kemal dexterously argued....it was entirely appropriate that the Turkish Grand National Assembly, which represented national sovereignty and worldly government, should coexist with a caliph bereft of temporal power....

“Kemal had made three significant points. First, he had presented the development of the caliphate strictly within the context of *history*, and not as a *religious* issue. Second, he had presupposed a fundamental dichotomy between sovereignty and the caliphate. Third, he had implicitly rejected the accepted view, propounded by the ‘ulamā’, that the caliphate and sultanate were inseparable.”(137-9)

A significant move cited by Hanioglu, once Atatürk’s absolute political supremacy was assured, “....was his abrupt dismissal of the imam assigned to the Turkish Grand National Assembly....(explaining that) “We do not need such things (prayers) here....You may perform them in a mosque. We did not win the war with prayers, but with the blood of our soldiers.”(145) Nevertheless, the “new Vatican-style (caliphate)....remained a major obstacle to the secular transformation....and its abolition was incomparably more difficult than the termination of the sultanate....large numbers of Sunni Muslims all over the Islamic world viewed it as the paramount Muslim establishment charged with the defense of their rights against Western encroachment....Under attack at home and abroad, Mustafa Kemal,

after receiving assurances of the military's support, launched the abolition process.”(147-150)

A curious and not very edifying story surrounds the way Atatürk asked Mehmed Seyyid to defend the abolition of the caliphate from an Islamic viewpoint at a parliamentary group meeting:

“After reiterating Mustafa Kemal's thesis that the Turkish Revolution was the greatest revolution in the history of humankind....(he) stressed that the question of the caliphate was political and temporal in nature, and had nothing to do with....the Muslim system of belief....He also underscored the importance of issuing laws that were “in conformity with the traditions and customs of Turkishness.” Here he made one fatal mistake in an otherwise brilliant defense of Mustafa Kemal's position. Underestimating the president's commitment to Westernization, he mentioned the Swiss Civil Code as a clear example of something that could not possibly be adopted by a truly Turkish legislature. As a result, he lost his cabinet portfolio three days later....(and) died shortly before the Turkish assembly adopted a slightly modified version of the Swiss Civil Code in 1926....(which ended many Islamic practices such as polygamy). Keeping abreast of Mustafa Kemal's avant-garde program was not easy.”(150-151)

On the same day that the caliphate was abolished, Kemal established the Directorate of Religious Affairs, with which he wanted to tame the power of religion and harness it to his own programme of reform. The directorate was to spearhead a process whereby Islam would be opened to progress and modernity and usher in a society guided by “scientism” (as Hanioglu terms it) and Turkism. Atatürk's idea was to initiate a reform movement similar, so he thought, to the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century in Europe, which would prompt a secularizing, Turkish Renaissance in the twentieth century. (His intention was not simply to suppress religion (yet), as he thought the Bolsheviks were doing in the Soviet Union.) But unlike other Westernizers in the Moslem world, instead of wanting to adapt “modernity” to Islamic realities, what he wanted to do was open Islam to modernity. “Whereas (the Arab) Muhammed 'Abduh worried about how to reconcile modern Western headgear with Islam, Mustafa Kemal was bent on reconciling Islam with the practice of wearing a hat.”(231)

The idea of launching a kind of Reformation was a fascinating one, but the assumed parallels are obviously fraught with difficulties. For one thing, Protestantism emerged as a more or less “spontaneous” phenomenon, not something master-minded and directed from above, by the state, at least not at first. Also, a central impulse of Protestantism, originally, was supposedly to restore the original impulses of Christianity, not to foment a secularization of society, though in the longer run it did do just that. Puritanical Muslim movements such as Wahhabism and Salafism, which proposed a return to the original sources of Islam in order to create a new orthodoxy, were not what Atatürk wanted at all.

He himself remarked that “I do not want to become a Luther.”(154) It must however be admitted that his grand conception was extraordinarily bold and imaginative, as well as perhaps unique.

Kemal’s programme involved scholars making new interpretations of Islamic law, turning to a new library of books drawn from all over the world; a new Turkish translation of the Qur’an with a multivolume commentary on the text; and prayers to be held in Turkish (which met with little enthusiasm and was abandoned in 1928). It was thought that the orthodox religious establishment would thus become obsolete, religion more privatized and Turkified. Madrasahs were closed down and Shari’a Courts abolished in 1924. Atatürk asserted that: “Primitive individuals seeking moral and material prosperity through the guidance of such and such a sheikh despite the enlightenment of science, technology, and civilization as a whole should not exist in Turkish society.”(155-6) But concludes Hanioglu, “Efforts toward the Turkification of Islam made little headway among the masses....There was something naïve about this assumption that the role of religion in society could be gradually diminished until such time as the world attained a higher stage of human evolution and was ready to accept the “world religion” of science.”(156-7)

No doubt Kemal is not the first “idealistic” or “visionary” revolutionary to embrace such naivety in one form or another. Hanioglu mentions in an interesting footnote that Kemal was deeply impressed by the subsection called “The Next Stage of History” in H.G. Wells’s *The Outline of History: Being a Plain History of Life and Mankind*.”(157) However, “The downfall of the single ruling party in the first free Turkish elections held in 1950 was to mark the end of the religious reforms, and the return of the Arabic call to prayer in Turkey.”(157)

Other important symbolic changes included adoption of the Gregorian calendar, Sunday as the weekly holiday, the replacement of the European hat for the fez, the Europeanisation of the family naming system (though with names evoking the ancient Turkish past), and the switch from the Arabo-Persian Ottoman script to a modified Latin alphabet. “He worked,” remarks Hanioglu humourously “as if he were Leo the Isaurian, Martin Luther, the Baron d’Holbach, Ludwig Büchner, Emile Combes, and Jules Ferry rolled into one.” Interesting times for Turkey, though achieving “limited penetration of the masses.”(159)

Summarising “Kemalist nationalism”, Hanioglu has this to say:

“The new ideology....was a modified, scientifically sanctioned version of Turkish nationalism. There were several associated cults: a Turkish cult of reason, reminiscent of those of the French and American revolutions, based on Enlightenment ideas as well as on late nineteenth and early twentieth century scientism; an institutional cult of the republic, which aspired to create a sentiment reminiscent of the French *esprit républicain*; a personality cult surrounding Mustafa Kemal, “the savior Gazi”; and a further institutional

cult around his own Republican People's Party. In the 1930s, his followers and party pulled together various strands of these cults to create Kemalism, an all-encompassing state ideology based on the sayings and writings of Mustafa Kemal.”(161)

Republican textbooks moved from the “appearance of mammals....to the start of tool-making to the emergence of civilized life in the Turkish homeland in 9000 BC....(asserting that) “the real evolution of humankind will be properly illuminated when the pickaxe of science breaks ground in Central Asia....the Turkish homeland.””(162) Kemal charged the Turkish History Society with highlighting Turkish involvement in the origins and evolution of human civilization. The latter's *The Outlines of Turkish History* (described by Hanioglu as a “Wellsian oeuvre....sought to reconcile scientism, Darwinism, racial theories, and the Turkic past and to explain world history from the emergence of the cosmos to the establishment of the Turkish Republic under “Mustafa Kemal's flag.””(163) In 1938 “the absolute victory of the thesis was declared, and criticisms....” - though it is surprising any were still allowed - “were denounced as....“incontestably unscientific” (a stance reminiscent of....Lysenkoism in the Soviet Union).”(164)

The remarkable thing to wonder about the “Turkish history thesis” – a combination of bits and pieces of archeological knowledge with unbridled fantasy – is whether Kemal (who as I have suggested was not a fool intellectually) actually believed in it himself, or whether it entailed a complete opportunism, a question which always lingers in the mind with respect to some of the maniacal official or unofficial Nazi fantasies of those times. (There is some evidence for example that Hitler himself did not believe in all of them, such as Himmler's enthusiasm for the idea that the Germans and the Japanese had some kind of common origin.)

According to this “Turkish history thesis”, the cradle of human civilization was Central Asia, the Turkish homeland. From there the Turks had migrated to all Old World continents, establishing the Sumerian and Hittite empires, and helping the Chinese and Indians to produce their civilizations. Turkic peoples also migrated to Crete and Italy, where they helped to found the Greek and Roman civilizations. This was a bastardised application of ideas from the German diffusionist school of anthropology, which was a serious theoretical current, even if later disputed on the basis of new evidence. “Turks lived clothed during the stone (Neolithic) age in 12,000 BC, while Europeans reached that stage 5,000 years later....(thus) the twentieth-century Turk in Anatolia was the descendent of the race that first gave humankind fire, bread, clothing, tools, and domesticated animals.”(165)

The nationalistic usefulness of these bizarre notions lay in the fact that they undercut any sense of Atatürk's regime being obeisant to European ideas, as the Turks had been responsible for bringing into being European Civilization in the first place. Now Turkey could reclaim its heritage, and advance beyond Europe, where it should have anyway remained if its glorious civilizing trajectory had not been subverted and undermined, for a

few mere centuries, by Islam. It also served the purpose of preempting claims by rival nationalisms that the Turks had arrived later in Anatolia and the Balkans than Greeks or Slavs. It presented Turkey as the fountain of Western civilization, and thus integral to it, indeed ultimately superior to it. Similarly, Hanioglu cites Atatürk's claim to the region called Alexandra Sanjak, awarded to Syria under the French mandate, on the grounds that it had once been part of the Hittite empire, where Turkic peoples had settled long before the Arabs. And in respect of the conflict with Greece, he could claim not just that the Turks were the founders of Greek civilization, but that the Trojans had been of Turkish origin (fascinatingly, he could base this claim on a Renaissance belief that the Turks had descended from the Trojans).

Another somewhat maverick European figure – this time one Eugene Pittard, a French anthropologist, enters the picture here. Pittard maintained that Turks and Greeks had racial similarities which explained why many Turks had light-eyes, as after all they had arrived in Europe earlier than the Greeks. One of Kemal's adopted daughters called Âfet İnan (sadly Hanioglu never explains why or when, or in what personal context or circumstances of his life the Gazi adopted these daughters, nor at what ages the girls were adopted, nor how many there were of them, though they seem to have had some significant role in his rule) wrote a dissertation under this Pittard's supervision. She conducted an extensive state-sponsored research project for which Pittard wrote an introduction, in which the latter's principles of "anthropometry" were used to establish supposed scientific bases for Turkish identity. Meanwhile, a Turkish anthropologist called Şevket Aziz, whom Kemal made a member of the Society for the Examination of Turkish History in 1932, brought a peasant family with a blond child to the Society's congress to prove that Turks were descended from an "Alpine" race; while the investigations of remains in cemeteries by other "anthropologists" claimed to demonstrate that Turks were a race superior to both Jews and Greeks. A particularly absurd "anthropometrical" investigation of the exhumed remains of the Ottoman architect Sinan (d. 1588), was claimed to prove that "the genius's skull showed that (he)...was not only culturally, but racially Turkish." (171) But in fact Sinan had been a *devsirme*, a Christian boy seized by the Ottoman state.

Atatürk accepted the thesis of a Pole named Borzęcki who had fled to the Ottoman Empire after the unsuccessful 1848 revolution in Poland, and claimed to find similarities between Turkish and Latin. Kemal's reading of Bernard Carra de Vaux's study of the Etruscan language satisfied him that Latin had originated from proto-Turkish. These and other essays convinced Kemal that modern Turkish was "the culmination of an evolutionary process beginning with the initial tongue of civilized humanity, from which all other languages derived." (173) These kinds of ideas are probably better described as "pseudo-scientific" rather than "scientistic", the term Hanioglu normally uses.

The first director of the Turkish Language Association, Samih Rif'at, personally appointed by Kemal, claimed that Indo-European and Semitic languages had all derived from the

proto-Turkish spoken in Central Asia thousands of years ago. The government charged that “pure Turkish words” should be collected from the various local Turkish dialects, and from folktales and ancient texts, which should then be substituted for the many foreign words – especially those derived from Arabic and Persian – that were “polluting” the Turkish language. Where no authentic Turkish word could be found, a new word should be coined based on an existing Turkish root. Hanioglu refers to a book by Geoffrey Lewis, entitled *The Turkish Language Reform: A Catastrophic Success* in his discussion of ideas that had existed prior to Atatürk’s project concerning the “purification” of Turkish. Hanioglu concludes that:

“As in many fields....Kemal adopted the most radical approach on offer....he stressed the need for “liberating Turkish from the yoke of foreign tongues”....he was “going to defeat the Ottoman (language).””(175) A superb emanation of all this was that Atatürk decided in 1934 no longer to use his birth name Mustafa, on the grounds that it was not Turkish, whilst his personal name, Kemal, a word meaning “perfection” in Arabic, should henceforth be considered Kamal, allegedly an old Turkish term meaning “fortification”.

It seems clear that Atatürk was possessed of a profound psychological, and not merely political need to purge from himself and the Moslem Turkish people all that to him was associated with their historical “decline”, especially vis-à-vis “Europe” and European “success”, and that this also entailed a need to find an identity that was loftier than their European competitors; but not dependent either on recent or recordable history nor on other contemporary, extant “Asian” cultures; rather it was to be based in terms of some imagined, immensely ancient, no longer visible Asian roots. (Coming as he did from cosmopolitan, modernizing Salonica, it is tempting to look for parallels to his kind of outlook elsewhere; such as in that of the Irish modernist poet W.B. Yeats, who grew up largely in London, and later invented a fantastical mythological vision concerning the deep roots and “true being” of the Irish. Similar examples abound, throughout the world, from the South American Andes to Scotland.)

This does not imply that he did not wish for “peaceful” relations with European nations and peoples now or in the future: after all, the Moslem Turks had not asked European minorities to split off from the Ottoman Empire, nor for European encroachments upon it, nor for the ultimate desire of some European powers to see its final dismemberment. (It was of course a disastrous, catastrophic mistake for Ottoman Turkey to enter the First World War on the side of Germany, but this does not seem to have been in accordance with Atatürk’s own wishes at the time.)

Some resentment and distrust of Europe were therefore hardly surprising, but these do not necessarily entail a deep hatred for Europeans (though he does display a certain negative disposition towards the Arabs – for instance, apart from his views of the Arabs quoted

above, he does not, at least as recounted in Hanioglu's book, show an inclination to draw on any ideas from Arab traditions of thought).

Another colourful, obscure, maverick scholar, this time a Viennese called Herman Feodor Kvergić, produced "a grandiose theory based on psychoethnology....His thesis (submitted to Mustafa Kemal in a typewritten essay in 1935) gained fame as the "sun-language theory" (drawing somewhat on Germanic theories about the symbolism of sounds); it maintained that primitive humans started referring to objects with gestures – for example, identifying the most revered object, the sun, with the cry "Aa" – and it claimed that proto-Turkish was the first language in which such sounds, later to become words, were uttered. Under Mustafa Kemal's instructions, the theory was utilized to bolster the grandiose claim that Turkish was the original language of humankind and to provide a theoretical basis for accepting words borrowed from European languages, since these after all originally derived from ancient Turkish. Somewhat inconsistently, although the sun-language theory was also used to claim the Turkic origins of the Semitic languages, it was not used to justify retaining Arabic vocabulary in Turkish. Kvergić became a well-known figure in Turkey....(rendering) valuable services to the Turkish nationalist cause...."(176-7)

Next, with proto-Turkish firmly established as the *Ursprache* of humanity, the final cap was provided by James Churchward, "a British-born American adventurer, mystic, and occultist (whose essays) led (Kemal) to believe that the Turks had brought civilization to the Americas as well...."(178), and thus in the Turkic origin of Amerindian civilizations and languages. With these twin theses of Turkish history and language, "an invention....(of) our Great Leader's towering genius" as the general secretary of the Turkish Language Association expressed it (quoted 180), Atatürk attempted to create a new civic religion, a concept borrowed from Emile Durkheim's *moralité civique*. Having read some of Durkheim's work, Kemal thought nationalism could take on the function of the sacred, and underpin a new secular societal morality. Republican nationalist idealism would take Turkey to new heights, whilst enlightenment, science, and reason would, as for Moses Mendelssohn, become the basis of education. At the same time, rather like "Abdülhamid II (who) had adroitly crafted the image of a pious caliph, father, and savior of Muslims everywhere....(Kemal now) posed as father and savior of the Turks. In November 1934 the Turkish Grand National Assembly bestowed upon him the surname Atatürk – literally, "Father Turk"."(185) Unlike his Hamidian predecessor however, Atatürk's "personality cult" was aided by radio and visual images spread throughout the land, thanks to technology and the removal of traditional Islamic prohibitions against representational images and sculpture. In a Stalin-like manner, many paintings had Atatürk "accepting the gratitude of the people for his extraordinary services and leadership."(186)

Atatürk was absolutely determined that "Kemalism" should be new and distinct to Turkey: "We can only be likened to ourselves."(190) He closed down a Marxist journal called *Kadro* (Cadre) that was trying to theorise the Turkish revolution as a revolution against the

expansion of capitalism and its consequence, colonialism. A Kemalist party leader who launched the journal *Ülkü* (Ideal) in an attempt to produce an ideology modeled on German National Socialism and Italian Fascism, was dismissed from his post and his project terminated. Nevertheless, Hanioglu argues that a right-wing version of Kemalism (advocating authoritarianism under a single-party regime, supported by racial anthropology) became dominant between 1938 and 1950, that is, in the period following Atatürk's death. On the other hand the Turkish history thesis was abandoned after Atatürk, though reform of the Turkish language continued for some while, hence the idea of a "catastrophic success" referred to in the above-mentioned book by Lewis. Events from the Ottoman era however, were reintroduced into Turkish history, and after 1950 the regime sought to mend its relationships with Islam. An intriguing squabble about whether the official emblem for Ankara should be the Hittite sun-disk or a mosque, continued for decades.

"Kemalism is the religion of the Turk", declared the Turkish Language Association as late as 1945.(193) Poems were written comparing Atatürk to the Prophet Muhammed, Moses, and Jesus. Even Hanioglu himself, in spite of his critical stance throughout his book, has to own that: "In retrospect it can be said that Mustafa Kemal attempted one of the greatest societal transformations of modern times. Not only as a statesman, but also as a self-made thinker, he invested tremendous energy in preparing the intellectual groundwork for this momentous project."(194) It is interesting to note that Atatürk's successor İsmet İnönü declared Atatürk the "Eternal Chief" and himself, once in power, as the "National Chief." Hanioglu suggests the latter was emulating Stalin who designated Lenin "Leader of the Revolution" and himself as "Leader of Progressive Humanity". If so, İnönü's efforts did not work: for a while his image replaced Atatürk's on banknotes and stamps, but the cult of Atatürk made a comeback, as well as providing the ideological basis for several later coups. Still today the "Atatürkist System of Thought" is taught in military schools.

A primary objective of the Kemalist project was to convince Turks as well as Europeans that Turkey was European – in a sense "still" European as for many Turks Rumelia had been a more important part of the Ottoman heartland than Anatolia (more densely populated and cosmopolitan), whilst the Ottoman empire had been a "big power player" in Europe for centuries, although a gradually waning one since the late seventeenth century; and if Turkey had moved geographically eastwards it was all the more important to establish its essential Europeanness culturally and ideologically. Herein lay the enormous importance of the Turkish history thesis "...which posited Turks as the founders of world civilization, (and) was designed to create a cultural bond with Europe. A shared culture going back thousands of years to a time before the advent of Christianity or Islam could, it was thought, bolster claims of closeness based on common cultural origins. In Wellsian terms, what happened during the Neolithic age turned out to be more important than the teachings of Jesus or the Islamic conquests." Needless to say, these ideas had a minimal

impact in Europe, though in a general way they did help “to persuade the educated classes (in Turkey) to embrace a new identity.”(202-3)

We can see in this the absolute uniqueness of Atatürk’s project of Turkish Westernization within the Islamic world: Hanioglu briefly compares it with those of some other Muslim leaders, such as Matathir bin Muhammed of Malaysia, who championed “Asian Values” in his authoritarian industrial developmentalism; and with the more limited Westernizing measures adopted by the Iranian Reza Shah Pahlavi. Nevertheless there are many aspects of the complex reality of modern Turkey that do hold considerable parallels with other “modernizations”, both within and outside the Islamic world, and herein lies one of the values in understanding it deeply. In one interesting aside, though it leaves me in some doubt, Hanioglu suggests that Kemalism holds a certain resemblance to the “Israeli sense of belonging to the West despite residing in the East.”(201)

Hanioglu summarises certain foundations established by the reformers of the late Ottoman Empire that Atatürk could build on, thus:

“By the turn of the twentieth century, the Ottoman reformers had succeeded in fashioning a particular brand of modernity that, if it did not succeed in penetrating the lower social strata, was accepted by the elites; they had devised a hybrid legal system that combined Western legal principles with Islamic jurisprudence; they had created a European-style bureaucracy; and they had facilitated the emergence of private companies, a sizable socialist movement, trade unions, materialist journals, suffragettes, a school of fine arts, lotteries, cinemas, theaters, and newspapers featuring advertisements for women’s corsets.”(204-5)

The author suggests that Kemal “thought the Western way of life was not a result of the socioeconomic dynamics prevalent in certain societies, but rather was itself a determinant of those dynamics....adopting Western ways would bring about a transformation in social and cultural life which went far beyond cosmetic changes. It is only with this in mind that one can understand the sudden proliferation in the late 1920s of books purporting to instruct Turks on how to look, behave, and live like Westerners.”(206)

But the actual fact is that fashions and habits, the use of new technologies if they are available, consumeristic values etc. evolve hand in hand with deeper economic, social, and political changes, as the complex, disturbing, sometimes liberating and exciting, at other times frightful processes of “modernization” have shown all over the world. “Progress” is multifaceted, and loses as much as it gains. Nevertheless we can take Hanioglu’s amusing point about the often quixotic character of the modernizing drive he speaks of: “....(in 1927) a Turkish rendition of Gaston Jollivet and Maie-Anne L’Heureux’s *Pour bien connaître les usages mondains* (was published), teaching Turks how to kiss the hand of a lady, make home visits, celebrate the new year, serve Médoc after the second course of a

meal, keep women fit with exercise, and manage interfaith marriages....once all Turkish women and villages looked like these “enlightened,” “modern,” and “progressive” role models, the country as a whole would become an authentic part of the West....(but) most of the civilizing reforms imposed by the government were viewed by the Turkish masses as hostile attempts to displace long-standing Muslim traditions....and (they) quietly persevered in their traditional ways.”(207)

And not surprisingly, particularly for women living in the countryside of Anatolia: religion, tradition, customs, clothing, and life-style generally - though certain things they would no doubt have much liked to see change - would have involved very much more than “identity” as it is currently conceived: these would have gone to the very depths of their being, their existence, their existential and ontological security. As Hanioglu says, Kemal had not even set foot in Anatolia until he was in his thirties.

Unlike with his anti-fez reform and requirement that state employees wear the hat – which prompted a resistance even stronger than the abolition of the caliphate had done - Independence Courts actually putting on trial and executing opponents to the reform – Atatürk was cautious about legally abolishing the veil, though he spoke openly of his wish to do so, as of his support for the emancipation of women generally. Legal changes made women equal in various aspects of life; women were accorded the right to vote and stand for election; but in spite of claiming the veil “rendered Turks a laughingstock in the eyes of Europeans, he made no attempt to abolish (it).”(209)

It is clear that Atatürk’s idea of gender equality was for women to be, equally with men, loyal supporters of the republic and republican ideology. In this it is analogous to the legal position of women in Stalin’s Soviet Union: having formally equal rights under the law, so that “Women can march under the banner of Socialism” (to paraphrase Stalin’s slogan). It did not involve ideas associated with what is sometimes called “second-wave feminism”, which gradually evolved in the world from the 1960s onwards – and which concern more than formal and legal rights to equality, taking on board questions of women’s broader roles, their specific needs and qualities, the structure of the family, and of widely embracing societal attitudes and behaviour; which have concerned, and continue to concern complex, as-yet unresolved, and possibly finally unresolvable issues around “equality”, but also of “difference”. Thus Atatürk could speak, apparently without a sense that his words involved any problematical complication, of women as “mothers of the nation.” Nevertheless, his legal advances happened earlier than in some European countries, let alone in many other parts of the world.

A female republican role model in 1937 was combat pilot Sabiha Gökçen, another adopted daughter of Mustafa Kemal, who is depicted in an imposing photograph(211) in aviator uniform gazing, hand shielding eyes, at the sky. The photo has her resemble both Amy Johnson and British advertising posters from the Second World War that encouraged

women to join the armed forces. Hanioglu tells us, sadly, that she bombarded Kurdish rebels from the air.

In remarkable contrast was Keriman Halis, who won the Miss World contest in Belgium in 1932 (unfortunately there is no photograph of her). For Kemal she was an exemplar of “the exquisitely preserved beauty of the Turkish race”(212), and he gave her the name “Ece” from an ancient Turkic word meaning “queen”. And then there was the above mentioned adopted daughter Âfet İnan , a history teacher who staunchly defended the Turkish history thesis in her research and lectures and later edited and published one of Atatürk’s diaries. And it is worth considering that women in 1935 made up nearly 5% of the Turkish Grand National Assembly, a figure not surpassed until 2007. Yet the Turkish Women’s Union, which Hanioglu claims rendered important services to the regime, was closed down after causing annoyance to it by some “slightly feminist” speeches, but in what way these speeches were feminist he does not explain. However, in spite of the extreme limitations within Kemalism’s attitude towards Turkish women, there is a kind of unpatronising tone to it, a sense of women’s “strength”, indeed toughness, which is perhaps quite important, and certainly a complete acceptance of women’s equal intellectual capacities. Such considerations enter the very core of Atatürk’s paradoxical outlooks.

Vis-à-vis whether Atatürk held anti-Semitic proclivities or not, it seems worthy of note that in 1907 he discussed at length in Jerusalem the issue of alphabet reform with Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, a leading figure in the revival of Hebrew. Later he asserted, in his characteristic manner that “The Arabic alphabet had not been revealed by (the angel) Gabriel.”(217) This is in line with his constant assertions that holy books do not float down from heaven, but are written by human beings. Such views do not however necessarily indicate that he harboured psychologically disturbed, hateful or murderous attitudes towards any particular group of religious believers as such, whether Jews, Christians, or Muslims, nor indeed, in spite of his extraordinary convictions concerning the “racial superiority” of the Turks, towards other particular national or “ethnic” groups or peoples as such. It seems from reading Hanioglu that it was the formation of a new, secular, “modernized”, militarily strong and proud Turkish state that was most central to Atatürk, not (in spite of Kemalism’s racial ideologies), racist resentments towards “others” – though it can be imagined that the latter could easily result from the former. So far as religion was concerned, this was something that would “naturally” disappear in the evolution of Turkey, along with the rest of humanity, towards a new, “scientific” consciousness.

It would be valuable to review Hanioglu’s interesting discussion of Atatürk’s views about the arts, and his Westernizing reforms in these, but space precludes. Suffice it to say, his regime promoted Western sculpture and painting, as well as music. In spite of enjoying traditional Turkish songs, he was most impressed by a performance of *Carmen* that he saw in 1914 in Sofia, and is said to have remarked afterwards that he understood how the Bulgarians had defeated the Ottomans the previous year. On hearing a famous Egyptian

singer called Munīra al-Mahdiyya in 1928 on the other hand, he said, “....Oriental music....this primitive music is not sufficient to express the Turk’s spirit and intense feelings”(220), in a judgement that can even amaze a Westerner who knows only some of this powerful Arabic and Turkish music. Banning *Alla Turca* music, he invited Paul Hindemith to visit Turkey and reform Turkish music. Hanioglu concludes:

“The far-reaching reforms instigated by Mustafa Kemal encompassed the totality of life: from speech to writing, from modes of dress to art, from conceptions of history to the very definition of time, from the inculcation of a sense of belonging to the construction of identity....A European visitor (to Ankara in 1938) would have been able to decipher some signs written in the modified Latin alphabet, such as “telefon”, to do business on a Friday, and to make sense of a (calendar!) date....Although a small number of people in Turkey today pay much attention to the Turkish history thesis....a majority....views Turkey as a genuinely European country.”(222-4)

It would be interesting of course to discuss the issue of Turkey’s wish to join the European Union today, but again space precludes. Our own opinion, if it be allowed is, briefly, that Turkey should be welcomed both because the Turks wish it and because it would be a further move towards cosmopolitan solidarity, after an extremely protracted and often dreadful history concerning Turkey’s relations with the “rest of Europe.” If the Turks feel European, let them in. Besides, there exists no clear definition as to what constitutes Europe either culturally or geographically. These are mental constructs that have changed and developed over time and will continue to change and develop. The issue of religion has nothing to do with it, as there are millions of Moslems in Europe, and Bosnia is clearly a European country with a large Moslem majority. Nor should the question of who arrived where or when in history be a matter central to the issue (though of great interest, if it can be approached “objectively”, and without prejudiced “baggage”). There *is* an issue of democratic and civil rights however; I say this not because European countries have been in the past (far from it) nor still are often shining examples of their respect. But at least membership of the EU offers some kind of *potential* lever (though it shirked its responsibilities abysmally in the case of Bosnia which was not in the EU but clearly part of Europe, merely bickering and prevaricating), to exert collective pressure against their abuses. At least in principle governments should accept minimal standards in these regards.

(There is absolutely no mention in this book of the Armenian Genocide of 1915. I am no expert on the matter, but like most people I have heard and read that as many as one and a half million Armenians were massacred in 1915 by the Turkish army. It is extraordinary that a book which deals with this period of Turkish history does not discuss or analyse it at all, or even attempt to refute it, if that is what is deemed correct. It seems obvious that whatever happened, it bears upon Ataturk’s life-experience, even if he was not involved. The only vague allusion to it is in the following remark: “By and large, Americans (after the First World War) were strongly anti-Turkish, out of sympathy for the sufferings of the

Ottoman Armenians.”(90) It is also mentioned that “the Allies treated Enver Pasha as a war criminal”(84), but with no further comment or explanation. What history that covered the period of the Second World War would not refer directly to the mass murders of Jews or Gypsies: the Holocaust, or its even more terrifyingly named, Shoah? Or a history of more recent events around the collapse of Yugoslavia that would not mention the “ethnic cleansing” and mass murder of Bosnian Moslems? The same surely applies to major atrocities committed at any time, against and by whomsoever, anywhere in the world.)

In his Conclusion Hanioglu provides a succinct evaluation of Atatürk: “....Atatürk was no thinker of the order of Auguste Comte, Karl Marx, or Lenin. He was not a philosopher who produced a systematic theory attempting to encompass all aspects of life and society.”(226) This is undoubtedly true, but when he asserts that “The ideas he espoused had been widely discussed in detail long before the republican reforms, and were not novelties originated by the founder of the republic”(227), one is inclined to observe that Lenin also developed his ideas in a context of much earlier debate, that Comte certainly developed his ideas partly on the basis of those of Saint-Simon, whilst Marx also, however remarkable and original a thinker, developed his ideas through absorption and criticism of many others, particularly certain German philosophers, French “utopian socialists”, and British political economists. Eminently clear however, is Hanioglu’s assertion that:

“Had the Great War not occurred (and the subsequent Ottoman collapse), the normal development of Ottoman society would not, in all likelihood, have brought about the triumph of these ideas in the 1920s....(along with) Mustafa Kemal’s rise to power....”(227) And after reading this book it is difficult to disagree with Hanioglu that his leadership “has been overlooked by Western historiography as a minor postwar affair in the Near East....(rather than marking) the first challenge to the new world order unilaterally imposed by the seemingly invincible victors....(and that) societal conditions largely predetermine(d)....the singularity of the opportunity he seized.” To paraphrase Marx, human beings make their own history, but not in conditions of their own choosing. (A brief reference to “the new world order” imposed upon the new Arab nations formed out of the dissolution of the Ottoman empire by these same victors, might also have been worth making however, along with the problems this caused them.)

Equally valid is the following:

“He was not a Marxist, but he developed a similarly unlimited confidence in his beliefs regarding where the world was going and where his own society had its place in this evolutionary process,”(228) though the caveat should be added that not all versions of Marxism have contained such a sense of certainty (nor did all of Marx’s own writing) – some have considered a “socialist future” a possibility that depends on human agency, not as an inevitability.

It is clear that “The various ideas (Kemal) collected (sometimes from obscure or even occult writers) tended to be tools for the implementation of his grand project, not goals in and of themselves. Consequently, his intellectual reach knew no limits; as a visionary, he took anything that seemed useful from any source in order to further his political program and realize his utopia....(yet he) was a product of the social realities of his time....(which included) his Salonican background, his education at nonreligious and military schools, his service in the army, his participation in the Young Turk movement, and his membership in the CUP....”(229) It is a little unclear however why Hanioglu sometimes describes Atatürk as a product of long-developing intellectual currents, whilst at other times as having evolved a “conception of Utopia as nationalist....(that) was bold and original....”(230); though of course the author of this generally subtle book may simply be indicating that Atatürk was really both.

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