Thinking Beyond the Secular-Pious Divide: A Relational Study Within and In-Between Secular Feminists and Pious Feminists in Turkey

by

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Graduate Department of Political Science
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Abstract

My dissertation examines the relationship between secular feminists and pious feminists in Turkey from a relationship-centered, transformation-oriented, multi-discursive approach. Despite the growing research on either one group or the other, the current literature that brings together the two sides of the debate and explores the interpersonal relationships between the two women’s groups is at best minimal. This lack of relational focus not only reinforces the secular-pious binary in Turkey and reduces the complex and dynamic relationship between the two women’s groups into a relentless, seemingly irresolvable political opposition, but also, it limits further opportunities for possible future collaboration. My study is an effort to relationally rethink and deconstruct this common assumption. Based on my data from open-ended, one-on-one interviews, group interviews, and participant observation in Turkey in between 2011 and 2013, I analyze secular feminist and pious feminist narratives and identify alternative concepts to rethink the relationship between the two groups beyond the secular-pious divide. In the intersection of applied theory and empirical ethnographic research, I provide detailed discussions of secular feminist friendship (Chapter 3), pious feminist autonomy (Chapter 4), and the overall dynamics of disagreement and collaboration between the two groups (Chapter 5). In this manner,
rather than predominantly relying on the assumptions of the secular/pious and analyzing how it predetermines feminist relationships, my analysis contributes to the previous debates by analyzing feminist relationships and how they iteratively challenge the assumptions of the secular/pious. While documenting both group’s perceptions of selfhood and otherhood, I also document how these perceptions change when my participants think about their Other in relation to themselves. I pursue this task by posing two inter-related questions: How can secular feminists and pious feminists in Turkey transcend their political fixities and transform their relationship in a more plural and collaborative manner? How can secular feminists and pious feminists in Turkey act upon their shared feminist interests instead of political disagreements, and in this way collaborate on the same women’s civil society project as equal partners and by mutual consent?
Acknowledgments

Before starting my PhD studies at the University of Toronto, I knew that I wanted to study a topic that personally mattered to me. Of course, I was very excited for the opportunity and to travel to the other side of the world and to a city that I did not know anyone. However, never could I imagine neither how demanding this process could be and how it would change me as a person. I am thankful for everything I have encountered during this process, including its agony and exhaustion, which taught me a lot about myself and life, especially their darker parts that make the light visible. Yet, none of this would be possible without the continuous encouragement, support, and love of my colleagues, my mentors, and my friends—who have become a second family to me and made Toronto my second home. With their support and love, I was able to carry on and keep on writing every day, even if that meant only 15 minutes a day, when things were heavy and life had other plans for me as well as for the people that I deeply cared about. Now that this chapter of my life is about to be over, I wish everyone that holds a dear place in my heart could live long enough or stay healthy to share this moment with me as they did during all the other crossroads of my life.

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Preface

After 17 separate working-group sessions held in different regions throughout Turkey, during the final meeting of “The Trails of Woman in Democracy” (Demokraside Kadın İzleri) on March 4, 2011, representatives from 72 different women’s organizations got together and presented their recommendations to the women members of the parliament in Ankara. Even in such a diverse crowd, I could easily pin down the two women’s groups that my dissertation is about: the secular feminists and pious feminists in Turkey. They sat at different sides, together with their friends and in their corresponding symbolic dress codes: the women with the headscarf, on my right, and the women with tailored suits (tayyör) and Atatürk badges, on my left. Despite the distance that separated them, there they were, in the same room, contributing to the same civil society project. Seated in between the two groups that day, I remember thinking that perhaps it might be easier than I thought to bring secular feminists and pious feminists together in a focus group session and let them deliberate on the idea of a possible collaboration.

This was the initial idea for my dissertation: After conducting one-on-one interviews with secular feminists and pious feminists, I wanted to bring them together in a focus group session, and document the changes in their perceptions once they deliberatively debate their opportunities for a collaboration. I was aware this idea could be too ambitious both empirically and theoretically because: (1) empirically, the previous comparative studies that deal with both secular feminists and pious feminists were very rare, and I was pushing for focus group sessions; and (2) theoretically, I was aiming towards a situated relational framework that may perhaps locate an interconnection between two separate broader literatures that are not often considered complementary, theories of feminist subjectivity and theories of deliberative democracy. Despite my efforts during the earlier phases of my dissertation in between 2011 and 2013, this idea was not successful.

While putting together my research proposal, I had already thought about this possibility. My original alternative plan was to analyze the reasons why the focus group sessions did not work out. However, I also assumed that, in that scenario, I would get definitive negative answers from one side or the other. Contrary to what I expected, most of my participants, both secular

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1 In this project (which was funded by National Endowment for Democracy (NED), Flying Broom worked in corporation with YASA-DER (Yasama Derneği). More information can be retrieved from: [http://www.ucansupurge.org/turkce/index2.php?id=11](http://www.ucansupurge.org/turkce/index2.php?id=11) [in Turkish].

2 Women MPs from all 4 political parties in the parliament at that time were present. Including: Gürdal Akşit from Justice and Development Party (JDP), or Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP) in Turkish; Gaye Erbatur from Republican People’s Party (RRP), or CHP in Turkish; Şenol Bal from Nationalist Movement Party (NMP), or Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi (MHP) in Turkish; Peace and Sebahat Tuncel from Democracy Party (PDP), or Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi (BDP) in Turkish (currently a part of Peoples’ Democratic Party, or Halkların Demokratik Partisi, in Turkish). Sebahat Tuncel is currently detained in prison.
and pious, replied affirmatively to my question and accepted my invitations. The focus group sessions did not work because of last minute cancellations from secular feminists. The problem therefore was not exactly their willingness to cooperate: At the level of thought, secular feminists were willing to work with pious feminists. At the level of actualization, however, their hesitancy was more powerful. The problem was, therefore, transforming the thought into action. My study in this regard has become an effort to reflect on this conflicting tendency in the narratives of my study, in which both women’s groups prefer a more cooperative relationship, but are hesitant, doubtful, and distrustful towards one another—questioning each other’s authenticity, sincerity, and good will.

Since I had originally built my project on the idea of a collaboration between the two groups, in my one-on-one and group interviews, I was able to gather rich ethnographic data on secular feminist and pious feminist perceptions of a possible collaboration and cooperation between the two groups in the future. I noticed that, in doing so, I had already formulated my questions in relational terms, which ended up motivating my participants to think about the other group relationally, rather than presuming a bounded, separate, Other. In the following pages, therefore, I discuss secular feminist perceptions of limits of feminist friendship or pious feminist perceptions of feminist autonomy, not because I was interested in these themes prior to my fieldwork, but because these were the two main themes that I identified in the narratives of my participants as primary obstacles towards a collaboration between the two women’s groups when my participants tried to think about the other in relation to themselves and beyond the discursive boundaries of the secular-pious divide.
Introduction

In my dissertation, I examine the complex and convoluted relationship between secular feminists and pious feminists in the women’s rights movement in Turkey. In the current literature, the stagnant relationship between the two groups is often considered a path-dependent extension of the historically deep-seated, increasingly polarizing, politico-discursive secular-pious divide. Consequently, the actual dynamics of disagreement as well as potential openings for cooperation and collaboration between the two women’s groups remain underexplored. Although there is prominent research on either secular feminists or pious feminists, the studies about their actual interpersonal relationships, including comparative studies, are at best minimal. I suggest that this general lack of relational focus, both in the literature and in public debates, reinforces the discursive secular-pious binary and limits further opportunities for possible future collaboration. As a result, it also strengthens the idea that the disagreement between secular feminists and pious feminists in Turkey can be deduced entirely from the more general secular-pious divide, and therefore, can easily be reduced to an “ordinary, obvious, and irresolvable” opposition.

My study, in this regard, is an effort to relationally rethink and deconstruct this assumed-to-be obvious and self-apparent disagreement in the women’s movement in Turkey. I am particularly interested in the parts of the relationship between the two women’s groups that cannot be completely determined by the broader political polarization. That is, I critically account for the secular-pious divide’s strong evaluative power, predictive capacity, and situated complexity. However, I do not limit my approach by what it prescribes. I also explore the actual interactions between the two women’s groups, which offer room for both fixity and fluidity, disagreement and collaboration, critique and conformity, divergence and convergence. Hence, instead of limiting my analysis with one group only or within the discursive boundaries of the

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2 Although her study is not relational, Sibel Astarcıoğlu Bilginer’s study on feminist solidarity might be an exception. See: Sibel Astarcıoğlu Bilginer, “Feminist Solidarity: Possibility of Feminism in Solidarity Practices,” (Master thesis, Middle East Technical University, 2008). Yael Navaro-Yashin’s study also includes both secular and pious women as her case studies, for more details, please see: Yael Navaro-Yashin, *Faces of the State: Secularism and Public Life in Turkey* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2002).

3 “Ordinary, obvious, and irresolvable conflict” (olağan, aşıkar, ve çözümsüz) was the way one of my (hardliner) secular feminist participants (Derya Ertürk) used to describe the relationship between the two groups at the beginning of my interview.
secular-pious binary in the Turkish context, I also examine the self-constitutive relationships within and in-between secular feminists and pious feminists, and how these relationships simultaneously affirm and challenge the more general secular-pious divide. While documenting both groups’ perceptions of selfhood and otherhood, I also document how these perceptions change when my participants think about their Other in relation to themselves. I pursue this task by positing a key question: How can secular feminists and pious feminists in Turkey transcend their political fixities and transform their relationship in a more plural and collaborative manner? By asking this question, my aim is to locate alternative feminist vocabularies of disagreement in the narratives of my participants that might help both groups to rethink their political fixities, expand their imaginations, and transform their relationship in more plural and collaborative terms. Thus, my study challenges the binary vision of the secular-pious divide in the particular locus of the women’s right movement in Turkey with a relationship-centered, transformation-oriented, multi-discursive approach.

Based on the data I have collected during my fieldwork between 2011 and 2013 from in-depth, repeated, open-ended one-on-one interviews, group interviews, and participant observation in Ankara, Istanbul, and Izmir, I analyze secular feminist and pious feminist narratives and identify alternative concepts to rethink their relationship. In the intersection of applied theory and ethnographic research, I provide detailed discussions of secular feminist friendship (Chapter 3), pious feminist autonomy (Chapter 4), and the overall dynamics of disagreement and collaboration between the two groups (Chapter 5). In this manner, rather than predominantly relying on the assumptions of the secular/pious and analyzing how it predetermines feminist relationships, my analysis contributes to the previous academic debates by analyzing feminist relationships and how they iteratively challenge the assumptions of the secular-pious binary in Turkey. In the remaining parts of this introductory chapter, I would like

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4 I have chosen my participants through snowballing method. My study includes representatives from 26 different women’s organizations: İzmir Association for Protection of Women Rights (İzmir Kadın Hakları Koruma Derneği); International Council of Women (Türk Kadınlar Konseyi); Federation of Women Associations of Turkey (Türkiye Kadın Dernekleri Federesi); Turkish Women’s Union (Türkiye Kadınlar Birliği); Hazar Education and Culture, and Solidarity Foundation; Ankara Kadın Hakları Yeni Çözümler Derneği; Association for the Protection of Women Rights; Adayları Destek ve Eğitim Derneği; Federation of Women Organizations of Turkey (Kadının Sosyal Hayatını Araştırma ve İnceleme Derneği); Kadın Adayları Destek ve Eğitim Derneği; Teachers and Students for Women’s Human Rights; Women for Women’s Human Rights; Kadının İnsan Hakları Yeni Çözümler Derneği; Capital City Women’s Platform (Başkent Kadın Platformu); Platform for Meeting Women (Buluşan Kadın Platform); Hazar Eğitim, Kultur ve Dayanışma Derneği; Platform for Women’s Rights; Federation of Women Associations in Turkey (Türkiye Kadınlar Birliği); Federation of University Women Associations in Turkey (Türkiye Üniversiteli Kadınlar Birliği); Turkish Association for University Women (Türkiye Üniversiteli Kadınlar Birliği); Kadın Neden Kadın Derneği; Kadınprints Women’s Platform (Haklı Kadın Platform); Turkish Women’s Platform (Haklı Kadın Platform); Türkiye Soroptimist International of Europe Turkish Federation (Türkiye Soroptımist Kadınlar Birliği); Hazar Eğitim ve Bilim Emekçileri Sendikası; Amargi; Capital City Women’s Platform (Başkent Kadın Platformu). The number of pious participants is lower than my secular participants because, in Turkey, the number of pious women’s organizations is significantly lower than secular women’s organizations.
to frame the key ideas and issues of my study with respect to the relevant literature, including (1) issues of naming and labelling, (2) my relational approach, (3) feminism’s post-secular challenge, (4) the headscarf issue and the secular-pious divide in Turkey, and (5) the significance of collaboration and transformation in my study.

**Naming and Labelling the Two Women’s Groups**

In my study, since I am interested in the idea of a possible collaboration between secular and pious feminists, I limited the scope of my research with the rights-oriented secular and pious women’s groups in the women’s civil society in Turkey because, I thought, a shared concern towards women’s rights might serve as an incentive for both groups to actually care about re-evaluating their relationship, and this might in turn provide a more solid ground for an actual collaboration in the future. During my interviews, I consulted my participants about their preferences regarding confidentiality, anonymity, and labelling. During the time of my interviews, the potential risks involved with my study seemed to be minimal. I, therefore, gave my participants the choice of using their real names, pseudonyms, or assigned numbers. All of my participants verbally confirmed that I could use their real names. However, due to the current political environment in Turkey after the failed coup attempt in July 2016, I decided to use pseudonyms to protect the identities and to ensure the safety of my participants (and the persons that my participants name in their narratives). Throughout my discussion, I only identify the real names of the cities, and if necessary, the names of my participants’ organizations.

I also treated the labels I used throughout my discussion with “ethnographic sensibility.” For this purpose, in our first one-on-one interviews, I consulted each participant of my study about the labels they prefer for themselves and for the other group. In this manner, I documented their perceptions of three main terms I use to describe the two women’s groups in my study: (1) Islamic/Islamist/pious/conservative/headscarved/veiled and (2) Kemalist/secular/secularist and (3) feminist/women.

The secular feminist participants in my study preferred to be called “secular feminists” and “secular women” and they univocally rejected the label “secularist” (laikçi), which they thought was a construct of the leading pro-pious political party, JDP (Justice and Development

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6 They also called themselves “Atatürkçü,” meaning supporters of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. But, they were not sympathetic towards “Kemalist” (same in Turkish) which they considered as a term JDP supporters invented for secular citizens. While Atatürkçü was perceived similar to “secular,” Kemalist was perceived similar to “secularist.”
Party), that did not linguistically make sense in Turkish. While referring to the pious feminists, secular feminists preferred “the women with the headscarf” or “veiled women” (başörtülü kadınlar/kapalı kadınlar or başörtüülüler/kapalılar). They were also tempted to use the word “turban” (türban)—which was a common secular term to differentiate the political headscarf (türban) from the religious headscarf (başörtüsü) during the 1990s. But because of the criticisms they have received, during my interviews they verbally stopped themselves and used hand gestures to describe the political headscarf. Secular feminists thought the labels “pious,” “conservative,” and Islamic could be applied to secular women as well as the women with the headscarf, so they thought “Islamist” would be a better term to describe pious feminists. Prior to my fieldwork, I was using the term “secularist” instead of “secular” to refer to this group. After my fieldwork, I started using “secular” in light of their preferences.

Pious feminist participants of my study had three different preferences: (1) Some preferred to call themselves “conservative women sympathetic to Islam,” who rejected the label Islamist, but accepted the label “feminist.” (2) Some preferred the label “pious women” over Islamic or Islamist. Although they supported the headscarf as a women’s right and acknowledged that they had sympathies for key feminist values, they refused to be labeled as feminists. (3) Some considered themselves proudly as “pious feminists” and delineated that they support women’s secular rights as well as “God-given” rights (Allah tarafından verilen haklar). However, they also cautiously added that they could not say everyone in their organization was a feminist. To label secular feminists, pious feminists generally used Kemalist, secularist, and secular interchangeably, but I observed that they used “Kemalist” more frequently than the others. Prior to my fieldwork, I referred to this second group of my participants by using the terms “Islamic” or “Islamist.” After my fieldwork, I started using “pious” in light of their narratives.

Since the majority of my participants were comfortable with the term feminism and being labelled as feminists, although it is not very common in the previous literature, in my dissertation I generally refer to my participants from both groups as feminists. In Chapter 4, I provide a more detailed discussion on pious women who individually consider themselves feminists and those who do not. Before that, when I quote from my participants who do not consider themselves feminists in my discussion, I explicitly acknowledge it and try to stay close to the preferences of my participants as much as possible.
After asking my participants about their preferred labels, I also asked them about their perceptions about the meaning behind the term feminism or being a feminist. My participants (both secular and pious) commonly referred to three main inclinations: (1) towards the achievement and advancement of women’s rights and freedoms, (2) challenging structural inequalities and prejudices women have to confront, and (3) fighting against socially accepted forms of patriarchy in Turkey. I think, in this regard, the way my participants defined feminism resonates with Elizabeth Bucar’s definition of feminism as “any system of thought that challenges stereotypes that misrepresents women’s actions”7 and “feminist politics as a form of action that attempts to reshape the conditions of women’s individual or collective existence.”8

I also asked my participants about their perceptions of the situated meanings of “the secular” and “the pious” in the Turkish context. According to secular feminists, “the secular” referred to the separation between the state and religious affairs as well as to a deeper commitment towards maintaining and preserving secular values, rights, and freedoms granted by the Kemalist reforms. They considered secularism as a basis for Turkey’s further democratization, modernization, and pluralization. For pious feminists, if “the secular” only pertained to the separation between state and religious affairs, they too could be considered under this label (hence the reason why they preferred “secularist” and “Kemalist” over “secular” when they referred to other secular feminists). According to pious feminists, therefore, the secular meant more than that in the Turkish context. It was also a hierarchal value system that was designed to control religion. In this regard, I think pious feminist perceptions of the secular can be understood in connection with Saba Mahmood’s recent discussion. Building on Talal Asad’s work that locates “political secularism as the modern state’s sovereign power to reorganize substantive features of religious life, stipulating what religion is or ought to be,” Mahmood argues secularism no longer implies “simply the organizing structure for what are regularly taken to a prior elements of social organization (…) but a discursive operation of power that generates these very spheres, establishes their boundaries, and suffuses them with content, such that they come to acquire a national quality for those living within its terms.”9

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8 Bucar, Creative Conformity, xvii.
For my pious participants, “the pious” was a way of describing their individual commitments to the practices and requirements of Islamic piety and a pious way of life, and not to political Islam or pro-pious political parties. For secular feminists, after JDP’s second term, “the pious” has become synonymous with JDP in the Turkish context. It has become a part of JDP’s political vocabulary to manipulate religion, encourage pro-pious favoritism, and undermine secular women’s religiosity. For secular feminists, therefore, “pious” has become a linguistic tool in JDP’s New Turkey that served to strategically empty out the concepts of democracy, rights, and freedoms, and polarize all identity-based conflicts to accumulate more political power for JDP and to ensure its political continuity.

My Relational Approach: Within and In-Between

To challenge the situated discursive circularities between the secular and the pious in the particular context of the women’s movement in Turkey, my study suggests that a relational approach might be helpful for re-grounding the debate on alternative feminist vocabularies of disagreement. In doing so, my study adopts a relational approach to subjectivity that focuses on the actual relationships secular feminists and pious feminists have with each other as well as the relationships they have in their own groups. In this regard, my approach is centered around the relationships “within and in-between” secular feminists and pious feminists in Turkey.10

In her work on subjectivity and intentionality while capturing the dynamics of personal and familial relationships in Lebanon, Suad Joseph introduces Stephen Mitchell’s “relational matrix” as an alternative to the psychoanalytic models based on Freudian drive theory. According to Joseph, Mitchell’s approach aims to bring together the three dimensions of relationality that the previous relational models have separately studied: the self, the other, and the space between the two.11 Suad Joseph argues that, for the Arab world “where attachments are multiple, diverse, constantly shifting in personas,” Mitchell’s approach is applicable. However, Joseph also adds that this approach should be considered in connection with Kenneth Gergen’s relational framework because Mitchell only looks at the relationships between “separate units” and not between different “webs or networks of relationships” like the ones she observed in Lebanon.12 Although I am interested in relationships between different women’s groups in

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10 Here, I take the phrase “within and in between” from Bucar’s discussion. See: Bucar, Creative Conformity, 1.
Turkey rather than familial relationships, I think similar observations can be made about the relationships I analyze in my study regarding the constantly shifting, self-constitutive attachments between different webs and networks of relationships in the women’s movement in Turkey. Therefore, to guide my analysis, I use a similar framework based on Mitchell’s relational matrix and Gergen’s relational multi-being.

According to Mitchell’s categorization, the theories that define relationality by design concentrate on the space between the self and the other, building on the premise that “people are constructed in such a fashion that they are inevitably and powerfully drawn together.” Secondly, the theories that explain relationality by intent focus on the object, saying that we are related because “we crave relatedness.” In this regard, relationality by intent provides “the manner in which various kinds of identifications and ties to other people serve as latticework, holding together one’s personal world.” Lastly, the theories of relationality by implication focus on the “self-pole of the relational field” as they treat “the establishment and preservation of a sense of identity and selfhood as the primary, superordinate human motivation, which also posits certain kinds of interpersonal relations, those crucial for reflexivity, as key psychological building blocks.” In line with Mitchell’s relational matrix, therefore, the overall approach of my study brings together all three dimensions of relationality. For both groups, I study their perceptions of themselves, their other, and their relationship in-between.

Gergen’s main critique of these relational approaches is that, although they stress the interrelatedness between different persons, they nevertheless rely on an assumption of a bounded being. Instead, Gergen calls for the need for thinking about the self as a relational multi-being that evolves through the coordination of different webs of relationships. In this manner, Gergen situates reason, agency, and memory as repeated iterations of action and co-action, or as performances that emerge from former relationships and are generative of new ones.

In line with Gergen’s critique of bounded subjectivity, my analysis does not predominantly focus on secular feminist and pious feminist subjectivities as bounded identities that appear in complete separation. My analysis switches back and forth between secular

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feminists and pious feminists, without fixating one group or the other as the permanent Other. It documents how the two groups self-constitutively evolve in relation to one another. My analysis similarly does not treat the secularism and Islam as two completely separate sources of knowledge. I do not limit my conceptual analysis of secular feminist narratives within the boundaries of Western, secular, feminist ideals, nor pious feminist narratives within a particular discursive tradition of Islamic piety. For example, to explain secular feminist perceptions of feminist friendship in Chapter 3, my theoretical framework draws from Western political thought as well as Islamic thought. Similarly, while analyzing pious feminist narratives of autonomy, my framework calls for a situated, relational re-reading of pious women’s feminist agency in Turkey that negates neither pious affirmation nor feminist critique. In this way, I analyze both subjectivities as liminal identities, both within and in-between, and highlight different patterns in the narratives when my participants respond to relational questions.

I argue that rethinking about the relationship between the two groups from an alternative relational approach might help us to realize that: (1) Despite its eminent predictive power, the secular-pious divide can only partially explain the relationship between secular feminists and pious feminists in Turkey: the constraining part of their relationship, which separately gives meaning to both struggles. (2) There is also a more fluid side to their relationship that is open to creation of new meaning, iteratively constituted by their feminist interactions. Although the latter part of their relationship is currently narrower than the former, it nevertheless exists and it is effective. (3) The two parts are not separate and disparate from one another. As I discuss in Chapter 5, each shared encounter between the two groups is contingent: It can enhance the constraining side of their relationship or lead to new collaborations in the future.²⁰ (4) Due to the relative strength of the secular/pious divide, however, the presumption of disagreement lingers and both groups remain doubtful towards altering their current patterns of collective action. Hence, I suggest that the secular-pious divide not only fails to capture the full extent of the current relationship between the two groups, but also, if we only focus on this divide it limits the opportunities for feminist collaboration.

²⁰As Kenneth Gergen argues, and as I discuss in more detail in Chapter 5, in each joint meeting secular feminists and pious feminists coordinate the two parts of their relationship like ocean waves, in a relational flow, folding on to each other, where it is not possible to precisely locate where one wave ends and the other follows. For more details, see: Kenneth Gergen, Relational Being: Beyond Self and Community. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).
Feminism’s Broader Postsecular Challenge

In the broader feminist literature, the blurring boundaries between the secular and the pious are often discussed with respect to the debates on the current post- or neo-secular\textsuperscript{21} challenge in global politics as mounting number of studies depicts (1) rising religious conservatism and (2) changing secular attitudes towards the existing religious impulses, both across different religions and regions.\textsuperscript{22} Although some scholars continue to present an affirmative link between secularization and modernization,\textsuperscript{23} for many others, this new phase of politics challenges the validity of the secularization thesis.\textsuperscript{24} The latter group of studies most notably include Casanova’s studies of “deprivatization” of religion and “public religion,” Berger’s findings towards de-secularization, Eisenstadt’s “multiple modernities,” Stepan’s study of de facto presence of religion in established democracies, and Malesevic’s neo-secular analysis that suggests the routes to secularization is not singular.\textsuperscript{25}

There are two sets of conflicting observations associated with the historical specificity of the current post-secular condition, as Braidotti calls it. Firstly, despite the general trend towards postsecularism, in the Western societies, the postsecular continues to be falsely equated with “the Muslim problem,” which fosters Islamophobia and anti-Islam racism in the West where the Muslim women’s veil lies at the center of this debate as a challenge against neutrality, impartiality, autonomy, equality, and feminism.\textsuperscript{26} As the recent controversy around Quebec’s religious “neutrality” legislation also brings to mind, rather than breaking the essentialist separation between the Western world and the Islamic world, the historical specificity of the

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\textsuperscript{24} According to David Herbert, the studies that support secularization thesis have 4 shared assumptions: 1) Social differentiation where society is divided into “semi-autonomous spheres” that require specific scientific knowledge 2) Societalization, that assumes diminishing needs for community and religion, and rising influence of anonymity and urbanization. 3) Rationalealization, which similarly diminishes the power of religion. 4) Worldliness, which predicts that religions will become more concerned with worldly issues of social and political life rather than transcendence. For more details, please see: David Herbert, \textit{Religion and Civil Society: Rethinking Public Religion in the Contemporary World}, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003); Reilly, “Rethinking the Interplay of Feminism and Secularism,” 7-8.
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\textsuperscript{26} Braidotti, “The Postsecular Turn,” 4-5.
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postsecular condition\textsuperscript{27} is, in this regard, often misinterpreted in the Western context, which intensifies and ensures the continuity of mutual prejudices. As a result, postcolonial feminists still have to ask: Do Muslim women “continue to be constructed ‘under Western eyes’ as passive, oppressed, and in need of saving?”\textsuperscript{28}

Secondly, although it is false to equate the postsecular condition with the rise of Islamic fundamentalism, it is observed that the current rise in religious conservatism does enhance patriarchy in similar modes and across different religions. Opposition and negation, as well as ahistorical Orientalist dichotomizations, are not particular to the Western eye and its reliance on secular ethics. As Nanje Al-Ali argues, it is possible to observe corresponding Occidentalist dichotomies between “authentic Islamic values” and “hegemonic, imposed upon secular values”\textsuperscript{29} that leave out and stigmatize the “locally situated, indigenous dissenting subjects who both articulate women’s equality or human rights claims in their own contexts: and firmly reject the imposition of false universalization of human rights from various standpoints, internally and externally.”\textsuperscript{30} In this regard, if we address the postsecular only by criticizing the secularization and democratization theses, we cannot address the full extent of feminism’s postsecular challenge.\textsuperscript{31} There is the need for asking a more important question in light of the rising postsecular politics: How do we put gender inequalities into context without enhancing the false dichotomies, essentializing women’s ethno-cultural and religious differences, imperialistically imposing Western feminist values, or failing to distinguish between women’s religious rights and enforcements of religious patriarchy?

As Elizabeth Spellman argues, the forms of women’s liberation are indeed as diverse as the forms of women’s oppression.\textsuperscript{32} In the current post or neo-secular age, however, women’s religious difference no longer raises just a question of plurality and diversity. It also challenges

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\item \textsuperscript{27} Braidotti, “The Postsecular Turn,” 4-5. Braidotti argues, this misinterpretation can be observed in the writings of some European feminists, including Fallaci and Badinter. For more details, please see: Oriana Fallaci, \emph{The Pride and the Rage} (New York: Rizzoli International, 2002); Elisabeth Badinter, \emph{Dead End Feminism} (Cambridge: Polity, 2006).
\item \textsuperscript{28} Reilly, “Rethinking the Interplay of Feminism and Secularism,” 6. See also: Chandra Talpade Mohanty, “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses,” \emph{Boundary} 2 12/13, 12/1 (Spring-Autumn 1984), 333-358.
\item \textsuperscript{30} Reilly, “Rethinking the Interplay of Feminism and Secularism.” 22.
\item \textsuperscript{31} For example, as Ruth Marshall argues: “…denouncing the ideological or coercive secularization narrative or requiring that the non-believer stand in the shoes of the religious in the name of constitutional patriotism is hardly sufficient. Rethinking the secular all the way down requires more than a genealogy such as Talal Asad’s or Charles Taylor’s, however welcome such critical enterprises are. It requires onto-theological roots of contemporary secular forms and concept, an engagement beyond the antinomies which have constituted the “great divide” between faith and reason, beyond confessionalism and a dying humanism.” For more: Ruth Marshall, “The Sovereignty of Miracles: Pentecostal Political Theology in Nigeria,” \emph{Constellations} 17, 2 (2010): 197-223, 199. See also: Talal Asad, \emph{Formulations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity} (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003); Charles Taylor, \emph{A Secular Age} (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2007).
\item \textsuperscript{32} See: Elizabeth V. Spellman, \emph{Inessential Women: Problems of Exclusion in Feminist Thought} (Boston: Beacon Press, 1988).
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feminism’s foundational assumption of opposition between women’s liberation and oppression. In the last few decades, the growing literatures on pious women’s subjectivity and agency, especially “the sub-genre of literature” that has emerged after Saba Mahmood’s *Politics of Piety*, contributed to this debate significantly by challenging the mainstream feminism’s “negative consensus on anti-oppression” and by calling for an alternative re-reading of feminist subjectivity that can be based on affirmation.  

Due to this eminent challenge religion causes for feminism’s foundational assumptions, scholars have suggested that religion continues to receive only very little attention as an interlocking category of women’s oppression in wider studies of intersectionality. As a result, women’s religious difference, and the diverse forms of liberation and oppression it involves, remain largely under-problematized. In response to this gap in the literature, recent studies stress two general areas of further research: (1) provincializing, contextualizing, and localizing the feminist analysis to be able to avoid broad generalizations, and (2) building more relationships, collaborations, and interconnections amongst women who come from different interlocking ethnic, racial, religious, ideological, cultural, or class-related backgrounds to pluralize feminist judgments. I argue that by studying the relationship between secular feminists and pious feminists in Turkey, my dissertation contributes to both debates. It contributes to the contextualized debate of the secular-pious binary in the women’s movement in Turkey by providing a relational approach; and to the literature on feminist collaboration by exploring the two women’s groups’ perceptions of a possible collaboration in the near future.

**The Headscarf Issue and the Secular-Pious Divide in Turkey**

According to Ramsbotham, a radical disagreement can be defined as a “linguistic manifestation” of two types of conflict: 1) intense conflict, where the participants are more likely to mutually negate rather than willing to compromise, or 2) intractable conflict, where there have been unsuccessful attempts of settling the issue. The political meaning behind the headscarf might therefore be considered as an issue of radical disagreement between secular feminists and pious feminists in Turkey. According to Ramsbotham, such intractability and intensity can only be transformed by specifically concentrating on the disagreement itself, by taking the beliefs and

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attitudes of both sides seriously as they are interacting with each other.\textsuperscript{36} Despite its promising prospects for further academic research, Ramsbotham indicates “there is no (…) sustained ethnographic fieldwork on radical disagreement.\textsuperscript{37} Therefore, my study also contributes to this previously under-explored approach of phenomenology of radical disagreement by studying the relationship between pious and secular women in the women’s movement in Turkey.

According to Kandiyoti, in the Turkish setting the headscarf issue raises two sets of “conflicting claims (…) accompanied either by a clamorous discourse of Muslim injury (…) or by an increasingly alarmist narrative of encroachment on secular spaces and intimidation of its citizens.”\textsuperscript{38} A brief background on the two different interpretations of Turkish secularism might be helpful here to understand how these two conflicting claims are actually interrelated.

The first interpretation assumes Turkish secularism as a break in the modern Turkish history. There are two particular versions of this interpretations. According to the secular modern interpretative framework, or secular modern imaginary as I call it in my discussion, the establishment of the Republic has placed a break in the Turkish history. The Kemalist secular historiography suggested that this break was between Ottoman Empire and Turkish Republic, tradition and modernity, backwardness and progress, Sharia rule and secularism. From this perspective, the revival of the headscarf since the 1980s in Turkey is considered a political move to reverse the Turkish modernization process and bring back to the Sharia order. It is a move backwards. The headscarf, from this standpoint is not about piety or pious women’s rights; it is about political Islam.

According a second version, the Republican era has indeed placed a break in the history, not between backwardness and progress, but between the state and the society, the center and the periphery.\textsuperscript{39} The pious modern imaginary often interpreted this critique in a narrower sense, and claimed that this break was between the secular values of the state and the Islamic values of the society—therefore reducing the values of the Turkish society into a single set of values determined by Sunni Islamic ideals, and leaving out a traditionally more “secular” set of Ottoman values (a mix of Islamic and Byzantine values), called \textit{adab}.\textsuperscript{40} From this alternative

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{36} Oliver Ramsbotham, \textit{Transforming Violent Conflict}, 31.
\item \textsuperscript{37} Oliver Ramsbotham, \textit{Transforming Violent Conflict}, 32.
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perspective, due to the Kemalist state’s assertive impositions of secular values, the Kemalist break in history has created an unbridgeable cultural gap between the secular and pious citizens of the Republic, separating the majority of the pious population in Anatolia from the secular elite in coastal, urban cities. During the 1980s, it was suggested that the rise of religious communities had placed an end to this trend and reconnected the society with its values. When JDP formed its first single-party government after the 2002 elections, it similarly claimed itself as the “clean break” that had ended the 79-year-long separation between the state and the society, and thereby placed its first electoral win almost as a “second revolution” in the Republican history. From this perspective, the headscarf is considered as a critique of the Kemalist master narrative and its “cleansing of Islam from the public sphere.” It signifies the re-awakening of the society (reduced to pious, Sunni Muslim Turkish citizens only, leaving out religious minorities) that has been largely disconnected from its cultural roots (reduced to Sunni Islamic values) since the establishment of the Republic and the introduction of secularism. In contrast to this interpretation that is commonly associated with the pious modern imaginary in Turkey (as my discussion in Chapter 4 reveals), according to pious feminists in my study, living in a secular country has been a formative part of the second stage of their pious subjectivity formation, which I refer to as informed piety.

According to the second interpretation, the Turkish experience with secularism has always been “ambivalent” or “elusive” towards Islam; the separation between the religion and the state has never been clear or comprehensive since the early days of Turkish modernization during the late Ottoman era. As Kandiyotı notes, “Turkish nationhood and claims of national belonging were never divorced from being Muslim and Sunni, but (…), the manner in which this was incorporated into official state ideology underwent significant changes through time.” As Şerif Mardin also argues, in the Ottoman Empire, Sharia was not the sole source of law; there were also secular sources of law which provided the Sultan his legal and militaristic powers. From this perspective Turkish secularization goes back to the Ottoman era, decades before the

41Ahmet Kuru differentiates between assertive and passive forms of secularism. He argues that while American secularism is passive, Turkish and French secularisms are assertive. For more details, see: Ahmet Kuru, Secularism and the State Policies toward Religion (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).
47Şerif Mardin, Din ve Ideoloji (İstanbul, İletişim Yayınları, 1983); Şerif Mardin, Türk Modernleşmesi: Makaleler 4 (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2003).
establishment of the republic; and rather than casting religion out, it has aimed to contain it under state control. For example, although the caliphate was abolished, the Kemalist reforms institutionally replaced it with the Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet).48 In this regard, the second interpretation challenges both the secular modern and the pious modern interpretative frameworks.

For example, contrary to the pious modern interpretation, as Feroz Ahmad notes, the process of Islamization started long before the 1980s; it dates back to the introduction of the multi-party system in late 1940s and early 1950s.49 According to Binnaz Toprak, the alliances between central right political parties and religious communities have also started during the 1950s.50 With the 1980s, what happened was that these ongoing connections between religious and political actors have become visible and consistent, and secular actors started to react back.51 The result was the “sacralization of the secular.”52 The image of Atatürk has become a potent public symbol throughout the 1980s and 1990s, including the women’s movement where secular feminists proudly wore their Atatürk badges. According to Yael Navaro-Yashin, sacralization of the secular strengthened the statist and militarist attitudes within Kemalism.53 For Esra Özyürek, rather than a militarist or statist call, this was mostly a self-defensive and nostalgic effort on the part of the secular women to return back to the golden age of the Republic.54

Similar to the sacralization of the secular during the 1990s, by following Agamben’s notion of “profanation” that “demolishes the separation between the sacred and profane, putting the sacred to profane use,” Ayşe Çavdar suggests that JDP period in Turkey has “reprofaned” Islam.55 According to Çavdar, the reprofanation of religion in Turkey has started with the rise of Islamic capital since the 1990s, but with the JDP, it has grown more rapidly. According to Çavdar, through the reprofanation of religion, JDP was able to redefine and expand the use of religion in secular matters and control the political meaning associated with both, just like the

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Kemalistic secular elite did during the Republican period (1923-1938). Therefore, if we go back to Saba Mahmood’s discussion on secularism as a “discursive operation of power,” we might infer that, with the JDP, religion also has become one in the Turkish context. In this way, the state started to hold the “sovereign power to reorganize substantive features of” both the secular and pious ways of life.\textsuperscript{56}

The Question of Collaboration and the Idea of Transformation

Although the secular modern and the pious modern imaginaries can provide a clear account of the political disagreement between secular and pious feminists in Turkey, I suggest that these two frameworks are not sufficient to explain the full extent of the complex and convoluted relationship between the two women’s groups. There is also the need for exploring their actual inter-personal feminist relationships in the women’s movement. Over the last few decades, despite the heightened level of institutionalization in the women’s movement, development of national and international women’s machineries, and increased availabilities for feminist collaboration since the late 1990s, the women’s movement has been deeply divided along ethnic, religious, and class-based differences.\textsuperscript{57} As a result, aside from strategic, temporal, issue-specific alliances, secular feminists and pious feminists in Turkey rarely come together and work towards the same goal. Rather than providing deeper engagements, in this regard women’s civil society serves as a site for reproducing old patterns of political dissent,\textsuperscript{58} and as a result, the secular-pious divide sets a cognitive barrier towards what Arendt refers to as “enlarged mentality” or what Anne Philips calls “horizons of possibility” in the women’s movement.\textsuperscript{59} During my fieldwork, I tried to challenge this socially accepted discursive limitation by asking both groups a slightly different version of my research question: How can secular feminists and pious feminists in Turkey act upon their shared feminist interests instead of political disagreements, and in this way collaborate on the same women’s civil society project as equal partners and by mutual consent?


\textsuperscript{58} For a comprehensive comparative framework on this observation, please see Paul Kingston’s study on path-dependency and rights-oriented advocacy politics in Lebanon, which can also provide valuable insight into the Turkish debate: Paul W. T. Kingston, Reproducing Sectarianism: Advocacy Networks and the Politics of Civil Society in Postwar Lebanon, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2013.)

This question involved a very delicate trade-off for my participants (especially secular feminists, as I discuss in detail in Chapter 3): On the one hand, they wanted to deduce their answers from the secular/pious and stay in their mutual discursive comfort zones. On the other hand, they recognized this meant admitting they would never be able to be a part of a feminist coalition (as equal partners and by mutual consent), which they were not at ease with. As a result, both groups had to undertake the challenging task of rethinking the relationship between the two groups in terms of a collaboration in order to respond to my question without simply admitting such a collaboration is not possible. They could no longer assert that their reasons to stay distant were self-apparent or obvious. They had to think about the part of their relationship that is not solely determined by negation and opposition. They had to think about their Other in relation to themselves, instead of a separate Other. This seemed to be a highly-demanding task, which my participants perceived as a hypothetical thought experiment.

As Chapter 4 indicates, this task seemed to be easier for the self-acclaimed pious feminists in my study because they have already gone through a similar process when they chose to become a part of the women’s rights movement and embraced themselves as feminists. For pious feminists, the achievement of a more cooperative relationship between the two groups, first and foremost, required secular feminists to recognize the transformation pious women have been through as feminists or women’s rights activists, and accept them as their equals. For this purpose, they argued that secular feminists had to understand that the pious women’s headscarf is a constitutive part of their piety, and not simply an empty political symbol. For pious feminists, therefore, aside from the more general divide, the most important feminist issue of disagreement between the two groups was about pious forms of feminist autonomy. As my discussion in Chapter 3 suggests, however, secular feminists were concerned about pious women’s intentionality as well as autonomy, but also, for them, the main obstacle against a more collaborative relationship was the limits and limitations of feminist friendship, and its reliance on trust and loyalty. Since both groups considered the secular-pious divide almost unbridgeable, they did not reflect upon their concerns about autonomy and friendship when I asked questions about their perceptions of one another. Only when I started to ask questions about their feminist relationships were these issues raised.

In *Is Critique Secular?* Judith Butler argues, “The point is that when we judge, we locate the phenomenon we judge within a given framework (…) The point is not simply to expand our capacities for description or to assert plurality of frameworks (…) Rather it seems most
important to ask, what would judgment look like that took place not within one framework or another but which emerged at the very site of conflict, clash, divergence, overlapping? Although my participants were neither able to enlarge their horizons of possibility nor arrive at a collective feminist judgment that emerged at the very site of conflict, I suggest that when they started to rethink about their Other in relation to themselves, their answers offered a glimpse of how judgment would look if, one day, the two women’s groups were willing to go beyond the boundaries of the secular and the pious. Although, this tendency appeared weaker in the narratives (compared to the secular-pious divide,) my study suggests that when secular and pious women focused on their actual relationships, they did refine their perspectives in more critical, self-reflective, feminist terms. In this regard, I argue that the idea of collaboration guided my participants towards reconsidering the possibility of a relational transformation and sharing their perceptions that did not neatly align with the secular/pious.

Overview of the Chapters

I present my discussion in five main chapters. Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 set the historical background for the wider political secular-pious divide in Turkey and how it has shaped the relationship between the two women’s groups so far. Chapter 1 examines the historical evolution of the secular-pious divide, while Chapter 2 introduces the disagreement between secular feminists and pious feminists in the women’s movement and traces the historical progression of secular and pious women’s rights movements in Turkey.

Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 provide the alternative feminist vocabularies of the disagreement separately in the narratives. Chapter 3 focuses on the secular feminist perceptions of friendship and loyalty as a formative part of the ongoing disagreement between the two women’s groups. In the intersection of Aristotelian friendship, Kleinig’s discussion on loyalty, and Islamic thought on love and friendship, the chapter presents loyalty as the relational glue that holds secular feminists together and, at the same time, sets them apart from others. Following Arendt’s notion of enlarged mentality, Chapter 3 locates the need for secular feminists to re-imagine their relationship with pious feminists, and in this way imaginatively expand their boundaries of loyalty and friendship to pious women in order for a collaboration to be possible in the future. Chapter 4 analyzes the pious feminist perceptions. It indicates secular feminist unwillingness to

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recognize pious forms of autonomy as a key part of the disagreement between the two groups. After reviewing common models of pious women’s agency in the literature and discussing how they can or cannot be applied to the pious narratives of autonomy, in this chapter I propose that pious feminist autonomy in Turkey requires a relational perspective, which my discussion provides by interconnecting Bucar’s dianomy and creative conformity, Gergen’s relational multi-being, and Jennifer Nedelsky’s relational autonomy.

Lastly, Chapter 5 provides an overall discussion on the dynamics of disagreement and collaboration between secular feminists and pious feminists in the intersection of Gergen’s relational flow and Arendt’s discussion of thinking as a thought event. It argues that although, at a particular moment, the relationship between the two groups appears like an extension of the secular-pious divide, when that moment is over, it is possible to recognize that the relational flow between the two groups is made up of two main waves: one marked by the general secular-pious divide and the other marked by their shared encounters in the women’s movement. While the former constitutes the constraining side of their relationship that anchors both groups in their past patterns of dissent, the latter marks a more fluid side to their relationship that is potentially open to transformation in the future. Although the second wave of their relational flow, or the more fluid side to their relationship, appears weaker in the narratives, Chapter 5 suggests that it nevertheless challenges the assumptions of the secular-pious binary every time the two groups come together in the women’s movement.
Chapter 1

The Historical Progression of the Secular-Pious Divide in Turkey

The constraining side of the relationship between secular feminists and pious feminists in Turkey is enrooted in the historical progression of the secular-pious divide in the broader Turkish politics. Although the main objective of my dissertation is to challenge the deterministic assumption that leaves no room for secular and pious women to re-constitute themselves (and their relationship) outside of the secular-pious divide, in this chapter (and in Chapter 2), I focus on the structural political divide and its progression in Turkey and provide a historical background of the disagreement.

As I trace the key political junctures in the constitution and progression of the secular and the Islamic political/interpretative frameworks in Turkey, which I refer to as the secular modern and the pious modern imaginaries,¹ I also trace the roots of the Turkish identity, situated between the East and the West, the Orient and the Occident, Islam and secularism.² For some scholars, this in-betweenness makes Turkish identity an “identity-in-crisis,” or, as Huntington argues, Turkey is “the most profoundly torn country.”³ For others, after more than two hundred years of acquaintance, the crisis itself has become the Turkish identity.⁴ In this chapter, I suggest that this foundational liminality of Turkish identity is best captured by what Arendt calls as an “odd in-between (…) determined by things that are no longer and by things that are not yet.”⁵

Similar to the previous transformative in-betweens in Turkish political history, such as the transition from multi-religious, polyethnic Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic, Kemalist nationalism to Turkish-Islam synthesis, or a series of failed coalition governments during the 1990s to the current era of the Justice and Development Party (JDP),⁶ I argue that

¹ I suggest that these two imaginaries share the same original aim of finding the most proper mix of Islamic values and Western ideals for the Turkish society, but diverge significantly when it comes to the political role of religion. For more details, see: Nilüfer Göle, The Forbidden Modern: Civilization and Veiling (Ann Harbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996): 29. I prefer to use “imaginary” as a term because it allows more space for what Navaro-Yashin refers to as “fantasy” in comparison to other alternatives she enlists such as Benedict Anderson’s “imagined” or Foucauldian “discourse.” According to Navaro-Yashin, instead of discourse or imagination, the idea of the supreme secular state in Turkey has been consolidated by “fantasy” in Lacanian terms, which survives both critique and deconstruction. For this reason, she argues, even if Islamization could be interpreted as an effort for deconstruction or the undoing of the Kemalist norm, it would not be meaningful because the fantasy cannot be undone. Any effort to undo the fantasy would lead into its reproduction. For more details, please see: Yael Navaro-Yashin, Faces of the State: Secularism and Public Life in Turkey (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2002. See also: Yeşim Arat, “Review: Yael Navaro-Yashin, Faces of State,” International Journal of Middle East Studies 35 (2003): 493–520.
³ Samuel Huntington, “Clash of Civilizations,” Foreign Affairs 72, no. 3 (Summer 1993): 22-49, 43.
⁴ Selim Deringil, “Turks and Europe: An Argument from History,” Middle Eastern Studies 43, no.5 (2007): 709-723, 721). In Selim Deringil’s words: “…when your ‘identity crisis’ has lasted for some 200 years it is no longer a crisis. It is your identity.”
⁶ Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, in Turkish. Supporters of the party prefer to abbreviate it as AK Parti (AK Party) instead of AKP because “ak” in Turkish means “white” or “clean,” suggesting that the party denotes a break from the tradition of scandal-driven politics of the Turkish politics in the 1990s. The opposition does not agree with this proposition, and therefore, abbreviate it as AKP. AK Parti is also the official abbreviation of the party. In order to keep an equidistant stance, in my study, I use the English abbreviations of all political party names.
Turkey is at another crossroads where the borders between the two imaginaries are about to be redrawn, but new boundaries are not yet known. I also show that, despite continuously shifting borders and ongoing negotiations between secular and pious political actors, the defining oppositionality between the two imaginaries has remained and both imaginaries have mostly become tools to control and consolidate political power. Although their transformative or generative power over the society has been replaced by a rather degenerative discursive circularity, the two imaginaries continue to retain their “hypnotic effect” over the people even more than ever, where outside of this contestation, “no comprehensive thought seem[s] possible at all.” As it unfolds in the following chapters, although the secular/pious can only provide a partial explanation to the current dynamics of the disagreement between secular and pious feminists in Turkey, it is possible to identify similar discursive circularities in the narratives of my participants. This chapter, therefore, contextualizes the political disagreement between secular and pious feminists in Turkey by providing a general historical background of the secular modern and pious modern interpretative frameworks from the last decades of the Ottoman Empire to the current day.

1.1 Ottoman Legacy: Historical Roots of the Political Distrust

The contestation between the secular modern and pious modern imaginaries, and therefore the roots of the political side of the disagreement between secular feminists and pious feminists in Turkey, dates back to the initial phases of Turkish modernization during the late Ottoman period. Before this period (and the rise of national independence movements), the Ottoman Empire was a polyethnic, multireligious, precapitalist state that relied on taxation as its main source of income and Islamic law as the basic ideology. The efforts for modernization in the pre-Republic, late-Ottoman period demonstrates two main lines of continuity with the later periods of the Turkish modernization: 1) Although there were no explicit appeals to secularism in this period, there was the duality between the military/bureaucratic elite and the religious elite. 2) Despite their political disagreements (and failed efforts for coalition), both the religious

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8 Erik J. Zürcher, *Turkey: Modern History* (London: I.B.Tauris, 1993): 11. Roughly, by the end of 18th century, the Ottoman Empire covered a territory that included: “the Balkans (or the modern states of Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo, Slovenia, Macedonia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, Greece, Bulgaria, large part of Romania), Anatolia (Turkey), and most of the Arab world (Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel, Iraq, Kuwait, parts of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, and Algeria).”
9 In contrast to the historical “political dualism” of medieval Europe where the Christian church existed as an independent institution than the state, in the Ottoman Empire, the Sultan represented both the state and the caliphate in “political monism.” For more details, see also: Hakan Yılmaz, “Islam, Sovereignty, and Democracy: A Turkish View,” *Middle East Journal* 61, no. 5 (2007: 477-493). According to Yılmaz, “…Christianity was born in society and Islam in state, and this difference between the historical contexts in which the two religions first emerged helps explain the political dualism in the doctrine of the former and the political monism in that of the latter” (478, my emphasis).
and the bureaucratic/military elite strategically consulted ideologies such as Ottomanism, Islamism, Turkism, and Westernism. Neither Westernism nor Islamism could be cast under the exclusive domain of a certain group.

The beginning of the separation between the military/bureaucratic elite and the religious elite goes back to the period that is characterized by the Tanzimat Edict, commonly referred to as Tanzimat period (1839-1876). During this period, with the newly introduced secular education system, the religious ruling elite and military/bureaucratic elite diverged into different paths and were trained to preserve complementary spheres of Ottoman civilization. While the religious elite (ulema) were the keeper of the Islamic codes; a relatively more secular set of moral rules (adab) was produced, preserved, and propagated by the military/bureaucratic elite. Therefore, the two segments of the ruling elite were meant to complement one another in a joint struggle for preserving the Ottoman civilization. Besides the religious fraternities and communities (tarikats) in Anatolia, both military/bureaucratic and religious ruling elite were segregated from the rest of the populace.

The Tanzimat era has marked a series of legal reforms, which not only included the Westernization of the previous kanuni system, but also ensured the equality of the Christian subjects. In contrast with the later efforts, the reforms during this period mostly aimed towards top-down application of Westernization. A group of conservative dissenters, called Young Ottomans ( Genç Osmanlılar), criticized Tanzimat reforms and argued that Ottoman modernization should include Islamic values along with constitutionalism. Later, the Young Turks (Jeunes Turcs, or Jön Türkler), a group of secularist dissenters who had sought refuge in France from the absolutist rule of Sultan Abdülhamit II, opposed the Young Ottomans and argued that the Ottoman citizenship should be based on rationality instead of religion or blind 10

10 Zürcher, Turkey: Modern History, 65-66. The traditional Islamic schooling system consisted of primary schools of mektep, and secondary schools of medrese (where students learned Islamic sciences). The secular system of education consisted of: 1) Rüştiye (Adolescence) schools after mektep as an alternative to medrese 2) Complemented with similarly all-male secondary İdadiye schools 3) And colleges called Sultanıye schools, modeled mainly after French lycées. There were also separate private schools for non-Muslim communities.

11 Zürcher, Turkey: Modern History, 13-14.

12 Zürcher, Turkey: Modern History, 14. will provide a more detailed discussion of how major religious fraternities have been operating since the last decades of the Ottoman Empire later in this chapter as I explain the revival of religious fraternities and the conception of the “Turkish-Islamic synthesis” in modern Turkey.

13 Zürcher, Turkey: Modern History, 32. The need for westernization became apparent after Russia started to represent The Greek Orthodox Church in the Ottoman Empire because the effects of the French revolution, especially the rise of nationalism, started to become more influential over the Christian reaya (or, subjects of the Sultan). Despite the growing discontents of the military and the ulema, the modernization efforts that started with Sultan Selim II’s new army, Nizam-ı Cedid (New Order). Mahmut II’s strategic move to break the connection between the religious elite and the military resulted with Vaka-i Hayriye (Beneficent Event,) where the new army suppressed the Janissary riot in 1826. Tanzimat Edict in 1839 was a result of all these developments.

14 Zürcher, Turkey: Modern History, 63-64. The Christean subjects who had to specialize in commerce and trade (as they could not own land or undertake bureaucratic responsibilities due to being second class subjects), not only became richer due to changing economic structures but also due to the rights they received during Tanzimat era. The emerging bourgeoisie within the Armenian and Greek populations, therefore, became more confident than ever.
Westernism. Hence, although they advocated different foundations for the future of Ottoman citizenship, both the Young Ottomans and the Young Turks were trying to formulate the best mixture of Western ideals and Islamic values for the Ottoman society.

However, the tension between the religious and the bureaucratic/military ruling elite intensified after the “1908-1909 incidents,” which includes two events: 1) the establishment of constitutionalism after the 1908 revolution jointly organized by the secular bureaucratic/military elite and the upper segments of the Islamic elite; and 2) the re-establishment of the Sharia rule after the 1909 counter-revolution organized by the lower segments of the religious elite. The 1908 revolution was actually the second attempt at constitutionalism in Ottoman history. The first was a failed attempt in 1876 that commenced the 30-year-long absolutist rule of Sultan Abdülhamit II, characterized by an internal espionage system and severe censorship of the press. After the loss of territories in Europe, Abdülhamit II turned to Muslim solidarity and he became the first Ottoman sultan to use his title as the Caliph. It is important to note here that the pious modern discourse today often turns back to the rule of Sultan Abdülhamit, or “the Hamidian era,” as a point of reference instead of more successful periods, such as the Süleyman the Magnificent era. Hence, pious modern imaginary is rooted in this period when Sultan Abdülhamit called for Muslim solidarity.

Yet, Abdülhamit’s strategic move towards Islamism did not help him to suppress the Macedonian uprising at the time. The Committee of Union and Progress (CUP, İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti), composed of Young Turks (Jön Türkler) established the constitutional rule during this period, in 1908. The revolution created a sentiment of joy, a sense of relief, uniting both Muslim and non-Muslim subjects of the empire. However, there was a growing disenchantment between the benefactors of the Hamidian espionage system and the new order led by the Young Turks. As a result, one year after the revolution, Sharia rule was restored after a riot led by the lower segments of the religious elite in 1909. CUP’s “Action Army” (Hareket

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15 Turam, Between Islam and the State, 39.
16 Zürcher, Turkey: Modern History, 84. Thousands of the bureaucratic clerks were awarded generously for keeping detailed reports (jurnal) about their colleges.
17 Zürcher, Turkey: Modern History, 80-82. Newspapers could not publish anything related to nationalism, liberalism, and constitutionalism.
18 Zürcher, Turkey: Modern History, 83-85.
19 Zürcher, Turkey: Modern History, 94-95, 98. During 1906-1908, Ottoman Empire’s financial crisis became more visible in rising prices and inability to pay salaries in time. As a result, small scale rebellions throughout the empire were common. Macedonian problem started as one of such instances, however, it paved the way for the revolution.
20 Zürcher, Turkey: Modern History, 97.
21 Zürcher, Turkey: Modern History, 102-103. The benefactors of the old Hamidian system includes old bureaucrats, Hamidian spies, older alaylı officers without education. The benefactors of the new system include the members of the CUP, new bureaucrats, younger meşrefi officers with secular education. Besides the frictions between the old and the new, there were also disagreements within the Young Turks regarding CUP’s harsh treatment of the religious opposition.
22 Zürcher, Turkey: Modern History, 101-103.
Ordusu) from Macedonia suppressed the rebellion shortly after; however, the counter-revolution shifted CUP’s policy-making towards the interests of the army thereafter.\textsuperscript{23} Since the first attempt at a strategic political alliance between the two segments led to a counter-revolution, the 1908-1909 incidents have become a traumatic turning point in the progression of secular modernity in Turkey that is still fresh in collective memory. For example, recently, during the trials of the journalists from the newspaper Cumhuriyet (Republic) in July 2017, Ahmet Şık, one of the most well-known investigative journalists in Turkey, ended his defense statement by repeating CUP’s slogan, “Down with tyranny, long live freedom!” and reminding that “the tyrants should know that no cruelty can prevent the progress of history.”\textsuperscript{24}

During the Ottoman modernization, both the secular and the pious elite strategically used three main ideologies to keep the Ottoman Empire alive, and a fourth one, Westernism, has influenced all three. These ideologies were: 1) (Pan) Ottomanism that aimed to unite different communities of the Empire under a common Ottoman identity;\textsuperscript{25} 2) (Pan) Islamism that aimed to rebuild the Ottoman identity around Muslim solidarity as an Islamic community (i{"u}mmet);\textsuperscript{26} and 3) (Pan) Turkism that aimed to reconstruct the Ottoman identity around a union of Turkic people. The challenge was to reconcile all three ideologies.\textsuperscript{27} Most notably, drawing on Durkheim, Ziya Gökalp argued that the society superseded the individual, but so did the nation, he also added. With this twist of equating society with the nation, he was able to define the nation in cultural terms.\textsuperscript{28} By incorporating Tönnies’s differentiation between culture and civilization into this approach, he then argued that the unique Ottoman culture (both Islamic and Byzantine) could co-exist with the European civilization without any trouble.\textsuperscript{29} Ziya Gökalp’s ideology was highly influential in the construction of Turkish nationalism and the Kemalist remaking of the state after the establishment of the Republic. From a pan-Islamist view, Mahmud Esad argued that the
material aspect of the Ottoman civilization could be reformed with respect to Western ideals, while moral principles of Islam could be kept as they were. In contrast, Şemseddin Sami and Tevfik Fikret, as more zealous secular Westernists, asserted that the materialistic shift necessitated a cultural transformation towards secularization. Extreme Westernizers, however, never gained adequate support amongst either religious or bureaucratic/military elite.

Like the traumas of the 1909 counter-revolution in the secular memory, the aftermath of the Turkish Independence War (1918-1922) was traumatic for the pious memory. During the independence war, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder and the first President of the Turkish Republic, emerged as the leader in the mobilization in Anatolia where he had the support of local notables, religious representatives, and the majority of the populace despite the orders of the Sultan to the contrary. Although the Independence War ended with absolute victory and the unification of the elite and the populace against the imperial powers, its aftermath brought out similar disagreements at the elite level. The religious representatives were not content when 1) the parliament abolished the sultanate in 1922 to avoid dual representation during the Lausanne re-negotiations, 2) the Turkish Republic was established a year later in 1923 instead of re-structuring the Ottoman state, and as the last straw, 3) the caliphate was abolished in 1926. As the 1908-1909 events affected the secular memory, so the reforms after the Independence, especially the abolition of the sultanate and the caliphate, had an enduring effect on the pious memory. Most of my pious feminist participants, for example, remembered the early republican period (1923-1938) as an era that tried to erase religion.

1.2 The Kemalist Social Memory Construction (1923-1945)

The golden age of Kemalism, named after Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, was during the single party era, which includes the rapid period of socio-political reforms under Mustafa Kemal (1923-1938) and İsmet İnönü governments until the introduction of the multiparty system in 1945. Although the Kemalist historiography presents the republican reforms as a rupture from the

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31 Göle, The Forbidden Modern, 37. He called the secular morality humanism, or humanisme.
32 Zürcher, Turkey: Modern History, 131-133, 132.
33 Zürcher, Turkey: Modern History, 148-159. Mustafa Kemal, born in Salonica in 1881, was educated in the Hamidian secular education system and he was involved in CUP since the Action Army in 1909. His reputation was militaristic rather than political until the struggle for Turkish independence.
34 Zürcher, Turkey: Modern History, 167-168. After this, the sultanate only operated as the Caliphate.
backwards, late Ottoman era, there are inherent continuities between the two periods since during both periods the secularist/nationalist elite was trying to build a new modus vivendi for the society.

The ideological basis of Kemalism rests on six principles, or “six arrows” (altı ok). These principles are: “nationalism (milliyetçilik), republicanism (cumhuriyetçilik), populism (halkçılık), laicism/secularism (laiklik), revolutionism (inkilapçılık), and statism (devletçilik).” The reforms were implemented in three stages where, amongst the six arrows, nationalism and secularism were the most pivotal. In the first stage, the state, education, and law were secularized, which included: 1) the closure of religious shrines and dervish convents, 2) the establishment of the Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet), 3) bringing the religious schools under state control, and 4) the adoption of the Swiss civil law, the secular family law, and Italian penal code that further curbed the power of the religious elite. The second stage was the replacement of religious symbols with the symbols of European modernization such as the replacement of the fez (the symbol of Sultan Mahmut II’s Westernized Ottomanism) with the hat. Lastly, there were also other reforms to secularize social life in general that did not directly target religion like the adoption of the Latin alphabet and Western numerals and measures that eased communication with the Western world.

In this three-tiered way, the construction of the Turkish “national culture” in Ziya Gökalp’s terms was established.

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37 Zürcher translates halkçılık as populism, however halkçılık is closer to national sovereignty than populism. Populism has its direct Turkish equivalent, popülizm, which is different from halkçılık.
38 Zürcher, Turkey: Modern History, 194-195.
39 This can be considered as an attack on the sufi and Alevi practices as well as religious communities and brotherhoods. In this regard, while exerting state control over religion, Kemalist reforms have also served to homogenize religion under the Sunni Islamic tradition—which is still valid in the current JDP period in Turkey since 2002.
40 It has been suggested that Turkish laiklik differs from French laicism with its overt use of state control over the religion. The current research on the increasing political significance of Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet) might be helpful in demonstrating this difference. For a more detailed discussion on Diyanet, please see: Gözaydın, İstbar B. “Diyanet and Politics.” The Muslim World 98, 2-3 (April 2008): 216-227. For a recent comparative-historical study of secularization in Turkey and France, see also: Efe Peker, “A Comparative-Historical Study of Secularisation: Republican State Building in France and and Turkey. (PhD Thesis, Simon Fraser University, 2016).
41 Zürcher, Turkey: Modern History, 195.
42 Zürcher, Turkey: Modern History, 195-201. Also, the use of religious garments was strictly limited to the prayers, the courtesy titles (like bey, efendi, hoca) were abolished, and the original Arabic call for prayer (ezan) was replaced with its Turkish version. Although there was no ban on veil, the image of the new Turkish women was also modernized with the use of the scarf.
43 Ince, Citizenship and Identity in Turkey, 196. The legislation that granted political rights to women in municipal elections in 1930 and in general elections in 1934 was also perceived as a way of secularizing the social life.
44 İnce, Citizenship and Identity in Turkey, 63-67, 69-70. The national culture education was instituted through the People’s Houses, Halk Evleri. The history of the national culture was established through the Turkish History Thesis of the Study of Turkish History (Türk Tarih Kurumu, TTK), which traced the emergence of civilization to the Turks in Central Asia. The Society for the Study of Turkish Language (Türk Dil Kurumu, TDK) was responsible to preserve and purify the authenticity of the Turkish language. TDK’s Sun Language Thesis argued that Turkish was “the mother of all tongues.”
There are different scholarly interpretations of the Kemalist era. According to Faruk Birtek, Kemalism encouraged an assertive, top-down application of secularism within the Weberian bound of reason. In doing so, as Berna Turam puts it, Mustafa Kemal’s aim was to establish “the idea of the ‘oneness of the chief and the nation’ (şef-millet birliği), the ‘unity’ of the state and the society.” For scholars like Hande Eslen-Ziya and Umut Korkut, Kemalism has become more than an ideology; it has become a “sacralized ideology” that can be referred to as a political religion. For Metin Heper, Kemalist “cognitive revolution” was not coupled with a “cultural revolution.” According to Navaro-Yashin, the most problematic part of Kemalist secularism was its reliance on statism. The Kemalist reformists did consider secularization as a necessary step for transforming Islamic monism and for redefining the worth of the individual more fluidly from belonging to a pre-given religious subjectivity by their contribution to the Turkish nation. Yet, as Navaro-Yashin suggests, while doing so secularism was not used as a tool to protect the individual against the state in the Lockean sense; to the contrary, starting from the pre-Republican/late Ottoman period, Turkish secularism was more interested in protecting the ongoing liberal transformations of the state rather than individual rights and freedoms.

1.3 Pro-Islamic Populism, Military Guardianship, and Political Fragmentation

The first move of bringing Islam back into politics, and reformulating a pious alternative to the Republican reforms, started with the transition to the multiparty era in Turkey in 1945. With the transition to multiparty democracy, the legitimacy of the secular modern imaginary and its reliance on the six arrows no longer remained unchallenged as it was getting harder to maintain the Kemalist coalition of elites (the bureaucrats and the emerging bourgeoisie). The Democrat Party (DP), in this regard, captured the pulse of the people more than the continuation of the Kemalist policies under the leadership of İsmet İnönü’s Republican People’s Party’s (RPP) and won the 1950 elections.

46 Turam, Between Islam and the State, 40-41. Also see: Taha Parla, Siyasi Kültürel Rezmi Kaynaklar (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1991).
49 Yılmaz, “Islam, Sovereignty and Democracy,” 487.
The DP period is considered as the period in which the seeds of pious modernity were planted. This is mostly due to DP’s pro-pious, populist agenda that differed from RPP’s in two ways: 1) DP supported a market-driven economy rather than economic statism, and 2) DP advocated the importance of local traditions, customs, and religious values. Religion was always an integral part of DP’s populism; but prior to 1957 elections, it was never used to otherize the Kemalist opposition as “unbelievers” and/or “communists.” After the 1957 elections, however, DP accepted political support from the brotherhoods (tarikat), the call to prayer (ezan) was switched back to Arabic, religion courses became an opt-out elective instead of an opt-in, and there was a tremendous increase in the number of mosques. Starting from this period, the use of religion in populist pro-pious political discourse, including the current JDP era since 2002, has been limited to the Sunni Islamic tradition. The DP period introduced populism into Turkish politics, and since then, the meaning of the “national will” is equated with the government instead of the parliament by the right-wing politicians.

The relations between the military and DP worsened after December 1957 when nine military officers were arrested for planning a coup d’état. As a result, an investigation committee was launched and all political activities outside of the parliament were banned for three months. Shortly after it was announced the investigation would only last a month, on 27 May 1960, Turkey experienced its first military coup, followed by a new constitution in 1961. While some considered the 1961 Constitution as a transformative effort to liberalize society, for others it was a restorative effort to re-allocate power to the Kemalist elite. Rather than the bureaucrats, however, the new constitution favored the industrial bourgeoisie and unionized workers. After the controversial tribunal on the DP regime, which ended up with the execution of three ministers from the DP cabinet including the former Prime Minister Adnan Menderes, DP

52 Keyder, Türkiye’de Devlet ve Sınıflar, 164.
53 Zürcher, Turkey: Modern History, 243-244. On the contrary, when some religious extremists smashed down the busts of Atatürk while celebrating the DP’s first electoral victory, DP responded by legislating a law against defaming Atatürk’s memory in 1951.
54 Zürcher, Turkey: Modern History, 244-245; Keyder, Türkiye’de Devlet ve Sınıflar, 190. DP’s policy on religion was not the only factor that contributed to the rise of religion. Due to the immense rural to urban migration during 1950s, the population of the cities socio-demographically shifted, which has led to the first wave of hybridization of the rural-urban cultures.
55 For a study on Alevi community in Turkey, for example, please see: Kabir Tambar, The Reckoning of Pluralism: Political Belonging and the Demands of History in Turkey (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014).
56 Keyder, Türkiye’de Devlet ve Sınıflar, 163-164.
57 Zürcher, Turkey: Modern History, 250-253.
58 Zürcher, Turkey: Modern History, 257-258; Keyder, Türkiye’de Devlet ve Sınıflar, 198; İnce, Citizenship and Identity in Turkey, 133-135. The main aims of the 1961 constitution were: 1) To introduce more checks and balances to the system to counterbalance the power of the assembly — such as the senate, an independent constitutional court, and the proportional representation system 2) To provide more socio-political rights and to re-build a welfare state by a planned economy 3) To formalize the political role of the military by establishing National Security Council (NSC, Millî Güvenlik Kurulu).
59 Zürcher, Turkey: Modern History, 260-261. The tribunal included a bizarre mix of criminal and constitutional cases. The constitutional cases were mostly about the commission on RPP, however the verdict on the case suggested that parliamentarians could not be held responsible about their votes. But yet, at the end, 15 parliamentarians were sentenced to death. The National Unity Committee only confirmed the 4 which were reached unanimously. The former Foreign Minister Fatin Rüştı Zorlu, and Finance Minister Hasan Polatkan were hanged in 16 September 1961.
was replaced with the Justice Party (JP, Adalet Partisi). In the 1965 elections, JP and its new leader Süleyman Demirel took over DP’s votes. Meanwhile, RPP experienced a transformative phase and reframed its political agenda in line with social security and justice, reclaiming its new position as the “left of the center” (ortanın solu).

The beginning of 1970s marked a tremendous rise in violence and political fragmentation between the right and the left. While the radical leftists resorted to armed struggle as the only hope for revolution, the underground contra-guerrilla organizations armed the extreme right against the left. Despite its growing sectarianism, the leftists were able to wed their anti-imperialist ideology in Kemalist “revolutionalism,” one of the six arrows. The fascist/nationalist wing of the right could similarly link their struggle to another Kemalist ideal: nationalism. Only the Islamists could not connect their struggle to Kemalism.

In January 1970, Necmettin Erbakan departed from AP and established the first pro-Islamic political party in Turkey, National Order Party (NOP, Milli Nizam Partisi). On March 12, 1971 the military announced martial law in 11 cities. For two years, the military used extraordinary measures against the left, including progressive liberals. 5,000 people were arrested (including professors, journalists, party leaders, and union representatives) with widespread reports of torture. Upon his release, Erbakan established the National Salvation Party (NSP, Milli Selamet Partisi) in 1972. The early elections in 1974 initiated a period of coalition governments (1973-1980). In this period, the number of reciprocal killings between the right and the left increased to thousands per year.

The 1970s not only marked the emergence of the Kurdish Workers Party (KWP, Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan), but also other identity-driven conflicts were drawn into the polarization between the right and the left. For example, in December 1978, more than 100 Alevi (Shite Turks, usually associated with the leftist circles) were killed in Kahramanmaraş by the ultranationalist, neo-fascist, pan-Turkist youth organization called Gray Wolves (Bozkurtlar). Meanwhile, Turkey’s use of an import-substitution industrialization (ISI) strategy led to a severe balance of payments crisis marked by hyperinflation, decline in manufacturing output, and a

Prime Minister Adnan Menderes’ death had to be executed the next day because he attempted a suicide the day before. The President Celal Bayar’s death sentence was not actualized due to his old age.

60 Zürcher, Turkey: Modern History, 265-266.
61 Keyder, Türkiye’de Devlet ve Sosyalar, 282.
62 Keyder, Türkiye’de Devlet ve Sosyalar, 285. Similar to the Kemalist struggle against Western imperialism, the leftist struggle was against the oligarchic links between the state and the monopolistic capitalist power of the growing bourgeoisie.
63 Zürcher, Turkey: Modern History, 270.
64 Zürcher, Turkey: Modern History, 271.
65 Zürcher, Turkey: Modern History, 274-275.
66 Zürcher, Turkey: Modern History, 277.
significant decline in the growth rate. Turkey could only finance itself by taking high-interest, short-term Eurodollar loans, and imposing import restrictions, daily electricity cuts, and price control boards in an international environment which had seen two consecutive oil crises.\textsuperscript{67} In October 1979, as the under-secretary for economic affairs, Turgut Özal took over the state-planning agency and introduced a reform package.\textsuperscript{68}

### 1.4 1980s: Neoliberalism, Turkish-Islam Synthesis, and Islamic Trust Networks

The 1980s started with a coup d’
état in Turkish politics, which initiated the Turkish-Islamic remaking of Kemalism. In this period, where the contestation between the right and the left had been finally curbed by the military, a Turkish-Islam synthesis had instigated a shift in the borders between the pious modern and the secular modern imaginaries that eventually led to JDP’s victory in 2002. Hence, during the 1980s, two processes changed the social context in Turkey and reshaped the pious modern imaginary thereafter: 1) Özal’s neoliberalism and the Turkish-Islam synthesis, and 2) the rise of Islamic trust networks.\textsuperscript{69}

#### 1.4.1 Özal’s Economic Neoliberalism, Turkish-Islam Synthesis, and Pious Modernity.

After the army took over the state on September 12, 1980, the National Security Council (NSC) and its chief General Kenan Evren controlled all means of power.\textsuperscript{70} Evren managed to put an end to political violence but he also ended all socio-political life in the country.\textsuperscript{71} Together with the 1982 constitution, the hostile environment created by the 1980 coup increased the discontent regarding the military’s guardianship over politics. The 1980s thus created an environment of social uncertainty, insecurity, and distrust as it fostered politics of exclusion and negation.\textsuperscript{72} In this political context, Turgut Özal became the leading figure in Turkish politics after the Motherland Party (\textit{Anavatan Partisi}) won the first elections after the coup in 1983.\textsuperscript{73}

Özal attracted popular support because he could be identified with both camps: On the one hand, he was a well-educated, “self-made” man from Anatolia who advocated economic neoliberalism; on the other hand, he had close connections with Erbakan’s NSP and religious

\textsuperscript{67} Zürcher, \textit{Turkey: Modern History}, 280-281. The first oil crisis was during 1973-1974, the second during 1979-1980.

\textsuperscript{68} Zürcher, \textit{Turkey: Modern History}, 281-282.

\textsuperscript{69} Yıldız Atasoy, \textit{Islam’s Marriage with Neoliberalism}, 75-95.

\textsuperscript{70} Zürcher, \textit{Turkey: Modern History}, 292.

\textsuperscript{71} Zürcher, \textit{Turkey: Modern History}, 294.


\textsuperscript{73} Zürcher, \textit{Turkey: Modern History}, 297. Motherland Party has received 45% of the votes.
communities. Özal’s main motive was to keep two main factions of the Motherland Party together: 1) the coalition of the Islamist and ultra-nationalist factions of the right, often referred as Kutsal İttifak (Holy Alliance), and 2) the emerging neoliberal capitalists.

Özal was coming from the tradition of Aydınlar Ocağı (Hearths of the Enlightened) composed of influential figures from academia, the business world, and politics who could not identify with the leftist or the Kemalist elite. Instead, Aydınlar Ocağı defined its position as “Turkish-Islam synthesis” and set the foundational assumptions of the pious modern imaginary. Inspired from the works of the poet Necip Fazıl Kısakürek, the pious modern imaginary considered the Kemalist era as a period of “cultural alienation” of the pious Turkish people living in their own nation. For Necip Fazıl, Islam was the Kemalist missing link between the state and the society. Accordingly, the pious modern critique of Kemalism made three assumptions: 1) Kemalism negates the Islamic subject and the Ottoman values (reduced to Islamic values), 2) Islam is the only link between the state and the society in Turkey, and 3) re-Islamization of Turkish society is, thus, the only solution for undoing the harms of Kemalism. In this regard, like the secular modern imaginary that assumes a break between the secular Turkish Republic and the Ottoman Empire under Sharia rule; pious modern imaginary similarly assumes a break between the secular and the pious. In doing so, however, pious modern imaginary takes the secular modern reading of the Ottoman period for granted, and similarly reduces the tripartite structure of the Ottoman culture—composed of Islamic values, Byzantine tradition, as well as a more secular set of values referred as adab—into a single dimension: Islam.

After the 1980 coup, the meaning behind “Turkish-Islam” became less clear because the military decided to adopt and redefine the term as a strategic move to control religion under the guardianship of the military. During the Motherland Party period, the Islamic ethos was further fostered by the inclusion of compulsory religion courses to the high school curriculum and increased the number of mosques and schools of preaching (imam-hatip).
Meanwhile, during the Özal period, throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, in coordination with World Bank (WB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Turkish political economy underwent a significant neoliberal transformation. This was carried out mostly by replacing the earlier tradition of state-interventionist, trade protectionist, and import-substituting policies with the measures that are commonly associated with the Washington Consensus, including trade liberalization, liberalization of direct investment, and opening the economy to international capital flow. Özal was often criticized for his decision to open up the Turkish capital account prematurely, without building a proper financial, legal, and institutional infrastructure. Özal was a man of rapid political and economic action, but his lack of hesitancy created a political environment where rule of law and democratic checks and balances were considered restrictive and unnecessary. Hence, the 1990s became a decade of economic crises and unprecedentedly high corruption in the state apparatus. It was also a period marked by rise of the Islamic capital as a result of the neoliberal transformation. Islamic communities (cemaat) actively participated to the institutionalization of neoliberal capitalism, and in this way Özal attracted support from the people who felt excluded from the Kemalist order. Despite the rising concerns of secularists at the time, the secular tradition was still strong in social and cultural debates in this period.

1.4.2 Islamic Trust Networks and Islamic Communitarianism

The 1980s also marked a rise of the Islamic communities and trust networks. For some scholars, this was a sign that Islam has become a moral regulatory mechanism in Turkish politics; others argued that Islamic communities supported a more moderate form of political Islam guided by unintended, every-day life engagements between Islam and the state. In this section, I briefly introduce the Nakşibendi, Nur, and Gülen communities and their role in the neoliberal transformation of the pious modern in the decades to follow.

By creating small community networks and linking them to a strong central core, the Nakşibendi religious order is known to pursue Islamic knowledge as means for “self-

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81 Ziya Öniş, “Turgut Özal and His Economic Legacy: Turkish Neoliberalism in a Critical Perspective,” Middle Eastern Studies 40, no. 4 (2004): 113-134, 115. The newly emerging Islamic bourgeoisie was a winner of the Özal’s economic policies. Some studies refer to the rising Islamic capital in central Anatolia (especially Kayseri) during the course of 1990s and early 2000s as Islamic Calvinism. For more information, please see: European Stability Initiative, 2005, Islamic Calvinists: Change and Conservatism in Central Anatolia, Istanbul and Berlin: European Study Initiative.
82 Öniş, “Turgut Özal and His Economic Legacy,” 114.
83 For a more detailed discussion on this standpoint, please see: Atasoy, Islam’s Marriage with Neoliberalism, 123.
84 For example: Turam, Between Islam and the State, 156.
purification” through the Qur’an, the memory, and rabıta—which means the coupling of the heart of the follower with the leader, through dhikr (zikir, getting inspired in silence) and sohbet (one on one conversations). In the Nakşibendi tradition, promoting the Islamic ethos in all aspects of life is considered a moral duty. Therefore, participants of the Nakşibendi community are encouraged to become integrated into the academia and business world as moral agents. Turgut Özal, who initiated Turkish neo-capitalist transformation, was commonly associated with this community.

Composed of the followers of Said-i Nursi, who was trained as a Nakşibendi, the Nur (light) community has been operating similarly. In the late-Ottoman and early-Republican period, Nursi initially supported the Young Turks but later his vision of Islam coincided with the Pan-Islamists. The compiled writings of Nursi, Risale-i Nur, is a guide on how to establish a pious community and avoid the Western way of life.

The Gülen community, composed of the followers of Fettullah Gülen, is closely involved with da’wa work, which is called “hizmet” (service) in Turkey. The Gülen movement advocates hizmet for the sake of God, that is, an action-based responsibility to spread the message of Islam. Founded on the principles Turkish nationalism (especially Ziya Gökalp’s idea that Islam can bring social cohesion to the society), free market, and education, the Gülen community is considered as a “Neo-Nur movement.” In addition to a closely-knit network of small apartment flats all around Turkey, the Gülen community also operated a web of university exam preparatory schools (dershane) and numerous private universities in Turkey, as well as a network of boarding schools outside of Turkey. In these close-knit communities, the older students are known to guide the younger through temsil (example) and not tebliğ (instruction). It is therefore through “the power of suggestion” and “the hold of pious community” that the

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85 Atasoy, Islam’s Marriage with Neoliberalism, 123-125.
87 Keskin, “Market Oriented Post-Islamism in Turkey,” 124; Turam, Between Islam and the State, 42.
90 Keskin, Market Oriented Post-Islamism in Turkey,” 25.
91 Atasoy, Islam’s Marriage with Neoliberalism, 128; Ihsan Yılmaz, “State, Law, Civil Society and Islam in Contemporary Turkey,” Muslim World, Special Issue: Islam in Contemporary Turkey 95 no. 3 (2005).
93 Atasoy, Islam’s Marriage with Neoliberalism, 129.
94 Atasoy, Islam’s Marriage with Neoliberalism, 129.
Gülen movement has created an aura that supersedes the individual, though not by enforcement or instruction.\textsuperscript{95} The students were encouraged to discuss the Qur’an, \textit{Risale-i Nur}, and the writings of Fettullah Gülen, but not expected to overtly display any religious practice or symbol, including the headscarf.\textsuperscript{96}

The Gülen movement has been central for the transition to “post-Islamism,” which Tuğrul Keskin defines as “the integration of Islamic movements into the larger political and economic spectrum.”\textsuperscript{97} In this regard, Gülen’s advocacy of “humble capitalist nationalism” or “worldly asceticism” was more pro-Özal than pro-Erbakan.\textsuperscript{98} Until the 2002 elections, however, Fettullah Gülen avoided direct involvement with politics.\textsuperscript{99} JDP was the only political party that Gülen openly supported, and the first pro-Islamic.\textsuperscript{100} The current developments after the 2013 corruption operations between December 17 and 25 and the July 15, 2016 coup attempt, however, suggest that the relationship between Gülen movement and JDP has been completely reversed, which I will revisit shortly.

\textbf{1.5 The 1990s: Political Islam, Postmodern Coup, and the Headscarf}

The 1990s was an era of changing party names, coalition government failures, economic crisis, political scandals, and heightened tensions among political leaders.\textsuperscript{101} Two incidents were particularly important during this period with regard to the progression of the contestation between the secular modern and pious modern imaginaries: 1) the 1994 municipal elections, and 2) the February 28 Period. The results of the 1994 municipal elections marked a new phase in the secular-pious rift in Turkey since it was the first time a pro-Islamic political party, Erbakan’s Welfare Party (WP, \textit{Refah Partisi}), had gotten significant electoral support and won Istanbul and Ankara, two of the three biggest cities in Turkey. (The exception is Izmir, where pro-pious political parties still cannot succeed.) This intensified the Kemalist apprehensions towards Islamization, often expressed in the forms of cynicism, irony, and humor,\textsuperscript{102} which deepened when Erbakan became the Prime Minister in July 1996. Yet, Erbakan’s coalition government

\textsuperscript{95}Turam, \textit{Between Islam and the State}, 60-61.
\textsuperscript{96}Atasoy, \textit{Islam’s Marriage with Neoliberalism}, 128.
\textsuperscript{97}Keskin, “Market Oriented Post-Islamism in Turkey,” 121-122.
\textsuperscript{98}Turam, \textit{Between Islam and the State}, 51.
\textsuperscript{99}Turam, \textit{Between Islam and the State}, 51.
\textsuperscript{100}Keskin, “Market Oriented Post-Islamism in Turkey,” 140.
\textsuperscript{101}Starting from 1992, there was growing dividedness and personal interest driven inner tensions within both the Motherland Party (led by Mesut Yılmaz) and DYP (led by Tansu Çiller, after Demirel’s presidency after Özal’s death) while RPP had a comeback with its new leader Deniz Baykal, who used to be a member of DSP.
\textsuperscript{102}Navaro-Yashin, \textit{Faces of State}, 171-187.
lasted only for a year. During the National Security Council meeting on February 28, 1997, the military concluded that Erbakan’s close connections with the Islamic communities, Iran, and Libya, signaled a move towards Islamization.

This started the “28 February Process” (28 Şubat Süreci) or Postmodern Coup (Postmodern Darbe). In this period, the headscarf ban in the public buildings and state institutions, including universities, was monitored more strongly than ever. It was common amongst secularists to refer to “the politically charged version of the headscarf” as türban to separate it from the traditional headscarf (başörtüsü), which was considered a garment that elderly women use in the villages, and therefore, not a political symbol. It was also during this period that the constitutional court closed WP in 1998 and issued a political ban on Erbakan and other party leaders for five years. As a result of these developments, in 1999 Fetullah Gülen fled the country. The Virtue Party (VP, Fazilet Partisi) was the first party to replace RP. In the 1999 general elections, the rise of politicized religion was coupled with the rise of nationalism.

Although VP claimed to support a more moderate political Islam, it was also closed down in 2001 by the constitutional court due to its support of the headscarf movement. As Chapter 2 will discuss in greater detail, the 28 February Period has been formative for the pious women’s movement and its integration into the wider women’s rights movement in Turkey.

1.6 JDP’s “New Turkey” and the Remaking of the Pious Modernity in Turkey

As I discussed, the introduction of Islam into Turkish politics started during the 1950s, and the neoliberal transformation that has led to the rise of Islamic capital goes back to the Özal period during the 1980s. The JDP’s unique contribution to this transformation was to achieve and maintain strong electoral support for this pro-pious project to be in the political forefront for four consecutive terms. During this period, however, JDP also restructured the pious modern imaginary in its own terms. The previous pro-pious efforts until JDP only argued that

103 İnce, Citizenship and Identity in Turkey, 139.
105 Zürcher, Turkey: Modern History, 304. The headscarf ban was originally introduced in 1982. During the first Motherland Party cabinet, the Holy Alliance tried to raise the ban, but, as the President, Kenan Evren took it to the constitutional court where it was rejected. In 1989, a decree was passed from the parliament, which lifted the ban, and left it to the discretion of the university rectors. But, in 1990, after the murders of Bahriye Uçoğ and Muammer Aksoy by the Islamists, the ban was implemented more extendedly. With the 28 February period, the ban was enforced more strictly than ever.
106 İnce, Citizenship and Identity in Turkey, 139.
Kemalism’s “clean break” between Sharia-rule and secularism (or Ottoman Empire and Turkish Republic) was actually a break between the state and the society. JDP has went one step further and re-located itself as the true clean break with the history that created the alienation between the people and their cultural values (reduced to Sunni Islamic values, and therefore, leaving out adab, the secular set of Ottoman/Turkish values that the Ottoman secular elite was responsible to protect). As a result, by separating itself from the prior traditions of both Kemalist and previous pro-pious traditions, JDP has marked the year 2002 as the beginning of “the New Turkey” (Yeni Türkiye). Below I review the main political junctures of JDP’s “New Turkey” and how it transformed the secular-pious rift in the country.

1.6.1 Politics of JDP: Undoing or Reproducing Kemalism?

After JDP’s first victory in 2002, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan—a former mayor of Istanbul who was imprisoned one year before in 2001 for reading a poem with the lines, “The mosques are our barracks...and the believers our soldiers”—had become the leader of the pro-pious coalition. With the support of the religious communities. During JDP’s first term, Erdoğan’s agenda was both pro-pious and pro-EU (European Union) at the same time. Initially, Erdoğan successfully implemented what he had promised and JDP showed that a pro-Islamic political party can function in a constitutional democracy. Although JDP’s commitment to the reformist democratic spirit (in terms of carrying out EU-driven foreign policy, including penal code reforms, women’s rights, and to some extent, minority rights) was mostly felt during the first two years of its first term, in the eyes of post-Kemalist critics, JDP continued to offer an opportunity for further democratization and undoing the harms of Kemalism in its second term. From this perspective, JDP’s first electoral victory was the long-awaited political result of the rise of Islamic trust networks and the awakening of the civil society (equated to Islamic civil society) in Turkey. JDP, in this regard, was thought to institutionalize and politically legitimize “the society’s awakening” that started during the 1980s with the rise of the religious communities by finally bringing the state and the society back together.

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109 Here, it might be important to remember that JDP abbreviates its name in Turkish as AK Party instead of AKP (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi). “Ak” in Turkish means “clean” or “white.” of JDP, Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, is AK Parti. “Ak” in Turkish means “white.” Although the opposition prefers to refer to JDP as “AKP,” JDP supporters insist on “AK Parti.”
110 İnce, Citizenship and Identity in Turkey, 140.
In her anthropological study on the statism of public life in Turkey during the 1990s, Navaro-Yashin provides a dual critique of this post-Kemalist support for pro-pious politics that I consider relevant also for the JDP period. According to Navaro-Yashin, contrary to the post-Kemalist interpretation, the rise of Islamic communities in the aftermath of the 1980 coup was not an awakening initiated by the people against the state. For Navaro-Yashin, throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s, pro-pious political actors started to use “a different technique,” or a shift of discourse, in the exercise of statism and state power.\textsuperscript{112} Navaro-Yashin thinks that what happened instead was a synthesis of repressive and productive uses of state power in Foucauldian terms. From this perspective, the new pro-pious actors of the state continued to use the state’s repressive power over the society, but this time, this process also involved productively offering more opportunities for a group of people that had felt neglected by the Kemalist political and economic structures. As a result, by using the productive power of the state that has offered more opportunities for their supporters, these pious actors were able to “reproduce and enhance state power.”\textsuperscript{113}

For Navaro-Yashin, the problematic part of the post-Kemalist critique and its reading of the rise of religious communities is the isolation of “an almost ideal-typical picture of ‘autonomous’ public sphere” that has never existed in Turkey.\textsuperscript{114} On the contrary, she argues that neither the rise of civil society, nor the rise of Islamic trust networks, was outside of state influence.\textsuperscript{115} Instead of undoing the harms of Kemalism or Kemalist Orientalism, Navaro-Yashin argues that the rise of pro-Islamic politics and the post-Orientalist, post-Kemalist critiques of the secular modern imaginary in the 1990s have both “[reproduced] what [they] had set up to deconstruct: Orientalism.”\textsuperscript{116} In this regard, Navaro-Yashin’s argument stands closer to what Arendt refers as the “hypnotic effect” of the oppositional forces that ensure the continuity of a tradition in which “the very assertion of one side of the opposites (…) necessarily brings to light the repudiated opposite and shows that both have meaning and significance only in this opposition.”\textsuperscript{117} From a similar perspective, I suggest below that JDP’s “undoing” of Kemalism has actually reproduced and intensified the key techniques that have been used during the Kemalist remaking of the society.

\textsuperscript{112} Navaro-Yashin, \textit{Faces of State}, 132.
\textsuperscript{113} Navaro-Yashin, \textit{Faces of State}, 132.
\textsuperscript{114} Navaro-Yashin, \textit{Faces of State}, 131.
\textsuperscript{115} Navaro-Yashin, \textit{Faces of State}, 132.
\textsuperscript{116} Navaro-Yashin, \textit{Faces of State}, 76.
\textsuperscript{117} Hannah Arendt, \textit{Between Past and Future}, 35.
1.6.2 The Critical Political Junctures of JDP’s “New” Pious Modernity

Now, I will discuss how JDP has transformed the boundaries between the secular and the pious in Turkey over the last 15 years. It is possible to identify three stages.

The first stage roughly starts with the end of JDP’s first term as the secularist opposition started to express heightened discontent and fear regarding the rising power of JDP and international support for Erdoğan’s moderate political Islam. Since JDP was successful in terms of providing rights-based reforms in this brief period, many leftist intellectuals started to side with JDP on selective rights-based issues. Abdullah Gül’s candidacy for presidency can be considered the first critical political juncture that intensified the Islamic-secular rift during this period. As a result, nationwide protests and demonstrations were organized across different cities in Turkey under the leadership of the main opposition party, RPP, and Kemalist civil society organizations, including many secular feminist organizations. Following *Cumhuriyet Mitingleri* (Republic Meetings), RPP decided to boycott the poll and block the assembly.118 The military responded to the crisis by posting a statement on their website, sometimes referred as “e-memorandum” (*e-darbe*), and warned the government not to take any initiative to endanger the secular character of the state.119 Instead of backing down, JDP called for early elections and raised its votes. With the support of the nationalist party, NAP (Nationalist Action Party), Abdullah Gül became the new president and Hayrinüsa Gül became the first Turkish First Lady with a headscarf.120

Although JDP did not back down in the aftermath of the e-memorandum, to prevent another possible military intervention, the cooperation between JDP and Gülen movement became deeper since, by that time, Gülen followers were already appointed to key bureaucratic positions in the judiciary and the security forces. The result of this alliance between the judiciary and JDP ignited the beginning of the *Ergenekon* (name of a valley in Turkish mythical history) and *Balyoz* (sledgehammer in Turkish) operations and court cases, and hence, an important phase of JDP’s counter-narrative formation. The *Balyoz* trial, which targeted most of the high-ranking retired military officers, ended in September 2012 and *Ergenekon* ended in August 2013. During the first years of the case, *Ergenekon* trials were commonly perceived by the leftist liberals as an effort to expose the potential threat of military-led or hardliner nationalist initiatives, possibly including the assassination of the Armenian journalist, Hrant Dink. Especially after the last wave...
of Ergenekon arrests in 2011, however, when journalists like Ahmet Şık were taken under custody,121 Ergenekon lost its credibility. While some pro-government intellectuals still considered these cases important for Turkish democratization, many scholars argued that the main purpose of these court cases was to “delegitimize and criminalize political dissent” against the JDP government.122 As Bakiner argues, “the hastily prepared indictments, the unjustified arrests and long detention of key defendants” have become common procedures in handling these cases.123 Moreover, even if the aim of these cases was bringing criminal justice, it became more widely recognized that both trials were interested in “coup plots against the government” rather than the human rights violations against the citizens. Thus, if we go back to Navaro-Yashin’s argument, like the pious communities and previous pro-Islamic political parties in the 1990s, rather than challenging the statist tradition of Kemalist politics, JDP has taken similar statist measures.124

With the constitutional referendum in 2010, the politics of JDP entered its second stage. A few months before the referendum, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu—a former bureaucrat—became the new leader of the main opposition party, RPP. Kılıçdaroğlu proposed to pass the constitutional amendments regarding rights and freedoms in the assembly in cooperation with JDP and only taking the amendments regarding the expansion of the executive functions of the government to the referendum—which was rejected by JDP. As a result, the constitutional referendum became another key political juncture that over-emphasized the Islamic-secular rift in the country rather than spurring thoughtful debates around constitutional amendments. While doing so, JDP continued to favor its own version of pious modern conservatism rather than providing plural openings for difference and further democratization as was officially declared.

Shortly after winning the referendum in 2010, during the 2011 general elections, JDP once again increased its votes, which made Erdoğan the first Prime Minister of Turkey to win 3 consecutive elections.125 Although JDP’s third term posed serious questions about its commitment to democracy,126 Erdoğan maintained strong electoral support during the municipal elections and for the first time held presidential elections in 2014.127 Before he became the first

121 Most notably, Ahmet Şık’s arrest was highly contentious because he got convicted due to his unpublished book manuscript about the link between the Gülen movement and the police force.
122 For example: Bakiner, “Politics of Memory and Majoritarian Conservatism,” 705.
123 Bakiner, “Politics of Memory and Majoritarian Conservatism,” 705.
124 Bakiner, “Politics of Memory and Majoritarian Conservatism,” 704.
popularly elected President of Turkey, Erdoğan began to claim himself as the sole voice of democracy. Despite “speaking for” everyone, JDP’s discursive pseudo-pluralism rarely involved “acting for” anyone else who was not in support of JDP. Therefore, JDP not only continued to conflate the state and the society (like the previous pro-Islamic political parties) but also majoritarianism and pluralism.

The Gezi Protests during June of 2013 took place in this particular period of growing media censorship, polarization between the secular and the Islamic, and distrust in public institutions. The Gezi movement started as a response to the disproportionate use of police force used against the peaceful environmental protestors who wanted to stop the demolition of the Gezi Park in Taksim (that used to be the Halil Pasha artillery barracks during the Ottoman period) to build a shopping mall-mosque-residence complex instead. Starting from its third day, however, it developed into a movement aimed at all injustices and human rights violations that had been happening in the country for the past decades. In this regard, Gezi protests, or more particularly, the way JDP reacted to the protests, instigated the third and current stage of the JDP era, which has been a downward spiral in terms of individual rights and freedoms in the country, ironically validating almost all of the fears of the Kemalist secularists during JDP’s first and second terms that were considered ungrounded.

Leaving 11 people dead, thousands injured, and hundreds of journalists arrested, there were two interpretations of Gezi. According to pro-government commentators, Gezi was a continuation of Republic meetings in 2007 where the “leftist and anarchist groups” took over the protest “with massive support from the Kemalists,” Yet, given the diversity of Gezi protestors, it is at best anachronistic to interpret Gezi from the framework of Islam versus Kemalist secularism. More critical interpretations suggest that Gezi was a powerful critique of both JDP’s “deification” of electoral majoritarianism as the only legitimate judgment mechanism and of the constant use of visible and invisible means of state violence against all forms of political criticism.

During December 2013, the JDP government faced another challenge with the corruption scandals. Before December 2013, as discussed above, there was a coalition between the Gülen

128 Especially the judiciary—because of the unjustified arrests and questionable indictments during the Ergenekon and Balyoz cases.
130 Özhan, “The Longest Year,” 82
133 Moudouros, “Gezi Park,” 184, 190.
movement and JDP, which led to the appointment of members of the Gülen movement to key bureaucratic positions. Yet, starting from JDP’s third term, the power dynamics behind this coalition gradually shifted as Erdoğan and Gülen declared different opinions on Turkey’s policy in the Middle East to the Kurdish issue. On February 7, 2012, however, when the prosecutor of the Kurdistan Communities Union case (KCU, or Koma Civaken Kurdistan, KCK, in Kurdish) issued a police warrant after the undersecretary of the National Intelligence Organization (NIO, Milli İstihbarat Teşkilati) who had refused to testify, JDP perceived it as an open threat. At first JDP only responded by reappointing the prosecutor who issued the warrant. In the fall of 2013, Erdoğan threatened the Gülen movement by raising the issue of closing down the university preparatory schools, known as dershanes, including the chain of schools administered by the Gülen movement. After this incident, a political war commenced between the Gülen movement and the JDP.

The result was a corruption investigation held on December 17, 2013 that arrested 50 people affiliated with JDP including children of three ministers who were still in office, with the allegations of money-laundering and bribery. Erdoğan claimed that the allegations were led by a coalition between Gülenists in the judiciary and the police.¹³⁴ The second wave of operations on December 25, 2013 directly targeted Bilal Erdoğan, the son of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. During the following few months, various telephone conversations were leaked to social media. Erdoğan claimed that these tapes were fabricated to harm the government by the Gülen movement. Erdoğan asserted that the Gülenists had formed a “parallel structure” (paralel yapı) that occupied the judiciary and the police without their knowledge. By leaving the questions about JDP’s role in appointing the members of the Gülen movement into key government agencies unanswered, JDP and pro-government intellectuals claimed that the Gülen movement used its hizmet work as a cover-up to take over JDP. Yet, this approach was far from convincing at the time. This was most notably because Erdoğan, who previously declared his trust for the Turkish judicial system during Ergenekon, Balyoz, and KCK operations, adopted a strikingly different approach and immediately fired public prosecutors and police officers involved with the corruption investigation instead of taking the accusations seriously and guaranteeing a full, transparent investigation.¹³⁵ Meanwhile, the scholars close to Erdoğan tried to justify Erdoğan’s personal intervention by claiming that December 17 operations constituted “an attempted judiciary coup”

¹³⁴ Taha Özhan, “The Longest Year,” 85.
by the Gülenists.\textsuperscript{136}

A few months after the corruption scandal, during the campaigns for the municipal elections in March 2014, Erdoğan led JDP’s campaign personally by visiting every city in person, often stating in his speeches that “only the will of the nation” could judge if he was guilty of the charges. When JDP kept 45\% of the votes,\textsuperscript{137} Erdoğan concluded he was not guilty in the eyes of the people.\textsuperscript{138} The corruption cases were closed, the Gülen movement became the new enemy of the state, and thus the second stage of the war between Erdoğan and Gülen began. In July 2014, the police officers who carried on the corruption arrests were detained for allegedly spying against the prime minister and taking part in “the parallel structure,” which was now considered “a terrorist organization.”\textsuperscript{139} To the current day, the claims and the reality of the “parallel structure” or the Fettullah Gülen Terrorist Organization remain unclear.

It has also been argued that, with the March 2014 elections, JDP ensured its “electoral hegemony” as the most “dominant political party” in Turkey that is likely to win elections.\textsuperscript{140} The presidential elections in August 2014 further perpetuated Erdoğan’s and JDP’s power.\textsuperscript{141} Immediately after Erdoğan became the first elected president of Turkey, he signaled his presidency would not be ceremonial. To the contrary, Erdoğan stated that, if JDP held 2/3 majority in the elections to come, a transition towards a presidential system was possible. Erdoğan’s plans were slightly disturbed in the June 7, 2015 elections which resulted with JDP’s loss of the absolute majority and a victory for the Peoples’ Democratic Party (PDP, \textit{Halkların Demokratik Partisi} in Turkish, and \textit{Partiya Demokratîk a Gelan} in Kurdish) as it got 13\% of the votes and passed the 10\% threshold.\textsuperscript{142} After inconclusive efforts for a coalition government, however, the elections were set to be renewed in November.

In between the two elections, the political climate in Turkey changed drastically as the war against Kurdistan Workers Party (KWP, \textit{Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan}) restarted after the Ankara and Suruç bombings. JDP advocated that the bombings took place due to the loss of political stability after the June elections, which granted JDP its fourth victory in November 2015. Far from providing political stability, however, during JDP’s fourth term, not only had the

\begin{footnotes}
\item[136] Özhan, “The Longest Year,” 91.
\item[137] Özhan, “The Longest Year,” 94
\item[141] The official results can be found at: http://www.ysk.gov.tr/ysk/content/conm/YSKUCM/path/Contribution%20Folders/HaberDosya/2014CB-Kesin-416_d_Genel.pdf
\end{footnotes}
war against KWP led to thousands of deaths, but also Turkish involvement in Syria had rebounded detrimentally in consecutive ISIS suicide bombings along the Turkish border as well as in Ankara and Istanbul.143 Meanwhile, anyone who expressed dissent regarding government policies—from well-known journalists like Can Dündar and Ahmet Şık, to respected writers like Aslı Erdoğan, to the 1,128 academics who signed the “Academics for Peace” petition—were at an increased risk of losing their jobs and passports, as well as possibly facing imprisonment.

Shortly after the suicide bombings at the Istanbul Atatürk Airport, on 15 July 2016, Turkey has witnessed a failed coup-attempt and a counter-coup by the civilians.144 Although Turkey was no stranger to coups, this was the first time that the masses of civilians reacted immediately after Erdoğan called for his supporters to go out to the streets during a live streamed video-phone conversation. Without any proper investigation, Erdoğan and the JDP government was certain that the coup-attempt was plotted and administered by the Gülenist terrorist organization, now referred as FETÖ (Fettullah Gülen Terör Örgütü). Three weeks after the coup, Erdoğan apologized to the whole nation for the first time for mistaking Gülen as an ally. The aftermath of the failed coup-attempt, as the emergency of the state was renewed for another three months, more than 40,000 people were detained, more than 20,000 teachers and even more police officers lost their jobs overnight, and Gülen affiliated schools including universities were closed down. Interestingly, therefore, the pious modern discourse on Muslim harm and injury in the aftermath of the 28 February Process was replicated by the pro-pious actors of JDP, much more comprehensively and in stricter terms. After all, the number of people who were detained and purged is not comparable even with the 1980 military coup, which was much more comprehensive than the 28 February Process.

In sum, despite the hopes of post-Kemalist liberals who saw JDP as an opportunity for the deconstruction the Kemalist norm, as soon as JDP ensured its electoral hegemony and became the dominant party of Turkish politics, it only replaced the Kemalist norm with its own neo-capitalist, majoritarian, conservative pious norm. As a result, although JDP’s early period between 2002 and 2007 was helpful in terms of making the republican secular elite145 realize they could no longer ignore the new Islamic elite and start to self-reflect on their presuppositions,

143 Salt, “Erdoğan’s ‘New Turkey’ Slides into Turmoil,” 119.
145 Some scholars highlight that the secular elite is not elite in terms of capital. Secular elite rather refers to the middle class bureaucratic officials, lawyers, university professors, or public servants who are privileged in terms of education, but not (or, no longer) necessarily social-standing or capital. For an example of this discussion: İbrahim Kaya, “Conceptualizing the Current Clashes Between Modernist Republicans and Islamic Conservatives in Turkey,” Social Science Information 51 no.3 (2012): 3-21.
as JDP became the only reference point to talk about anything related to Islam it raised more question marks than opportunities for a plural regrounding of both imaginaries, and inevitably, replicated the very same tendencies it originally despised.

1.7 Conclusion

Thus far, I have discussed the political roots of the disagreement between secular feminists and pious feminists in Turkey that go back to early years of the Ottoman-Turkish modernization. My discussion introduced the secular/Kemalist and the Islamic/pious imaginaries of Turkish modernization as well as the discursive relationship between the two from the late Ottoman era to the current day. Since the contestation between the two interpretative frameworks is considered as the strongest cognitive barrier against a collaboration between the two groups, this chapter aimed to provide a general political background for the rest of my discussion in the following chapters. In doing so, instead of treating the two imaginaries as separate ideologies in isolation, I tried to highlight the ongoing contested relationship between the two imaginaries and how this relationship has transformed over the years.

In my discussion in this chapter, I suggested that that the secular modern imaginary is centered on the Kemalist reading of the political history. It assumes a clear break between the backwards-oriented, traditional, Ottoman, Sharia order and the forward-looking, modern, and secular Turkish Republic. Pious modernity, on the other hand, is construed as a strategic criticism of the secular modern imaginary. It relocates Islam as the missing link between the state and the society in Turkey and re-imagines modernity in relation to Islamic values. Although both imaginaries have been transformative in their early periods, I argued that they have both become contested techniques of consolidating political power. As Arendt asserts, however, this does not suggest that they have lost their power over the people. On the contrary, as they ensure the continuity of the foundational opposition of Turkish identity, their hold over the people becomes stronger than ever—which is “not only wrong but also dangerous” because it curbs people’s capacity to think beyond the locally-established categories of the secular and the pious. With the current transition to the presidential system after the highly contentious referendum held in April 2017, the borders between the secular and the pious are likely to change again. Although many

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146 As Kandiyoti puts it, “the terms ‘secular’ and ‘Islamic’ have, in time, become empty signifiers and tropes that are mobilized by contending political actors in their search for hegemony and the consolidation of their power.” For more information, please see: Kandiyoti, “The Travails of the Secular,” 528.

147 Hannah Arendt, Between Past and Future, 30.
aspects of this upcoming fourth stage of JDP politics are uncertain, the secular and the pious are likely to remain as the two oppositional forces of Turkish politics, and the coercive power of this opposition over the society is likely to continue.

My discussion in the next chapters indicates that secular feminists and pious feminists share similar perplexities when they approach one another in the women’s movement due to the power of the secular-pious divide, however their relationship cannot be reduced to this tendency alone. My study, in this regard, is an intellectual effort to explore alternative ways to think about the secular-pious divide in the women’s movement in Turkey so that secular feminists and pious feminists can possibly arrive at their own, women-to-women, “enlarged” feminist standpoint beyond their political fixities, and towards a possibility for a more collaborative women’s movement. But before I pass onto that discussion by exploring the narratives of my secular feminist and pious feminist participants (in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4), the next chapter (Chapter 2) will expand the background provided in this chapter by contextualizing the ways in which the more general political secular-pious divide in Turkey have influenced the development of the women’s movement in Turkey.
Chapter 2
The Secular and the Pious in the Women’s Movement in Turkey: 
Historical Roots, Collaborative Opportunities, and the Rupture

Chapter 1 traced the historical progression of the political secular-pious divide in the broader Turkish context and contextualized the foundational opposition between secular modern and pious modern imaginaries in Turkey. In this chapter, I aim to take this discussion to the level of the women’s movement and trace out the evolution of the secular-pious divide in Turkish feminism. Together with Chapter 1, therefore, this chapter offers a contextual background for my analysis in the next chapters. Starting with Chapter 3, I will reconsider the disagreement between the two women’s groups beyond secular-pious opposition by also exploring alternative frameworks that appear in the narratives of my participants. From the standpoint of secular feminists, I discuss the disagreement as an issue of feminist friendship in Chapter 3, and from the standpoint of pious feminists, I examine the disagreement as a question pious women’s autonomy in Chapter 4.

Diverging from Chapter 1, in this chapter, I also consult the narratives I have collected during my fieldwork as well as the relevant academic literature. My discussion proceeds in three parts. In the first two parts, I introduce the historical progressions of the secular and pious women’s movements upon the general background I provided in Chapter 1. In the third part, I examine the opportunities and obstacles for collaboration in the women’s movement in two sections: the first focuses on shifting institutional structures and the second provides a narrative-based account the current rupture between the two women’s groups. I argue that both the historical progression of the two women’s movement and the institutional structures surrounding the women’s rights issues in Turkey have replicated and reproduced the secular-pious divide. For this reason, I introduce two critical reasons to explore the actual inter-personal dynamics of collaboration and disagreement in the women’s movement: (1) to understand the full scope of the relationship between the secular and the pious women in the women’s movement in Turkey without reducing it to a particular pre-determined, discursive frame, and (2) to identify alternative feminist vocabularies of disagreement that are not discursively limited by the secular/pious divide, and in this way shift our attention towards alternative relational concepts that can offer different approaches to alleviate the current rupture between the two groups. In this chapter, I will only introduce the current rupture. I will present my analysis of the alternative
feminist vocabularies of the disagreement in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4. In Chapter 5, I will revisit the last part of my discussion in this chapter and provide a relational framework to rethink about the relationship between secular and pious women’s groups in Turkey.

2.1 Secular Feminism in Turkey

There are two main approaches to think about the progression of the women’s movement in Turkey.¹ According to the first approach, there are three stages of Turkish feminism that coincide with the key points of Turkish modernization: The first stage started during the late 19th century and lasted until the Kemalist era (1923-1938), the second stage lasted until the development of an independent women’s movement during the late 1980s, and currently, we are in its third stage.² According to the second approach there are only two stages, which coincide with women’s actual demands: During the first stage, women demanded equality “regardless of differences,” which started with the Tanzimat Era (1839-1876) and lasted until the late 1980s, when women in Turkey started to demand equality “despite differences.”³ In this regard, the two approaches have two observations in common: 1) The first efforts of feminism can be traced back to late Ottoman era, or more specifically, to the Tanzimat reforms, where “the woman question” has become an integral part of the top-down Ottoman-Turkish civilizational transformation led by the ruling elite.⁴ 2) It is only in the 1980s that women began to ask for their independent, autonomous, feminist interests instead of considering the women’s struggle secondary to their wider political struggles—including Kemalism, Islamism, and leftism.⁵

According to the first observation, the historical roots of the women’s movement go back to the early years of Ottoman-Turkish modernization during the Tanzimat period in which the corporeal visibility of women became a value and a sign of Ottoman civilizational transformation like other values of the time including anti-imperialism, nationalism, and secularism.⁶ Although this process was mostly led by male reformers, there was also a small group of educated women

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⁶ Alexander Safarian, “On the History of Turkish Feminism,” Iran & the Caucasus 11, 1 (2007): 141-151, 141. Prior to the reforms of Sultan Mahmud II, Ottoman society was silent about the women question as it was considered improper to talk about women. With the Tanzimat reforms, the right to marry by a civil court, right of inheritance for daughters (irade-i seniye), and mandatory education of girls between ages of six to ten were granted to women.
involved in the process. However, their involvement was limited in the sense that they did not place a critique of patriarchy or question the dichotomy between “Islamic moral purity” and “Western prodigality.” Despite its limitations, according to Nilüfer Göle, in this period, the boundaries between the East and the West, the mahrem (private) and the namahrem (public), the interior and the exterior, started to shift. For example, with the Tanzimat reforms the regular newspapers began publishing letters written by women, and in 1876, Fatma Aliye founded the first women’s organization, Cemiyet-i İmdadiye (Charity Community) to help wounded soldiers. With the constitutional revolution (1908), women became more active in the public sphere. While the political issues such as women’s suffrage rights were considered in men’s domain, Ottoman feminism during the Young Turk period (unlike the Tanzimat period) is often interpreted as a grassroots movement since women responded to the aspirations of the modernizing male elite as well as to their own.

This trend continued during the early years of the Turkish Republic where women were granted political and socio-economic rights by Atatürk’s reforms. During 1926-1928, women received legal equality with men, polygamy was prohibited, çarşaf (chador) was no longer mandatory, and women were allowed to work in state institutions. The right to vote came later in 1930 in municipal elections and in 1934 in general elections. Despite the ascribed nature and

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1 Jale Parla, Bahalar ve Oğullar: Tanzimat Romanının Epistemolojik Temelleri (Istanbul: İletişim Yayıncılık, 1990), 69; Göle, The Forbidden Modern, 34, 41-42. Mahmud Esad considered polygamy to be “the nature of human beings.” Musa Kazım argued that the purpose of veil was to protect women from the lustful gaze of others. Likewise, Sait Halim Pasha criticized the West and the Westernists and argued that the civilization of the west leads to a ‘pleasure-oriented’, hedonistic society rather than a ‘society of decency and virtue.’


3 Nicole A. N. M. Van Os, “Ottoman and Turkish Women in an International Context,” European Review 13, 3 (2005): 459-479, 461; Safarian, 144-145. Eventually, in 1869, Terakki-i Muhadderat (Progress of Virtuous Ladies) was founded as the first women’s periodical. After Terakki-i Muhadderat, the number of women’s periodicals escalated—some produced by women, some published and edited by men. Amongst all, Hanımlarca Mahsus Gazete (A Newspaper for the Ladies) which was established by Ibnuulhakki Tahir and Şadle Hanım in 1892 was the most popular one, which published articles about belle-lettres, child-rearing, family relations, Islam, health and hygiene, needlework, and lives of famous women.

4 Van Os, “Ottoman and Turkish Women in an International Context,” 463. A year later, Emine Semiye, Fatma Aliye’s sister, founded a similar organization in Salonica called Şevkat-i Nisan (Women’s Compassion).

5 Van Os, “Ottoman and Turkish Women in an International Context,” 460.


8 The Muslim women’s veiling takes many forms and names across different regions. In Turkish, çarşaf refers to the long garment or robe that covers the body and the head, around the face. Çarşaf can be in different colors, and the colors indicate different religious/secular associations. Its black version, kara çarşaf, is closer to the originally Iranian use of “chador” or a long dress with the headscarf “jilbab.”

9 Safarian, “On the History of Turkish Feminism,” 151.

uneven application of women’s rights,\textsuperscript{17} many women enjoyed the benefits of being “agents of modernization” in this period.\textsuperscript{18} They supported the modernizing Republican elite reverently instead of asking for more rights and freedoms. The interests of the national struggle, therefore, superseded feminist interests during the Kemalist era.\textsuperscript{19}

Feminists started to question the inherent flows of the state-led feminism in Turkey with the rise of other social movements during the 1970s. However, even in the 1970s, feminism remained secondary to political ideology. For example, the Progressive Women’s Organization (İlerici Kadınlar Derneği) operated under the Turkish Communist Party;\textsuperscript{20} revolutionary leftist groups included female comrades but feminist claims were set aside as bourgeois deviation;\textsuperscript{21} and the Idealist Ladies’ Association (Ülkü–Han, Ülkücü Hamimler Derneği) branched out of the National Action Party (NAP).\textsuperscript{22} Hence, as the second observation suggests, the women’s movement in Turkey started to place its own independent demands only with the 1980s.

The 1980 military coup changed the political landscape and sociopolitical structures thereafter.\textsuperscript{23} In this period, the socialist, radical, and liberal feminists began to distance themselves from the Kemalist ideology and its tradition of military guardianship. With the global rise of transnational feminism, a new generation of feminists in Turkey began to establish their own independent, non-hierarchical consciousness-raising groups during the 1980s that met in informal settings such as homes, cafes, or book clubs in which women began to discuss the meaning of feminist identity regardless of their divergent political ideologies.\textsuperscript{24} One of the most important organizations during this time was the Women’s Circle (Kadın Çevresi).\textsuperscript{25} In 1982, during a symposium, the term “feminism” was used publicly for the first time.\textsuperscript{26} In 1986, the feminists in Ankara and Istanbul marched together to demand for the government to comply with the standards of CEDAW. 1987 marked the first street demonstration after the coup where

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{17} Kardam, \textit{Turkey’s Engagement with Global Women’s Human Rights}, 40. While the privileged elite women enjoyed active involvement in the public life, receiving education, and exercising their professions; “an increasingly large number of ‘other’ women (…) were expected to contribute to the modernization process by becoming housewives and bringing “order” and “rationality” to the private realm by going to evening schools.” The latter category not only included women in the rural/traditional areas, but also the “new urban” class as a result of migration.
\item \textsuperscript{19} Van Os, “Ottoman and Turkish Women in an International Context,” 469.
\item \textsuperscript{22} Van Os, “Ottoman and Turkish Women in an International Context,” 469.
\item \textsuperscript{24} Kardam, \textit{Turkey’s Engagement with Global Women’s Human Rights}, 42-43.
\item \textsuperscript{25} Aksu Bora and Asena Günal, \textit{90’arda Türkiye’de Feminizm}, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2002), 7. The documentation of most of the activities during this period is highly limited due to the prohibitions of the military rule.
\item \textsuperscript{26} Tekeli, “Introduction: Women in Turkey in the 1980s,” 13.
\end{itemize}
feminist groups in Istanbul protested against domestic violence. In 1989, the first feminist congress was organized in Ankara.\textsuperscript{27} In the same year, a nation-wide upheaval started after the decision of the constitutional court that reduced the penalty of a rapist in cases where the woman was a sex worker. With the slogan, “we are all prostitutes,” the protest of the feminists led to the abolition of the law.\textsuperscript{28} According to Yesim Arat, instead of the Republican solidarity or leftist/rightist ideologies, it was liberal individualism that gave impetus to an autonomous feminist movement in Turkey during this period after the mid-1980s.\textsuperscript{29}

Kemalist/secular feminists were a part of this transformation in Turkish feminism throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Meanwhile, however, they continued to emphasize the need for preserving the rights that were granted to women by the Kemalist reforms.\textsuperscript{30} For many independent feminist critics, this showed that secular feminists were concerned about Kemalism (and its statist and militaristic tendencies) more than feminism.\textsuperscript{31} Secular feminists in my study responded to this critique by suggesting that when people thought about secular feminists, the image that came into their minds was a “caricature;”\textsuperscript{32} This was an image of upper class, privileged, elitist, Westernist, well-educated, urban, elderly, secular women in the women’s movement whose conception of feminism was limited to the outmoded Kemalist ideals and helping others.\textsuperscript{33} Despite their active work on various women’s issues, including but not limited to violence against women,\textsuperscript{34} gender equality,\textsuperscript{35} women’s political representation,\textsuperscript{36} childcare,\textsuperscript{37} reproductive rights and health,\textsuperscript{38} women’s rights advocacy,\textsuperscript{39} and building and administering community centers in partnership with municipalities;\textsuperscript{40} secular feminist participants of my study were disheartened to know that more radical or plural feminists continued to devalue and underrate their struggle as “not feminist enough.”\textsuperscript{41}

\textsuperscript{28} Feride Acar et al., “Report Analysing Intersectionality,” 12.
\textsuperscript{30} Kardam, Turkey’s Engagement with Global Women’s Human Rights, 41-42; Tekeli, “Introduction: Women in Turkey in the 1980s,” 12-13. Women’s movement is considered as the first democratic movement to emerge after the coup.
\textsuperscript{31} Coşar & Gençoğlu Onbaşı, “Women’s Movement in Turkey at a Crossroads,” 329.
\textsuperscript{32} Mine Rendeci, Interview, April 2011, Istanbul.
\textsuperscript{33} Mine Rendeci, Interview, April 2011, Istanbul.
\textsuperscript{34} Most notably mentioned by: Derya Ertürk, Filiz Doğan, Seyhan Polat.
\textsuperscript{35} Most notably mentioned by: Derya Ertürk, Filiz Doğan, Esra Çakır Zorlu.
\textsuperscript{36} Most notably mentioned by: Derya Ertürk, Ömür Çakmak.
\textsuperscript{37} Most notably mentioned by: Esra Çakır Zorlu, Demet Paksoy.
\textsuperscript{38} Most notably mentioned by: Derya Ertürk, Filiz Doğan, Seyhan Polat, Dilek Fışek, Başak Haznedar, Mine Rendeci, Rana Emir, Ömür Çakmak, and Oya Hıçyılmaz.
\textsuperscript{39} Most notably mentioned by: Dilek Fışek, Seyhan Polat, Başak Haznedar, Hale Ulu and Filiz Doğan
\textsuperscript{40} Most notably mentioned by: Derya Ertürk, Filiz Doğan, Başak Haznedar, Emel Evgin, Demet Paksoy, Seyhan Polat, Dilek Fışek and Fatma Batuhan.
\textsuperscript{41} Filiz Doğan, Interview, February 2011, İzmir. This might be similar to the critique National Organization of Women (NOW) received from leftist feminists in the U.S.
While some scholars, like Şirin Tekeli, refer to the Kemalist women’s movement as “state feminism” that justifies the Kemalist structures more than feminism, others, like Zehra Arat, considered it as a political project that primarily seeks national development, Kemalism could not nurture any other form of consciousness other than its own, including feminism. From both perspectives, Kemalism only granted rights to women because of their possible contributions to the nation.\(^{42}\) In the literature, two examples are commonly given from the Kemalist era to illustrate this argument. The first is the rejection of Nezihe Muhittin’s proposal to establish the Women’s People Party (Kadınlar Halk Fırkası) in 1923.\(^{43}\) The second is the closure of The Union of Turkish Women (TKB, Türk Kadınlar Birliği)\(^{44}\) in 1935 that was established by Nezihe Muhittin after her declined proposal for the political party.\(^{45}\) I think these two examples show us two important points about secular feminism in Turkey: 1) Despite the early developments concerning the legal rights granted to women, the Kemalist era did not offer a favorable environment for the secular women’s movement to flourish and place its independent demands. 2) Even during this early phase, there were feminists, like Nezihe Muhittin, who supported the Republic (as the most favorable basis for women’s emancipation) and provided a freedom-centered feminist critique of the Kemalist structures by pushing the Kemalist system as much as they could at the same time—even if this meant social isolation.\(^{46}\) Therefore, even during this relatively more restricted, statist period, it cannot be simply assumed that all secular women involved with the women’s movement fit into a single, monolithic image that only blindly conformed to the secular modern ideals of the Kemalist state.

This observation is also applicable to the secular participants of my study. Rather than a unitary approach towards the secular-pious divide in the women’s movement, I could detect at least four approaches in the secular feminist narratives and four different groups of secular feminists: (1) Hardliner Secularists/Nationalists, who display a plethora of national symbols in

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\(^{45}\) It was closed down on the premise that Turkey had already achieved equality between men and women. For more information see the Union’s website [in Turkish]: [www.turkkadinlarbirligi.org] However, it is also argued that the real reason of the closure was the declaration the organization had issued regarding the Nazi Regime in Germany, and thereby, violated the proper “non-political” domain of the civil society. For more detailed discussion, please see: Feride Acar, et al, “Report Analysing Intersectionality,” 9-10. See also Deniz Kandiyoti, “Introduction,” in Women, Islam and the State, ed. Deniz Kandiyoti (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991); Deniz Kandiyoti, “Patterns of Patriarchy: Notes for an Analysis of Male Dominance in Turkish Society,” in Women in Modern Turkish Society: A Reader, ed. Şirin Tekeli (London: Zed Books. 1991); Van Os, “Ottoman and Turkish Women in an International Context,” 465. After the closure of TKB, former members joined other organizations in which the state could control their activities, such as the women’s auxiliary branches of CHP.

\(^{46}\) For more details about Nezihe Muhittin’s life, please see: Yaprak Zihnioğlu, Kadınsız İnkılap: Nezihe Muhiddin, Kadınlar Halk Fırkası, Kadın Birliği (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2003); Tanıl Bora, Cerayanlar: Türkiye’de Siyasi Ideolojiler, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2017): 754-760.
their offices like Turkish flags of different sizes, framed Atatürk pictures and full-sized wall calendars, certificates that say “Turkey’s Title Deed: Undividable,” and who responded to my questions about pious women and pious feminists in Turkey by saying “elhamdilüllah, we are all Muslim.” Contrary to common post-Kemalist assumptions, this group constitutes only a minority. (2) Secular communitarians, who locate Kemalist secularism as a prerequisite not only for feminist consciousness, but also for a more democratic, harmonious, peaceful community based on impartiality, pluralism, diversity, and multiplicity. For them, the rise of identity politics since the 1990s has cultivated individualistic values rather than communitarian ones, which has divided the women’s movement. Composed of secular feminists who were receptive towards self-reflective critique, but who nonetheless could not conceive an alternative formulation of feminism that is not grounded on secularism, this second group of secular feminists constitutes the majority of my participants. (3) More liberal feminists, who search for a new equilibrium between the individualistic and communitarian values, and as a result, choose to concentrate on managerial issues like administering EU (European Union) projects, searching for alternative sources of funding, or encouraging professionalization in the women’s movement so that everyone respects each other, at least discreetly and strategically. This group of secular feminists are often called “project feminists.” (4) Critical activists, from a younger cohort of academics, specialists, feminist activists, and graduate students who are critical about both the exclusionary tendencies of the secular women as well as the possible enforcements of religious patriarchy misconstrued under the banner of democratic rights and freedoms. Although secular feminists are often portrayed as elderly women, I had participants from all age categories ranging from women in their late 20s to women in their early 80s. The younger cohort of secular feminists I interviewed, which was about roughly 25% of my participants, all had graduate degrees, while the middle-aged, more communitarian participants, which constituted more than the half of my participants, had either high-school or undergraduate degrees.

As Chapters 3 and 5 will further explore, the majority of my secular feminist participants were highly concerned about how they were seen from the outside. Their primary concern was to respond to possible critiques (post-Kemalist, liberal, pious, Kurdish), rather than to provide their personal stories or opinions. They felt trapped not only in between the ideals of Kemalist secularism and feminism, but also in between their image seen from the outside and how they felt about their own struggle. For example, one of my participants, Filiz Doğan, was deeply

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47 Derya Ertürk, Interview, February 2011, Izmir.
disturbed about the portrayal of secular feminists in Turkey as elderly women who equate “drinking tea with friends” with “non-partisan feminism.”

2.2 Pious Feminism in Turkey

According to Berna Turam, it is possible to observe three main similarities between the first generation of secular feminists and the first generation of pious women in women’s piety movement in Turkey. For Turam, since both secularization and Islamization were civilizing projects in Turkey, during both experiences, 1) the visibility of women was utilized as a “window site” of political transformation, 2) women undertook active roles in the implementation of both forms of social-engineering, 3) however, men took the main political decisions about women. I think it is possible to add a fourth one: During both experiences, women simultaneously resisted and affirmed the political structures they came from—as can be seen from the Nezihe Muhittin example in the previous part, and the emergence of pious feminism in Turkey, which I am about to introduce now and will revisit in Chapter 4.

Although the pious women’s headscarf became a political issue with the 1980s and the 1990s, the roots of the headscarf issue go back to the late 1960s. Fevziye Nuroğlu is often identified as the first university student who wore the headscarf. The first headscarf demonstration in the universities took place in 1968 after Hatice Babacan, a student at the Faculty of Religion, who became the first “headscarf victim” (başörtüsü mağduru) by being dismissed from the university for insulting a professor when she declined to take her headscarf off despite the professor’s request. After this incident, the students boycotted the university and started wearing the headscarf as a form of protest. As a result, the headscarf issue was brought to the parliament, but Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel dismissed it by commenting that, “Our problems will not be solved by a headscarf.” During the 1970s, the incidents became recurrent. In 1973, students with the headscarf were not admitted to the final exam at a junior high school; 215 students attending a religious vocational school in İzmit were reported to the disciplinary

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48 Filiz Doğan, Interview, February 2011, İzmir.
49 Berna Turam, Between Islam and the State: The Politics of Engagement (California: Stanford University Press, 2007). Turam’s research only includes the women in the Gülen community and the women working in the women’s branches of JDP.
50 Berna Turam, Between Islam and the State, 109-110.
committee for wearing the headscarf; and a woman lawyer named Emine Aykenar was discharged from the Ankara Bar Association because of wearing the headscarf.\textsuperscript{53}

Another influential figure during the rise of the headscarf at the end of 1970s was Şule Yüksel Şenler,\textsuperscript{54} who was a columnist and a writer. She initiated and encouraged the use of a new, modernized, and elegant way to tie the scarf around the head without a knot in the front.\textsuperscript{55}

The opponents of the headscarf referred to this new style as “şulebaş” (Şule’s head) in order to distinguish it from the traditional headscarf. During the 1980s and 1990s, “türban” (turban) became a more popular way of referring to şulebaş.\textsuperscript{56} With the 1982 legal ban on wearing the headscarf in the state/public institutions, including universities, the controversy around the headscarf entered into a new phase.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the headscarf increasingly became a deeply divisive political symbol in Turkey. Coinciding with the rise of the civil society and the women’s movement, the first mass level demonstrations against the headscarf ban started in front of the university gates in 1984.\textsuperscript{57} Like the newly emerging generation of radical/critical feminists, pious women similarly shared a critical approach towards the Kemalist remaking of the women. With the 1990s, like feminists, they too began to draw attention to the secular forms of patriarchy in the Turkish society.\textsuperscript{58}

Yet, during the early 1990s, the majority of the Islamic women’s organizations were still founded on the premise that women and men are different but complementary, and the women’s domain is the family. Therefore, periodicals published by pious women’s organizations during this period were mainly concerned about women’s role in the family, such as Woman and Family (Kadın ve Aile) and Our Family (Bizim Aile).\textsuperscript{59}

The February 28 “postmodern” military coup (1997) changed this political landscape. As the first military intervention that was directed against the Islamists,\textsuperscript{60} the 28 February process


\textsuperscript{54}Şule Yüksel Şenler is the writer of a fiction book entitled “Huzur Sokağı” (Tranquility Street), which has been adopted to a television series in one of the major television channels in Turkey starting from September 2012.

\textsuperscript{55}See: Tanıl Bora, Cerayanlar: Türkiye de Siyasi Ideolojiler (İstanbul: İletişim, 2017): 801-802.

\textsuperscript{56}Bora, Cerayanlar, 801-802; Çaḥa, “The Islamic Women’s Movement,” 118.

\textsuperscript{57}Çaḥa, “The Islamic Women’s Movement,” 121.


\textsuperscript{60}Interviews that delineate the importance of the post-modern coup: Meral Şenel (December, 2010; March, 2011; September, 2011), Ayşe Şengül (September, 2011), Melahat Tanış (September, 2011), Zeynel Göknil Şanlı (September, 2011), Zeliha Leventöl (December, 2009, March, 2011); Elif Bayatlı Özcan (December, 2009); Özlem İçel (February 2011); Oya Hiçyılmaz (February, 2011); Rüya Uysal (February, 2011); Esra Çakır Zorlu (April, 2011); Ebru Başar (April, 2011); Güniz Hünel (April, 2011).
led to the resignation of the Welfare Party (WP, Refah Partisi), and later, its closure by the constitutional court. With the WP’s closure, many women with the headscarf working in public institutions were discharged from their jobs. Based on the decisions of the constitutional court and the European Commission of Human Rights (ECHR), more stringent measures against the headscarf were implemented. During the 1990s, university students with the headscarf developed two alternative ways of entering the universities: They either took their headscarves off before entering the campus, or they put on wigs as a substitute for the headscarf. In Istanbul University, the students grew more vocal about the controversy around the “persuasion rooms” (ikna odaları) where headscarved students were talked into taking their headscarves off and not forgoing their right to education. In June 1998, 60 students with the headscarf from Cerrahpaşa Faculty of Medicine marched from Istanbul to Ankara to protest the headscarf ban. Shortly after, in October 1998, students with the headscarf initiated a human chain with the slogan “hand in hand for freedom of thought, respect for belief” (inanca saygı, düşünceye özgürlük için el ele). These were the first instances where the women with the headscarf publicly used the rights language to make their claim against the ban.

The 28 February Process also nurtured the seeds of pious feminist consciousness in Turkey. Being deprived of their jobs in the public sector, educated pious women who wore the headscarf observed a very important gender bias in the system: The 28 February Process did not detrimentally affect pious, Sunni men working in public institutions as it did the pious, Sunni women with the headscarf. Besides, pious men did not do anything to address the consequences pious women had to face. These pious women, who were deprived of their jobs, could only find refuge in forming new communities with other pious women who were suffering from the same problem, which instigated the first steps towards the conception of a pious women’s rights movement in Turkey based on both “God-given” rights of women and women’s rights, and not just secular women’s rights.

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According to my pious participants, the women’s piety movement is traditionally composed of four categories of pious women: (1) the pious women who work in Islamic civil society associations that help the poor or prove first aid during catastrophic events (like Mazlumder or İlkder); (2) the pious women who work under the women’s auxiliaries of pro-religious political parties; (3) the pious women participants of religious communities, or cemaats (most notably Gülen and Nur communities); and (4) more independent initiatives that bring together pious women of similar professional backgrounds, such as divinity school graduates, political scientists, lawyers, and educators.

In my study, since I explore the relationship between secular and pious women’s groups that are interested in working towards the achievement and enhancement of women’s rights, I have only included women from the pious women’s rights movement in my study. I had mainly three types of pious participants: (1) women who preferred to call themselves “conservative women sympathetic to Islam,” rejected the label Islamist, and were not hostile to the term feminism; (2) “pious women” who supported and worked towards the achievement of women’s rights and explicitly admitted their sympathies for feminist values, but did not consider themselves feminists; and (3) more progressive, self-acclaimed pious feminists. In my study, like my secular participants, my pious participants were also educated women coming from middle-class and upper-middle-class families who have lived most of their lives in urban cities. My pious participants were younger on average than my secular participants.

The first effort to unite the women’s piety movement in Turkey came in 1995 with the establishment of the first pious women’s umbrella organization, the Rainbow Istanbul Women Organizations’ Platform (Gökkuşağı İstanbul Kadın Kuruluşları Platformu). Following the Rainbow, similar organizations were founded in other cities. The Capital City Women’s Platform (CCWP, Başkent Kadın Platformu) in Ankara was one of such efforts, perhaps the most important one, which originated from an independent initiative group composed of divinity school graduates (İlahiyatçılar). CCWP differed from Rainbow in two regards: 1) It focused on pious women’s rights, and 2) rather than a particular community of pious women, CCWP’s main aim was to bring together all four categories of pious women together in one organization.

According to Ayşe Şengül, “The idea was to establish something like Rainbow in Ankara. But we also wanted more diversity. We wanted to have representatives from every cemaat (religious

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66 Ayşe Şengül, Interview, September 2011, Ankara.
community), every [pious women] association." The problem was there was no legal basis for founding a platform in Turkey. To continue its activities, CCWP had to become an association. As Ayşe stated, “things started to change when we arrived at the stage of action as a platform, as a single entity.” As a platform, CCWP could bring together all four groups. But as an association, CCWP needed its own individual members. The representatives who were already attending the CCWP meetings were encouraged to have double membership, however the women from “stronger associations and/or Islamic communities” did not find this option desirable. Yelda explained the process as follows: “They preferred their own organizations. (…) They had their own peculiar stance about both religion and politics, so they took a step back when CCWP became an association. But we continued to be a part of this new effort and we created an association of our own, on our own. (…) All of us, each and every one of us here, we have our own beliefs and opinions, (…) what we share is another thing: Our aim is to eat the grape; it is not to beat up the grape grower.”

Although my participants from CCWP considered themselves feminists, and individually preferred the label pious feminism over other alternatives (Islamic/Islamist/pious/conservative, women/feminists), they also stressed that they were only disclosing their personal opinions and they were not talking in the name of CCWP as a feminist association. They considered CCWP as “a part of both women’s piety movement and women’s rights movement in Turkey.”

The first project of CCWP after it had become an association targeted the mothers of disabled kids. The project included 20 mothers and aimed to inform them about the religious, legal, and social dimensions of their struggle. They reminded the mothers that they were not only caregivers, but they also should care for themselves without feeling guilty. CCWP also organized educational seminars on gender (including reproductive health, legal rights, hygiene, and psychological and bodily health) in cooperation with the Directorate of Religious Affairs, in which the Directorate agreed to include CCWP’s seminars into Qur’an courses. In Meral Şenel’s words: “In Turkey, there is a reality. Some girls can only get out of their houses to go to Qur’an courses. Whether you want to admit it or not, in this regard, Qur’an courses provide an

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67 Ayşe Şengül, Interview, September 2011, Ankara.
68 Ayşe Şengül, Interview, September 2011, Ankara.
69 Ayşe Şengül, Interview, September 2011, Ankara.
70 In Turkish: “Amacımız üzüm yemek bağcıyı dövmek değil.” This is an idiom in Turkish, which means, we may be entering your territory, but we do not have ill purposes, we are only here to share the fruits that you have.
71 Yelda Hakman Tekyol, Interview, September 2011, Ankara.
72 This observation is also can be found in Tanıl Bora’s comprehensive work on political ideologies in Turkey [in Turkish]. For his discussion on Islamic feminism, please see: Tanıl Bora, Cerayanlar: Türkiye’de Siyasi İdeolojiler (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2017).
73 Meral Şenel, Interview, March 2011, Ankara.
opportunity for these girls to get out of their houses. So, we approached the Directorate of Religious Affairs and tried to turn this limitation into an opening.” CCWP also gathered different pious women’s organizations all over Turkey during yearly Kadın Buluşmaları (Women Meetings). In the aftermath of their third Women Meeting, CCWP prepared a report that was presented to the Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet). The primary resolution in the report was the need for appointing women muftis and religious scholars, which has consequently led to the appointment of the first woman mufti in Turkey. Meral considered this as a very important achievement of CCWP. According to Meral, another achievement of the report was: “Diyanet has also agreed to inform men about domestic violence. All of the imams were trained on violence against women and they were asked to talk about effects of violence during the Friday prayers. Imagine the audience we reached. Basically 60-70% of the men in Turkey go to the Friday prayers.” During these sermons, therefore, with the help of this coalition between Diyanet and CCWP, the imams informed the public that about the parts of Qur’an and the hadiths that forbids violence against women.

In terms of contested women’s issues between the two groups, two main issues might come into mind: the growing influence of religion in education and the bodily rights of women, especially abortion. According to my pious feminist participants, the JDP’s implementation of increasing the number and the influence of religious courses was not a particular problem. However, they criticized the way JDP overemphasized Sunni Islam over other forms of Islam (as well as religious beliefs other than Islam) while determining the religious curriculum. As Chapter 4 argues, according to pious feminists, engaging with multiple sources of knowledge beyond Sunni Islamic piety was crucial for self-development. Regarding abortion, as I discuss in more detail in Chapter 4, pious feminists were clear that they were not personally for it, but they were against a ban on abortion. In other words, they defended women’s right to abortion; they did not defend abortion.

Despite CCWP’s progressive efforts after the 28 February Process, with the electoral success of JDP (Justice and Development Party), the contestation between the secular and the pious began to increase, which culminated in the 2007 Republican Meetings. Following the Constitutional Court’s decision to overturn the JDP’s legislation about lifting the headscarf ban

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74 Meral Şenel, Interview, March 2011, Ankara.
in 2008, the tension grew even more.76 According to Ayşe Şengül and Meral Şenel, the period after the 2007 Republican Meetings increased the verbal insults and harassment directed at women with the headscarf. Ayşe Şengül thought that how they were treated during and after the 2007 Republican protests were akin to the 1990s in many ways: “They [secular women] would moan when you pass them by on the street; they would complain when they see you driving a car; they would look at you in a condescending manner; they would call you a bug; and sometimes they would even curse out loud.”77 For Yelda Hakman Tekyol, this was related to how secular moderns see women with the headscarf: “If you wear the headscarf, then you must be messy (paspal), you must be ignorant, and uneducated (cahil).”78 In agreement with Yelda, Melahat also observed that from the secular modern eye, the women with the headscarf were perceived as housecleaners, housewives, or old ladies, and not as agents in the workplace, civil society, or in politics. My pious participants thought that these prejudices were still common amongst secular feminists. Moreover, pious feminists also thought that, due to their critical stance on pious forms of patriarchy (as well as secular forms of patriarchy), the pious community was also prejudiced against their women’s rights approach. By the end of JDP’s second period, pious feminists increasingly felt they were “too feminist” for the pious community, and “too pious” for the feminist community.79 As Chapter 4 and 5 will discuss in detail, both secular feminists and pious feminists in my study felt trapped and restricted between different prejudices and dichotomies. Both groups wanted to transcend those limitations and create something new out of their entrapment. Pious feminism in Turkey, in this regard, was an effort for pious women to create “a feminist community of their own, on their own,” as Yelda put it.80

### 2.3 The Women’s Movement: Opportunities, Obstacles, and the Rupture

Since the late 1990s, it is possible to observe two seemingly opposing trends in the women’s movement in Turkey: (1) One marked by heightened level of institutionalization in the women’s movement, the continued rise of the number of women’s organizations,81 and

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76 Many supporters of JDP feared that the Constitutional Court could even shut down JDP, but it was only fined. For a more detailed discussion on this incident, please see: Seyla Benhabib, “The Return of Political Theology: The Scarf Affair in Comparativ Constitutional Perspective in France, Germany and Turkey,” Philosophy & Social Criticism 36 (2010): 451-472, 463.
77 Ayşe Şengül, Interview, September 2011, Ankara.
78 Yelda Hakman Tekyol, Interview, September 2011, Ankara.
80 Yelda Hakman Tekyol, Interview, September 2011, Ankara.
81 This trend holds for both tendencies. Since, prior to 1990s, pious women were not an active part of the women’s movement, the increase in the number of pious organization has been much more visible compared to the number of secular feminist organizations.
increasing availabilities of common platforms;\textsuperscript{82} and the other by (2) the rising ideological, ethnic, and religious cleavages as a result of the socio-political shift that has been happening since the 1980s in Turkey.\textsuperscript{83} While the first offered increasing structural opportunities for feminist coalition-building, the second has polarized the identity-ridden differences in the women’s movement which made it harder to coordinate different feminist efforts.\textsuperscript{84} In my discussion below, I will explore these two trends in the women’s movement in Turkey and draw the interconnections between them—which also sets a background to my discussion in Chapter 5. In Chapter 5, I expand my discussion in light of the narratives in my study and argue that these two trends did not appear as two completely separate processes in the narratives; they were submerged into one another where it was not possible to identify where one ends and the other begins.

2.3.1 The Shifting Institutional Structures and Opportunities for Collaboration

Along with the relationships women have with each other in “the cozy associational world,” as Anthony Smith calls it, the dynamics of cooperation and collaboration in the women’s movement are also shaped by the national and international institutional structures available to women.\textsuperscript{85} After all, these structures not only provide shared platforms for collective action, they also set the primary policies. In the Turkish context, the structural reforms that invigorated the women’s movement during the late 1990s go back to the mid-1980s.

In the aftermath of the 1985 Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies, like all governments that ratified CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women), Turkey was obliged to set up a national women’s machinery (NWM) to eliminate political, constitutional, legal, and bureaucratic discriminations against women.\textsuperscript{86} With this purpose, in 1990, after heated discussions in the parliament, two institutions were created, instead of one: 1) the General Directorate on the Status and the Problems of Women (GDSPW), and 2) the Presidency of Family Research (PFR). This was due to the contestations between pro-secular and


\textsuperscript{83}Here, I am mostly referring to the hybrid transformation marked by neoliberal economic policies and the rise of political Islam. Please see Chapter 1 for more details. For a recent study [in Turkish] on the globalization, neoliberalization and Islamic women in Turkey, please see also: Zehra Yılmaz, “Küreselleşen İslam ve Türkiye’de İslami Kadınlar,” (PhD Thesis, Ankara University, 2013).


\textsuperscript{85}Smith, Myths and Memories of the Nation (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 87.

\textsuperscript{86}The incidents that happened followed the CEDAW meeting in New York (2005) and have led to the greatest rupture between the secular feminists and pious feminists to the current date are not yet been documented in the previous literature. For a recent account of the pious women’s experience during the New York meeting, please see: Amelie Barras, Fashioning Secularisms in France and Turkey: The Case of the Headscarf Ban (Oxon: Routledge, 2014).
pro-Islamic members of the parliament. The more conservative, pro-pious members were against using the word “women” while naming the unit; the secular members insisted on using it. The two sides could not settle the issue. As a result, Turkey originally had two NWMs: one that focused on women, the other that focused on family. Until 2011, both institutions operated under the Ministry of State responsible for Women and Family. The secular-pious political divide in the broader general context, in this regard, also influenced the institutional structures around women’s policy. Later, this duality within the Turkish national women’s machinery (NWM) created problems during the coordination of international meetings and the drafting of the periodic CEDAW reports.87

Despite this confusing institutional duality, however, during 1995-2005 the Turkish women’s movement went through a formative period of transformation. In 1995, the Turkish government signed the Beijing Declaration of the Fourth World Conference on Women and confirmed to act upon the action plan determined by the declaration. A year later, in 1996, the Habitat II conference was held in Istanbul. For many of my participants (both secular and pious), this conference was the start of a new phase in women’s movement in Turkey. This was because, at the Habitat II, different women’s groups from diverse ethnic, religious, class-based backgrounds came together and talked to each other for the first time. Following the Habitat II meeting, the rapid increase in the number of women’s organizations continued and new issue-specific platforms were created.88 For example, in 1996, Flying Broom (Uçan Süpürge) was founded in Ankara as a women’s NGO to enhance communication between different groups.89 The Civil Code and the Penal Code platforms were also pivotal because these platforms lasted for about 3 years (2001-2004) and brought together 30 women’s organizations nationwide. Under the coordination of the Istanbul-based Women for Women’s Human Rights (WWHR)—New Ways, the Civil Code and the Penal Code platforms played a central role in the comprehensive legal changes made to the Civil Code in 2001, and the Penal Code in 2004.90 During this period, the Turkish government also signed and ratified the Additional Protocol to

87Kardam, Turkey’s Engagement with Global Women’s Human Rights, 56.
88 According to the interactive online database prepared by Flying Broom in 2009, there are 522 women’s organizations in Turkey For more information, see the website of Ucan Süpürge (Flying Broom): http://www.ucansupurge.com. For the searchable database, please see: http://www.ucansupurge.org/veritaban/ [Turkish]
90At the level of national legislation, there are four main documents that regulates gender equality and rights of women: The Constitution, the Turkish Civil Code, the Penal Code, and the Labor Law. Therefore, the campaigns have led to a considerable legislative change in two of the four main legal documents on women’s rights: For the WWHR-New Ways’ detailed report on the campaigns, please see: Ela Anıl, Başak Arın, Ayşe Berktay Hacımirzaoğlu, Melviç Bingölü, Pınar İlkkaracan, and Liz Erçevik Amado, Turkish Civil and Penal Code Reforms from a Gender Perspective: The Success of the Two Nationwide Campaigns (Istanbul: WWHR-New Ways, 2005.)
CEDAW in 2000, and the Optional Protocol in 2002. With the latter, the right to submit individual petitions to the CEDAW Committee became an option for Turkish citizens.

For the secular feminist participants of my study, the period between 2002 and 2005 was a unique period in recent history. It was just the beginning of the JDP period. This meant that secular women felt relatively more confident and eager to hear pious women’s sides of the story compared to the current day. Therefore, the academic literature on this period is distinctively hopeful and suggests that the contestations between secular and pious women’s groups were “initially not very large.”

While reminiscing on those days during our interview, as Kati Baruh stated: “During those days there was an energy for further [collective] resistance. I do not know if we can do it again. Living in Turkey as a woman gets harder and harder.”

With this initial wind at its back, the Flying Broom undertook the initiative to bring together all women’s organizations in Turkey. With the aim of drafting a common “shadow” report and presenting it to the CEDAW Committee in New York along with the government’s first official progress report in 2005, the Flying Broom formed a coordination committee in 2003. Turkish CEDAW coordination committee was composed of the representatives of different women’s groups in Ankara. It convened regularly in Ankara to organize 3-day-long working group sessions in 2003. Alongside the Baha’i women’s organization, CCWP (Capital City Women’s Platform) was the only pious women’s organization in the Turkish CEDAW coordination committee. In the 2003 working group sessions, 453 women from different organizations throughout Turkey, including representatives from all 81 cities, came together and deliberatively debated the issues of discrimination all women faced in Turkey and prepared a common shadow report that they all signed at the end. According to the secular and pious participants in my study who had personally contributed to this process, their experience during the working group sessions showed them that, although the women’s movement in Turkey was divided, when there was something at stake for all women, the existing patterns of solidarity could be altered, and a new form of difference-based feminist solidarity was possible.

For self-acclaimed pious feminists like Yelda, CEDAW working groups were a turning point because: “Everyone was there! From the ones who wore the complete chador (çarşaf) to,

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91 Landing, “Bringing Women to the Table,” 207.
92 Kati Baruh, April 2011, Interview, Istanbul. Here, Kati Baruh is referring to the political environment of fear and auto-censorship created and intensified by JDP concerning the time of the interview in April 2011; since then, it has become exceedingly harder in light of the events after JDP’s authoritarian turn since the Gezi Protests in June 2013, and even more visibly so after the 7 June 2015 general elections, which has eventually culminated into the current emergency state era in the aftermath of the failed coup attempt in July 2016.
93 Alongside the Baha’i women’s organization, CCWP (Capital City Women’s Platform) was the only religious women’s organization in the committee.
what is the opposite of that? You say it—lesbians, Kemalists, atheists… Every lifestyle, every belief, every perspective on women’s issues were there.”

Yelda enlisted three reasons why CEDAW working group sessions were pivotal for pious feminism in Turkey. Firstly, it was the first time a pious women’s organization was included in the coordination committee of a nationwide event. Secondly, the 2003 CEDAW working group sessions showed that the headscarf was “the most contentious issue amongst women in Turkey.” The only issue that came close was the Kurdish question. Thirdly, with the help of CEDAW working groups, for Yelda, pious women realized they were not alone. Against all the odds, they could form unlikely friendships with some secular women she thought would not be otherwise be possible if the secular-pious dichotomy dictated how the two women’s groups approached one another in the women’s movement.

2.3.2 The Rupture and the Current Obstacles for Collaboration

However, things started to fall apart quite quickly right after the last leg of the project, the CEDAW meeting in New York. The central problem was that, during the drafting of the common shadow report, secular feminists (who constituted the majority of the participants) were only interested in reporting the issues of discrimination all women faced in common in Turkey, and not all forms of discrimination women faced in Turkey. This meant disagreements on the three main issues of women’s difference in Turkey: the headscarf issue, the Kurdish problem, and LGBT rights. While secular feminists were more open to including discriminations based on sexual preferences and (to some degree) ethnic identity, the headscarf as an issue of discrimination caused heated discussions. In the working group sessions, however, pious feminists put across a convincing argument that the ban on the headscarf was only applicable to Sunni Muslim pious women, and not on Sunni Muslim, pious men. As a result, the headscarf made it into the report by the support of more liberal, senior secular feminists in the movement, who convinced their friends. However, all three issues were only very briefly mentioned in the report. There were no satisfactory details these three groups’ particular vulnerabilities. As Yelda explained, “It was only one sentence, and the sentence looked like this: women in Turkey are

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94 Yelda Hakman Tekyol, Interview, September 2011, Ankara.
95 Yelda Hakman Tekyol, Interview, September 2011, Ankara.
96 Yelda Hakman Tekyol, Interview, September 2011, Ankara. Here, Yelda mentions the support they have received from secular feminists including Nazik Işık, Sema Kendirci, Yıldız Tokman, and Demet Işık.
also being discriminated on the basis of ethnic background, religious choice and attire, and sexual orientation. All three in one sentence!"  

In this regard, the Turkish leg of the CEDAW project marked three trends that were still effective in the women’s movement in Turkey during the time of my interviews between 2011-2013: (1) Due to the ideological distrust between the secular and pious women’s groups, the international and national women’s networks play a central role as intermediaries in bringing the two groups together as intermediaries; (2) Both secular and pious groups are hesitant to admit the role of their individual or political interests, or in-group motivations, while arriving at a judgment on the common good for all women; and (3) The moments of rapprochement between the two groups are not separate from moments of contestation and conflict.

For pious feminists, it was disappointing that the headscarf issue only appeared once in the shadow report. As a result, Yelda, who represented her organization during the international phase of the project, decided to prepare a one-page addendum with her friends (who were more active during the working group sessions); a day before her flight to New York. Yelda also brought informative brochures and CDs about the 28 February Process (provided by another pious women’s organization, AK-Der) to distribute during coffee breaks. Yelda stressed that this was not a move to undermine the common shadow report. To the contrary, for Yelda, it was the common report that undermined the headscarf issue.

Since Yelda and her friends prepared the addendum the night before the flight, Yelda did not have enough time to inform the coordination committee appropriately. Therefore, she approached them during the flight and showed them the addendum and the brochures. According to Yelda, at that point secular feminists had already chosen to ignore her. They preferred to enjoy their complimentary wine and talk with their own friends. As Yelda recalled, “Once we arrived and I started distributing the brochures, however, the pandemonium broke out! They said they did not see any brochures during the flight! But I did show you the brochures, I said, why haven’t you read them?” Secular feminists, then, reminded Yelda that she was not in New York anymore.

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97 Yelda Hakman Tekyol, Interview, September 2011, Ankara.
98 As Güniz Hünel from the Flying Broom recalled, they had initially received a lot of complaints from secular feminists who learned pious women with the headscarf were also invited to the sessions—and worse, a woman with the headscarf was a member of the coordination committee. According to Güniz, some secular feminists even threatened the Flying Broom by saying that they would not attend the meetings if the headscarved women were also going to be present. Flying Broom did not try to convince secular feminists to attend at that point. Secular feminists were told that the Flying Broom would respect their choice. According to Güniz Hünel, if it were not for CEDAW, these secular women would not end up attending the meeting. For more details: Güniz Hünel, Interview, March 2011, Ankara.
99 For a similar discussion, please see Amelie Barras’ study on pious feminists in Turkey: Amelie Barras, Fashioning Secularisms in France and Turkey: The Case of the Headscarf Ban (Oxon: Routledge, 2014).
100 Yelda Hakman Tekyol, Interview, September 2011, Ankara.
York to represent her own struggle, but she was there to lobby for the common shadow report and “the Turkish CEDAW coordination committee as a whole.” 101

According to secular feminists, Yelda knew very well that there was no way that the committee would consent to her decision. For them, Yelda was strategically manipulative: all she wanted to do was to promote her own group’s political interests even if this meant breaking the new form of feminist friendship and solidarity that was emerging amongst different women’s groups—which meant a lot to secular feminists. As I will discuss in Chapter 3, secular feminists valued friendship as one of the main reasons why they are a part of the women’s movement. According to secular feminists, therefore, Yelda would have circulated the addendum even if secular feminists said no. Willingly and knowingly, she was hijacking the pact between 453 women with her “pirate shadow report.” 102

Once the Turkish CEDAW committee returned to Ankara from New York, despite this incident they continued to carry out the regular meetings for the next CEDAW report. However, the tension started to escalate during three particular events. 103 The first was during a meeting in Adana where Yelda presented the CEDAW coordination committee’s report on education. She explained what happened as follows: “I started by saying, there is a reality in Turkey: A woman can become a professor or even the prime minister, or the president of the state, but when she enters her house, she would still be the slave of the house. A man, on the other hand, even if he is a garbage collector, when he enters his house, he is the sultan.” 104 This was Yelda’s introduction to the committee’s report on women’s disadvantages in education. However, for the secular feminists, it was unacceptable. As Yelda explained, “Everyone was mad. How could I say that? How could I defend that? I said I did not defend the argument; I used it ironically. I used it as an indication of the current situation (tespit). (…) For months, they kept telling the same thing (…) Yelda did this in New York. Yelda said this in Adana. It lasted for about a year (…) We were stuck.” 105

The second instance took place during the organization of their second meeting in Samsun. The meeting was planned to take place in a university where Yelda could not enter with

101 Yelda Hakman Tekyol, Interview, September 2011, Ankara.
102 Kati Baruh, April 2011, Interview, Istanbul. Here, Kati Baruh is referring to the political environment of fear and auto-censorship created and intensified by JDP concerning the time of the interview in April 2011; since then, it has become exceedingly harder in light of the events after JDP’s authoritarian turn since the Gezi Protests in June 2013, and even more visibly so after the 7 June 2015 general elections, which has eventually culminated into the current emergency state era in the aftermath of the failed coup attempt in July 2016.
103 Yelda Hakman Tekyol, Interview, September 2011, Ankara.
104 Yelda Hakman Tekyol, Interview, September 2011, Ankara.
105 Yelda Hakman Tekyol, Interview, September 2011, Ankara.
her headscarf. The other women at the meeting said they had completely forgotten about her “situation” and tried to convince her to take off her headscarf. However, Yelda doubted their sincerity:

I said, dear friends, if I participated this meeting as myself, [as Yelda], this would not be an issue. I am used to it from the university. But, I am here to represent my organization. Secondly, I am here to represent the women with the headscarf. Thirdly, is not this a meeting against discrimination? Therefore, I cannot do this. Plus, let us say I take my headscarf off, no problem, how about the other women with the headscarf in the Black Sea region, what would happen to them if they want to attend the meeting? Would they be left at the gates of the university?\(^{106}\)

As Yelda was making her point, an experienced secular feminist member of the committee intervened. She told everyone that it was ridiculous to discriminate against the women with the headscarf during a meeting against all forms of discrimination, and just like that, the meeting was canceled.\(^{107}\) A few other senior secular feminists showed also showed support. With the support of respected senior secular feminists, therefore, Yelda managed to cancel the meeting despite the complaints of other secular feminists.

However, the story did not end there. When Ayşen Helvacıoğlu entered one of the regular CEDAW meetings with Başak Haznedar, Yelda immediately sensed this was an intervention: “It was clear that these two have already decided to overthrow me! And instead, it got out of hand, and they overthrew the CEDAW committee altogether!”\(^{108}\)

For Yelda, even the presence of Ayşen was enough to sense that something was wrong because Ayşen never attended the regular meetings. According to Yelda, when Ayşen Helvacıoğlu entered the room, she must have assumed that Yelda had not arrived yet, because she only knew about “the woman with the headscarf,” she had no idea about who Yelda was in person. That day, Yelda was not wearing her headscarf since it was a women-only meeting. Therefore, when Ayşen took the floor, unbeknownst that Yelda was present in the room, she addressed the group by saying, as Yelda recited, “Dear friends, what are these ragged women (paçavralılar)\(^{109}\) doing in this group?” This was the beginning of the end of the short-lived experience of CEDAW meetings that regularly brought together secular and the pious feminists in Ankara.

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106 Yelda Hakman Tekyol, Interview, September 2011, Ankara.
107 Yelda Hakman Tekyol, Interview, September 2011, Ankara.
108 Yelda Hakman Tekyol, Interview, September 2011, Ankara.
109 Paçavralar in Turkish means a piece of cloth. Therefore, Ayşen Helvacıoğlu is trying to undervalue the meaning of the headscarf here by calling it a piece of cloth. This is not a very common term to disparage the headscarved women in particular, but it is clearly a belittling term. Even when it is used to describe a cloth, it is a ragged piece of cloth.
Yelda explained what happened as follows: “She [Ayşen] certainly did not recognize me because she did not know me. [Her friend] tried to warn her by pointing towards my direction with her head, her eyes wide open, and then, when it was obvious that she [Ayşen] did not get it, she openly told her to stop talking… Poor woman [Ayşen’s friend], she was ashamed for her friend. Her efforts did not ring a bell.”\(^{110}\) By the time Ayşen realized her mistake, it was too late to maneuver around and have a constructive dialogue. Ayşen tried to explain herself by asserting that by not acknowledging the political meaning of “the new headscarf,” pious women were implying that the women who chose not to cover their heads were not pious enough. She gave herself as an example and stated that she came from a very religious family, but that did not stop her from becoming a secular woman.

Yelda’s response was two-tiered. Firstly, she said that her story was similar. Although Yelda’s father was one of the founders of DEV-SOL (Devrimci Sol, Revolutionary Left), a radical leftist organization active in Turkey between 1978-1994, this did not stop her from wearing the headscarf.\(^ {111}\) Secondly, Yelda asked Ayşen Helvacıoğlu to clarify what she meant by a modern and contemporary woman: “I said, I was also curious about her indicators because I can speak three languages, I have better computer skills than everyone in that room, I have a PhD, I have taken ballet and music lessons, I am a professional swimmer, I am this, I am that. I counted everything to challenge her.”\(^ {112}\) Yelda continued: “I asked her, if I am not modern, if I am not considered contemporary, how does this make a woman who has never achieved anything on her own be considered modern just because she does not wear the headscarf?” Finally, as the last stroke, Yelda made it evident that she was personally attacking Ayşen by reframing her question in more obvious terms: “Do you become modern simply because you somehow some way become the president of a women’s civil society organization although you have achieved absolutely nothing in your life other than that?”\(^ {113}\) After that point, Yelda knew that there was no going back. For the next CEDAW meeting in 2010, the two groups submitted separate reports.\(^ {114}\)

Yelda’s account of this rupture in the women’s movement reveals a part of the relationship between secular feminists and pious feminists that has not received adequate scholarly attention. In my reading, we can take out four main points from her narrative: (1) The disagreement between secular feminist and pious feminists is not solely about the secular-pious

\(^{110}\) Yelda Hakman Tekyol, Interview, September 2011, Ankara.

\(^{111}\) Yelda Hakman Tekyol, Interview, September 2011.

\(^{112}\) Yelda Hakman Tekyol, Interview, September 2011, Ankara.

\(^{113}\) Yelda Hakman Tekyol, Interview, September 2011, Ankara.

\(^{114}\) Yelda Hakman Tekyol, Interview, September 2011, Ankara.
divide. With the help of the Flying Broom, secular feminists and pious feminists did try to work together for the same goal from 2003 to 2005—which, interestingly, corresponds to JDP’s relatively more liberal, reformist first period. The two groups were even willing to regularly meet up for the second shadow report before the rupture. (2) However, this opportunity did not play out well. Rather than the discursive secular-pious divide, it was the ways in which the two groups chose to communicate their differences and disagreements that led to this rupture. (3) In this regard, this rupture suggests that coalitions do not immediately produce new beginnings and result in new solidarities. Detachment from previous identity-driven fixities and rebuilding new relationships in more receptive terms requires relational attention, effort, patience, and resilience to try again after each failure. (4) For this reason, in order to understand the full extent of the situated complexities behind the secular-pious divide in the women’s movement in Turkey, there is a need for further research about this communicative, relational side of dissent. In the next three chapters, I will attempt to offer my take on this particular challenge.

However, before getting into my main relational analysis, I think it is important to note that, in the years following 2005, the opportunities that brought the two groups together started to gradually diminish as JDP had taken an authoritarian turn. This came along with three main institutional changes. First, in 2007, the name of the General Directorate on the Status and the Problems of Women (GDSPW) was changed into the General Directorate on the Status of Women (GDSW). The “problems” of women were therefore taken out of the name of Turkey’s primary NWM. Second, in 2011, the Family Research unit was closed which was understandable since the existence of two NWMs caused problems. 3) But in order to replace the Family unit, the JDP government decided to also close down the Ministry of State position for Women and Family Affairs, and instead introduce a new post: The Ministry of Family and Social Policies. Therefore, after dropping “problems” from both the name and the agenda of Turkey’s primary NWM, the JDP government also dropped “women” from the name of the Ministry that was once responsible for women’s rights and empowerment.

After these institutional changes in 2007 and 2011, although GDSW remains to be the official NWM, rather than acting for the achievement and enhancement of women’s rights, it has mostly become a part of the Ministry of Family and Social Affairs. Like the Ministry, it has predominantly grown focused on the rights of women only as a part of the family, and therefore,
has reduced the complex network of women’s relations into a single constituent. As a result, currently the discriminatory attitudes against women are rising and the opportunities for coalition-building amongst different women’s groups are diminishing. According to the 2016 Gender Gap Report by the World Economic Forum, Turkey is ranked 130th out of 144 countries. Only 34% of women are currently in the work force, and the rate of domestic violence in Turkey is 40% on average—42.8% in central Anatolia, where it is highest. In this current phase, therefore, although some recent studies remain hopeful about a deeper cooperation between secular feminists and pious feminists (against the repressive measures JDP periodically raises such as a ban on abortion), the two groups have not yet been able to work together in the same civil society projects as equal partners.

2.4 Conclusion

Thus, together with Chapter 1, this chapter has contextualized the disagreement between the secular feminist and pious feminists in Turkey. While Chapter 1 discussed the progression of the political secular-pious divide and the assumed separation between the secular modern and pious modern imaginaries, this chapter has focused on the progression of the secular-pious divide in the women’s movement. My main aim was to provide a discussion not only of the historical roots of the secular feminist and pious feminist movements in Turkey, but also of the rupture of dialogue between the two women’s groups in the women’s movement. I argued that shifting the analysis from the level of political discourse to the actual dynamics in the women’s movement in Turkey might help us to understand the full complexity of the relationship between the two groups without caricaturizing one group or the other (or both). I also argued it might be helpful for locating feminist vocabularies of dissent that might provide alternative conceptual tools for a transformed relationship between the two women’s groups. In the next two chapters, I will search for these alternative vocabularies separately in secular feminist (Chapter 3) and pious

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118 It should also be noted that 89% of domestic violence survivors (that participated the survey) also said that they have never filed a complaint. For a Turkish version of the report carried out by researchers from Hacettepe University for the Ministry, please see: Hacettepe Üniversitesi Nüfus Eşitlikleri Enstitüsü, Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Aile ve Sosyal Politikalar Bakanlığı, Türkiye de Kadınla Yönelik Aile İçi Şiddet Araştırması, available online at http://www.hips.hacettepe.edu.tr/KKSA-TRAnaRaporKitap26Mart.pdf (2015).

feminist (Chapter 4) narratives in my study, and in Chapter 5, I will provide an overall relational analysis of the dynamics of disagreement between the two groups by revisiting the fixities of the secular pious divide and the feminist iterations in the women’s movement.
Chapter 3

Secular Feminist Perceptions of Disagreement:
Friendship, Loyalty, and Relational Re-imagination

The secular feminist participants of my study used two main vocabularies to explain the antagonistic relationship between the Kemalist/secular and pious/Islamic feminists in Turkey: one pertains to the political divide between the pious modern and secular modern imaginaries, the other pertains to the limits of friendship and loyalty in their own secular feminist communities. In this chapter, I focus on the latter, and try to locate an alternative, relationship-centered vocabulary of disagreement in the secular feminist narratives. By exploring secular feminists’ actual relationships (with other secular feminists as well as pious feminists), I discuss how these relationships might possibly challenge, complicate, confuse, or transform their discursive adherences to the secular/pious dichotomy in Turkey.¹ In this manner, I aim to provide a more accurate reflection of the current “odd, relational in-between”² where secular feminists stand, in between Kemalism and feminism, love and arrogance, ignorance and critical self-reflection, fixity and change, resentments of the past and hopes for a better future.

In the intersection of applied theory and empirical research, and inspired by Stephen Mitchell’s “relational matrix” that brings together three dimensions of relationality,³ my discussion in this chapter proceeds in three stages where I discuss the secular feminist perceptions of the self, the Other, and the relationship between the two. Firstly, in the intersection of Western and Islamic thought, I analyze the secular feminist perceptions of friendship in their own organizations. Instead of similarity or sameness, I suggest that secular feminist friendship is a quest for loyalty and trust. Secondly, I move to the secular feminist perceptions of pious feminists. After reviewing the arrogant eye, the loving eye, and knowing, loving ignorance, I argue that self-criticism and seeing the Other as a complex being are not enough for secular feminists to self-transform and self-pluralize. Lastly, I identify shifting patterns in secular feminist perceptions. I argue that secular feminists adopt a more receptive stance in response to relational questions that guide them to think about pious feminists in

¹ Instead of exploring how the secular/pious divide determines secular feminists’ relationships, which seems to be the central focus of the current literature, in this chapter I am interested in the opposite as I try to locate ways in which secular feminists’ relationships might help them to question and challenge their adherence to the secular/pious divide.
relation to themselves instead of separate, disparate, monolithic Others. When secular feminists thoughtfully reconsider the possibility of a collaboration between the two groups, my study suggests that they can (at least momentarily) go beyond their discursive comfort zone and re-imagine their relationship with pious feminists as a “potential feminist friendship.”

My study thus asserts that a comprehensive change in the collaborative patterns of secular feminists in Turkey requires an “enlarged” understanding of feminist friendship that has to be coupled with iterated shared civil society encounters between different women’s groups in Turkey. It necessitates both “distance and proximity” so that the two groups can move towards a collectively-redefined “equidistant” feminist standpoint together, in both thought and action, and transcend the secular/pious divide in the locus of the women’s movement in Turkey.

3.1 Perceptions of the Secular Self, Feminist Friendship, and Loyalty

In the first part, I examine secular feminist friendship as a relationally constitutive part of the secular feminist identity in Turkey. In the intersection of the Aristotelian model of friendship, Kleinig’s discussion on loyalty, and different conceptions of love and friendship in Islamic thought, I argue that, in their feminist friendships, secular feminists seek loyalty, mutuality, and trust between like-minded, secular, Kemalist women who are committed to women’s rights without any other strategic or political self-interest. I also argue that this focus on loyalty slightly diverges from the emphasis on similarity, nurturance, accord, and self-verification in the Western literature on women’s friendships (especially during the second wave of feminism). Although my secular feminist participants did prefer to work with like-minded women, they also identified mutual self-growth as a purpose of friendship, which necessitated a degree of difference so that they could learn from one another. Instead of setting a standard for similitude and sameness, therefore, I argue that secular feminists in my study thought that their shared values provided “a safety net of trust and solidarity” and helped them to preserve and advance their “voluntarist spirit.” Thus, secular feminist friendship requires a more detailed discussion on the self-constitutive role loyalty plays in friendship. My intention here is not to provide a comprehensive

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4 I asked my participants about the possibility of a collaboration originally because I wanted to bring secular and pious feminists in Turkey in a joint focus group session. My intention was not particularly about identifying shifts in secular feminist perceptions. It was rather an unexpected result of my fieldwork to see that directing relational questions can make secular feminists think outside of the secular modern imaginary.
5 Here, I am implicitly referring to Kantian/Arendtian framework on “enlarged mentality.”
7 Filiz Doğan, Interview, Izmir, February 2011.
8 Başak Haznedar, Interview, Ankara, March 2011.
theoretical account of friendship and/or loyalty, but a narrower one of how these two aporetic, concepts might offer us a different perspective to understand and provide alternative solutions to ameliorate the relationship between the secular and pious women’s groups in Turkey. My discussion is mostly centered around Aristotle’s model of friendship, but I also turn to Islamic thoughts on love and friendship, which I think provide a better grasp of what secular feminists mean by the “fear of being lost in-between” or “marking one’s side clearly.”

3.1.1 Aristotelian Philia and Secular Feminist Friendship

In the current literature, the desire for similarity and sameness in women’s friendships is often problematized and traced back to “the narcissistic masculinist ideals” of friendship in the classical Western political thought, or “neoliberal regimes of sameness.” It has been argued that without a viable female alternative to this male-centered “deep-seated fantasy of similitude,” women can set artificially high expectations of friendship. For example, Nancy Miller recalls her own feminist friendships during the second wave of feminism in the U.S. as a mixture of the “beautiful highs” and “devastating lows” resulting from women’s “intense identification, and competition, with each other, but also this is harder to explain—for each other.” For Miller, therefore, there are two equally intense, opposite forces of feminist friendship: identification and competition. Resembling Miller’s personal account, Derrida argues that friendship is an aporetic term in the Western political thought that is built on the tension between the two opposing calls it contains simultaneously: one of similarity and proximity, and the other of dissymmetry and distance. Correspondingly, Derrida identifies two models of friendship in Western political thought: one that considers friendship as a necessary component of politics (Aristotle and Cicero), and the other as a concern (Montaigne and Nietzsche). Despite this difference, for Derrida, in both models, friendship makes a dual call; it is both “a component and a concern of politics.”

Aristotle uses the term friendship (*philia*, the same word for love) in two main ways: 1) a special, non-individual, utility-based, civic friendship that stands closer to the use of fraternity in the French revolutionary motto “liberté, égalité, fraternité,” and 2) different levels of individual friendship that are closer to the modern use of the word. Although the first places friendship as a component of societal justice, with the second, it is possible to see that not everyone can be a friend and not every friendship is the same. Derrida stresses this dual call in Aristotelian friendship by recurrently revisiting a quotation that has been attributed to Aristotle: “O my friends, there is no friend” which, for Derrida, exhibits a “desperate dialectical desire” of bringing together appeals to friendship and re-examination of friendship at the same time. Derrida says, “incompatible as they may appear and condemned to the oblivion of contradiction,” two sentences come together in the same sentence “in a single breath, in the same present, in the present itself.” I argue that secular feminist friendship in Turkey places a similar dual call. Although secular feminists call out for an all-inclusive feminist sisterhood, this call does not seem to include all women.

Regarding its first meaning, Aristotle presents “civic friendship” as the glue that holds the city (the *polis*) together and highlights the mutual benefits (male, elite) citizens see in each other. Aristotle assumes political community comes before the individual like the body and its parts (*Politics* 1253a18-29; 1337a28-29) and argues that, in cities where there is “no justice, there is no friendship either” (*NE* 1160a41). For Aristotle, “particular kinds of friendship (…) correspond to the particular kinds of community” (*NE* 1160a30-3309), and hence, political community sets the extends of justice, virtue, and therefore, friendship (*NE* 1159b29-32). As Chapter 1 argues, the secular-pious divide posits two different political imaginaries in Turkey which, from Aristotle’s perspective, corresponds to two different communities of friendship. As Filiz Doğan stated, “the sides are always distinct in Turkey. Upon your slightest mistake people can cross you off and ignore everything that you have been struggling to achieve.”

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24 In ancient Greek philosophy, men are not assumed to be equal by nature, but they become equal, artificially, through their political engagement in the city. As Arendt states, “The equality of the Greek polis, its isonomy, was an attribute of the polis, and not men, who received their equality by the virtue of citizenship, not by birth.” For more: Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (London: Penguin Books, 1990), 30-31.
25 Filiz Doğan, Interview, February 2011, Izmir. I will revisit this point later in the next part on Islamic love and friendship.
Regarding its second meaning, Aristotle considers three main factors while distinguishing different levels of individual (or interpersonal) friendships. First, Aristotle identifies mutual recognition of *eunoia* (good will)\(^{26}\) as the minimum condition of friendship (1167a12). Second, Aristotle presents three different purposes of friendship: utility, pleasure, and equality of virtue. Third, in order to rank the three, Aristotle differentiates between means and ends friendships. For Aristotle, only the friendships based on equality of virtue, or character, are “complete,” “perfect,” or “ideal,” because in these friendships, we have goodwill (*eunoia*) for our friends for the persons they are, as ends in themselves, and we can trust them through thick and thin.

Secular feminists make a similar distinction between ends-based and means-based friendships: They associate utility friendships (and therefore, strategic partnerships and tactical calls for solidarity) with pious women’s groups in Turkey and, with themselves, they associated mutuality, loyalty, trust, and almost a selfless sense of devotion to the women’s rights struggle. For example, Başak Haznedar differentiated secular feminist movement from the other identity-based women’s groups in Turkey by asserting that the “others” privileged their own political interests (like the headscarf issue) over the interests of all women. Similarly, for Filiz Doğan, instead of “feminist consciousness,” pious women’s organizations were at best “charity organizations” that aim to Islamize Turkish feminism.\(^{27}\)

Hence, the second use of Aristotelian friendship brings out two points in my study. First, in resemblance to the Aristotelian model, secular feminists consider accord and trust as signs of an elevated level of friendship. As Demet Paksoy stated, “In our association, we are all very good, very close friends. We have always been. We always support each other, in good times, and more so in bad times.”\(^{28}\) Second, rather than similarity or sameness, the defining determinant of secular feminist friendship is loyalty, perseverance, and the willingness to stick up with one another in both fair and foul weather. As van Tongeren argues, when politics feeds on growing distrust, people might be “tempted to flee from this political jungle to a refuge where ‘real community’ can be experienced.”\(^{29}\) In this sense, instead of “difference and separation” or “similarity and proximity” what brings secular feminists together is perhaps “a shared sense of disappointment” with politics.\(^{30}\) The next two sections will further explore these two points by discussing love and loyalty in friendship.

\(^{26}\) For many scholars, Aristotle’s discussion on *eunoia* is puzzling. I will revisit this point later in my discussion.

\(^{27}\) Interview, Izmir, February 2011.

\(^{28}\) Demet Paksoy, Interview, April 2011, Istanbul.

\(^{29}\) van Tongeren, “Politics, Friendship and Solitude in Nietzsche,” 215.

\(^{30}\) van Tongeren, “Politics, Friendship and Solitude in Nietzsche,” 215.
3.1.2 Self-Love vs. End-love in Aristotelian Friendship

For Aristotle, in perfect/complete friendships, friends treat each other as “another self” (1166a38-41). For some scholars, this means Aristotle grounds equality of virtue on self-love and self-mirroring. As Derrida argues, for example, an ideal friendship (in both Aristotle and Cicero) seeks “a narcissistic image, of its own ideal image, already inscribes the legend.”\(^{31}\) The friend becomes “the exemplar” or “the same as self but improved,”\(^{32}\) the “ideal Self-double,” or even “one soul in twin bodies.”\(^{33}\) For Schweitzer, self-mirroring in friendship is particularly problematic because of its “interchangeability,” not only “on a spiritual level” but also “on a physical level,”\(^{34}\) where the ones that we “cannot physically mirror” become the Other.\(^{35}\)

In Filiz Doğan’s narrative, self-mirroring was important to friendship. She firmly believed, and repeatedly stated, “one appears as one’s friend (kişi refikinden belli olur).”\(^{36}\) According to Filiz, as her mirrors, her secular feminist friendships helped her to reflect “good will, sincerity, and non-partisanship, and intentionality.”\(^{37}\) Instead of a narcissistic quest for her own reflection, however, for Filiz, feminist friendship was a part of a (secular) moral quest for becoming a better person and a better feminist. As she explained, “As I listen the stories of all these inspirational, wonderful women around me in my organization, I feel like I have become a better, more mature person.”\(^{38}\) In this regard, Filiz’s narrative brings to mind Aristotle’s argument that “friendship of good people is good and increases through their association (…) They seem to become even better through their activity” (1172a10-17).\(^{39}\) For Filiz, therefore, her feminist friendships were not merely self-reflectors, they helped her to become who she was: “Me and my friends, we are in the women’s movement because we are looking for an identity for ourselves, a feeling of belonging somewhere, finding our own safe circle.”\(^{40}\) I think this self-

\(^{31}\) Derrida, The Politics of Friendship, 3.
\(^{32}\) Derrida, The Politics of Friendship, 4.
\(^{33}\) Derrida, The Politics of Friendship, 177.
\(^{34}\) Schweitzer, “Making Equals,” 347.
\(^{36}\) Filiz Doğan, Interview, February 2011, İzmir. Here, Filiz restates an old Turkish proverb differently. The original proverb can be translated as “one aggresses/disobeys because of a bad friend” (kişi refikinden azar, in Turkish). While the original proverb highlights bad influences of bad friends, Filiz preferred to use it in reverse. Instead of the word “azmak,” Filiz instead uses the verb “belli olmak” in Turkish which could equally be translated as “to appear as,” “to ascertain,” or “to be defined by.”
\(^{37}\) Filiz Doğan, Interview, February 2011, İzmir. For pious feminists, similar values are important for membership. But yet, these values are, divergently, considered as “Islamic values.”
\(^{38}\) Filiz Doğan, Interview, February 2011, İzmir.
\(^{40}\) Filiz Doğan, Interview, February 2011, İzmir.
constitutive element of friendship in Filiz’s narrative differs from self-love or searching for a self-double because mirroring as a learning tool requires a degree of difference so that the two sides can learn from each other’s unique personalities and experiences.

According Neera Kapur Badhwar, what Aristotle means by loving a friend as another self cannot be equated with “self-love” because self-love makes ideal friendship a means for one’s love for oneself, and therefore, friendship can no longer be considered “an end in itself,” which is the only criterion Aristotle uses to differentiate character friendships from utility or pleasure friendships. Although Filiz’s mirroring approach to friendship cannot be reduced to self-love (because she did not frame friendship as a means for her love for herself), we also cannot immediately claim that this indicates end-love. As Badhwar argues, “the best, most complete friendships are those in which friends (...) value each other’s separateness.” Rather than interchangeability between friends, therefore, Badhwar suggests that perfect friendship actually necessitates “irreplaceability and indispensability” instead of “interchangeability.” I think Filiz’s understanding of feminist friendship also differs from this approach based on end-love because Filiz explicitly stressed the connection between her friends and herself, rather than valuing her friend’s separateness. For this reason, I think there is also the need to discuss the relational role of loyalty in friendship with respect to the secular feminist perceptions.

3.1.3 Loyalty, Associative Identification, and Perseverance

Resembling the aporetic character of friendship, loyalty also appears as a “Janus-like” concept in the Western political and moral thought, pointing towards two opposing ends. On the one hand, loyalty ensures the continuity of meaningful relationships. It enables us to go beyond self-interest, make relational commitments, and learn to compromise. On the other, loyalty has a “corruptive” side. It poses a problem not only for individual autonomy, but also for the principle of impartiality in moral decision-making. I now discuss the more positive side of loyalty with respect to the secular feminist narratives in my study.

Aristotle considers loyalty as one of the highest forms of virtues, which is a component of our most perfect and complete friendships only. Indeed, loyalty is often associated with strong

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feelings, devotion, and emotional attachment. As John Kleinig admits, “there is something irreducibly personal (singular or plural) about loyalties (…) My loyalty is to what I identify as mine—to my friend, my tribe, my company, our country.”45 In this regard, one can feel loyally connected to not only “persons, collectivities, or quasi-persons” but also “principles, causes, ideas, ideals, professions, religions, ideologies, nations, governments, parties, leaders, families, friends, regions, racial groups, (…) ‘anyone or anything to which one’s heart can become attached or devoted.’”46 According to Kleinig, however, loyalty’s close association with strong feelings does not suggest that loyalty is just a “sentimental attachment,” or an inner feeling that instantly finds its outward expression.47 For Kleinig, loyalty is best understood as a disposition to perseverance “for the sake of an associational other.”48

There are two parts to Kleinig’s definition. Firstly, loyalty requires perseverance, which he defines as, “persistence in an attachment despite the difficulty it involves.”49 Loyalty is therefore about maintaining the best interests of “an associational other” at difficult times. As Derya Ertürk claimed, “Never do I complain about the sacrifices I have made [for the women’s struggle], not even once until this point in my life.”50 Secondly, and more importantly, for Kleinig, loyalty requires associative identification in which “there is a certain identification of oneself with the other, often one in which one sees one’s identity as being partially constituted by the relation.”51 As Filiz stressed, “We always say ‘we’ in my organization, (…) even when it is only one person who accomplishes something, we feel it is our success.”52 For Kleinig, the associative or relational side to loyalty constitutes its “irreducibly personal” side, where we “constitutively” identify with our friends and make relational commitments for the furthering of our relationship that we would not otherwise.53 Kleinig argues that, once we call something or someone our own, our refusal to jeopardize its interests does not inhibit our own autonomous interests, on the contrary, we benefit from them.54 As Seyhan Polat stated, “I am committed to my friends, despite their criticisms, despite their oppositions. I never give up on them. I never give up on my own beliefs either. We always find a common ground.”55

45 Kleinig, On Loyalty and Loyalties, 20, 28.
49 Kleinig, On Loyalty and Loyalties, 19.
50 Seyhan Polat, Interview, April 2011, Istanbul.
52 Filiz Doğan, Interview, February 2011, İzmir.
53 Kleinig, On Loyalty and Loyalties, 20. 22.
54 Kleinig, On Loyalty and Loyalties, 20.
55 Derya Ertürk, Interview, February 2011, İzmir.
For Kleinig, therefore, by being loyal to a friend, not only do we affirm our sense of self, but we also form it. I think this self-constitutive element of loyalty in friendship is the primary obstacle that prevents secular feminists from transforming their patterns of feminist collaboration. Instead of self-transformation or expanding their feminist loyalties to other feminists who are not like them, secular feminists are interested in preserving their identity, and therefore their feminist friendships as they were, as they have always been.

3.1.4 Partiality, Unconditional Love, and Love in Islamic Thought

For Kleinig one of the main concerns about loyalty is its partiality. According to Kleinig, loyalty necessarily demands partial/preferential treatment because as soon as we associatively identify ourselves with a friend, we refuse to jeopardize her interests. For Kleinig, impartiality in friendship can be met in two ways: by assuming (1) a “selfless” moral self without any pre-existing individual commitments in treating others, or (2) an “ongoing, committed self, faced with conflict between some of its commitments and the demands of a moral maxim that does not privilege such commitments.” In my study, as I mentioned, secular feminists tried to adopt a “selfless self” to preserve their “voluntarist spirit.” However, they also admitted that, far from lacking any private commitments, this was a way of locating a moral standard for themselves so that they do not prioritize any of their individual commitments over others. In this regard, their assumption of a “selfless” self was an effort to set a secular moral standard for their actions.

Since secular feminists in Turkey are portrayed as rational agents of Kemalist secular modernity, it might seem counterintuitive to the Western eye that secular feminists associate strategic calculation of interests with pious feminists, and an unconditional, selfless, secular, moral quest for women’s rights with themselves. However, as Charles Taylor argues, “Secularity (…) is a matter of the whole context of understanding in which our moral, spiritual or religious experience and search takes place;” it is not entirely independent of the contextual dynamics of religious belief (and religious belief is not entirely independent of the contextual dynamics of secularity). From a similar perspective, despite Derrida’s general commitment to secularism (or more particularly, his revised and deconstructed understanding of French laïcité), the medieval Christian thought plays a vital role on his discussion on friendship. In contrast with Derrida’s

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56 Kleinig, On Loyalty and Loyalties, 93.
silence on other religions besides Christianity. In this section, I turn to Islamic thought for explaining the secular feminists’ concerns about choosing their friends unwisely.

It has been argued that, in Qur’an, there are two intertwined models of love and friendship: 1) one based on universal love and expandable boundaries of inclusion, which is similar to Christian agape, 2) the other on hierarchies of love that strengthens the separation between boundaries of inclusion and exclusion. The former is commonly associated with Islamic philosophers and Sufi mystics, and the latter with traditional dialectical theologians. For contemporary scholars like Chittick, it is possible to detect both interpretations of love (universal love and hierarchies of love) in Islam in the Shahadah, the necessary testimony one declares to become a Muslim, that is, in English: “There is no god but God, and Muhammad is God’s messenger.” Although the two sentences that make up Shahadah are not in apparent contradiction (unlike Derrida’s use of the quotation “Oh my friends, there is no friend”), in Chittick’s analysis, the first part of Shahadah, is an assertion of “a universal love for all human beings and all creation” while the second part denotes “a particular love for those who put love into place,” which (like in Derrida’s discussion) has led to two different interpretations of love, “in a single sentence, a single breath” that is “repeated over and over again” in every prayer.

According to Chittick, the two interpretations of love lead to two different views of God in Islam: 1) In Himself, and 2) as a guide, in relation to men. While the Sufi mystics and Islamic

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59 In an earlier work, Derrida has explicitly acknowledged his silence on Islam: “I thus decided not to speak of negativity or of apohatic movements in, for example the Jewish or Islamic traditions (...) Concerning that about which one cannot speak, isn’t it best to remain silent?” As a Jew born and raised in Algeria, a Muslim country, Derrida could actually speak about both Jewish and Islamic thought. Jacques Derrida, “How to Avoid Speaking: Denials,” trans. K. Frieden, in H. Coward and T. Foshay (eds), Derrida and Negative Theology, (Albany: SUNY Press, 1993): 73-142.

60 In the current literature, there is a similar silence on Islamic thought and friendship besides few studies that explore “Islamism as religious communitarianism” or as another “social matrix” that transcends individual autonomy in the liberal sense. See: Filippo Dionigi, “Islamism as Communitarianism: Person, Community and the Problem of International Norms in Non-Liberal Theories,” Journal of International Political Theory 8 1-2 (2012): 74-103, 83. For more details, see also: Charles Taylor, 1985, “Atomism,” in Philosophical Papers: Vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press): 203.

61 The divergence in the traditions of dialectical theology and philosophy in Islamic thought goes back to translation movement in the Abbasid Period in Baghdad and Andalucía. In this period, texts of Aristotle and Plato were translated first from Greek to Arabic in Baghdad, then from Arabic to Western languages as the dynasty expanded to Spain. As texts of Aristotle and Plato became available in Arabic and Western languages, this period has intensified discussions about how to reconcile faith and reason. Works of Maimonides in Jewish thought and Aquinas in Christian thought show similar challenges.

62 The intellectual exchange between Al-Ghazali (1058-1111) and Averroes (1126-1198, also known as Ibn-i Rushd), is often given as an example to illustrate this debate amongst the schools of Islamic judges/thinkers. Al-Ghazali’s critique of philosophers entitled The Incoherence of the Philosophers (Tahāfut al-Falāsifa) is considered one of the most influential texts of Islamic thought—where Al-Ghazali has criticized 20 arguments made by Islamic philosophers and scientists, and claimed “three of them as apostasy from Islam.” These 3 arguments were: (1) that the word has no beginning in the past and is not created in time, (2) that God’s knowledge includes only classes of beings (universals) and does not extend to individual beings and their circumstances (particulars), and (3) that after death the souls of humans will never again return into bodies” (Griffel, 5-7). Averroes’ response to Al-Ghazali, The Incoherence of the Incoherence (Tahāfut al-Tahāfut) is seen as a defense of Aristotle, which has led to Averroes’ exile from Spain and to the end of classical Islamic philosophy. For this reason, some early Western studies on Islamic thought depicted Al-Ghazali as the beginning of the end of Islamic philosophy. However, according to more contemporary academic work, the two Islamic judges/thinkers had more things in common than in opposition. For an extended discussion, please see: Frank Griffel, 2009, Al-Ghazali’s Philosophical Theology (Oxford: Oxford University Press): 5-7; Wohlman, Avital, Al-Ghazali, Averroes and the Interpretation of the Qur’an: Common Sense and Philosophy in Islam, trans. David Burrell, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010).


64 Chittick, “Love in Islamic Thought,” 233.
philosophers encourage the former, that is, a deeper reading of God’s unconditional love for all beings regardless of their sins or beliefs, the dialectical theologians focused on the latter, that is, God as guide where one can only be “worthy” of God’s love if s/he follows his guidance. For Chittick, the dialectical theologians spoke in dualities as they “spoke of reward and punishment, felicity and wretchedness, paradise and hell,” while the Islamic philosophers and the mystics spoke of the divine qualities of God as himself in Qur’an, such as “rahma,” which refers to God’s limitless compassion and mercy (drawn from rahim that means a woman’s womb), and jamal, which presents God as “the possessor of absolute beauty” that also makes all his creations beautiful, and therefore, worthy of love. As one of the highest kinds of metaphorical love in Islam (from the latter “hierarchies of love” perspective), Ghazi identifies four types of friendship in Islam that involve different levels of loyalty and trust, ranging from self-love to end-love: 1) companionship (sunbah), the lowest form of friendship or fellowship, which may or may not be affectionate; 2) friendship (sadaqah), which indicates “sincere mutual love” between friends (or, mahabbah); 3) close friendship (sadaqah hamimiyya); and 4) intimate friendship (khullah). Regarding friendship with disbelievers, Ghazi argues that, as long as they “do not wage a war against Muslims,” Qur’an makes it clear that Muslims are obliged to treat everyone “with respect, empathy, kindness and mercy, and not act or speak aggressively and with anger”—going back to the unconditional, universal love approach.

This dual call for both “unconditional, selfless love” and “hierarchal love” captures the way secular feminists explain their connection with others in the women’s movement. As mentioned before, Başak Haznedar was one of my participants who explained the secular feminist struggle in Turkey by saying, “We started with an almost selfless, voluntarist spirit for helping women and helping the advancement of women’s rights in Turkey,” which she thought was the exact opposite of pious feminists’ strategic involvement in the women’s movement for the headscarf issue. As the second part discusses in greater detail, for secular feminists, pious women were a part of the women’s movement mostly because they wanted to recruit more

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65 Chittick, Love in Islamic Thought,” 232-233.
66 Although Islamic theologians often interpreted “rahma” signified “the motherly, patriarchal image of God,” Chittick and Murata delineate that the root of rahma in Arabic is rahim, meaning a woman’s womb, which can perhaps subtly suggest a connection between the divine creativity and the women. For a more detailed discussion, see: Chittick, “Love in Islamic Thought, 231; Sachiko Murata, The Tao of Islam: A Sourcebook on Gender Relationships in Islamic Thought (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992): 203-222.
67 See: Ghazi, Love in the Holy Qur’an. Here, Ghazi outlined thirty different words and hundred stages of love, and four explicit types of friendships amongst believers in Qur’an (He occasionally refers to hadiths and sunnah as well, but his main source in this book is Qur’an).
68 Ghazi, Love in the Holy Qur’an, 165.
supporters for their own political cause, and therefore, they did not genuinely care for women’s rights besides the right to wear the headscarf. Pious women’s commitment to women’s rights was strategic, according to secular feminists, and therefore, not unconditional and selfless like theirs. However, the secular feminist “selfless” commitment was not as impartial and stripped from self-interest (or politics) as Başak claimed. If we revisit Filiz’s narrative, for example, she wanted to become a better person and a better feminist through her friendships, but at the same time, she also wanted to “mark her side clearly.” On the one hand, secular feminists talked about a selfless sense of self, unconditionally devoted to the rights of all women in Turkey, on the other hand, they clearly favored secular rights of women and preferred working with Kemalist, secular women whom they trusted.

3.1.5 In Between the Two Circles of Love in Islam

Ghazi explains the “hierarchies of love” perspective through the two circles of love in Qur’an, “a circle of love for the good, and a circle of love for evil.”71 Between the two circles are “those who combine the two: faith and sins of disbelievers.”72 Salvation may or may not come to the ones who stand in-between because, as Ghazi argues, “God does not hate anyone, but that He hates certain actions.”73 In this manner, the ones who stand in between two circles of love confront uncertainty and fear as they wait in the Heights (araf), between the Heaven and Hell.74 In contrast, for the Sufis, who view the God “as a guide, in relation to men,” the world itself is an in-between where we long for unity in a world of separation.75

In this regard, the fears of secular feminists to be trapped “in between” and “not marking their side clearly” resonates closely with the hierarchies of love approach in Islamic friendship. For example, Oya Hiçyılmaz made explicit references to the concept of araf during our interview. “We are afraid to be left in between,” Oya stated, “We are afraid to be lost in araf, between the right and the wrong. We want something solid to believe in. We want something to advocate to the end, blindly and faithfully. We are afraid to meet in the middle.”76 According to Oya, the fear of the in-between only created thoughtless hatred, where people ended up either

72 Ghazi, Love in the Holy Qur’an, 327.
73 Ghazi, Love in the Holy Qur’an, 325.
74 Araf in Islam is not temporary like the purgatory in Christianity.
76 Oya Hiçyılmaz, Interview, February 2011, Izmir.
“hating” or “loving” one side or the other. In her words, “Kurds, Islamists, secularists… We do not even want to confront one another. There is just thoughtless hatred, only thoughtless, heartless hatred.” Other secular feminists made indirect references. For example, Seyhan Polat called it hesitation: “Once you are seen together, you are labelled as an enemy of the Republic, or serving the enemy of the Republic. We have this hesitation. Even if we do not believe in othering, not in our hearts, [but] we still have to stay distant.” According to Esra Çakır Zorlu, the fear of this in-between was about facing uncertainty: “They say that you only fear the unknown. (…) So, perhaps it is not just learned behavior (…) perhaps we are afraid of the uncertainty.” Filiz Doğan called it “the fear of what is outside of the box.” Derya Ertürk linked it to self-preservation: “When you are in between, the radicals push you down. When all sides are radical (…) [we] push each other around because we want to keep what is our own.”

3.1.6 Perseverance, Corruptibility, and Loyalty

For Kleinig, the second concern about loyalty in friendship is its corruptibility. There is indeed a “blindside” to loyalty because perseverance demands sticking with a friend irrespective of the circumstances. In this regard, loyalty’s “blindside” can be mistakenly reduced to unconditional, selfless love for an associational other. For Kleinig, however, there is a difference. An example from my study might be useful here.

According to Seyhan Polat, during late 1990s, well-known hardliner secularists have caused irreversible damage to secular feminism in Turkey. Here, Seyhan Polat refers to Nur Serter, a well-known academic and former member of the parliament, and her involvement in the controversy around “persuasion rooms” (ikna odalari) in Istanbul University during the 28 February Period where students with the headscarf were taken to separate rooms and psychologically manipulated to take off their headscarves. In Seyhan’s words: “I am outraged when I think about what (…) Nur Serter did! Forcing the veiled girls to take off their headscarf, that was truly a violation of human rights! (…) Those persuasion rooms indeed have harmed the women’s movement and our image.” Despite her personal disapproval, Seyhan also admitted, due to her loyalties to women like Nur Serter, neither Seyhan nor her other secular feminist

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77 Oya Hiçyılmaz, Interview, February 2011, Izmir.
78 Seyhan Polat, Interview, April 2011.
80 Filiz Doğan, Interview, February 2011, Izmir.
81 Derya Ertürk, Interview, February 2011, Izmir. I will revisit the validity of the secular feminist fears in greater detail in Chapter 5.
82 Seyhan Polat, Interview, April 2011, Istanbul. To the current day, Nur Serter denies the use of “force” in this procedure.
friends protested the persuasion rooms—which Seyhan retrospectively considered a mistake. For Seyhan, their silence about the persuasion rooms not only led to “the militarization the secular feminist image” but also contributed to JDP’s “victimization discourse.”

Here, Kleinig’s discussion might be helpful. Kleinig, firstly, suggests that loyalty is not based on unconditional love, or even end-love, it is about the associative, relational connection in between—which, as I argued, captures the secular feminist narratives more accurately. Secondly, taking his cue from Michael Walzer, who argues people are more loyal to other people than abstractions, Kleinig differentiates between our abstract loyalties and interpersonal loyalties. For Walzer, our loyalties to abstractions are almost always coined with our loyalties to particular persons from whom these abstractions are learned or with whom they were practiced or experienced. Like Walzer, Kleinig asserts, “most of our loyalties—loyalties to members of our families, to our friends, and even our religious or national loyalties—are loyalties to people, individually and collectively.”

From this perspective, therefore, Seyhan chose her secular feminist interpersonal loyalties to Nur Serter over her abstract loyalties to rights-based critique of the persuasion rooms. This distinction between interpersonal and abstract loyalties is important for my study because, as I discuss in the third part, when secular feminists face difficult decisions that require them to choose between their Kemalist secular or feminist values (like my question about a possible collaboration with pious feminists), rather than choosing one set of values over the other or keeping the discussion at the level of abstraction, they prefer to turn to their relational commitments and interpersonal loyalties to their secular feminist friends. Besides, secular feminists are likely to respond in a more self-reflective (yet puzzled and perplexed) manner towards their relationship with pious feminists when they are addressed questions from a relational standpoint.

According to Kleinig, the solution to Seyhan’s problem lies in the realization that loyalty only requires sticking with our particular “objects of loyalty,” and not all of their actions. For Kleinig, if Seyhan and secular feminists like Seyhan were more vocal with their criticisms about

83 Seyhan Polat, Interview, April 2011, Istanbul.
84 “Concomitants to principles are usually also concomitants to other men, from whom the principles have been learned and by whom they have been enforced.” For more, see: Michael Walzer, Obligations: Essays on Disobedience, War, and Citizenship (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1970), 5. Taken from: Kleinig, On Loyalty and Loyalties, 29.
85 Kleinig, On Loyalty and Loyalties, 30.
86 I directed this question to my participants because, originally, my study was about trying to bring together Kemalist and pious women in a focus group interview that I hoped might lead into a joint project. I was not trying to make them re-evaluate their relationship with Kemalist and feminist values; it was an indirect consequence of my research which I did not personally foresee prior to my fieldwork.
the persuasion rooms, this could not be treated as a sign of disloyalty or betrayal. As long as Seyhan continued to stand by her friend and kept her relational/interpersonal loyalties (which she did), from Kleinig’s perspective, she could disagree with her friends’ particular actions without feeling guilty. On a broader level, I think, this distinction between loyalties to people and loyalties to abstractions is also relevant for understanding why the idea of feminist sisterhood is not enough. There is also the need for building interpersonal connections because, as Kleinig suggests, interpersonal loyalties are stronger than abstract loyalties. Besides, as Seyhan’s narrative suggests, when interpersonal loyalties are strong, it is hard to separate the person from her actions, and therefore, voice an internal critique. The lack of expressing internal criticism, in this regard, does not always suggest the lack of self-reflection.

3.2 Perceptions of the Pious Other: Difference, Arrogance, and Exclusion

After my discussion of secular feminist friendships where I emphasized loyalty and trust as its main constituents, in this second part I turn my attention to the secular feminists’ different inclinations towards pious women and pious feminists with respect to the feminist literature on difference and ignorance.

In *Woman’s Inhumanity to Woman*, Phyllis Chesler claims to reveal the previously unaddressed truth behind feminist sisterhood: the harm and the hurt women cause to “other” women. Far from being unaddressed, however, long before Chesler’s work feminists have been problematizing and deconstructing “white solipsism” and the “arrogant eye” in feminism with regard to multiple, interlocking categories of women’s oppression (in the intersection of race, ethnicity, class, nationality, sexuality, etc.) and rethinking the notion of feminist friendship without using “the master’s tools” or sororizing its “fraternist biases.”

In between the arrogant eye, which can only see “what is one’s own,” and not “what one’s own determines,” and the loving eye, through which the others can be seen independently as “complex beings,” in my study, secular feminists were at times well-meaning but still ignorant towards pious feminists. In this sense, I think they were closer to what Ortega

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92 Frye, “In and Out of Harm’s Way,” 75.
93 Marilyn Frye, “In and Out of Harm’s Way,” 75.
refers to as “loving, knowing ignorance,” which includes the perceivers who aim to reverse-arrogate their perceptions by loving and listening to the other, but while doing so do not “check and question” their own presuppositions, desires, or interests. At other times, secular feminists were genuinely curious, critical, and questioning, which eventually led them to self-critically reflect back at themselves and check and question their own positions towards pious feminists. Thus, in between the “loving eye” and “loving, knowing ignorance,” secular feminists treated pious feminists as “complex,” strategic beings, but this did not mean they saw pious women as politically independent from the JDP or the politicization of Islam in Turkey, both of which they openly despised. Similarly, in between the critical eye and self-critical eye, secular feminists were willing to self-reflect on their own presuppositions and “world-travel” into the worlds of others, but this did not also mean they were willing to transform their standpoint. I explain the reason why secular feminists are reluctant to transform their standpoint towards pious feminists (despite their willingness for critical self-reflection) by revisiting the relationship between loyalty, self-transformation, and exclusion in secular feminist narratives.

3.2.1 Secular Feminist Arrogant Eye

According to Frye, feminism’s “arrogant eye” results from the perceiver’s own desires, limited knowledge of others, and inability to see beyond her own webs of meaning or the limits of subject-object dualism in feminism. From a similar standpoint, in Turkey, secular feminists are often assumed to discriminate against women who wear the headscarf because of their own inability to see beyond the subject-object dualisms of the Turkish modernization. This common, prototypical categorization of secular feminists often suggests that these middle-aged, Kemalist women with the tailored suits and Atatürk badges can only see the pious women’s headscarf from an internalized Orientalist perspective where they put themselves in the position of white feminists in the West and treat pious women in the same exact way that the Western feminists have treated the women of the Middle East. From this perspective, secular feminists are assumed to arrogate, otherize, and infantilize pious women and presume that pious feminism is an oxymoron. For secular feminists in my study, however, both secular and pious groups in Turkey were unable to see beyond their own side of the debate; that is, partiality and preferential treatment were not exclusive to secular women. Even hardliner secularists like Derya Ertürk

95 Ortega, “Being Lovingly, Knowingly Ignorant,” 68.
96 Frye, “In and Out of Harm’s Way,” 80.
suggested that, if pious feminists focused on the Islamic rights of women beyond the headscarf, she did not think that the two groups would find each other at the opposing ends:

“When women with the headscarf approach us in the women’s movement, they always bring up divisive issues in Islam—like the controversy around the headscarf. If they instead ask us our opinions about Islamic rights of women, then, we could perhaps start a conversation. And, if they are feminists they claim to be, I do not think we would find ourselves at the opposing ends when we focus on Islamic rights of women. After all, we are alhamdulillah Muslim too, and contrary to general belief, we are well-informed that, with Islam, our Prophet Mohammed granted women some rights. He has limited the number of wives to 4, after all. For that specific context and time, this was an important development for women, how can I deny this as a believer! For the women with the headscarf, it is an anomaly that a woman like me can ever talk about positively about Islam and women’s rights. They simply assume we are atheists because we don’t wear the headscarf. If there is a prejudice amongst the two groups of women, my little child, well then, be it, but it is definitely mutual.”

Hence, even in the prototypical hardliner secular feminist narratives in my study, the arrogant eye was not completely limiting, as it is often assumed. Still, however, it is possible to detect three ways in which arrogant eye functions in the secular feminist narratives.

Firstly, from an arrogant eye, secular feminists avoided questions about difference by not providing definitive answers. For example, when I asked Filiz Doğan if a woman with the headscarf could become a member of her organization, Filiz told me there has been no precedents of such a request, and thus, anything she could say would be a speculation. For Filiz, the main problem was that if one side is assumed to be categorically “more pious” because of wearing the headscarf and the other “more secular” simply by not, then, the two sides could never be “equals,” that is, Aristotelian standard of equality of virtue could not be met. For Filiz, “without building mutual trust,” the two groups could “perhaps force themselves to work together (…) if they really, really had to” but this would only strengthen their resentments.

Secondly, secular feminists blamed the religious patriarchy in Turkey. For example, Seyhan Polat contended that there were “invisible layers” of “widely accepted” religious patriarchy in the Turkish society. Seyhan, therefore, reasoned that the headscarf debate in Turkey was different from similar debates in the West. Although Seyhan stood in solidarity with Muslim women’s rights to wear the headscarf in Western countries like France, Britain, the Netherlands, or Canada, in the Turkish setting where patriarchy is deeply ingrained in the politico-religious, state-led structures, she stood cautious and critical towards the headscarf. For Seyhan, differing

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97 Derya Ertürk, Interview, Izmir, February 2011.
98 Filiz Doğan, Interview, February 2011, Izmir.
from the Western context, in Turkey people did not trust their political leaders, institutions, and the justice system, and hence, as secular women, they felt unsafe when the rising Islamization gradually changes their secular lifestyles.

Thirdly, secular feminists (mostly the hardliners) pointed towards the agenda differences between the two groups. As Demet Paksoy stated, “I am sorry to say this, but we are different, we are very different.”\(^9\) Similarly, Hale Ulu stated, “We always embraced them lovingly and compassionately. (...) But, they (...) went their own separate way.”\(^10\) Rana Emir thought that pious feminists did not really prefer to work with secular women either; they too preferred to work with women from similar backgrounds. For example, during Rana’s experience at a joint women’s platform to increase the number of women in the parliament, Rana observed that Islamic feminists were the first to branch out and form their own, separate platform. For Rana, pious feminists “could have continued attending both platforms, but they did not.”\(^11\)

3.2.2 Pious Feminists as Strategic, Complex, Yet Politically Dependent Beings

For secular feminists in Turkey, pious women with the headscarf were not religiously brainwashed, subjugated, naïve believers who were fooled into false consciousness. Instead, secular feminists thought that these women were willingly on this road for a certain strategic, political gain (either for themselves or their families). Their headscarf was the sign of a particular political project (dava) and not of Islamic piety. This suggests that the secular feminist arrogant eye differs from Western feminist arrogant eye in two main ways. Firstly, this secular feminist arrogant eye sees pious women as complex, strategic beings, but not politically independent from JDP or the secular-pious divide in Turkey. Secondly, deviating from the Western feminist arrogant eye, secular feminists are more concerned about pious women’s intentionality as well as autonomy, which brings to mind Suad Joseph’s argument that there is an unexplored territory of research about intentionality in the feminist scholarship due to feminism’s general reliance on agency and action in Western literature. According to Joseph, contrary to common assumptions, agency does not automatically capture intentionality because, in her words, “Agency, as it has been approached, is attached to the subject in the aftermath of observing actions. Intentionality invites a probe before and during actions.”\(^12\) Secular feminists did not think that they could

\(^9\) Demet Paksoy, Interview, April 2011, Istanbul.
\(^10\) Hale Ulu, Interview, March 2011, Ankara.
\(^11\) Rana Emir, Group Interview, April 2011, Istanbul.
\(^12\) Suad Joseph, “Thinking Intentionality,” 2.
simply trust pious women’s actions; they felt they needed to understand the “true intentions” behind them.

Hale Ulu, for example, warned that people could easily mask their truthful purposes “for long, very long periods of time,” therefore, she demanded an elaborate research on pious organizations. She enlisted a number of questions to determine their “true purposes and intentions” (gerçek amaç ve niyetleri): “Who are their members? Why are they a part of that organization? What are their sources of income? Do they receive governmental assistance?”

Derya Ertürk explicitly stated that she did not contest pious women’s claims of autonomy for their choice of wearing the headscarf. In her words: “It may very well be their personal, autonomous choice to wear the headscarf, I honestly could not care less.” From Derya’s perspective, if their choice to wear the headscarf was autonomous, it meant that they autonomously accepted and validated the male-ridden, patriarchal structures in Turkey—which was, for Derya, worse than false consciousness. According to Derya, this reaffirmation could grant individual gains for a particular group of pious women by placing them under the patronage of JDP, but not for many other pious women who are forced to wear the headscarf due to wishes of a male family member (and not by their autonomous choice).

Similarly, Filiz Doğan argued, there was a thin line between “persuasion” and “enforcement” in religious indoctrination. For example, attending the schools run by religious communities or staying at their dormitories might perhaps be women’s autonomous choice, but Filiz reminded that, as a consequence of that choice, these women were also expected “to comply with a certain conservative lifestyle.” As a secular feminist who regularly practices Islam herself, Filiz thought these religious communities were interested in “regulating women’s lives” more than teaching them about Islamic piety. Whether it was the wishes of a male family member or a religious community, Filiz contended that all forms of religious patriarchy operate similarly: They distort multileveled and complex political realities into a single dimension, the religion, and then manipulate people into believing those particular persons, communities, or institutions have the absolute authority to speak on behalf of religion. James Fishkin argues, “a person has been manipulated by a communication when she has been exposed to a message intended to change her views in a way she would not accept if she were to think about it on the basis of good

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103 Hale Ulu, Group Interview, March 2011, Ankara.
104 Derya Ertürk, Interview, February 2011, İzmir.
105 Filiz Doğan, Interview, February 2011, Istanbul. Filiz Doğan, here, is probably talking about a student who joined the Gülen movement although she did not personally acknowledge.
conditions.”

For Fishkin, if a person consents to a message that is directed at her from a source that provides her inadequate and single-sided information, this would not represent her opinion under “good conditions,” therefore she is manipulated. Filiz was confident that this was the case with the women participants of the religious communities in Turkey.

3.2.3 Secular Feminist Critical, Questioning Eye

Despite their arrogant eye, secular feminists were also quite interested in learning more about pious feminists and their activities in the women’s movement. For example, Mine Rendeci tried to stay well-informed about pious feminists by following their meetings, websites, social media accounts, and the recent academic research on the pious women’s movement. For Mine, pious women’s groups in Turkey have three main goals in the women’s movement.

Firstly, Mine thought, these organizations aim “to dismantle the image of the prototypical Republican women” and “to challenge the monolithic image of Islamic women in Turkey.” For Mine, this was dangerous: “These women want to dismantle the Republican women image. They want to achieve their goal by breaking us up. And it is not just us they are trying to destroy. They also [want to destroy] the secular regime. It is not the headscarf that we care about, honestly, it is not. It is this feeling... that I can’t explain... Of losing everything, absolutely everything, we strived to achieve for at least three generations.”

Secondly, for Mine, pious feminists focus on common feminist issues for a limited time to hide their “true intentions” (gerçek niyet) until they achieve acceptability from other feminists so that they could use their “feminism” as a cover-up. Like JDP’s misuse of “democracy” or religious communities’ misuse of “persuasion,” for Mine, pious women’s organizations wanted to misuse “feminism” to push the women’s movement towards Islamization in small, barely noticeable doses. In this regard, Mine thought secular women had to stay cautious and alert. Mine questioned, “If they get the star for piety because of their headscarf, how can they focus on our similarities? If they think they can only challenge the monolithic image of Islamic women by breaking us up, how do they focus on similarities? Do they seriously think people see secular feminists any less monolithically than Islamic feminists? Haven’t they seen our image in the newspapers, the caricatures and all that! I do not think they are that naïve!”

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107 Mine Rendeci, Group Interview, April 2011, Istanbul. As I will revisit in Chapter 5, at the time of my interviews in between January 2011-January 2013, these worries of secular feminists (about JDP) seemed rather exaggerated. However, as JDP adopted growingly authoritarian measures against any form of expression of political dissent starting with the Gezi Protests in June 2013, retrospectively, secular feminist fears about JDP no longer seemed very far off from the current political realities of Turkey.
Thirdly, Mine thought that pious women’s organizations try to repackage the headscarf as a sign of resistance and freedom, not of religious patriarchy and Muslim women’s subordination. Although Mine singled out the “real feminists among them,” she once again thought that it was all a part of a political project (dava) that was drawn out two centuries ago. For Mine, pious women “work hard to spread their ideology, they work like the capillary vascular system. They get stronger as they emanate from street to street, from neighborhood to neighborhood. They work with the discipline of a political party.”\(^{108}\) Similar to Filiz and Derya, Mine also thought that if the pious women truly wanted to be a part of the women’s rights movement in Turkey, they would have focused on “umbrella issues,” instead of the headscarf.

For Deniz Çolak, rather than a single-sided-critique, it was important to keep a critical eye on all sides: “My reading of the headscarf is through the discourse of human rights. I do not need to wear the headscarf to support the freedom of wearing the headscarf in the universities (...) but I also question the process from a feminist perspective. Yes, the women’s branches of JDP are very active, but our research shows that eight out of ten women in JDP women’s branches were members because their husbands were somehow tied to JDP.”\(^{109}\) Çağla Parlak, similarly, admitted that pious women’s involvement in the women’s movement made them to get out of their houses. However, for Çağla this did not mean secular feminists’ doubts were completely unreasonable. Çağla thought there was still value in asking, “Are these women out of their homes because they want to redefine their freedom, or are they out because they follow a path that has been planned for them and they had no other choice but to conform?”\(^{110}\) Therefore, more critical/liberal secular feminists in my study like Deniz and Çağla saw the value in pious feminist appeals to autonomy and feminism; however, when the issue came to JDP’s alleged role in this process, they kept their critical eye and also questioned pious women’s intentionality.

3.2.4 Secular Feminist Self-Critical, Self-Reflective, Loving Eye

For Ortega, loving, knowing ignorance is about “seeing the other with all her boundaries but not knowing much about her,” and therefore, it is not loving at all.\(^{111}\) In loving, knowing ignorance, the perceiver has the knowledge about the Other but she does not “check and question” herself. Therefore, in such situations, Ortega argues that we see the discursive

\(^{108}\) Mine Rendeci, Group Interview, April 2011, Istanbul.
\(^{109}\) Deniz Çolak, Group Interview, March 2011, Ankara.
\(^{110}\) Çağla Parlak, Interview, March 2011, Ankara.
inclusions of the women of color into the white feminist narrative, even references to prominent feminist theorists of color, but yet the experience of actual women of color are still inadequately represented. In my study, diverging from both the arrogant eye and the critical eye, Başak Haznedar adopted a slightly different stance towards pious women. For Başak, since it was not possible to decode pious women’s true intentions with certainty, there was no quick fix to the problem of sincerity in the women’s movement other than getting to know pious feminists in person in civil society. Even through silent observation, Başak thought that secular feminists could learn more about pious women. As she stated, “I have been in the women’s movement for a long time. I know that nothing remains hidden forever; the time will come and we will see if pious women are here to promote their own rights or the interests of JDP.”

Regarding the supporters of JDP, for example, after fluctuating between the loving eye and the critical eye, Başak stated, “We always embraced them. We always did; this has always been our narrative. We always said we have to learn to live together. They always replied back, ‘You will get used to us.’ We did. (…) but, unfortunately, they did not get used to us!”

Regarding pious feminists, Başak’s narrative was more self-critical. For Başak, both groups were guilty of “feeding and feeding on” their disagreement about the headscarf. This was because the headscarf gave pious feminists “a sense of identity,” and secular feminists “a cause to stand against.” Like Başak, Rana Emir raised the need for separating “the JDP supporters” from “other pious women,” especially pious feminists. Regarding the women supporters of JDP, Rana stated, “Perhaps it is because we do not trust them (…) we do not trust what they are saying so we do not listen to them and we are afraid about their hidden agendas.”

Regarding pious feminists, Rana (like Başak) thought that if they were just pawns of JDP like the women in JDP women’s branches, they too would remain silent about JDP’s illiberal measures, which was not the case. Mine also confirmed Başak and Rana’s view on pious feminists and appeared genuinely convinced as she asserted, “They [pious feminists] are taking a stand against patriarchal male hegemony.” However, all three participants (Rana, Mine, and Başak) added with caution that

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112 Ortega, “Being Lovingly, Knowingly Ignorant,” 62. Ortega gives the dialogue between Mary Daly and bell hooks as an example.
113 Başak Haznedar, Group Interview, March 2011, Ankara.
114 Başak Haznedar, Group Interview, March 2011, Ankara.
117 Rana Emir, Interview, April 2011, Istanbul.
118 Rana Emir, Interview, April 2011, Istanbul.
119 Mine Rendeci, Group Interview, April 2011, Istanbul.
pious feminists were only a small minority and the rest of the Islamic women’s organizations in Turkey had almost nothing to do with feminism or women’s rights.120

Dilek Fişek’s narrative was more visibly self-critical: “…the only way we can have an impact on the politics is through forming a unified stance and becoming a [united] pressure group. We have to learn to accept diversity.”121 Dilek’s call for a united women’s movement as a teacher of diversity and pluralism in Turkish feminism, in this regard, necessitates expanding the boundaries of secular feminist friendship at a collective level. Similarly, for Ömür Çakmak, tacitly accepting difference was not enough for transformation. Ömür argued that a united women’s front in Turkey necessitates self-reflection both at an individual and a collective level. For Ömür, currently, there was no urge for the latter.

In this regard, both Dilek’s and Ömür’s narratives bring to mind Maria Lugones’ world-travelling approach. According to Lugones, to ameliorate the problems associated with arrogance and/or loving, knowing ignorance, recognition of difference is not enough, there is also the need for traveling into multiple worlds of meaning with curiosity and playfulness, so that one can be “open to construction or reconstruction as oppressors or oppressed.”122 Due to growing political polarizations, world-travelling in a light, curious, and playful manner is indeed a hard task in Turkey. When secular feminists try to travel to the worlds of pious feminists, rather than humor and playfulness, therefore, it is possible to observe micro-aggressions, or at best, semi-defensive, semi-passive-aggressive jokes, or exaggerations the common pious criticisms against secular women: “Well, after all, we are all elitists!” “Atatürk gave us everything, you see, that is why we took our headscarves off!” “We are all brainwashed with Kemalist reforms! And they [pious women] are all authentic, of course!” “They are the populace, we are not! We live in castles and eat cake instead of bread!”123 For Dilek, this passive-aggressive undertone was partly because secular feminists knew that their momentum in the women’s civil society was on a decline: “We are tired. We are exhausted. We are under the radar of JDP, therefore, we are skeptical and cynical. We feel repressed. But the Islamic groups, they are blossoming. They have the government support. (...) We are scattered. We are either too radical or too apolitical. (...) We need to shake it off and snap out of it, snap out of this disappointment.”124

120 Mine Rendeci, Group Interview, April 2011, Istanbul.
121 Dilek Fişek, Interview, January 2012, Istanbul.
123 Deniz Çolak, Hale Ulu, Başak Harzendar, Emel Evgin, Dilek Fişek, Seyhan Polat, Filiz Doğan, Rana Emir, Mine Rendeci, Demet Paksoy all mentioned similar perceptions explicitly and implicitly. The exact translations, however, are taken from group interview in Ankara during March 2011. Except for the last quotation, which is from my field notes during a regular meeting of Soroptimists in Adana, Turkey in May 2011.
124 Dilek Fişek, Interview, January 2013, Istanbul.
3.2.5 Revisiting Loyalty: Oppositionality and Exclusion

During my interviews with secular feminists I noticed that there were two different secular feminist attitudes when they talked about their exclusionary stance towards pious women: 1) when they raised the issue themselves, they acknowledged their exclusionary tendencies openly and self-critically as a problem; however 2) when the issue was raised from the outside, secular feminists did not respond well to criticisms that reduce their complicated relationship with pious women single-handedly to this tendency. They thought such critiques suffered from either blatant ignorance or political bias, and regardless damaged “the soul of the secular feminist struggle” in Turkey. 125 Mine Rendeci expressed her feelings as follows: “Sometimes, when they [researchers or reporters] come and talk to us about our struggle, I feel a sort of arrogance [on their part] (…) as if they already know everything about us because they have read studies about women like us and concluded that we are ignorant, you know, just symbols of an old world that does not exist anymore.” 126 For Mine, this simply felt wrong. I think Kleinig’s discussion on loyalty can provide valuable insight about Mine’s frustration.

As discussed earlier, according to Kleinig, loyalty has a Janus-like character; it has two inseparable faces looking towards different directions. On the one hand, it is “a relational glue,” on the other, it is a “corruptive” value that can lead to exclusion and opposition. We cannot keep one side of loyalty and discard the other. For Kleinig, loyalty requires emotional attachment, a certain type of conduct, perseverance, and preferential treatment, but we cannot reduce loyalty to any single one of the four. If we consider loyalty only as an emotional bond, we misguidedly reduce it to a feeling that might require explanation, but not justification. 127 If we consider it only as a type of conduct, we reduce it to fulfillment of obligation. If we consider it plainly as perseverance, we limit it to difficult times. If we think about it only as preferential treatment, we risk exclusion. From Kleinig’s perspective, therefore, exclusion and opposition may become necessary for being loyal under certain circumstances that demand our perseverance, but loyalty in itself is not exclusionary and oppositional.

George Fletcher disagrees and argues that loyalty is necessarily oppositional: “A can be loyal to B only if there is third party C (another lover, an enemy nation, a hostile company) who

125 Başak Haznedar, Interview, March 2011, Ankara.
126 Mine Rendeci, Interview, April 2011, Istanbul.
127 Kleinig, On Loyalty and Loyalties, 16.
stands as a potential competitor to $B$, the object of loyalty."^128 With respect to my study, Fletcher’s equation might partly capture the hardliner secularist stance towards pious women, but not the more liberal or plural secular feminist standpoints. For example, as Rana Emir explains, “When we attend the meetings of pious women’s organizations, our friends in our organizations, you know, the more radicals, they do not support our decision at all, they do not say anything to us, but we perfectly know it.”^129 By participating in pious feminist activities, Rana and her friends wanted to learn from the experiences of pious feminists, and in this way, understand what they might be missing in their own secular feminist struggle. Unlike their hardliner secularist friends, therefore, Rana did not think she had to oppose everything related to the headscarf to be able to stay loyal to her secular feminist friends. Meanwhile, although her hardliner secularist friends adopted a more exclusionary stance, rather than interpreting Rana’s decision as a sign of disloyalty, they chose to remain silent and observe what happens from afar. In this regard, I think, secular feminist perceptions of loyalty stood closer to Kleinig’s interpretation. They did not need a third party, $C$, to stand loyal to one another. For them, loyalty was about their relationship with each other rather than their relationship with Others.

For Kleinig, Fletcher’s equation of loyalty is an “inadequate” response to “loyalty’s foul-weather background,” that is, Kleinig argues that Fletcher reduces loyalty to a type of conduct or fulfillment of obligation in times of difficulty. Indeed, as discussed above, from Kleinig’s relational perspective on loyalty, the necessary conditions for $A$’s loyalty are $A$’s “disposition to perseverance” in her “associative relationship” with $B$. I consider this as an important distinction in understanding the secular feminist standpoint in Turkey because it partly explains their defensive attitude towards post-Kemalist critics. Secular feminists, after all, adhered to both Kemalist secular and feminist values. They thought reducing secular feminism to this tendency of exclusion was a way of disregarding and devaluing their feminist character and dichotomously assuming that Kemalist women in Turkey can never be “feminist enough.”^131

Seyhan Polat, for example, thought the growing concerns about secular feminists’ discriminative or exclusionary Kemalist character towards pious women who wear the headscarf was both anachronistic and wrong. It was anachronistic because, for Seyhan, Kemalism could

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129 Rana Emir, Interview, April 2011, Istanbul.
130 Kleinig, On Loyalty and Loyalties, 23.
131 For example: Başak Haznedar, Interview, March 2011, Ankara.
132 Seyhan Polat, Interview, April 2011, Istanbul.
no longer be considered as the dominant political paradigm in Turkey since 2002, and “more apparently so after 2007.” As I will discuss in more detail in Chapter 5, for Seyhan, secular feminists were “the new minority” in JDP’s “New Turkey.” It was also wrong because, based on Seyhan’s personal experience in the field, there was no shared code upon which all secular women agreed regarding the headscarf. Some of Seyhan’s friends were more “liberal, open-minded,” and considered the headscarf as a women’s right, while some “absolutely detested even the sight of the headscarf.” Besides, both views could be supported by different Kemalist ideals, according to Seyhan. Therefore, for Seyhan, it was wrong to reduce secular feminism in Turkey to a group of difference-blind, elitist, privileged women with a dogmatic fixation on Kemalist secularist principles. Seyhan suggested that “I can work with a woman with the headscarf, but if I work with a woman who is only interested in enhancing the political role of religion, then our collaboration would not be meaningful.”

For Seyhan, the solution to the problem of exclusion in the women’s movement necessitated a collective move towards a more active, more self-critical feminist stance. If pious feminists continued to target secular feminists’ Kemalist identity and if secular feminists continued to target the pious feminists’ headscarf, this would yield nothing but continued dissent, distrust, and hurt.

### 3.3 Between the Self and Other: Relational Re-Imagination, Enlarged Mentality, and Equidistance

In the first two sections, I have discussed the secular feminist perceptions of the self and the Other. In this last section, I take a closer look at the relationship between the two by focusing on the responses my secular feminist participants provided to the question I asked about the possible scope and purpose of a hypothetical future collaboration with pious feminists (as equal partners and on an issue of women’s rights). I argue that when secular feminists think about pious feminists associatively in relation to themselves (instead of as a separate, disparate Other), they provide more self-reflective, self-critical responses.

During my interviews with secular feminists, I have observed that the question of a possible feminist collaboration between the two groups has immensely intrigued and perplexed my secular feminist participants. This was one of the standard questions that I posed to both groups. While the question did not have a significant impact on the interviews I had with pious

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133 Seyhan Polat, Interview, April 2011, Istanbul.
134 Seyhan Polat, Interview, April 2011, Istanbul.
feminists, in the case of secular feminists it shifted the course of the interviews and led my participants to refine their opinions as they re-imagined the relationship between the two groups differently and in more positive terms. The question of collaboration, in this regard, redirected my secular feminist participants to reconsider their loyalties to feminists who are not like them. I observed that the question located an uncharted territory in the imagination of secular feminists, and thus enabled them to reframe their perceptions of pious feminists more thoughtfully, not bounded by the secular-pious divide. Secular feminists considered this task as a hypothetical thought exercise. By placing the possible benefits of collaboration on one hand, and limits of secular feminist friendship on the other, they started to voice their confusions and ambivalences without a predetermined discursive map.

During this task, my participants seemed to be pulled in different directions by their commitments to Kemalist secularism and feminism in response to this question. As feminists, they wanted to reply affirmatively and try to find the common ground between the two groups. As secular women of Turkey, however, they wanted to reject the idea right away. Situated in between, secular feminists commonly replied along the lines of, “I would say yes, but my friends would never agree with me,” or “It is a brilliant idea, but I would never be able to convince my friends.” In this section, I argue that, rather than deferring the question, this initial indecisiveness in secular feminist narratives brings out important clues about how secular feminists might move towards a more plural understanding of others without considering it self-defeating. I think this can only be achieved by expanding the secular feminist boundaries of friendship to other feminist groups, including pious feminists. Thus, in this last section, I focus on the space between the self and the other in secular feminist narratives, and examine how secular feminists might possibly re-imagine their relationship with pious feminists as possible “feminist friends” and, together with pious feminists, move towards an “equidistant” feminist standpoint.

3.3.1 Feminist Friendship, Transformation, and Relational Re-imagination

Despite the immanent critiques of sisterhood discourse in feminism and its non-intersectional approach to women’s difference, instead of completely “abandoning the idea,”

135 The first quotation is from my one-on-one interview with Seyhan Polat, the second one is from Dilek Figek’s interview. Aside from these two participants, Mine Rendeci, Rana Emir and Başak Hazzedar also explicitly referred to this idea. Filiz Doğan and Demet Paksoy made more implicit references regarding to not being able to convince their friends “even if” they individually wanted to collaborate.  
recent studies still consider feminist friendship prominent for creating a united women’s front and examine the possibilities for a new dialectic to shimmer from different polarizations in feminism. This move in the literature, away from the biases of bourgeois white women and towards the possibility of a transformed, more plural understanding of feminist friendship is often thought to require three common processes: 1) self-criticism or critical self-reflection, 2) re-imagining of the self, and 3) focusing on the unlikely in-between identities, or the space between the self and the Other (instead of one or the other), where transformations can take place.

As I discussed in the previous part, Frye, for example, highlights the need for self-reflective criticism through which white feminists can see others from the loving eye. For Lugones and Ortega, white feminists should be able to world-travel into the worlds of others and re-imagine what is their own by putting themselves in the place of others. For Derrida, “loving” and “being loved” in friendship can be transcended by the emergence of a third force, which Derrida calls as “loveance,” where friendship without fraternism is “perhaps” possible in a “wholly other” (tout-autre) world beyond the self/other. More recently, Schweitzer argues women should “reimagine friendship as a dynamic, improvisational, sometimes improbable process that operates outside of the terms of self/other and sameness/difference and requires that we practice a form of self-exile or selfpluralization.” Similarly, for Jodi Dean, it is possible to move away from “limited forms” (affectionate, conventional, and tactical) of solidarity and towards “reflective solidarities” from the point of view of a “situated, hypothetical third” and by “re-build[ing] ties from dissent.” Inspired from Derrida’s works on both friendship and hospitality, Leela Gandhi likewise resituates friendship as “the lost trope in anticolonial...
thought”¹⁴³ and draws attention to the creative forces of in-betweenness or spaces of “interstitiality” in women’s friendships.¹⁴⁴ Hence, as this brief assessment implies, the literature provides an insightful guide for moving towards an enlarged understanding of friendship by delineating self-reflection, self-reimagination, and the creative forces of the in-between.

In my study, however, although secular feminists were inclined towards all three, this did not instigate self-transformation, or “a new dialectic to shimmer”¹⁴⁵ out of the secular-pious polarization in the women’s movement in Turkey. Secular feminists were individually open to self-criticism, but on the collective level, they were more reluctant to re-imagine where they stand on the issue of the headscarf. Secular feminists felt betwixt and in-between the various dualities of Turkish modernization, but this was not perceived as a creative in-between from which a new force can emerge. To the contrary, secular feminists perceived their current situation as a claustrophobic in-between that they do not know how to get out of. As a result, when secular feminists tried to re-imagine a new version of secular feminist identity that can respond to JDP’s “new Turkey” from a more plural or less self-defensive perspective, they acknowledged its possible benefits, but their fears about losing the core of their identity was much more prevalent. Therefore, in the secular feminist narratives, none of the three main strategies outlined in the current literature could provide a solution to the current incommunicado between the secular and pious women’s groups in Turkey.

Interestingly, however, a hybrid approach that combines all three, which I call relational re-imagination, provides slightly more positive results. By relational re-imagination, I refer to the instances when secular feminists re-imagine their relationship with pious feminists differently. In my study, not only did secular feminists respond more receptively to relational questions but also, when I asked my participants to reflect on what should be done for secular and pious women’s groups in Turkey to collaborate together in the same civil society project as equal partners, they perceived it as a thought exercise. Re-imagining the relationship between the two groups (rather than the self or the other as two separate entities), in this regard, provided a new filter for secular feminists that encouraged them to refine their opinions more thoughtfully,

¹⁴⁴ By the help of this approach, Gandhi uncovers relational ties that would have remained unimagined under the one-dimensional, either/or realities of colonialism. For more: Gandhi, *Affective Communities*, 5-6.
deliberately, and in relation to themselves. Rather than full-fledged changes in their attitudes and preferences, these incremental shifts provided opportunities for secular feminists to disclose their conflicting tendencies, inconsistencies, and complexities they were reluctant to share earlier, and in this way helped them to provide a more comprehensive account of what they actually think.

3.3.2 Interconnectedness, Harm, and Feminist Responsibility

Although the secular-pious dichotomy in Turkey sets the boundaries of friendship so that the secular and pious women’s groups rarely come together, the secular feminist answers to my question of collaboration also shows the interconnections between the two groups. For example, as soon as my secular feminist participants admitted the relational asymmetries between the two groups, they also acknowledged: 1) the harm they cause for pious women or feminists (who are not actually indoctrinated by JDP’s political agenda), 2) their own feminist responsibility to stop this harm, and 3) their failure to accomplish this task.

For example, after rethinking pious feminists as possible partners in the same civil society project, Mine Rendeci turned the mirror to herself and stated, “We say freedom. We say gender equality. But I always find myself in contradiction (tenakuz). I never put it in words, but I always think about it. We say gender equality, but then, we say to a certain group of women to be similar to us in order to become one of us. (…) Isn’t that self-contradictory?” Although, earlier in our interview, Mine was quite certain about the demands of pious feminists, when she reconsidered her stance towards pious feminists from a different filter, Mine self-reflectively admitted a sense of self-contradiction (tenakuz).

Although secular feminists like Mine acknowledged their feminist responsibility to ameliorate this problem, or this feeling of tenakuz, they often circled back to the political secular/pious divide in the country and their Kemalist responsibilities to preserve the secular character of the nation, and subsequently, apologized for not being able to find a way to deal with these two opposing sets of loyalties/responsibilities. As Mine explained further, “We think those women serve for the interest of another type of regime, which would make us suffer all

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147 Here I am thinking of interconnectedness in light of Jennifer Nedelsky’s approach on relationality, which draws on the interconnection between asymmetrical relations of power and relations of responsibility. For more details, see: Jennifer Nedelsky, Law’s Relations: A Relational Theory of Self, Autonomy, and Law, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, 24-29.
together. We are scared,"\(^{149}\) and concluded, “A part in us says, it is her human right, a part of us says she is trying to limit our [secular] rights (…) This is how we pick our side, it is out of fear. It is not because we are elitists. It is not because we do not understand or appreciate democracy.”\(^{150}\) For Mine, the current relationship between the two groups was disappointing because Turkish society was deeply divided. In her words, “The whole society is divided. Here, in Istanbul, we build walls to separate our worlds and we dig ditches in between these walls. A partnership in the women’s civil society would mean trying to fill up some of those ditches. It would mean getting rid of our fears. But we can’t.” For Mine, it was getting worse, “The ditches are getting deeper. Our fear excavates them. Their religious utopia excavates them. I do not know what is going to happen.”\(^{151}\)

As Mine’s narrative suggests, my secular feminist participants felt as if they needed to choose between two kinds of harm as they considered the idea of collaborating with pious feminists: 1) (both individual and collective) political harm to their own secular, Kemalist identity and 2) relational harm they cause for both pious feminists and themselves by not being able to act on their feminist responsibility. In deciding which harm they should minimize with respect to my question about a possible collaboration, most of my participants turned to their friends in their organizations, as the main source of “footing,” that is, the “constant, unspoken process of assessing the grounds for interaction.”\(^{152}\) In this regard, in line with Nina Eliasoph’s work, relational re-imagination encouraged secular feminists to rely on their assumptions on the meaning of and requirements for membership (or feminist friendship)\(^{153}\) moreso than a “reservoir” of “common knowledge”\(^ {154}\) (or the contextual secular-pious divide in Turkey).

In answering my question, for a brief moment, most of my participants assumed that their friends were likely to prefer less harm to their collective Kemalist identity despite its relational costs, which led them to arrive at an imaginative meta-agreement with their friends, and like Mine, restate their fears and anxieties. They were not inclined to consider the other alternative and share their opinions on how they could perhaps find new and creative ways to transform their Kemalist identity in more plural terms so that they might be able to act on their relational loyalties to other feminists. For secular feminists, instead of waiting for the boundaries between

\(^{149}\) Mine Rendeci, Group Interview, April 2011, Istanbul.

\(^{150}\) Mine Rendeci, Group Interview, April 2011, Istanbul.

\(^{151}\) Mine Rendeci, Group Interview, April 2011, Istanbul.


\(^{153}\) Here, I am implicitly referring to Fishkin’s argument about “deliberation as a filter” and his distinction between “raw” and “refined” opinion in deliberative discussions. For more details, please see: Fishkin, *When the People Speak*, 14, 72.

the secular and the pious to re-adjust, the only way to ameliorate the relational harm they cause for both themselves and pious feminists required both groups to adopt a more active feminist stance so that, one day, their shared feminist interests might perhaps supersede the socio-discursive political barriers determined by the secular/pious divide.

3.3.3 Revisiting the Friend-As-Another-Self through Enlarged Mentality

Since coalitions in civil society require friendship for secular feminists, as my participants responded to the idea of a future collaboration with pious feminists, they also reimagined pious feminists as potential feminist friends. In this manner, for a brief moment, my participants were able to imaginatively transcend the secular-pious divide and expand their boundaries of friendship to pious feminists while responding to my question. Thus, through the help of the imaginary scenario I presented, secular feminists reconsidered feminist friendship from a wider framework. I think Arendt’s discussion on Kant’s enlarged mentality can be useful here.

I have already discussed how secular feminists perceive friendship in their own organizations with respect to the Aristotelian model in the first part. I have provided different interpretations of what Aristotle means by “treating one’s friend as another self” including self-love, end-love, unconditional love, and hierarchies of love in the intersection of Western political and Islamic thought. Arendt offers an alternative perspective on this debate, which I find relevant for explaining the slight, hypothetical shifts in the secular feminist narratives. According to Arendt, instead of self-love or loving others as ends in themselves, treating a friend as another self can be understood in relation to the activity of thinking, that is, the capacity that makes us a “somebody” instead of a “nobody.” As Arendt sees it, “…thinking is a process of ‘silent dialogue between me and myself.’” For Arendt, therefore, it is “legitimate” for one to be afraid of “losing oneself,” because it would mean that one loses one’s “silent partner” to find one’s plurality within. As Arendt states, “…even in the singularity or duality of thinking processes plurality is somehow germinally present insofar as I can think only by splitting up into

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156 Arendt, “Responsibility and Judgment,” 93. As Nedelsky argues, for Arendt, there is a difference between “forming an opinion about something” and “actually exercising the cognitive capacity for judgment.” Arendtian judgment “involves a particular use of the mind, including imagination. People are only ‘really’ judging, or making true judgments when they engage their capacity for the ‘enlarged mentality,’ which I will introduce later. For more details on Nedelsky’s discussion on Arendtian judgment, please see: Jennifer Nedelsky, “Receptivity and Judgment,” Ethics & Global Politics 4.4 (2011): 231-254, 232; Jennifer Nedelsky, “The Reciprocal Relation of Judgment and Autonomy: Walking in Another’s Shoes and Which Shoes to Walk In,” in Being Relational: Reflections on Relational Theory and Health Law, eds. Jocelyn Downie and Jennifer J. Llewelyn, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2012): 36.
157 Arendt, Responsibility and Judgment, 96.
two although I am one.”158 Arendt considers this “two-in-one” thinking process highly important for secular questions of morality because, according to Arendt, “conflicts of conscience in secular terms, (…) are actually nothing but deliberations between me and myself, they are not resolved through feeling, but through thinking.”159

From this perspective, Arendt reflects on the friend as another self as follows: “If I am addressed by one person only and if, sometimes happens, we begin to talk in form of a dialogue about the very same things either one of us has been concerned about while still in solitude, then it is as if I now address another self (…) rightly defined by Aristotle as the friend.”160 From Arendt’s perspective, therefore, the Aristotelian perfect friend is the one with whom we can communicatively think as if we are thinking silently by ourselves. This implies that, by treating a friend as another self, we respect her opinions and we form our own judgments through the help of thinking and communicating with her. Instead of the narcissism of self-love or selflessness of unconditional love, the basis for friendship for Arendt is this plural, communicative, two-in-one activity of thinking or judging together. This becomes particularly important with respect to Arendt’s discussion on judgment, which borrows from Kant’s work on aesthetic judgment, common sense, and enlarged mentality.

For Kant, on matters of aesthetics or taste, or fields where there are no demonstratively provable or self-apparent standards, it is still possible to transcend the arbitrariness of subjective opinions and arrive at valid judgments by the help of our “common sense” and “capacity for imagination.”161 As Arendt puts it, what Kant means by common sense is not a sense that is common to everyone, but rather, he refers to “that sense which fits us into a community with others, makes us members of it and enables us to communicate things by our five private senses.”162 By the virtue of our common sense, in this regard, we become a part of a community, and in that community, if we want to claim validity of our judgments, we have to imaginatively take into account the perspectives of the other members and form our judgments as if we are trying to convince them. That is, with the help of our imaginative capacity, we have to “think in place of” others, take their perspectives, and form our judgments in a way that we think we can

158 Arendt, Responsibility and Judgment, 106.
159 Arendt, Responsibility and Judgment, 108.
160 Arendt, Responsibility and Judgment, 98.
161 Arendt, Responsibility and Judgment, 61, 138.
162 Arendt, Responsibility and Judgment, 139.
have their assent. For both Kant and Arendt, this helps us to judge beyond our own perceptions, and therefore, reach an “enlarged mentality.”

If we go back to Arendt’s discussion on thinking and friendship, while forming our judgments from this Kantian standpoint, in a way we split ourselves into multiple selves, imaginatively take their standpoints, and try to get their approval—where our judgments can only be valid “over the community of which [our] common sense makes [us] a member.” In this sense, like “a friend as another self,” enlarged mentality enables us to imaginatively consider the perspectives of the other members of our community as if they are other selves with whom we can think, who can help us to pluralize and contextualize our opinions, enlarge our minds, and turn our opinions into judgments—which lack certainty and universal applicability, but are not completely subjective either.

In her discussion, Arendt seems to diverge from Kant on two main points. Firstly, in contrast to Kant, Arendt thinks that, in addition to aesthetic judgments or matters of taste, political and moral questions of our time are of similar nature where we no longer have discernable standards. Secondly, while for Kant, enlarged mentality seems to operate on an imaginative level only, for Arendt, the process is communicative. As she states, “The validity of common sense grows out of the intercourse with people—just as we say that thought grows out of the intercourse with myself (...) the more people’s positions I can make present in my thought and hence take into account in my judgment, the more representative it will be.”

In this regard, by thinking about the possibility of a collaboration, from a Kantian perspective secular feminists in my study “imaginatively” considered different standpoints, and this has shifted their narratives slightly and made them more comfortable to talk about self-transformation as a possibility in the future. However, it did not create a noticeable change in their actual actions or preferences in the women’s movement. As my failed attempts to bring secular and pious feminists together in a group interview clearly demonstrate, secular feminists are still reluctant to meet up with pious feminists. In this regard, I think Arendt’s emphasis on the communicative necessity of judgment might provide a more relevant frame to understand this continued reluctance in secular feminist preferences. If we rely only on our faculty of imagination for enlarged mentality without actually communicating with others, we may perhaps

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163 Arendt, Responsibility and Judgment, 140.
164 Arendt, Responsibility and Judgment, 140.
165 Arendt, Responsibility and Judgment, 140.
166 Arendt, Responsibility and Judgment, 138.
167 Arendt, Responsibility and Judgment, 141.
empathize with others by taking into account what we imagine as their standpoint, but this does not mean that we are taking into account their actual perspectives.  

For example, as I introduced before, for Ömür Çakmak, self-criticism in secular feminist organizations was mostly restricted to the individual level; it was not considered collectively relevant. For Ömür, secular feminists felt alone and isolated in their critical self-reflections. Instead of debating, communicating, and sharing their confusions with their friends, Ömür argued that the majority of her secular feminist friends chose to “postpone thinking about [their] problems as long as possible.” Communication is, therefore, problematic even amongst secular feminists, according to Ömür. Similarly, Filiz Doğan recalled an incident where they (Filiz and her friends in her organization) misjudged a secular woman (a clinical psychologist who was a guest speaker in one of their monthly meetings) because she confessed that she was a battered wife. Instead of empathizing with her, Filiz painfully recalled that they questioned intentions after she had left the room, by saying “How could she stay in such a marriage!” or even, “Why did she disclose so much about herself?” In her words, “I still find myself thinking about what we have done. I do not tell it to my friends, this might be the first time I am expressing it out loud. I just could not confess how shameful I have acted as a feminist. I should have known better.” She asked herself, “Why did we judged this woman so harshly? Why did we not show her compassion? Why did we not communicated from a different angle?” For Filiz, understanding each other’s standpoints required real exchange between different groups, which was not the case in Turkey. As she stated, “In Turkey, even when there is a table that everyone agrees to sit around, and even when everyone who has a seat at the table talks for hours, still, we would be able to say nothing of use, nothing that could move us closer to a solution, nothing progressive. We would only complain and complain, and restate our own position over and over again. This is true for both sides. It is just the way we communicate.”

Oya Hiçyılmaz argued that self-transformation required a change in “both thought and action,” and therefore, adopted a more Arendtian approach. Oya confessed that she used to be “proud” about her “hatred towards the headscarf.” But after moving to Salzburg and becoming

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169 Ömür Çakmak, Interview, April 2011, Istanbul.

170 Filiz Doğan, Interview, İzmir, February 2011.

171 Filiz Doğan, Interview, İzmir, February 2011.

172 Filiz Doğan, Interview, İzmir, February 2011.

173 Filiz Doğan, Interview, İzmir, February 2011.

174 Oya Hiçyılmaz, Interview, İzmir, February 2011.
close friends with a pious woman, Oya started noticing her own discriminative attitudes. In her words: “I talked and talked and talked endlessly about why headscarf is against human rights. As I was talking I realized that something did not make sense, but I was not able to pin it down. So, I did not say anything, not to anyone, including my friend with the headscarf.” Oya, this initial stage of transformation at the level of thought had to be communicated with others in order to lead into change. Only then, secular feminists could actually relocate the borders of feminist friendship from an enlarged mentality, in both thought and action, and reconsider pious feminists as potential friends who are fundamentally different. Here, I would like to revisit Islamic (Sufi) thought.

3.3.4 Revisiting Islamic Thought: Rumi’s Parable About Friendship “of a Different Kind”

Rumi’s metaphorical story about the friendship between the frog and mouse in Book VI of Masnawi is often cited as an example of what happens if one befriends someone “of different kind.” The story begins when a frog befriends a mouse by a bank near the river. As they spend every day engaging in deep conversations that Rumi calls “play[ing] heart-and-soul with one another,” they understand that they are destined with bonds of close friendship. As the friendship between mouse and the frog gets better, they want to spend more time together. After some time, the mouse complains about not being able to speak with the frog when he is under the water. They decide to tie themselves with a string of friendship around their feet. But all of a sudden, “a raven of separation” comes and captures the mouse, and because they were tied to each other, the frog is also captured. As people watch the frog being taken away by the raven, they do not understand how a frog, an animal of the sea, can become a prey for a raven because their string of friendship is invisible to the human eye. At that point, Rumi temporarily ends the story by the frog’s lamentation that he has deserved this ending by being friends with someone different from him in the first place.

For some commentators, based on the lamentations of the frog, Rumi’s understanding of friendship necessitates similarity. Reminding of Aristotelian “virtue of equality” and Cicero’s

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175 Oya Hiçyılmaz, Interview, Izmir, February 2011.

176 The story of the frog and mouse is very similar to the fable of the scorpion and the frog in the Western fables, but Rumi offers an unexpected shift at the ending. The details of the story can be found in: Mevlâna Jalâl ad-Dîn Muhammad Rûmî, The Masnâwî, ed. and trans. Reynold A. Nicholson, 8 Volumes, (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 1925–40): Vol. 6, 2632-2639, 2665-2713, 2941-2973.


178 Rumi, Masnawi, Vol. 6: 2635-2640. As Rumi contends, in accordance with the concept of close friendship in Qur’an, sincerity in form of speech is very important for the act of friendship. In his words, “the flow of speech from the heart is a sign of (close) friendship; the obstruction of speech arises from lack of intimacy (or intimate friendship)” Here, I added some words in parenthesis to support the literal English translation in accordance with the Masnavi’s Turkish version.
distinction of “true and perfect” friendships, Rumi does argue that a friend is like a star, which shows “the way in sand and on the sea: fix your eye on the star, for he is the one to be followed.”

Therefore, from this reading, finding similarities with someone “not of one’s own kind” is worrisome, because one can end up being a prey for a raven by a string that she has tied to herself, and therefore, if anything goes wrong, she is the one who is responsible. As Mine Rendeci sadly anticipated, for example, “Even if we say okay to working together [with pious feminists], we will have to undertake a lot of concessions.”

In a similar manner, Dilek Fişek explained why secular feminists were afraid of finding similarities with pious feminists as follows: “What would happen if I listen to her and see that she is not actually that wrong, that is the question. We are afraid of understanding and agreeing with each other. So, we tend to oppose no matter what.”

Yet, Rumi revisits the story once more, and concludes that one should always seek similarities beyond the form or reason. In his words: “There was another trap which reason did not perceive; hence the inspiration which holds the unseen sped in this direction. By reason you can recognize [similarity and difference]: you ought not to run at once to forms (...) [similarity] is not in respect of form; Jesus, in the form of man, was homogenous with angels. The Celestial Bird carried him up this dark blue fortress [of heavens] as the raven of frog.”

Similarly, some of my secular feminist participants thought that their disagreement with pious feminists was more about “form” rather than substantive feminist issues. When these participants redirected their attention towards the possibility of a collaboration, in their narratives, they began referring to pious feminists as “our friends with the headscarf.” For example, Başak Haznedar responded to my question positively: “We can work with our friends with the headscarf. I value her opinion more than her headscarf.”

According to Başak, this was how they cooperated during the making of the 2003 CEDAW shadow report. Secular feminists who were more active in the women’s movement, like Başak, considered pious feminists “enlightened” Muslims. During the CEDAW meetings, for example, Sena Canyuva likewise stated, “The pious women we met there were enlightened Muslims. They were truly pious, you

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180 Group Interview, April 2011, Istanbul.
181 Dilek Fişek, Interview, January 2012, Istanbul.
182 Rumi, *Masnawi*, Vol. 6: 2970-2975. In this translation, the words congener and non-congener are used instead of similarity and difference.
183 Başak Haznedar, Group Interview, March 2011, Ankara.
184 In order to prepare this shadow report, intensive working group discussions were held with the organization, Flying Broom (or *Uçan Süpürge* in Turkish—a highly critical, freedom-centered, radical feminist organization based in Ankara, Turkey). The working group sessions have brought together 453 women from 81 different cities where almost every type of women civil society organization in Turkey were present at their own will including: businesswomen organizations, Kemalist/secularist feminists, Kurdish feminists, socialist feminists, liberal feminists, gay and lesbian initiatives, and Islamic/pious women’s and feminist groups.
know, they were not showing off their piety, not like JDP’s so-called piety. (…) Their feminist interpretations of Qur’an offered women freedom and rights, they did not support chaining women down in a house, without legal marriage, without a job, but with at least three children.” 185 For a collaboration to be possible between different women’s groups, Rana Emir also argued that both groups had to look beyond the form and admitted that this required arduous effort in Turkey because of the political polarization between the secular and the pious. As Rana stated, it is hard “to be gray [in Turkey] instead of black or white.” 186 For Dilek Fişek, some of her friends thought “gray” meant “devoid of values,” and she disagreed, “if you do not have values, it does not mean you are gray, it means that you are colorless.” Hence, Dilek thought that secular feminists needed more “gray” encounters to recognize “colorless” is not “gray.” 187

3.3.5 Distance/Equidistance

During our interview, Esra Çakır Zorlu suggested that a collaboration between the two groups was not possible in Turkey because the pious and the secular women’s groups were “not at peace.” For Esra, “Our difference is the beginning and the end of discussion. We are not willingness to convene and debate solutions. We have no urge to solve the unsolvable.” 188 To explain her point, Esra turned to the debate in the U.S.: “They say, the problems of black women are not the problems of the white women, but black women and white women can still work together on some issues. The division, here, you see, is not like that.” 189

Secular feminist participants of my study thought they had two options in handling dissent (both internal and external): 1) direct, open confrontation of conflict, or 2) temporary avoidance until both sides are ready to find the middle ground. According to secular feminists, open confrontation of conflict heightened the tension. Staying silent and avoiding the issue temporarily was considered a more cordial way to handle dissent. Hence, secular feminists attributed a dual role to distancing. On the one hand, it was a sign of avoidance (if not ignorance). On the other, they thought, it allocated a temporal, safe space to think calmly, let go of the hurt and anger, and try to understand the perspective of the other side by careful observation—not necessarily loving or arrogating, knowing or ignoring, but observing and

185 Sena Canyuva, Group Interview, Adana, May 2011.
186 Rana Emir, Interview, Istanbul, April 2011.
188 Esra Çakır Zorlu, Interview, Ankara, March 2011.
189 Esra Çakır Zorlu, Interview, Ankara, March 2011.
thinking in solitude. For secular feminists, therefore, distancing is not just a consequence of opposition and negation, but it is also an indicator of moving towards an “equidistant” position.

Rather than locating shared interests or similarities between the two groups, therefore, secular feminists like Esra explicitly stressed the need for finding the equidistance (eşitmesafelilik) between the secular and the pious women’s groups for the two groups to collaborate as equal partners in the same civil society project. I think the choice of wording is particularly important. By hoping to equate the distance between the two groups, secular feminists admit that they need to reposition their standpoint, and therefore, self-transform and self-pluralize, but in doing so they also affirm that there will always be some sort of a “distance” between two groups. Equidistance, therefore, enables secular feminists to stand closer to pious feminists and keep their distance from them at the same time, which allocates room for disagreement and critique as well as rapprochement and acceptance.

For Başak Haznedar, in order for both groups to arrive at an equidistant standpoint, they had to be more passionate about their feminist activism. For Başak, neither “project feminism” that only focuses on performance and results, nor the professionalization of the women’s movement that treats “women’s associations as businesses,” could set a road map for equidistance.190 Most secular feminists considered government support crucial in terms of providing tools, skills, and possibilities for the two groups to interact more, but aside from that they rejected other political interferences, which they thought would block the possibility of any genuine transformation.191

Secular feminists were open to gradual shifts in their patterns of collaborative action, however they also saw the possibility that these efforts might not lead into a comprehensive change regarding the relationship between different women’s groups in Turkey. According to Kati Baruh, if one of the sides holds onto the past, insisting on collaboration might actually set the two groups completely apart.192 For Ömür Çakmak, secular and pious women’s groups have already been moving towards an equidistant standpoint: “Few years ago there was this monolithic image (...) On the one hand, women with the headscarf were discriminated, on the other, secular women were afraid of being forced into wearing the headscarf (...) the challenge right now is about structuring the equidistance between the two groups.”193

190 Başak Haznedar, Interview, March 2011, Ankara.
191 Most notably the narratives of Seyhan Polat and Dilek Fişek.
192 Kati Baruh, Interview, April 2011, Istanbul.
193 Ömür Çakmak, Interview, April 2011, Istanbul.
For secular feminists, therefore, a more collaborative, more plural women’s movement in Turkey required finding the delicate equidistance between different groups. Similar to the reconciliatory role of distance, equidistance was also perceived in a dual sense. It offered a psychological shield against dissent as well as new opportunities for letting go of the past and befriending the Other. However, it is important to remember here that, in secular feminist narratives, the efforts for equidistancing were mostly at the level of relational re-imagination where there was no impulse to act differently or in a way that could facilitate a transformed relationship between the two groups in terms of action. As Esra suggested, equidistance only makes sense if it is coupled with a more open, active, communicative relationship between the two groups so that they can engage in a “two-sided dialogue [with each other] where both sides have the chance to openly state their purposes for deliberative discussion based on mutual trust, sincerity, and goodwill”194—which, as this chapter argues, constitutes the basis of feminist friendship in the secular feminist narratives in my study.

3.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed secular feminist perceptions of disagreement in between the self, the Other, and the relationship between the two. My main aim was to locate an alternative, relationship-centered, feminist vocabulary of disagreement in the secular feminist narratives that is not entirely determined by the more general, political secular/pious divide and, in this way, to delineate the actual feminist issues of dissent that are often forgotten behind the consistency and predictability of the secular/pious dichotomy in Turkey. Instead of particular feminist issues, however, I have observed that secular feminists tried to explain their distant relationship with pious feminists by the limits and limitations of feminist friendship in their own organizations.

In the first part, therefore, I analyzed secular feminist perceptions of friendship. Rather than love or being loved, or similarity or sameness, I argued that the dividing line for secular feminist friendship is loyalty and trust. With the help of Kleinig’s account of loyalty, I highlighted two important dimensions of secular feminist friendship: 1) perseverance to stand by a friend during hard times, and 2) associative or relational character of secular feminist friendship, in which the costs associated with perseverance are considered self-constitutive, and

therefore, not as painful consequences one has to bear for the sake of friendship. Contrary to the prototypical view (that is also upheld by pious feminists as the next chapter will suggest) that restricts secular feminist identity within the bounds of Western individualism, the first part of this chapter highlighted the self-constitutive role of loyalty, friendship, and membership to a community in secular feminist narratives, and later argued that secular feminists are concerned about pious women’s intentionality as well as autonomy.

In the second part, I passed on to the darker side of secular feminist friendship and discussed secular feminist perceptions of their pious Other with respect to the feminist literature on the arrogant eye, loving eye, and the knowing, loving ignorance. Instead of a clear-cut subject-object dualism (between the modern, rational, secular women and the subjugated, brainwashed, pious women), I suggested that secular feminists considered pious women in the women’s movement in Turkey as complex, overly strategic, political beings. Secular feminists acknowledged the lack of dialogue between the two women’s groups as a problem of the women’s movement in Turkey; however, for them, this was not simply a one-sided problem resulting from secular feminist unwillingness. If pious feminists were more vocal about their critiques of religious patriarchy or the Islamic rights of women besides the right to wear the headscarf, they thought the two groups would not find each other at opposing ends. Although secular feminists were inclined to “check and question” their own attitudes towards pious women with the headscarf, this effort was not collectively self-transformative.

In the third part, I discussed possible opportunities for self-transformation. I argued that thinking about a hypothetical, future collaboration has helped my secular feminist participants to reframe and re-imagine their relationship with pious feminists in terms of “collaboration” instead of “disagreement.” From a Kantian/Arendtian framework, my study suggested that relational re-imagination enables secular feminists to hypothetically expand their feminist loyalties to pious feminists, and re-imagine the relationship between the two groups in a way that the previous risks involved with this task are no longer perceived as a loss. While doing so, rather than direct confrontation, secular feminists preferred gradual feminist iterations in the women’s movement (which I will discuss in greater detail in Chapter 5). Thus, if the two women’s groups agree to spend more time thinking about their actual one-on-one “relationships” in the women’s movement instead of arguing about their deep-seated secular and pious political fixities, secular feminist narratives in my study suggest that they can move towards an equidistant standpoint together where another kind of feminist friendship can perhaps be possible.
Chapter 4
Pious Feminist Perceptions of the Disagreement:
Islamic Piety, Feminist Critique, and Relational Autonomy

Chapter 3 argued that secular feminists in Turkey explain their reluctant relationship with pious feminists not only as an extension of the polarizing political context in Turkey, but also by the limits and limitations of the secular feminist friendship and loyalty. This chapter examines the pious feminist side of the debate and identifies two vocabularies of disagreement: one pertaining to the unwillingness of secular feminists to recognize alternative, pious forms of agency, and the other pertaining to the growing secular-pious divide in Turkey. In this chapter, I focus on the former and discuss pious feminist agency in Turkey with respect to the narratives of my pious participants and the relevant scholarly research. I argue that my study locates a gap in the literature and calls for a relational approach on pious women’s agency that does not situate Islamic piety and feminism as two distinct alternatives, or fundamentally separate knowledges.

I present my discussion in four parts. In the first three parts, I trace the pious feminist narratives in my study with respect to common models of pious women’s agency in the literature. I particularly use Elizabeth Bucar’s categorization of the models based on autonomy (self-law), heteronomy (other-law), and dianomy (dual-law) as my starting point. In the first part, I argue that the models based on an individualistic understanding of autonomy (as independence and resistance) can partially explain the pious women’s struggle in Turkey, but fail to account for the agentic significance of religious affirmation, compliance, and acceptance in the narratives. In the second part, I focus on the pious feminist perceptions of “habitual piety” with respect to Saba Mahmood’s discussion of the alternative modes of pious women’s agency, which brings together Butler’s performativity, Foucault’s ethical formation, and Aristotle’s habitus. Although Mahmood’s work can accurately portray habitual piety in pious feminist narratives, I argue that it cannot account for the second stage of pious feminist subjectivity formation in my study that

1 Contrary to pious feminist perceptions, as I presented in Chapter 3, secular feminists did not consider their approach to feminist agency Western-centric or individualistic. As discussed in Chapter 3, secular feminist subjectivity in Turkey was more communitarian than individualistic. Secular feminists were mostly concerned about the hidden political intentions of the pious women rather than their agency.  
2 I will revisit the discursive fixities in both secular and pious narratives in my study in the next chapter. Both secular and pious groups I have interviewed for this study considered the polarizing political context as the most apparent reason of disagreement. The issues of solidarity and agency came up in the narratives when I asked my participants to specifically locate the main issue of disagreement they lived through during shared civil society encounters in the women’s movement.  
3 It may be important here to remember that, as Mahmood indicates in Politics of Piety, she does not put across a full-fledged alternative theoretical model to replace the universalistic Western feminist autonomy. Instead, she delineates the need for further contextualization of the discourse on pious women’s agency.
combines habituation of piety with informed choice. Thirdly, I pass on to the critiques of Mahmood’s theoretical framework (including her use of Aristotelian habitus to justify piety in itself) and introduce Bucar’s dianomy (dual-law). In this part, my discussion remains mostly theoretical as I suggest that Bucar provides a more relevant framework for my study compared to the other approaches.

Lastly, I assert that the pious feminist narratives go one step deeper than Bucar’s dianomy: Aside from dually bringing together critique with affirmation, pious feminists in my study raise the need for a relational reformulation of dianomy. In this part, I analyze the particularities of the progressive pious feminist approach in Turkey with respect to three main issues in the narratives: informed piety, intentionality, and feminism. I propose that pious feminist agency in Turkey can best be understood from a relational approach to Bucar’s framework in the intersection of Kenneth Gergen’s relational multi-being and Jennifer Nedelsky’s relational autonomy. Thus, in this chapter, I argue that a relational approach can provide a more critical framework to think about pious women’s agency, which pious feminist participants of my study considered as the most important feminist issue of disagreement in their contested relationship with secular feminists in Turkey—a relationship that is currently characterized by muted forms of othering, radical discursive separation, and a shared assumption of unavoidable, irresolvable disagreement.

4.1 Autonomy and Pious Women’s Agency

I commence my analysis by the most common models of pious women’s agency based on an individualistic conception of feminist autonomy and how this approach can be applied to the pious narratives in my study. In particular, I discuss four frames: submission, resistance, empowerment, and instrumental models of pious women’s agency. Firstly, I examine pious women’s submission and false consciousness through the pious narratives in my study regarding the secular feminist prejudice against the headscarf. Secondly, I analyze how my pious participants confront, resist, and try to alter the structures of Islamic patriarchy, but not Islam. Thirdly, I explore the way pious feminists in Turkey choose to empower themselves by using non-patriarchal, Islamic re-readings of the religious norms such as tevekkül (acceptance). Lastly, I examine the nonreligious rewards of piety in the narratives, including the achievement and maintenance of pious feminist solidarity and sisterhood as a political (and not religious) outcome of the February 28 Period after “the postmodern coup” in 1997 where the pro-religious political
party precedent to JDP (Justice and Development Party), the Welfare Party (WP), was forced to resign, and as a result many pious women lost their jobs immediately due to their headscarf, but not many pious men did since their piety did not include a visual marker that was immediately identifiable. I argue that although all four frames discussed here are partially relevant for understanding the pious feminist struggle in Turkey, they leave out the compliant terms in which my pious feminist participants reformulate autonomy.

4.1.1 Pious Women’s Submission Frame and the Headscarf

As an emancipatory project rooted in the Enlightenment and Western liberal political thought, feminism is closely associated with secularism⁴ and a support for the secularization thesis.⁵ Despite the escalated number of critiques including the emerging literature on pious women’s agency⁶ and the postsecular feminism,⁷ the secular roots of the feminist project are still prevalent, especially in mainstream feminism and the studies of intersectionality, where the binaries between empowerment and victimization, resistance and submission, liberation and subordination continue to constitute evaluative frameworks of women’s oppression.⁸ The studies of pious women’s subordination, in this regard, support what is known as “the false consciousness thesis,”⁹ or the presupposition that the women who participate in religious traditions are either not capable of locating their interests, or are brainwashed victims or dupes serving a tradition that negates their freedom, rights, and liberties, even when they vigorously assert the contrary.¹⁰ The debate on the Muslim headscarf is one of the primary issues associated with this legacy in the feminist literature.

Footnotes:

⁵ David Herbert’s observations on that the literature that supports secularization thesis might be helpful here. For Herbert, there are 4 shared assumptions in these studies: 1) Social differentiation where society is divided into “semi-autonomous spheres” that require specific scientific knowledge 2) Societalization, that assumes diminishing needs for community and religion, and rising influence of anonymity and urbanization. 3) Rationalization, which similarly diminishes the power of religion. 4) Worldliness, which predicts that religions will become more concerned with worldly issues of social and political life rather than transcendence. For more details, please see: David Herbert, Religion and Civil Society: Rethinking Public Religion in the Contemporary World, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003); Reilly, “Rethinking the Interplay of Feminism and Secularism,” 7-8.
⁷ “The postsecular condition,” according to Braidotti, is related to the global rise in religious conservatism across different religions and contexts, where it is no longer possible to simply equate “the postsecular challenge” with “the Muslim question.” For more details: Braidotti, “The Postsecular Turn,” 3-4.
¹⁰ Burke, “Women’s Agency in Gender-Traditional Religions,” 122-133.
In the context of Europe, for example, Joppke argues that the debate on *l'affaire du foulard* arises from the presumption that there is a categorical difference between Western and Islamic values: Western values, rooted in the Christian doctrine of human dignity, are assumed to be the sole domain of “democracy, secularism, liberty and reason,” whereas Islamic values are associated with “tyranny, religion, authority and violence.” As Göle puts it, this essentialist cultural separation between the Islam world and the West promotes the Muslim headscarf as a “stigma symbol” that is, “above all, a tool of oppression, of alienation, of discrimination, an instrument of power of men over women.” In this regard, the false consciousness thesis operates under the dichotomy between the individual and the system where gender-traditional religions are assumed to fully take over pious women’s ability to act as a free-choosing, rational individuals. The underlying assumptions behind this conclusion may be broken down into 4 parts: 1) Religion requires absolute submission. 2) Agency requires rational choice. 3) Submission cannot be rationally chosen. 4) Therefore, religion cannot be rationally chosen.

According to my pious participants, secular feminists in Turkey prototypically perceive the headscarf in these lines. For example, during our interview, Melahat Tanış felt as if when secular feminists saw her headscarf, they immediately concluded that they are not equal:

“…they [secular feminists] think we are not equal; they still consider us inferior. Even when they say they are fine with us entering to the universities, they ask how far we intend to push the headscarf issue after that. If I am only allowed to get a diploma and not use it, what good is it for me? They want us to be educated mothers at best! For them, our destined path begins with the family—ok, if we want it so much, we may have a university diploma, sure—but surely, we will end up once again in the family. At most, we are permitted to place our diplomas on our living room wall!”

Meral Şenel also thought secular women otherized the women with the headscarf because they were afraid of Islamic fundamentalism taking over Turkish secularism. According to Meral, this fear was unwarranted and the headscarf was an issue of women’s rights: “If [secular women] are pressured to wear the headscarf (...) and if we [pious women] do not support their right not

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14 Bilge, “Beyond Subordination vs. Resistance,” 18. In her words, “the veil has become an over-determined cultural signifier predominantly disqualifying its wearer as a free-willed agentic subject, since one cannot voluntarily choose to wear such a symbol of female submission.”

15 Melahat Tanış, Interview, September 2011, Ankara.
to, only then, their fear would have a logical basis. And, personally, I do not see any possibility of this ever happening.”\textsuperscript{16} Despite the lack of “a logical basis,” Zeliha Leventgil contended that the “secularists” treated the pious women “in the same exact way they are afraid to be treated if their fear becomes the reality one day.”\textsuperscript{17} Zeliha added:

“I feel we are locked up. (…) If I stay in Turkey, they [secular women] do not accept me anywhere. If I leave the country, they blame me for being a bad representative [of Turkish women]. Sometimes, I think they would only feel satisfied when they hunt us down and burn us into ashes! (laughs) Thank God, we are many (\textit{kalabalık}), they know they cannot do that!”\textsuperscript{18}

Zeliha recalled two traumatic experiences in her life, both related to the headscarf issue. The first one was the day Zeliha had to see her daughter cry when her daughter was forced to take off her headscarf in order to take the nationwide university entrance exam. “I still feel the pain I felt that day when I remember that moment,” she said. The second trauma Zeliha encountered was when her daughter had to transfer to Austria because it became unbearable for her to continue her studies in Turkey without taking her headscarf off. In her words, “Of course, she will get a much better education in Vienna. I am hurt because she was forced to go there (…). I cannot forget the first time she called me from Vienna and said, ‘Mother, here everyone talks with me without minding my headscarf!’ It was too painful.”\textsuperscript{19}

For Zeliha, “the secularist” view on the headscarf as a barrier to women’s autonomy had no credibility. Zeliha was utterly disturbed by secular women’s one-sided, ignorant view:

“…they project their own fear on us. And they claim this is their right. This is the worst part of the problem. They tell me since I cover up my head, I let go my right to be a subject! How can they make this choice for me? I am an individual. I am a mother. I work. (…) I make my own individual decisions in all other areas of my life. But when it comes to my headscarf, they assume, my brain miraculously stops, and my husband’s decisions take over! Isn’t this a contradiction, I ask! (…) They don’t even notice this is an insult to my personality! They assume I cannot even understand my own actions. They assume they have the right to accuse me. They are so blinded by their own righteousness that, they do not even realize it is their memorized ideology, and not my headscarf, that denies that I too am a subject.”\textsuperscript{20}

Zeliha also contended that the headscarf was not a problem when the women with the headscarf “were only house cleaners, superintendents, (…) wives of someone from a lower economic class… As upper-class women, secular women were teaching us, the lower class,
something.” The headscarf became a problem when “the women with the headscarf became doctors, engineers, lawyers, or even members of the parliament, so that they can take active role as decision makers.” For Zeliha, therefore, the headscarf “is not a problem of religiosity; it is a problem of class.” Zeliha sighed and concluded with an ironic smirk, “Those secular women, I am sure they still treat their house cleaners [with the headscarf] respectfully.”

4.1.2 Resistance Agency: Islam vs. Islamic Patriarchy

Like the submission frame, resistance agency similarly warns against the harmful religious practices for women, but divergently, assumes that pious women are capable of resistance. The examples of this approach include the studies of feminists in the American Catholic Church who demand reform and Muslim women who support women’s involvement in higher education, professional life, and women’s rights. In contrast to the submission frame, therefore, the resistance or subversion frame examines how pious women resist, contest, alter, or modify religious norms, values, and practices. Resistance agency, in this regard, posits that pious women can enjoy freedom and agency, but this is only possible when they act against the religion. Hence, despite its immanent critique of the false consciousness thesis (and its assumption about religious women’s innate submissiveness), resistance agency similarly replicates the Western liberal model of agency and assumes autonomy necessitates independence and resistance. It similarly equates 1) critique with resistance even at times when pious women do not intend to resist, and 2) religious obedience with a lack of agency even when pious women consider obedience as a part of their agentic pious subjectivity.

Although resistance agency cannot provide a comprehensive framework for the pious narratives in my work, it is helpful in explaining how my participants locate, criticize, and confront Islamic patriarchy, but not Islam. For example, Yelda Hakman Tekyol distinguished Islam from the applications of Islam. While Islam granted women “God-given rights,” Yelda argued that the “men in power only applied what worked for their own benefits. Traditions, cultural values, social values, contextual values, prejudices—they all played a role in the

23 Burke, “Women’s Agency in Gender-Traditional Religions,” 125. For more details, see Anna Korteweg’s study that presents the majority of newspaper coverage on religious women’s agency in Canada is through resistance to Islam: Anna C. Korteweg, “The Sharia Debate in Ontario: Gender, Islam, and Representations of Muslim Women’s Agency,” Gender and Society 22 (2008): 434–54.
distortion of Islam.” Yelda added, “it is also because of the societal and genetic codes of men, they could not take it [God-given rights of women].” Melahat Tanış concurred, “… it was a bedevi (Bedouin) society, after all, what else could we expect!” Yelda and Melahat, therefore, affirmed that while Islam provided women-specific rights, Islamic patriarchy has rewritten these rights in favor of men and deprived women of their God-given rights. Hence, pious feminists delineated the need to differentiate what Islam dictates and what patriarchy dictates in the name of Islam.

It is important to note that, for my pious feminist participants, if they did not live in a secular country, they would not be able to make this distinction between Islam and Islamic patriarchy. Hence, although they resisted secular forms of patriarchy, they did not reject secularism. To the contrary, they argued that, as a secular, Muslim country in between the Middle East and Europe, the Turkish setting provided them a unique ability to differentiate patriarchy from both secular and Islamic dogma. Contrary to secular feminist assumptions, therefore, they argued that they had no “hidden agenda” regarding replicating the Iranian model in Turkey:

“We are not fantasizing about the Iranian example. (...) We are against the headscarf ban in Turkey, but we are also against the Iran example, we are against forcing everyone to wear the headscarf. We have been very clear about this; never did we mumble or use an ambivalent language. (...) We have been telling them [secular feminists] that their fears are unnecessary. But it is one thing to say something; it is another thing for them to believe in what we are saying.”

For Melahat Tanış, living under “a repressive Islamic regime like Afghanistan or Saudi Arabia” was her “worst phobia, [her] worst nightmare.” Meral Şenel shared Melahat’s apprehension: “God forbid! If something like that happens in Turkey, we would be the first ones to get stoned! Yes, us, they would go after us even before the women who consider themselves ‘secular,’ or ‘modern!’ And, yes, I am not saying that they would just simply kill us, no, no! They would stone us to death!” Yelda also supported this view: “Arabs, you see. Arabic society! My mother used to say God has brought all religions to the Arabs in order to make better men out of them and even God could not succeed in doing so! [everybody laughs]” And she

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27 Yelda Hakman Tekyol, Interview, September 2011, Ankara
28 Melahat Tanış, Interview, September 2011, Ankara.
31 Meral Şenel, Interview, September 2011, Ankara.
32 Meral Şenel, Interview, September 2011, Ankara.
33 Yelda Hakman Tekyol, Interview, September 2011, Ankara.
added, “I fully agree with my mother, by the way! And this is not because I am prejudiced racist, no! I’ve been there. It is very hard to find a woman who has actually been to Hajj and who can defend the Arabs!” Meral observed that the prejudice was mutual when a group of government officials from Afghanistan visited CCWP. The group consisted of approximately 20 persons, including both men and women. Meral was astounded by the women’s absolute silence:

“The women did not open up their mouth even once to say a single word. Nothing. The sole purpose of their visit was learning more about our headscarf struggle. When they saw that we were demanding women’s rights and equality, the men did not say anything at first. But then, they did signal that they thought of what we were doing was slightly yollu (bitchy) by giving examples form Hazrat Aisha [Hazreti Ayşe] and saying she has been active in politics but she has always stayed in the background, in the shadows of Hazrat Umar [Hazreti Ömer].”

Yelda protested: “Who stayed in the background? How do you stay in the background when you go to war and fight!” Meral continued:

“You should have seen the gestures of those men! Every gesture they used implied that men ruled the world and women always came the second. The way they sat down, the way they talked… In this office, we had visitors from everywhere. Our neighbors tease us by saying that we are like the United Nations. But the day of the Afghani visit, it was the first time when our neighbors approached us with a concern. They asked us who they were. They were afraid. They had every right to be afraid, really.”

Ayşe Şengül thought the minds of these men were “filthy and cruel.” If a woman did not wear the headscarf, Ayşe contended that they would equate her with the Devil, and she openly condemned this mindset. All my pious participants were, thus, univocal about the benefits of living under a secular, democratic society instead of the rule of Sharia.

As Meral stated, “Turkey is different from the rest of the Muslim world. Turkey is a secular country; it is not ruled by Sharia. All the others can be enlisted as Muslim countries.”

Meral thought this was why pious feminism in Turkey does not attract much international interest: “In the rest of the Muslim world, anything [progressive] pious women do receive international attention. Every little thing they do is regarded to be controversial! But we are considered as a small group in millions, and therefore, the international community is not interested in our struggle.” Meral also mentioned colonialism as another reason: “The other
Muslim countries have gone through colonialism. Turkey did not. Therefore, most Turks in Turkey only speak Turkish. We cannot express ourselves in French or in English like our counterparts in the Muslim world.”

4.1.3 Empowerment Agency: The God-Given Rights of Women and Tevekkül

Over the last decades, a mounting number of studies has aimed to surpass the dichotomy of pious women’s submission and resistance—the two frames that I have discussed so far. For some scholars, this task requires combining poststructuralist accounts of religious difference with intersectional analysis; while for others a broader postsecular rereading of feminism’s fundamental assumptions, including its reliance on negative ethics and oppositional consciousness, is necessary. Kelsy Burke, however, argues that this dichotomy is false to begin with; resistance and subordination are not the only models used in the literature. Burke identifies three more models commonly used: empowerment, instrumental, and compliant models of agency. I discuss empowerment and instrumental models in this section and compliant agency in the next.

Similar to resistance agency, empowerment agency assumes that certain features of gender-traditional religions harm women; however, in contrast, the empowerment model does not require resistance. Instead, it focuses on the emotional or psychological rewards of religion as pious women reposition themselves towards the harmful practices. For example, in many studies, veiling has been argued to signify an innovative response to the privileging of the Western constructions of womanhood, oversexualization of women’s bodies, or rising tendencies of Islamophobia. Postcolonial feminist studies also reveal the alternative forms of

41 Meral Şenel, Interview, March 2011, Ankara.
42 Sirma Bilge (2010) delineates the need of combining intersectional analysis with poststructuralist critique so that intersectionality no longer remains silent on “the questions of piety, morality, modesty, virtue and divinity.” Meanwhile, Singh (2015) warns that this task may be more troublesome than Bilge assumes because of the reliance on negative critique, anti-oppression, and oppositional consciousness in both feminism and intersectionality. For more details, please see: Bilge, “Beyond Subordination vs. Resistance,” 14; Braidotti, “The Postsecular Turn,” 1-24; Reilly, “Rethinking the Interplay of Feminism and Secularism in a Neosecular Age,” 5-31; Jakeet Singh, “Religious Agency and the Limits of Intersectionality,” Hypatia 30, 4 (2015): 657-674.
43 Burke defines “gender-traditional religions” as the religions that “tend to emphasize ontological differences between men and women, noting that men are predisposed to leadership, activity, and strong work ethic, while women are naturally nurturing, passive, and receptive.” According to Burke, gender-traditional religions include Catholicism, conservative Protestantism, Orthodox Judaism, Mormonism, and some sects of Islam. For more details, please see: Burke, “Women’s Agency in Gender-Traditional Religions,” 122. See also: Judy Brink and Joan Mencher (eds), Mixed Blessings: Gender and Religious Fundamentalism Cross Culturally (New York: Routledge, 1997).
women’s empowerment that have become invisible to the Western eye due to the West’s overemphasis on resistance as well as ignorance towards its own violent abuses during the colonial and postcolonial experiences. Burke argues that (like the previous two models) empowerment agency also assumes a radical contestation between feminism and religion. For example, as Leila Ahmed asserts in the context of Egypt, “colonial paternalistic establishment appropriated the language of feminism in service of its assault in religions and cultures of Other men.” My pious participants, however, did not talk about feminism in this manner.

For pious women in the women’s rights movement in Turkey, feminism has helped them to relocate the God-given rights of women that have been distorted by patriarchal misinterpretations of the Qur’an and the hadiths. As discussed, rather than categorically resisting Islam or feminism, my pious participants often repositioned themselves towards both. For example, Meral asserted that God-given rights of women are important because: “Qur’an has given rights to women during a time in which people buried their newborn girls.” Similarly, while reading Qur’an, Melahat often thought that God is perhaps the greatest feminist of all time:

“I was reading the Qur’an the other night and I said to my daughter, ‘God (Rabbil Alemin) is such a great feminist!’ [laughs] Indeed, though, I have read very clearly, [Qur’an says] the women should be supported and men should be penalized. I have seen that Allah is the most feminist among us all. (...) I said this, and then doubted myself; [thinking] am I saying something bad?”

Yelda agreed, “God (Allah) and our Prophet always supported women (...) men exist to serve for women because women are reproductive. Full stop.” By emphasizing women’s God-given rights, therefore, pious feminists in Turkey challenged the assumption that Islam harms women. For my participants, patriarchy harms women, not religion.

While distinguishing what Islam dictates and what patriarchy dictates in the name of Islam, my participants particularly criticized women’s acceptance of oppression and violence based on false invocations of the Islamic notion, tevekkül. Originally tevekkül is akin to the Buddhist notion of acceptance. It is about genuine acceptance rather than resignation or disengagement from worldly deeds. Tevekkül adheres to an informed and spiritual form of acceptance that is achieved after having tried all worldly means available, and thus, as

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48 Though it is also important remember here that Turkey has never been colonialized, and for this reason, it was one of the countries that Said excluded in his study on orientalism. For more details regarding post-Orientalist feminist works on the subject, see: Braidotti, “The Postsecular Turn,” 8. See also: Homi Bhabha, The Location of Culture (London: Routledge, 1994).
49 Ahmed, Women and Gender in Islam, 152.
50 Meral Şenel, Interview, March 2011, Ankara.
51 Melahat Tanış, Interview, September 2011, Ankara.
opposed to uncritical acceptance, *tevekkül* or the belief in *tevekkül (tevekkül inancı)* in Islam refers to acceptance that requires prior pro-active worldly action. False claims of *tevekkül*, on the other hand, encourage uncritical acceptance without any worldly effort, which leaves everything to the hands of Allah. Therefore, my pious participants thought that Islamic patriarchy has redefined *tevekkül* as blind acceptance in order to ensure women’s absolute silence whenever they face oppression. For Meral, false applications of *tevekkül* made pious women hesitant to speak up about oppression they face in their pious circles because, if they did, they knew it would be misjudged as a betrayal to their pious community:

Pious women are continuously suppressed to remain silent whenever they are face to face with injustice. With *tevekkül*, pious women are suppressed to think oppression is the price we have to pay for our sins. There is this sense of giving in (*boyun eğmişlik*) where everything has to remain silent, closed down in a box. Pious women are not used to letting out their problems. (...) And when we finally do, we are accused of acting against the religion—which is not true! We are not criticizing religion. We are trying to reveal the ones who misuse it. However, most people cannot make the differentiation. (...) Whenever we criticize what is going on in our pious communities, we are treated as if we support the Other side [the secularists].

For Meral, her involvement in the pious women’s movement made her realize the manipulations of religion as manifestations of patriarchy. “Since I have become a part of CCWP and gotten to know many women from the divinity school, I have learned the difference between the injustices committed by the religion and those that are committed in the name of religion. In the name of religion, the patriarchal society keeps on suppressing the women.”

4.1.4 Instrumental Agency: Shared Traumas and Feminist Friendship

According to Burke, like the empowerment model, the instrumental model of pious women’s agency also highlights the rewards of religious participation. However, instead of emotional and psychological rewards, the studies of instrumental agency focus on material or relational benefits, including developing friendships with other religious women, establishing communities, and preserving them. In Burke’s words, “this approach suggests that religion is a means to reach an end goal that is unrelated to religious faith itself.”

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52 Meral Şenel, Interview, March 2011, Ankara.
53 Yelda similarly stressed that this was not context-specific to neither Turkey nor Islam; patriarchy operated the similarly across different religions and different contexts. She mentioned the AWID report (Association for Women’s Rights in Development) to support her point: “They have observed that all religions, not just Islam, seemed to be univocal about the areas to discriminate against women. All religions” (Interview, September 2011, Ankara.)
54 Meral Şenel, Interview, March 2011, Ankara.
55 Burke, “Women’s Agency in Gender-Traditional Religions,” 127.
draw upon the risks of focusing only on the positive results of religious participation that “may mask most of the ways in which religious participation re-inscribes inequalities and hierarchy.”

Or, as Bauman puts it, “blind us […] to the fact that ‘agents’ who act to combat one form of oppression may at the same time be preserving and validating another.” Zeliha was amongst my pious participants who emphasized the positive results of being pious:

“…a pious person has a lot more advantages [compared to a secularist]. While they [secularists] are only living in Turkey totally oblivious to their religion and piety, while they [secularists] have no idea about Turkish traditions and customs, while the only thing this other group has ever known is Western norms and paradigms… The young pious generation know both the East and the West. Therefore, we are a step ahead. We can compare. We can synthesize. We can say something new. We offer a new understanding of modernity.”

Here, Zeliha highlights the importance of taking different perspectives (both secular and Islamic, both Eastern and Western) to assert pious modernity is one step ahead from secular modernity. However, it is also important to note here that, while doing so, Zeliha presupposes that secular women cannot arrive at this judgment because, in her words, secular women are only exposed to “Western norms and paradigms” contra my discussion in Chapter 1, which shows that both the secular modern and pious modern imaginaries are products of Turkish modernity: they both offer a synthesis of the Ottoman Islamic and Western secular values. In this regard, Zeliha’s claim that secular feminists only operate within the locus of Western secularist values is as inaccurate as equating the secular modern imaginary in Turkey with Western liberal secularism, and similarly, pious modernity with the Sharia.

Rather than focusing on the positive rewards of being pious, more progressive pious participants of my study focused on the positive results of being a part of a pious women’s community of their own. As introduced before, pious women’s involvement in the women’s rights movement started as a way of dealing with the traumas of the February 28 Period where, as Yelda stated, “all of a sudden [pious women] had to become involved with the headscarf issue no matter [they] wanted to or not.” Or, as Meral Şenel put it, “Then came February 28… There was this vacuum, an immense vacuum in our lives. It was primarily economic, but also equally emotional.” In this vacuum, the bonding between pious women became stronger:

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56 Burke, “Women’s Agency in Gender-Traditional Religions,” 127.
57 Bauman, “Redeeming Indian ‘Christian’ Womanhood,” 8; Burke, “Women’s Agency in Gender-Traditional Religions,” 127.
58 Zeliha Leventgil, Interview, April 2011, Istanbul.
59 Yelda Hakman Tekyol, Interview, September 2011, Ankara.
60 Meral Şenel, Interview, September 2011, Ankara.
“Some of our friends had legal cases in motion [because of lost jobs]. We came together and exchanged information. We tried to help each other. Everybody gave lectures about their fields of study. (...) I am an agricultural engineer, but most of our members were from the divinity school. We gave computer lessons, English lessons, Arabic lessons (...) In doing so, we managed to rehabilitate ourselves psychologically from the process.” 61

Hence, pious women constructed an almost therapeutic, cooperative space for themselves as a part of the women’s piety movement.

According to Vamık Volkan’s psychoanalytic model, there are two elements that define the particularities of a large-group identity: chosen glories and chosen traumas.62 In contrast to the secular feminist solidarity that rests on the memories of glory, victory, and pride of being modern and educated women of the Turkish Republic, the political psychology behind the emergence of the pious women’s movement rests on commiseration after a collectively encountered trauma in which pious women “shared a sense of shame, humiliation, and victimization.”63 Therefore, from the perspective of the instrumental model of agency, pious women’s solidarity in the headscarf movement might be thought as a non-religious reward of the period. As pious women, they were able to create something positive during a politically turbulent time. The headscarf as their shared marker of identity led them to attain relational benefits in terms of forming and maintaining a community of support. Yet, in my reading, rather than external non-religious rewards, the process of forming and maintaining pious relationships was more formative and internal to the process of pious subjectivity formation in the pious narratives. I will revisit this issue in more detail in the last section of this chapter.

In this regard, like the previous models discussed above that presuppose an individually constituted, free-standing, independent, autonomous subject, instrumental agency similarly challenges mainstream feminism’s support for the false consciousness thesis but leaves the individualistic definition of autonomy unchallenged. Compliant models of pious women’s agency fill in this gap in the literature, which I am going to discuss in the next part to explain habitual piety in the narratives of my pious feminist participants.

4.2 Heteronomy and Pious Women’s Compliant Agency

Amongst Burke’s categories, only “compliant agency” challenges the Western liberal definitions of autonomy and recognizes the agentic significance of pious women’s religious conformity. According to Elizabeth Bucar, this approach to pious women’s agency, which most notably includes the works of Orit Avishai and Saba Mahmood, shifts the emphasis away from autonomy’s fundamental reliance on reason, equality, and resistance, and towards “situated reason, habituation, and obedience.” To differentiate it from other models of feminist autonomy (self-law), Bucar prefers to call this alternative model “heteronomy” (other-law). In this section, I particularly discuss Mahmood’s Politics of Piety to explain the first phase of pious subjectivity formation in the narratives of my pious participants, which I call habitual piety. Before that, however, I would like to clarify heteronomy as a term.

The tension between autonomy (self-law) and heteronomy (other-law) goes back to Castoriadis’ work on subjectivity, radical imaginary, and the instituting and the instituted. Castoriadis observes that individuals, societies, or institutions can never be completely autonomous (and, therefore, they are always partly heteronomous) because of being both “instituting and instituted.” Despite this space Castoriadis allocates for heteronomy in autonomy, he nevertheless adopts polarized definitions of the two terms and “maintains that religion is intrinsically heteronomous, and thus, intrinsically antithetical to the project of autonomy.” According to Castoriadis, autonomy is semantically enrooted in autos-nomos in Greek, which means giving “oneself one’s laws.” Instead of universal reason, therefore, for Castoriadis, autonomy is “to make, to do and to institute (therefore, also, to say);” it is about “making one’s own laws” and “knowing that one is doing so.” Heteronomy, on the other hand, is instituted by “an extra-social source” where “tradition means that the question of the legitimacy of tradition shall not be raised.” It is about repetition without questioning, which according to Castoriadis

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65 Burke, “Women’s Agency in Gender Traditional Religions,” 124.
67 In his words, “Society is the work of the instituting imaginary. The individuals are made by the instituted society, at the same time as they make and remake it.” Cornelius Castoriadis, Philosophy, Politics, Autonomy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 145.
69 Castoriadis, Philosophy, Politics, Autonomy, 164. Castoriadis also argues that autonomy, “makes it possible for the individual to escape the enslavement of repetition, to look back upon itself, to reflect on the reason for its thoughts and the motives of its acts, guided by the elucidation of its desire and aiming at the truth” (165).
70 Castoriadis, Philosophy, Politics, Autonomy, 164.
71 Castoriadis, Philosophy, Politics, Autonomy, 162-163.
appears in its most pervasive form in religion. As Chiara Bottici explains, Castoriadis suggests that, “by occulting the possibility of total chaos through its system of beliefs, religion operates a sort of closure of the social imaginary. (…) Saying ‘so it is written’ amounts to saying ‘you cannot imagine it otherwise.’ ” For Castoriadis, therefore, even contemporary re-interpretations of religious texts, like my participants’ rereadings of tevekkül and God-given women’s rights, are limited by the already imagined forms of sacred and divine.

Rather than Castoriadis’s rejection of religion in his discussion on heteronomy, which is “polemical and narrow-sighted” according to some critics, Bucar’s understanding of the term, seems to rely on Castoriadis’s more general contention that autonomy will always be partially heteronomous, and therefore, heteronomy will always be partially autonomous, which allows a space for creative engagement with “a truth that has been revealed by an other relative to the society itself,” as Bottici calls it. Indeed, for both Burke and Bucar, the studies of pious women’s compliance show that pious women can be agents through the religious practice “without challenging religious institutions, striving for empowerment, or seeking religious or non-religious advantages.”

Mahmood’s Politics of Piety is considered as the landmark study of pious women’s compliant agency where Mahmood offers a re-reading of Western feminist autonomy in alternative Islamic terms instead of a Western feminist reading of women’s piety. Mahmood thus explores pious women’s agency “within the grammar of concepts in which it resides” and validates that agency can also be cultivated through embracing, practicing, and perfecting Islamic values such as virtue, hope, and fear. Below, I briefly review the main conceptual pillars of Mahmood’s expanded redefinition of pious women’s agency—Butler’s performativity, Foucauldian ethical formation, and Aristotelian formulation of habitus—with respect to habitual

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75 Bottici, Imaginal Politics, 149.
76 Burke, “Women’s Agency in Gender-Traditional Religions,” 128. See also: Bucar, “Dianomy,” 671-672. For Bucar, there are four main contributions of this compliant, or in her words, heteronomous, approach to pious women’s agency: 1) It is a “move away from the idea of a subject that must extract herself from her religion in order to be truly free” 2) It offers “a more serious consideration of the role of traditions, including religious ones, as part of web of forces surrounding a woman” 3) It promotes a situated understanding of rationality that is more relevant for understanding “specific rhetorics within religious communities.” 4) The concept of habituation, “as a practice of embodied performance that relates actions to norms” is a very helpful concept for understanding pious women’s agency—which I discuss in detail below.
77 In this way, Mahmood responds to Spivak’s postcolonialist critique of how the West systematically unhears the subaltern subjectivities. For more details, please see: Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” in Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture, eds. Cary Nelson & Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 271-296.
79 For Bucar, the main challenge about heteronomous agency is “how to maintain both a sense of free will necessary for moral action and an acknowledgement that the terrain of tactics is to some extent externally imposed.” Please see: Elizabeth M. Bucar, Creative Conformity: The Feminist Politics of U.S. Catholic and Iranian Shi’i Women (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2011), 4.
piety in the pious narratives in my study. I argue that, although Mahmood’s work is helpful for explaining habitual piety in the narratives, it cannot account for my pious participants’ use of autonomy and choice as a part of their own “grammar of concepts.”

4. 2.1 Performativity and Affirmation

In line with Butler’s performativity, Mahmood firstly argues that pious acts are different from practical mimesis or imitation, which lack creative capacity. Mahmood rather argues pious acts are reiterative, citational performatives where the discourse produces, regulates, and constrains what it names. Unlike Butler, however, Mahmood’s discussion does not depend on any exclusionary matrix where the domain of the subject requires a domain of the abject. 

In Butler’s poststructuralist framework, performatives take place in the contingent space between subjection and abjection where the chances for failure and success cannot be anticipated prior to the doing (or the undoing) of the norm. This, in turn, creates a fluid, alterable environment where one can both attest and contest one’s subjectivity. Consequently, for Butler, the same mechanisms in which the norms attain their discursive power and permanence also make them vulnerable and unpredictable. In contrast, for Mahmood pious subjectivity does not operate within a discursive matrix where disidentification is the “founding repudiation” of identification. According to Mahmood, despite Butler’s immanent criticisms on “the transcendental subject, voluntarism, and repressive models of power,” Butler fails to account for the possibility of an affirmative, ethical cultivation of subjectivity where alterability and fluidity arise from the pious subject’s affirmative desire for perfecting and excelling the practices of piety, instead of contingency of success or failure. In each performance of a pious act, like the prayer or wearing the headscarf, Mahmood argues pious women, first, gradually get better at the practice externally, and then, through perfecting the external practice, they become better Muslims internally. Therefore, for Mahmood, although it does not involve the contingent risks of failure, the process is still contingent, continuous, and fluid because, even after years of practice, a pious woman would not be able to conclude that she has reached perfection and no

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80 The domain of the abject consists of “those who are not yet ‘subjects,’ but who form the constitutive outside ‘unlivable’ and ‘uninhabitable’ zones of social life.” For more details, see: Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter* (New York: Routledge, 1993): xiii.
82 Butler, *Bodies that Matter*, xiii.
84 Singh, “Religious Agency and the Limits of Intersectionality,”13; Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (New York: Routledge, 1990):195. As Singh argues, this might be motivated by “Foucault’s insight that forms of subjectivity are produced by relations of power,” but yet it ignores Foucault’s later “idea that forms of subjectivity and ethical practices that constitute them also produce and shape power in turn,” and therefore, fails to capture the way in which religious subjectivities are constituted.
85 To justify her point, Mahmood uses Aristotle’s discussion of habitus—which I will discuss in the following sections.
longer has to worry about becoming a better Muslim (only God can judge that). Piety, thus, requires a lifelong process of seeking excellence in God’s eye. In this way, when Mahmood introduces pious acts as performatives, she insists that norms are not always “subverted and confirmed,” but also “inhabited and performed.”

Resembling Mahmood’s first point that situates embodied pious acts as affirmative performatives, in our interview, Meral Şenel highlighted that, at its initial stages, piety is best learned through the habit, instead of simultaneous moments of subversion and confirmation due to intervening factors such as an “unfavorable social environment” where the headscarf is perceived as a stigma symbol. According to Meral, the process of “doing piety” precedes “choosing piety.” While the latter requires the availability of different knowledges to pious women (as well as critique and choice), the former is best learned through undisturbed habituation. To illustrate, Meral brought up the contested issue of young girls’ veiling from the perspective of concerned pious parents. Although Meral emphasized repeatedly that her personal opinion was to the contrary, she also stated she could empathize with the pious parents who wanted their daughters to wear the headscarf in elementary school because they were afraid that their daughters would never be able to get used to the habit unless they start during childhood. In Meral’s words, “A part of the reason why people use the headscarf is out of habit (...) if you want your kids to wear the headscarf, you have to make sure that after a certain age their social environment consists only of places where it is okay to wear the headscarf.” This shows that, in line with Mahmood’s analysis, Meral agreed that piety is performatively learned through habituating pious norms and acts. However, unlike Mahmood, here, Meral acknowledges the importance of “inhabiting connections” as well as “inhabiting norms.” For Meral, not only is there often more than one set of norms that one inhabits (as in the case of daughters of pious families going to secular schools), but also there are contingent social forces (socializing during school and socializing within pious circles). For Meral, therefore, during the early phases of pious subjectivity formation, the intervening forces between different norms as well as different webs of socialization could bear contingent risks of failure, which could complicate the

87 Meral argues the choice does not precede the action. Therefore, Meral challenges the sequencing of the Western frame on intentionality and choice, yet she does not challenge intentionality and choice per se.
88 Meral Şenel, Interview, March 2011, Ankara.
habituation of piety, and therefore Meral empathized with the concerned pious parents (despite her personal reservations).

4.2.2 Ethical Formation and Discursive Tradition

Secondly, Mahmood argues that Islam is best understood as a “discursive tradition” along the lines of Foucauldian ethical formation, rather than what Eric Hobsbawn and Terrance Ranger refer to as “invented tradition.” According to Mahmood, an invented tradition “describe[s] how the past is used to authenticate a novel set of practices that in fact lack historical antecedents.” 90 Hence, Mahmood argues, the studies that use this concept explain the various socio-political modernization projects in the Middle East as “authenticating moves that lack sociohistorical facticity.” 91 Although Mahmood acknowledges that the idea of an invented tradition is important for capturing the fragmented nature of such projects, she argues that Foucauldian ethical formation and discursive tradition provide a better explanation in defining tradition as “a field of statements and practices whose structure of possibility is neither the individual, nor a collective body of overseers, but a form of relation between the past and present predicated upon a system of rules that demarcate both the limits and the possibility of what is sayable, doable, and recognizable as a comprehensive event in all its manifest forms.” 92

Therefore, for Mahmood, Islam as a discursive tradition situates the individual and the community in a complex, multifaceted, discursive relationship that marks the capacities of pious women’s action. Due to this relationship, Mahmood argues that it is almost impossible to separate what is pious women’s “own” and what is determined by the discursive tradition. The two are constitutive of each other and, according to Mahmood, the question of agency individually belonging to the pious women discards this factor. Therefore, Mahmood shifts the question of pious women’s agency and delineates that she is interested in how discursive practices of Islam relate to the embodied capacities of subjectivity formation. 93 In her words: “The kind of agency I am exploring here does not belong to the women themselves, but is a product of the historically contingent discursive traditions in which they are located (…) the

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90 Mahmood, Politics of Piety, 114.
91 Mahmood, Politics of Piety, 114.
92 Mahmood, Politics of Piety, 114-115.
93 Mahmood, Politics of Piety, 7, 30-35.
individual is contingently made possible by the discursive logic of the ethical traditions she enacts.”

In this manner, Mahmood’s understanding of subjectivity resembles Foucault, who “treats subjectivity (not as a private space of self-cultivation) but as an effect of a modality of power operationalized through a set of moral codes that summon a subject to constitute herself in accord with its precepts.” This challenges the autonomous models of agency based on an individualistic conception of independence, resistance, and intentionality that require a “capacity to realize one’s own interests against the weight of custom, tradition, transcendental will, or other obstacles (whether individual or collective).” In contrast, Mahmood’s analysis uses a logic that “inheres (...) in the relationships that are articulated between words, concepts, and practices.” For Mahmood, her Foucauldian approach to agency enables us to think about agency: (1) “in terms of the capacities and skills required to undertake particular kinds of moral actions” and (2) “as ineluctably bound up with the historically and culturally specific disciplines through which the subject is formed.”

In this light, Mahmood’s discussion only offers limited room for “choice.” In contrast to its Western liberal understanding, Mahmood argues that choice becomes a relevant vocabulary for her participants when there is a “space of non-resolution” regarding different interpretations of Islamic principles (for example, on issues in which jurists differ in opinion), but not the Islamic principles themselves. As Mahmood explains: “The process of interpretation, while it differs from one context to another, is not free-floating, but is structured by the authority ascribed to norms of usage that are grounded in scholarly discourse.”

Hence, Mahmood offers a culturally and historically specific, Foucauldian critique of the Western liberal emphasis on individual choice, intentionality, and autonomy from a perspective founded on positive ethics, instead of feminist oppositional consciousness or resistance. With respect to my study, however, it is important to remember that the pious women’s movement in Turkey, culturally and historically, has been both a women’s piety movement and a resistance

94 Mahmood, Politics of Piety, 32. Mahmood also adds: “Self-reflexivity is not a universal human attribute here but, as Foucault suggested, a particular kind of relation to oneself whose form fundamentally depends on the practices of subjectivation through which the individual is produced.”
95 Mahmood, Politics of Piety, 28.
96 Mahmood, Politics of Piety, 8.
97 Mahmood, Politics of Piety, 17.
98 Mahmood, Politics of Piety, 29.
99 Mahmood, Politics of Piety, 103. For Mahmood, her participants can put across different opinions or “counter-arguments” regarding a particular application of an Islamic principle; they do not put across a feminist critique of the guiding principle. For example, Mahmood reflects upon Maryam’s narrative as follows: “Note that in making these counter-arguments, Maryam does not challenge the principle of female modesty as divinely ordained, but contests the daiyat’s ideas regarding how this principle should be lived in practice.”
100 Mahmood, Politics of Piety, 103.
movement in which both positive and negative ethics were simultaneously at work. If we go back to Meral’s narrative, it is possible to see that: (1) Islam does not offer a single discursive tradition, there are multiple, often conflicting different discursive traditions in Islam, and (2) a woman’s relationship with piety is regulated and shaped by Islamic discursive tradition as well as her other webs of socialization. As Meral exemplified: “…my nieces did not get used to [wearing the headscarf]. Yes, they see us with the headscarf. We tell them about religious responsibilities. We send them to Qur’an courses. But in the school, they are not socialized [in a pious way] so they don’t wear it. They never wanted to.”

Thus, for Meral, the ethical cultivation of Islam as a discursive tradition has to be coupled with a favorable pious social environment without which it is unlikely that “one would be willing to wear the headscarf in the first place.”

Like Mahmood, rather than putting the individual at the one end of the spectrum and the community on the other, Meral highlighted the discursive relationship between the two, especially during the initial, formative stages of habitual piety. Unlike Mahmood, however, Meral’s focus was on “the relationships” as well as the “discursive tradition.” In a complex society like Turkey where it is not possible to fully separate the pious from the secular (not only at the level of discourse but also at the level of the social upbringing), even the habituation of Islamic piety involves comparison, if not critique. I will revisit this point in my discussion in the third part.

4.2.3 Habitus and Habitual Piety

Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, Mahmood states that the Foucauldian ethical formation is rooted in the Aristotelian ethical pedagogy where outward performative acts (like prayer and veiling) create inward dispositions. Hence, Mahmood brings in Aristotle’s notion of habitus—the Latin translation of the original Greek term, héxis—and defines it as “an acquired excellence at either a moral or a practical craft, learned through repeated practice until that practice leaves a permanent mark on the character of the person.” Mahmood’s use of

102 Meral Şenel, Interview, March 2011, Ankara.
103 Mahmood, Politics of Piety, 136.
104 Instead of Bourdieu’s adoption of habitus, as an unconscious quality that is retained once acquired (signifying practical mimesis rather than performativity), Mahmood retains the pedagogic value of the original Aristotelian term. Here, Eikeland’s discussion héxis might also be useful where he héxis defines as “an acquired ability, skill, habit, or incorporated disposition and proclivity for acting and feeling in certain ways, resulting from practice, exercise, or habituation as certain inclination to act in certain ways.” For more details, see: Olave Eikeland, The Ways of Aristotle: Aristotelian Phronesis, Aristotelian Philosophy of Dialogue, and Action Research (Bern, Switzerland: Peter Lang AG. International Academic Publishers, 2008), 53-54.
105 Mahmood, Politics of Piety, 135
habitus, therefore, pertains to the internal potentiality of moral excellence where one has to endure an arduous external training.\textsuperscript{106} Hence, in the intersection of performativity, ethical formation, and habitus, Mahmood argues that her work can defer the question of pious women’s religious authenticity since pious acts are no longer just external displays of piety; they are also tools for its internal cultivation.

Mahmood’s discussion on Aristotelian habitus brings forth two points. Firstly, it suggests that external pious acts guide women towards certain emotions, which in turn teach them to internally become pious. For example, Mahmood highlights emotions such as virtue, fear, and hope. Correspondingly, while talking about solutions to women’s problems in Turkey, Zeliha Leventgil drew upon alternative Islamic values such as “loyalty (sadakat), conviction (kanaat), sacrifice (feragat), good deed (sevap), and God’s reward for a good deed (ecir)” that were, in her words, “ontologically different” from the Western feminist values of the secular feminists in Turkey.\textsuperscript{107} Secondly, as I discussed above, through habitus, Mahmood indicates that pious acts like veiling “do not serve as manipulable masks in a game of public presentation, detachable from an essential interiorized self, rather they are the critical markers of piety as well as the ineluctable means by which one trains oneself to be pious.”\textsuperscript{108} Similarly, pious participants in my study univocally considered the secular skepticism about the authenticity and sincerity behind veiling false and unjustified. As Meral argued, without internal devotion, it would be “impossible to wear the headscarf everyday forcefully or only for strategic economic or political benefits.”\textsuperscript{109}

Despite these continuities, Mahmood’s work and habitual piety in the narratives of my pious participants differ significantly. Firstly, the narratives of my pious feminist participants were both about autonomy and critique as well as affirmative habituation of religious acts. Secondly, for pious feminists in Turkey, there was a second stage of pious subjectivity formation that additionally required multi-engagement with different sources of knowledge and informed choice.\textsuperscript{110} I call this second stage of piety “informed piety,” which I discuss after Bucar’s dianomy in the next part.

\textsuperscript{106} Mahmood, \textit{Politics of Piety}, 147.
\textsuperscript{107} Zeliha Leventgil, Interview, April 2011, Istanbul. Although Zeliha acknowledged that not all feminists thought about agency in “extremely individualistic” Western secular terms, Zeliha still considered her preferences of what freedom meant for pious women were different from the Western feminist uses of what women’s freedom entails.
\textsuperscript{108} Mahmood, \textit{Politics of Piety}, 158.
\textsuperscript{109} Meral Şenel, Interview, March 2011, Ankara.
\textsuperscript{110} Meral Şenel, Interview, March 2011, Ankara. Meral acknowledged that this was not an easy task and that not everyone who wears the headscarf could arrive at this stage of informed piety or piety by choice that requires comparison, criticism, and choice, as well as a reformulation of a “religiously interdependent” way of locating the agency individually belonging to pious women.
4.3 Dianomy and Creative Conformity

Elizabeth Bucar offers one of the rare studies that brings together autonomous and heteronomous sources of moral law in her analysis of pious women’s agency. For Bucar, despite the inherent contradictions that might be associated with her dual approach, her work suggests that the tensions between autonomy and heteronomy (that result from pious women’s multi- engagement with different sources of moral law) help us to understand the creative and unique ways in which pious women relate themselves to religion. After presenting two particular critiques of Mahmood that are relevant for my work, in this part, I analyze Elizabeth Bucar’s notion of dianomy (dia-nomos, or dual-law) in comparison with the pious narratives my study.

4.3.1 On Mahmood: Conceptual Ambiguities and Exclusion of Creativity and Critique

Two interrelated critiques of Mahmood’s Politics of Piety can help to understand Bucar’s dianomy as well as the pious feminist agency in Turkey. The first targets the conceptual ambiguities in Politics of Piety, the second its exclusion of critique, creativity and spontaneity.

Firstly, despite Mahmood’s evident contributions to the literature, recent reviews address theoretical ambiguities in Politics of Piety. For example, Bucar proclaims that Mahmood’s discussion on habitus necessitates further elaboration on Aristotle’s differentiation between craft knowledge (téchne) and practical wisdom (phronesis) since Aristotle actually prefers the latter in moral life due to “the moral ambiguity of embodied skills.” For Bucar, Mahmood needs to clarify why téchne is more important than phronesis for moral life to clarify this conceptual ambiguity. I find Bucar’s critique relevant for my study because the narratives of progressive pious feminists include references for both craft knowledge (where piety is learned as a skill in its first stage of habitual piety) and practical wisdom (for distinguishing Islam from Islamic patriarchy, secularism from secular patriarchy, therefore, for arriving at informed piety).

Another critique of Mahmood’s conceptual ambiguity targets her greatest contribution to the literature, her expanded definition of pious agency. It has been argued that Mahmood only discusses “what pious agency is” without addressing “what pious agency is not.” For Burke,

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111 Bucar, “Dianomy,” 672.
112 I will revisit this point in the next part (Section 4.2.) and argue that the progressive pious feminist stance in my study may provide a more comprehensive reflection of Aristotle’s theory of virtue regarding the precise relationship between téchne, héxis (habitus), and phronesis.
113 Mahmood’s expanded definition of agency, here, refers Mahmood’s argument that there is the need for more localized understanding of pious women’s agency besides the universalist, Western, liberal frame of resistance and liberation. Mahmood herself makes it clear she does not offer a general “alternative” theory of pious agency. Therefore, Burke’s argument here refers to Mahmood’s localized discussion of “what agency is” and “what agency is not” pertaining to Mahmood’s participants in the women’s mosque movement in Egypt.
114 Burke, “Women’s Agency in Gender-Traditional Religions,” 128–129. Yet, it is also important to remember here that Mahmood never asserts that she provides a new, general theory of pious women’s agency, to the contrary, she makes it clear that her work proves the need for further contextualization of the way we think about the relationship between piety and agency.
this is critical because without problematizing the way we think about “what agency is not,” Mahmood’s compliant agency might “incorporate all actions taken by religious women, thereby, rendering the definition of agency useless.” Regarding this issue, the narratives of my pious participants differed from Mahmood in two ways. Firstly, my pious feminist participants did not relate to the religious tradition in affirmative terms only; they also criticized and resisted the pious forms of patriarchy embedded in this tradition. Secondly, for pious feminists, agency required comparison between multiple sources of knowledge along with habituation of embodied pious acts.

This resonates closely with the second line of critique, or Mahmood’s exclusion of critique, creativity, and spontaneity in her conception of pious women’s agency. There are two issues to consider here. Firstly, as Bucar suggests, there is the need to ask: “Can action really be the direct product of tradition?” Although Mahmood does not present religion as a pervasive, intrinsically heteronomous, extra-social force like Castoriadis, her overemphasis on discourse and positive ethics similarly leaves extremely limited room for pious women to be creative, critical agents. An uncritical acceptance of Mahmood’s argument might imply that everything pious women say or do can be justified as a part of the Islamic discursive tradition, which thus fails to address the relational dimension of the pious subjectivity formation that is present in my study. This brings out the second question: Why does Mahmood’s exploration of alternative modes of pious agency require a negation of autonomy, critique, resistance, or any value associated with the Western liberal vocabulary of concepts? Mahmood makes it clear elsewhere that “the secular and the religious are not opposed but intertwined both historically and conceptually such that it is impossible to inquire into one without engaging the other” and “that secularism neither entails a monolithic process nor a single ontology of the subject.” However, in Politics of Piety, she explicitly states that her “ruminations on the practices of the women’s mosque movement are aimed at unsettling key assumptions at the center of liberal thought” and “redress[ing] the profound inability within the current feminist political thought to envision

115 Burke, “Women’s Agency in Gender-Traditional Religions,” 128-129.
116 See Section 4.2.
118 Bucar, “Dianomy,” 674.
119 Mahmood on positive ethics and subjectivity formation: “Originally grounded in the tradition of ancient Greek philosophy, and more recently expanded by Michel Foucault, ethics in this formulation is founded upon particular forms of discursive practice (…) What is consequential in this framework is not necessarily whether people follow moral norms or not, but that what relationships they establish between the various constitutive elements of the self (body, reason, emotion, volition, and so on) and particular norm (…) What is striking about this approach to the explication of the self is that the work bodily practices perform in crafting a subject—rather than the meanings they signify.” For more details, see: Mahmood, Politics of Piety, 120-122.
valuable forms of human flourishing outside the bounds of a liberal progressive imaginary.” In doing so, Mahmood is equally critical of the studies of pious women’s subordination as well as the studies that “that endorse or defend veil on the grounds that it is a product of women’s ‘free choice’ and evidence of their ‘liberation’ from the hegemony of Western cultural codes.” My study, in contrast, argues that the choice is relational in pious feminist narratives.

Mahmood indeed offers a highly important criticism that has shifted the way pious women’s agency is portrayed in the Western feminist literature. However, for the purposes of my study, I find it important to note that her critique continues to operate within the dichotomous framework set by the Western liberal progressive imaginary itself, which locates a certain individualistic understanding of autonomy on the one end and all the rest on the other. Or, as Shively puts it, Mahmood “tends to discuss individual ethical cultivation as occurring within only one normative system or another.” In contrast, the narratives of pious feminists in my study, especially their dual interest in re-reading Islamic principles from a feminist standpoint as well as re-reading feminism from an Islamic pious perspective, urge us to question not only the inherent assumptions of the Western liberal progressive imaginary, but also about the assumed separation between this imaginary and its alternatives.

Shively’s study on a Qur’an reading group in Sincan (Ankara, Turkey) suggests that “pious individuals operate under multiple normative systems and must engage in several layers of authority—family, religion, community, state—some of which may make contradictory demands on the participants in those systems.” Thus, for Shively, affirmation to one set of norms (such as Islamic piety) might be directly linked to resistance towards another (like Kemalist values) in the minds of pious women. Shively refers to this interdependence between submission (to one set of norms) and resistance (to another) in the Turkish context as “entangled ethics.” As Shively observes, pious women in Sincan “saw their acts of resistance to the state as a sign of their commitment (submission) to God’s will—they faced risks in their efforts to become good Muslims but their willingness to bear those risks signaled their ever-

121 Mahmood, Politics of Piety, 155.
122 Mahmood, Politics of Piety, 195.
124 It is also important here to note that Mahmood affirms repeatedly that “…it is the best not to propose a theory of agency but to analyze agency in terms of the different modalities it takes and the grammar of concepts in which its particular affect, meaning and form resides” (188). Therefore, I would assume that, with respect to my participants, who use both vocabularies, her analysis would differ according to the particularities of pious feminism in Turkey.
127 Here, I am borrowing “interdependent relationship” from my pious feminist participants who commonly used the term when they referred to the relationship between resistance and submission as well as feminism and religion.
deepening devotion.”¹²⁸ Shively thus asserts that we cannot understand the pious subjectivity formation in Turkey if we only look at the pious vocabulary of concepts and embodied capacities of action. For Shively, therefore, one does not become pious only by doing pious acts individually. As Meral Şenel argued in my study, one also becomes pious through a matrix of relations that makes piety possible, a matrix that includes the relations of piety as well as piety’s relations with other discourses. For Shively, however, rather than a fluid relational matrix that cannot be pre-determined, in the Turkish context, there is discursive entanglement between Kemalist secular and Islamic pious values where resistance to Kemalist values are equated with submission to Islamic norms.¹²⁹ Diverging from Shively, therefore, in the narratives of my pious feminist participants, the link between submission (to Islam) and resistance (to Kemalist values) was not direct and one-sided. Their criticism was directed at both secular and pious forms of patriarchy. Pious women’s affirmation and resistance were not independent of the issue in question.

Similar to Shively’s entangled ethics, Deeb’s study of the Shi’i piety movement in Lebanon is also not grounded solely on women’s positive ethics and affirmation to the Islamic discursive tradition. Instead of a discursive tradition, Deeb argues they are acts of “authentication” by which she means “a process within a religious tradition, grounded in textual study and historical inquiry, as well as in a notion of rationality, and driven by a desire to establish a ‘true’ meaning of faith, taking distance from tradition.”¹³⁰ According to Deeb, authentication takes place under the premises of both “material and spiritual progress,” therefore, modernity and religiosity do not function in separate spheres.¹³¹ Islamic scriptures can be used as means to challenge and transform Islamic traditions.¹³² For Deeb, therefore, eventually modernity affects piety and piety affects modernity where both offer a room for transformative ambiguity towards the creation of a pious modernity, which Deeb also refers to as the enchanted modern.¹³³

Therefore, both Deeb’s authentication and Shively’s entangled ethics, assert the overlapping need for affirmation and critique while thinking about pious women’s agency. However, in doing so, they seem to leave out how the interactions between different normative

¹²⁹ Shively, “Entangled Ethics,” 476. For pious feminists in my study, however, entanglement could only apply for the initial stages of piety where secularism and Islamic piety appear as two fundamentally separate discourses.
¹³³ Deeb, An Enchanted Modern, 27.
systems take place and how these interactions relate to pious women’s agency. In this regard, I find Bucar’s work on dianomy and creative conformity particularly helpful.

4.3.2 Dianomy and Creative Conformity

Based on her comparative work on the agency of Iranian Shi’ite and U.S. Catholic women, Bucar introduces her own neologism, “dianomy,” which means “dual sources of moral law,” to explain the interplay between creativity and conformity, or as she puts it, “both religious influence on and individual creativity of women’s actions.” In Bucar’s dianomous approach, therefore, autonomous and heteronomous sources of moral law (or autonomy and compliance in Burke’s terms) are “held together (…) in an unresolved tension.” Instead of a single overarching moral law (like the ones provided by Islamic piety or Kemalist secularism), in Bucar’s dianomy, (1) pious women interact with multiple, often conflicting, sources of moral law, and (2) the tensions between these sources, result in pious women’s creative action.

What this means is, for Bucar, a woman is able to criticize the same religious norms that she complies with. Bucar, in this manner, delineates we cannot equate critique directly with resistance. To the contrary, for Bucar, the dual engagement with compliance and critique results in a creative tension that helps pious women to find their own, unique way to internally relate themselves to the religion. Although this process is still within the discursive boundaries of the Islamic discursive tradition as an external source, at the end, it makes it possible for pious individuals to relate to religion in their own creative way that cannot be fully determined by the discursive tradition. Meral’s narrative on both the headscarf and secularism can support this point: Meral supports secular values but she does not support secular forms of patriarchy in Turkey against the women with the headscarf. Meral supports the right to wear the Islamic headscarf, but she does not think little girls should wear it in elementary school.

Bucar calls the types of action that result from the productive tension between obedience and critique “creative conformity,” which enables her to study pious women’s obedience as well as the “creative ruptures in obedience (…) even when those innovations are

137 Here, I am referring to “productive tension” in the way Azam Torab uses it. For more details, please see: Azam Torab, Performing Islam: Gender and Ritual in Iran (Boston: Brill Publishing, 2007), 249.
138 Bucar, “Dianomy,” 678. In her words: “If dianomy is a theory of moral agency, creative conformity is the types of action this theory helps us to understand.”
unintentional.”\textsuperscript{139} It may be helpful to break down Bucar’s argument in three interrelated parts. For Bucar, firstly, critique and conformity can take place at the same. Secondly, interactions between multiple autonomous and heteronomous systems of moral law are possible. And thirdly, these two processes (or negotiations between critique and conformity, autonomy and heteronomy) do not require intentionality.

Firstly, similar to both Mahmood and Butler, Bucar also delineates the discursive power of pious traditions and supports that “a woman is formed within a specific discursive and performative environment.”\textsuperscript{140} However, although a woman becomes pious within this discursive environment, Bucar firmly maintains that her subjectivity cannot be reduced to that: She can interrogate the environment that she is a part of.\textsuperscript{141} For this reason, Bucar’s main interest is finding a way “how both to acknowledge that the clerical rhetoric (among external forces) influences women’s discourse and that women’s discourse has its distinct logic and therefore power in religious communities.”\textsuperscript{142} For example, in her discussion of mothering, Bucar shows this dual logic by identifying how one of her participants, Leila Arshad, first identifies a clerical tension and then offers an alternative resolution of her own. Bucar suggests that, for Arshad, the tension on the issue of mothering was practical: it was about how clerics “[affirm] the role of mothers and [deny] mother’s physical custody after divorce.”\textsuperscript{143} Bucar argues that, through using this practical tension against Khomeini’s rhetoric as a leverage, Arshad “link[ed] the virtues of motherhood to the rights of physical custody to argue for a necessary reform of civil law based on this intimate connection.”\textsuperscript{144} What is crucial here is Arshad places a criticism against the practical applications of Khomeini’s rhetoric by only using Khomeini’s writings, and shows how wrongful applications “impede women’s ability to fulfill their moral duties as mothers.”\textsuperscript{145} Therefore, although the source of Arshad’s critique is constituted under a particular discourse, by identifying practical tensions and providing her own alternative resolutions, Bucar argues that Arshad creatively conforms with the discursive tradition in her own way.

Secondly, Bucar argues, alongside piety, pious women are engaged with multiple discursive traditions. Islamic discursive tradition is, therefore, not assumed to be the only source

\textsuperscript{139} Bucar, “Dianomy,” 662.
\textsuperscript{140} Bucar, “Dianomy,” 678.
\textsuperscript{141} Bucar, “Dianomy,” 678.
\textsuperscript{143} Bucar, Creative Conformity, 73.
\textsuperscript{144} Bucar, Creative Conformity, 74.
\textsuperscript{145} Bucar, Creative Conformity, 74.
of moral law that governs pious women’s subjectivity.\textsuperscript{146} In addition to the possibility of critique within a single discursive tradition, following Azam Torab’s work on gendered pious rituals in Iran as performatives, Bucar’s brings in the importance of multiple grounds of re-negotiation between different discursive traditions and stresses that pious women’s action results from interaction between multiple, often conflicting discursive traditions.\textsuperscript{147} According to Torab, within the individual, these conflicting discourses are “re-aligned” according to subjective experiences, beliefs, and intentions (\textit{niyyat}) of each pious woman\textsuperscript{148} where “the notion of multiple selves does not mean the disappearance of powerful discourses within cultures, but in addition, individuals themselves are multiply constituted, which allows them to scope to act on a the world in which they live.”\textsuperscript{149} Building on Torab’s multiply constituted pious subjectivity,\textsuperscript{150} Bucar treats pious subjectivity as a dynamic process of negotiation and re-negotiation of power in the intersection of multiple moral law, “within and in between women, clerics, and traditions to describe both citation and innovation of women’s discourse, as well as, the dynamic relationship between clerics and laity.”\textsuperscript{151}

Thirdly, Bucar argues that dianomy does not necessitate intentionality of the pious actors, and in this manner, also departs from Torab’s emphasis on the intention (\textit{niyyat}) behind pious action. Bucar is not interested in the intended motivation behind pious women’s words or deeds; she is interested in how pious women “construct their visions of their moral lives using components of informal argumentation within a religious tradition—even when they see themselves as dissenting from this logic—and shift others—even when they see themselves to be reiterating clerical visions of women’s proper roles.”\textsuperscript{152} According to Bucar, the frame of “orthodoxy and reform” is also not applicable to dianomy because, from a dianomous perspective, all forms of obedience can possibly involve innovation and creativity, and all forms of dissent can possibly involve submission and conformity.\textsuperscript{153} Here, Bucar uses Michel de Certeau’s differentiation between strategy and tactic.

\textsuperscript{146}Bucar, \textit{Creative Conformity}, 2.
\textsuperscript{147}Torab, \textit{Performing Islam}, 24, 247-248. Here, Torab indicates that the real challenge is “how to account for resistance when it is not a part of the conscious politics of the actors” without lapsing into “false consciousness” and the trap of essentialism.
\textsuperscript{148}Torab, \textit{Performing Islam}, 248. Therefore, for Torab, not only there are multiple discourses within the same cultural context, but also “the individuals themselves are multiply constituted,” which in turn “opens up the possibility for contextual evaluation of people’s actions beyond a simple resistance/compliance divide” (249). This argument is also relevant for the dissent/obedience divide, according to Torab. In her words, it is pivotal to remember that “dissent always involves some level of obedience.”
\textsuperscript{150}Torab, \textit{Performing Islam}, 249.
\textsuperscript{151}Bucar, \textit{Creative Conformity}, 1.
\textsuperscript{152}Bucar, \textit{Creative Conformity}, 7. See also: Bucar, “Dianomy,” 683.
\textsuperscript{153}Bucar, \textit{Creative Conformity}, 7. See also: Bucar, “Dianomy,” 683.
According to Certeau, strategy involves “a calculus (or the manipulation) of relations of force.” Tactic, on the other hand, is calculated in the absence of the “proper” (propre), and therefore, it operates in “the space of the other.”¹⁵⁴ For Bucar, Certeau’s main objective is, in his words, “to bring light the clandestine forms taken by the dispersed, tactical, and make-shift creativity of groups and individuals caught in the nets of discipline.”¹⁵⁵ In line with Certeau’s objective, Bucar too “seeks to understand how religious women, (...) caught in the discipline, are nonetheless creative.”¹⁵⁶ According to Bucar, what is at stake here is “how to maintain both a sense of free will necessary for moral action and an acknowledgement that the terrain of tactics is to some extent externally imposed,” and therefore, to some extent not fully intentional.¹⁵⁷

According to Bucar, then, pious women make use of tactics in a contingent, creative space between “what is performed” and “what is the ideal.”¹⁵⁸ In her comparative discussion pious women’s creative conformity, therefore, Bucar names the particular tactics her participants cross-culturally use,¹⁵⁹ including the logic of expansion (or, re-applying particular religious norms to originally unintended situations,) logic of relocation (or, re-directing the focus to private accomplishments of women, and away from women’s public roles determined by male clerics), logic of resolution (or, identifying a gap in the scriptures regarding gender roles and providing a creative resolution), and logic of praxis (or, revising theoretical arguments in practical terms in favor of women).¹⁶⁰ For example, if we go back to Bucar’s discussion on mothering, along with others, Bucar names the logic of resolution and the logic of praxis in explaining Leila Arshad’s narrative to offer a practical solution to a previously unidentified tension within Khomeini’s writings. With the help of tactical fluidity and space for creativity, therefore, Bucar argues that “with dianomy, tactical moves, actions that are not intentionally chosen, and even happy accidents can be studied as productive of ethical knowledge within religious communities.”¹⁶¹

In sum, through dianomy and creative conformity, Bucar can account for both compliance and critique as well as engagements with multiple sources of moral law. Dianomy,

¹⁵⁵ Bucar, Creative Conformity, 3. Also see: Certeau, The Practice of Everyday Life, xiv-xv).
¹⁵⁶ Bucar, Creative Conformity, 3.
¹⁵⁷ Bucar, Creative Conformity, 4.
¹⁵⁸ Bucar, Creative Conformity, 6. Here “the ideal” refers to the external discourse.
¹⁵⁹ Bucar sums up these issues as “symbolics, procreation, hermeneutics, embodiment, and republication.” For a more detailed summary, please see: Bucar, Creative Conformity, 161-166.
¹⁶⁰ Bucar, Creative Conformity, 50-51. These are just common examples of tactics and logical grounds in Bucar’s discussion. Bucar identifies particular logical grounds and tactics used by US Catholic and Iranian Shi’ite pious women in different contexts, such as issues related to pious women’s relationship with moral exemplar, mothering, authoritative hermeneutics, embodied norms, and republication as a general moral discourse.
¹⁶¹ Bucar, Creative Conformity, 1.
thus, accounts for multiple sources of women’s freedom.\textsuperscript{162} Hence, Bucar’s approach stands closer to the narratives of my pious participants compared to the previous approaches. However, the narratives of progressive pious feminists also challenge the underlying assumptions of Bucar’s dianomy—which I discuss in the next and final part of this chapter. \textsuperscript{163}

### 4.4 Pious Feminist Agency in Turkey and Relational Autonomy

After reviewing the previous literature on pious women’s agency, in this final part of this chapter, I discuss the ways in which a relational perspective on agency, particularly Kenneth Gergen’s relational multi-being and Jennifer Nedelsky’s relational autonomy, contributes to the approaches I have introduced so far (especially Bucar’s dianomy) and provides a better grasp of the pious feminist narratives in my study. I argue that pious feminists in Turkey go one step further than Bucar’s dianomy. They search for their own law, or a relationally redefined, hybrid, pious feminist moral law, which not only dually brings together but also synthesizes different sources in a situated and contextualized, uniquely pious feminist way.

My study brings the need for a relational approach for two main reasons: (1) In addition to bringing habituation of piety together with critique and creativity, pious feminists in my study shared a relationship-centered, “interdependent” outlook on their identity both as pious women and as pious feminists. (2) In the pious feminist narratives, agency appears as a relational factor of disagreement between pious and secular women in the women’s movement. Agency is therefore a part of pious feminists’ own “grammar” of concepts in my study—or at least a particular part of their vocabulary that they think secular feminists do not want to acknowledge.\textsuperscript{164} In my discussion below, I firstly discuss how a relational approach to agency could contribute to all approaches discussed above. Then, I particularly examine the pious feminist narratives in my study and discuss how a relational re-reading of Bucar’s approach in the intersection of Nedelsky’s relational autonomy and Gergen’s relational multi-being can provide a better analysis for the second stage of piety in the pious feminist narratives that I call “informed piety.”

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\textsuperscript{162} Bucar, \textit{Creative Conformity}, 161.

\textsuperscript{163} In pious feminist narratives, there are three additional issues that cannot be completely explained through Bucar’s dianomy—which I will discuss in the next and final section of this chapter.

\textsuperscript{164} My study differs from the works I have discussed so far in one particular aspect: Pious women’s agency was not my main academic interest prior to my fieldwork. I was more interested about the possibility (and the potential transformative capacity) of collaborative action between secular and pious women in the women’s movement as equal partners. For this purpose, I guided my participants to think about the other group in relation to themselves, and hence, tried to identify what happens if they slightly shift their positions (or what Nedelsky refers to as “locations”) outside of the secular-pious disagreement in Turkey.
4.4.1 Relationality and Pious Women’s Agency

Thus far, I have argued that although all models discussed above are partially useful for explaining pious feminist perceptions of autonomy, none could capture the narratives in my study fully. Now, I would like to discuss how a relational approach can contribute to these models in explaining the pious feminist narratives in my study.

Firstly, as I suggested before, progressive pious feminists in my study considered their relationships (both pious and non-pious) self-constitutive. For example, Meral argued that, without the support of her family and friends, she could not become who she was. Her decision to go to university, her decision to become an engineer, her decision to decline taking off her headscarf, her decision to work at pious civil society, her decision to lead a radio show on women, and finally her decision to become a pious feminist, Meral considered all these decisions as inseparable building blocks of her identity. After getting more involved in the civil society and learning about the lives of different women, she realized that her relationships enabled her to make these choices.\textsuperscript{165} Rather than a strictly pious community, therefore, Meral stressed the importance of her contingent yet self-constitutive interactions with multiple communities (secular, pious, and feminist) as indispensable parts of her subjectivity.

Secondly, according to my participants like Meral, although it was not possible to separate what is their own and what the discursive tradition of Islam determines (as Mahmood argues), the question of agency still mattered beyond the embodied capacities of subjectivity formation (contra Mahmood). For Meral, the discursive traditions of Islam, Kemalist secularism in Turkey, as well as feminism were all constitutive her identity, but not a single one in isolation could determine who she was. As I argued, for my pious feminist participants, rather than acting for or against religion (as the submission/resistance model dictates), the distinction was in between Islamic patriarchy and Islam, secular forms of patriarchy and secularism, and imposition of Western values and the actual rights and freedoms (both democratic and God-given). In this regard, progressive, self-acclaimed pious feminist participants of my study were “constituted, but not determined by” Islam, Kemalist secularism, and feminism—or, more accurately, the particular discursive traditions associated with these concepts in the Turkish context. This resembles closely with Jennifer Nedelsky’s approach to relational self and relational autonomy, particularly her interpretation of Steven Winter’s “relational ecology of constituting and

\textsuperscript{165} Meral Şenel, Interview, March 2011, Ankara.
constitutive meaning” where we are simultaneously in the process of being “constituting and constituted.”\textsuperscript{166}

Nedelsky argues that, the assumption of the free-standing, independent individual ignores the fact that “each individual is in basic ways constituted by networks of relationships of which they are a part.”\textsuperscript{167} It neglects the inherent challenges associated with “being autonomous in an inevitably conditioned and contingent world.”\textsuperscript{168} For Nedelsky, therefore, instead of fantasizing about the possibility of unconditioned, radically independent, autonomous decisions, we need to be conscious about the way our relationships constitute (but not fully determine) our actions, and then, make our judgments accordingly. From Nedelsky’s perspective, once we are aware of how our relationships constitute us, we can re-evaluate and restructure our relationships to transform ourselves. In this regard, Nedelsky considers autonomy as a value that “enables people to sort, choose, reject, embrace, and transform the many factors that might otherwise merely condition us.”\textsuperscript{169} Despite her criticisms against “the modern sense of self” and its disregard for human interdependence, therefore, Nedelsky at the same time values the human “capacity for genuine creativity” that is embedded in the Western conception of autonomy, or what Hannah Arendt refers to as “human ability to act.”\textsuperscript{170} Hence, for Nedelsky, completely rejecting the vocabulary of autonomy or the term autonomy (like Bucar’s use of heteronomy or dianomy) does not offer a solution to the real problem about the Western notions of autonomy and its “caricature of (...) the iconic self-made man.”\textsuperscript{171} She instead “argue[s] that we cannot afford to cede the meaning of autonomy to the liberal tradition and that we should redefine rather than resist the term.”\textsuperscript{172} According to Nedelsky, “the very concept of relational autonomy presupposes that autonomy is possible for relational selves; and if that is so, then relationships cannot determine who a person is or what she does or becomes. Otherwise there would be no true autonomy.”\textsuperscript{173} I think pious feminists in my study, who did not reject the label feminism, were on a similar quest of relationally reconstituting their already-constituted pious feminist in the intersection of feminist critique and habituated affirmation, not one or the other.

\textsuperscript{167} Nedelsky, \textit{Relations of Law}, 19.
\textsuperscript{169} Nedelsky, \textit{Relations of Law}, 54.
\textsuperscript{170} Nedelsky, \textit{Relations of Law}, 31.
\textsuperscript{171} Nedelsky, \textit{Relations of Law}, 49.
\textsuperscript{172} Nedelsky, \textit{Relations of Law}, 44.
\textsuperscript{173} Nedelsky, \textit{Relations of Law}, 31.
Thirdly, Nedelsky’s perspective also might help us to recognize an important point regarding the pious feminist perceptions of how secular feminists treat them—which I covered as a part of my discussion on pious women’s submission and false consciousness in the literature. I argued that, for pious feminists, their relationship with secular feminists was limited by the secular feminists’ ungrounded fears and lack of equal treatment, which prohibited a two-sided, open dialogue. Nedelsky’s continuing support for “a universal claim of equal moral worth,” in this light, helps us to identify the harm and hurt secular feminists inflict on pious feminists in the women’s movement. However, Nedelsky at the same time reminds that “… equality cannot mean that all subordinated groups can finally come to enjoy the rights and privileges of the dominant group,” and notes, “Many of those advantages require the disadvantage of others.” From this perspective, Zeliha’s hierarchal reversal of pious modernity and secular modernity also relies on the “disadvantage of the other” to defend the “advantages” of her identity as a pious woman. As I have argued in relation to empowerment and instrumental models of pious women’s agency, more progressive pious participants of my study diverged from Zeliha’s approach, and instead talked about their simultaneous encounters with Islamic piety and feminism. Pious feminist concern for “women’s God-given rights” resulted from their dual engagement with the piety movement and the women’s rights movement in Turkey. Pious feminist empowerment was not just an instrumental “advantage” of being pious. It was a relational construct of their creative interactions with both Islamic piety and feminism.

In this manner, Nedelsky’s model of the relational self can fill in a missing piece in the current literature on pious women’s agency without rejecting the language of autonomy and its emphasis on “human ability to act.” As Mahmood mentions, Nedelsky is amongst the scholars who aim “to redefine autonomy so as to capture the emotional, embodied, and socially embedded character of people, particularly women.” Mahmood, however, differentiates her project from this aim. Mahmood argues, “...if the ability to effect change in the world and oneself is historically and culturally specific (...), then the meaning and the sense of agency cannot be fixed in advance, but must emerge through an analysis of the particular concepts that enable the specific modes of being, responsibility, and effectivity.” Mahmood is, therefore, more interested in the constitutive discursive relationship pious women have with the Islamic

176 Mahmood, Politics of Piety, 13.
177 Mahmood, Politics of Piety, 14-15.
discursive tradition through repeatedly the performative, embodied acts of piety than agency casted in Western, liberal terms.

Fourthly, however, from a relational angle it is possible to recognize that, in doing so, Mahmood limits her analysis of pious women’s subjectivity with a single relationship pious women have: their relationship with the Islamic discursive tradition. Thereby, she externalizes and undermines the agentic significance of other discursive traditions and relationships pious women have with others. As Allison Weir argues, “Although Mahmood, following Foucault, recognizes that the pietists’ agency involves various kinds of relationships, neither understands those relationships as being the telos of practice, and neither understands practices of freedom within a framework of inhabiting connections.”

I find Gergen’s notion of co-active confluence particularly helpful in understanding what Mahmood leaves out. According to Gergen, it is always through co-action that subjectivity is co-created and inclined “toward reliable or repeated forms of relationship.” In this regard, like Nedelsky’s relational autonomy, Gergen’s relational “multi-being” aims to reorder the sequencing of the Western definitions of autonomy, instead of categorically rejecting autonomy. For Gergen, “independent persons do not come together to form relationships; from relationships the very possibility of independent person emerges.” Subjectivity is dynamically constituted in-between multiple discourses and relationships as a process of “coordination” where every conversation we have is “akin to playing a multidimensional game in which any move on part of any participant can be treated as a move in several other games.” From Gergen’s relational approach, therefore, it is not possible to determine which conversation pertains to which discourse, tactic, or logic due to the complexity of the multi-being (unlike Bucar’s dianoous analysis). Since Gergen assumes subjectivity is an ongoing process always in motion, we can only observe how different relationships are coordinated at a given time and context. The relationship itself is fluid and constantly changing, or as Nedelsky suggests in Winter’s terms, always in the process of “being constituting and constituted.” Although Mahmood locates pious agency in the realm of relationship “articulated between words,

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178 Weir, “Feminism and the Islamic Revival,” 328.
180 Gergen, Relational Being, xv. Or, as Gergen restates, “My attempt here is to reverse the order, and to treat what we take to be the individual units as derivative of relational process” (xxi)
181 Gergen, Relational Being, 38.
182 Gergen, Relational Being, 43.
183 Nedelsky, Relations of Law, 32.
concepts, and practices,”184 her exclusive interest in positive ethics (and thus, exclusion of oppositionality, intentionality, resistance, and critique) predetermines the borders of this relationship within a certain discursive tradition. Mahmood, therefore, treats intentionality and discursive ethics of habituation as fundamentally separate paths to agentic action. Gergen’s work challenges this assumption in four ways.

Firstly, if we think through Gergen’s perspective, the problem with Mahmood’s discussion is not only the question of how to locate what constitutes a discursive tradition, but also “the very drawing of these borders” in a way that replicates “the same kinds of conflicts that attend our viewing persons as fundamentally separated.”185 Second, instead of categorically rejecting intentionality and autonomy, Gergen, similar to Nedelsky, identifies the real problem as the assumption of “the bounded being” that is ingrained in both concepts—which remains unquestioned in both Mahmood and Bucar. Alternatively, Gergen proposes to think about “intention as attention” where agency pertains to the way our relationships guide (but, once again, cannot determine) our attention to certain forms of co-action.186 Thirdly, Gergen argues “there is no action that has meaning in itself.”187 Therefore, from Gergen’s relational perspective, unless supported by constructive relationships, the habituation of pious acts may not inevitably lead to internalization of piety in themselves.188 Lastly, for Gergen, like all forms of knowledge, moral knowledge is “co-created” and “coordinated.” Gergen, in this sense, delineates interweaving categories and hybrid forms of knowledge like my pious feminist participants and their discussions of informed piety.189 Now, I will expand on these points further starting with pious feminist perceptions of informed piety in my study.

4.4.2 Informed Piety and Phronesis Revisited

For Meral, habitual piety was just the first stage of becoming pious where piety is learned as a habituated skill by the help of favorable pious relationships. At its second stage, Meral argued, piety could also be chosen.

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184 Mahmood, Politics of Piety, 17.
185 Gergen, Relational Being, xxiv. Here, Gergen argues, “I have less content with the valorization of community favored as the alternative to individualism. There is not only the problem of determining the boundaries of what constituted one’s community. There are additional complication resulting from the very drawing of these boundaries. Communities are also bounded entities and create the same kinds of conflicts that attend our viewing persons as fundamentally separated.”
186 Gergen, Relational Being, 79-81.
187 Gergen, Relational Being, 33.
188 Gergen, Relational Being, 49. Nedelsky similarly argues “thinking about autonomy as independence distorts our understanding of what actually makes autonomy possible, namely, constructive relationships.”
189 Gergen, Relational Being, 213-217.
For Meral, informed, or chosen, piety was not simply about accumulating more Islamic knowledge so that one internally arrives at an informed choice on one’s own piety. Resembling the works of Bucar and Torab, Meral talked about the need for multi-engagement with different sources of knowledge besides Islam to arrive at this choice. If the pious daughters of the pious families remained in their pious circles throughout their whole lives, for Meral, they could only be pious through the habit, not the choice. A strictly pious social environment contributes to the habituation process of piety but, at the same time, reduces the likelihood of arriving at informed piety. Like Bucar’s dianomy, informed piety in Meral’s narrative was about both devotion and comparison, affirmation and critique, and additionally, their co-active confluences in-between as Gergen suggests.

Meral acknowledged the transition from habitual piety to informed piety was neither easy or mandatory. As she posited, “It is not easy to decide to wear a headscarf of your own free will. (...) the genuine choice comes later, a lot later, perhaps, once you fully develop your character. And even then, it is a maybe.” For this reason, although Meral did not personally support girls wearing the headscarf in elementary school, she thought they should be allowed to wear it if their families let them go to school only in this way:

“…especially during periods in which a person is not fully autonomous, or aware of her individual consciousness, it is wrong to limit her opportunities with a ban on the headscarf. I don’t personally support the use of the headscarf during primary school— if I had a daughter, I would not let her wear it— but if a girl can only go to the primary school by wearing a headscarf, I would be okay with her being there in the school, because she belongs to the school with or without her headscarf”

For Meral, the ban restricted not only a pious woman’s right to education, but also, by limiting her access to different systems of knowledge other than religion, it also restricted her chances for making an informed decision about her piety.

In light of Meral’s narrative, I would like to revisit Mahmood’s use of Aristotelian habitus with respect to Aristotle’s discussion of phronesis. I argue that informed piety involves references to both téchne and phronesis, instead of only téchne that treats piety only as a habituated skill. As previously noted, Bucar argues that Mahmood’s use of habitus neglects the moral value of phronesis (practical wisdom) in Aristotle’s theory of virtue (aretê). Instead,

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190 Meral Şenel, Interview, March 2011, Ankara.
192 Similar to Zeliha, Meral also complained that secular feminists were completely oblivious about the fact that their support for the ban actually drew the pious women farther away from arriving at an informed decision about wearing or taking off the headscarf—which negated their own argument on pious women’s autonomy and choice.
Mahmood builds on Aristotle’s distinction between intellectual and moral virtues, and argues, “it appears that the pedagogical principle of habitus pertains to the latter but not the former.”\textsuperscript{193}

From this assumption, Mahmood deduces habitus as a specific way of cultivating moral values that cannot apply to intellectual virtues including practical wisdom, and she can thus justify pious agency only in the moral vocabulary that it resides in without the need for any other external justification.\textsuperscript{194}

In *Nichomachean Ethics*, Aristotle does introduce two kinds of virtue (aretê), one about reasoning (virtues of thought, or intellectual virtues) the other about following reason (virtues of character, or ethical values).\textsuperscript{195} However, the relationship between the two are not as immediate as Mahmood assumes.\textsuperscript{196} Aristotle instead emphasizes the teleological relationship between action and production, or reason and character, and asserts that “rational choice involves not only intellect and thought but a state of character; for acting well and its contrary require thought and character.”\textsuperscript{197} Here, practical wisdom, or *phronesis*, holds a special place. Although Aristotle initially enlists *phronesis* under “intellectual virtues,” he treats it both as an intellectual and ethical virtue because “real ethical virtue” can only be cultivated when natural virtue (of character) is combined with practical wisdom. Or as Aristotle puts it, “…we cannot be really good without practical wisdom, or practically wise without virtue of character.”\textsuperscript{198}

The difference between natural and real ethical virtue can also help us to understand the difference between *téchne* and *phronesis*. As Aristotle explains: “In skill the person who misses the mark voluntarily is preferable, but with practical wisdom, as with the virtues, the reverse is true. Clearly then, practical wisdom is a virtue and not a skill.”\textsuperscript{199} Hence, it is only when *téchne* is combined with *phronesis* that one can be really virtuous. Habitus is not just “a tradition of

\textsuperscript{193} Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 136.
\textsuperscript{194} As a continuation of this presumed separation between moral and intellectual virtues, Mahmood also seems to treat the Western/secular and Islamic/pious values as two distinct discourses where habituation belongs to vocabulary of only the latter; and reason and choice belong to only the former. As Mahmood argues, “transgressing gender norms may not be a matter of transforming ‘consciousness’ or effecting change in the significatory systems of gender, but might well require the retraining of sensibilities, affect, desire, and sentiments—those registers of corporeality that often escape the logic of representation and symbolic articulation.” For details, please see: Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 188.
\textsuperscript{195} Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, 1139a1-2. As Aristotle puts it, “When we had classified the virtues of the soul, we said that some are virtues of character, others of thought.”
\textsuperscript{196} Regarding the former category of intellectual virtues, Aristotle differentiates between theoretical/scientific knowledge (epistêmê) and practical wisdom (*phronesis*). Concerning the latter category of ethical virtues, Aristotle concludes that, like virtues of thought, there are two forms of virtues of character, namely, natural and real ethical virtues. Aristotle then suggests that virtues of thought (epistêmê and *phronesis*) are about “action” while ethical virtues (natural and real) are about “production.” However, contrary to Mahmood’s early conclusion, Aristotle does not imply moral and intellectual virtues are completely separate from each other.
\textsuperscript{197} Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, 1139a36-40.
moral cultivation.” For any habitus to be virtuous, it has to seek its teleological excellence or its ultimate form (*eidos*), which necessitates practical wisdom.

The narratives of my pious feminist participants, in this regard, involve both *téchnē* (or the craft knowledge to habituate the skill of piety) and *phronesis* (or the practical wisdom to compare different sources of knowledge and differentiate between Islam and Islamic patriarchy). Rather than Mahmood’s account of fully affirmative moral habitus or Bucar’s unintended creative conformity, pious feminists in Turkey talk about pious subjectivity in two interdependent stages where, in the first stage, piety is learned through the acts of piety, and in the second stage, it is coupled with an informed choice. Although the two stages do not start at the same time, they are not separate or dianomous. They interdependently merge with each other.

Gergen’s criticism of the bounded being can perhaps clarify this point. According to Gergen, the separation between the moral and the scientific forms of knowledge emerges from the assumptions of the bounded being. It arises from the assumption that we can determine the borders between ourselves and others. Informed piety, in this regard, challenges this assumption of the bounded being by complicating the separation between Islamic piety and feminism as two competing sources of knowledge. Like their pious subjectivity, pious feminists in my study become feminists first by the habituation of the feminist acts, such as attending civil society meetings, and then through educating themselves about key feminist texts in comparison with other sources of knowledge including Islam and the God-given rights of women. At first, therefore, there are at least two cycles of habituation (and two forms of *téchnē*) at work: pious skills and feminist skills. In time, however, pious feminists formulate their own “interdependent” pious feminist approach relationally. Co-active confluences between pious and feminist experiences produce a hybrid knowledge which enables pious feminists to search for their own law. In this way, pious feminist participants of my study were able to differentiate between Islam and its patriarchal manipulations, feminism and its Western-centric limitations, and reconstruct their own pious feminist stance towards women’s issues accordingly, combining *phronesis* with *téchnē* in each step. Hence, for pious feminists, their journeys towards piety and feminism were not two different roads, they were intertwined. This quest was both about autonomy and interdependency, habituation and intentionality, *phronesis* and *téchnē*.

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200 Mahmood, Politics of Piety, 136.
202 This might be similar to Weir’s argument that: “As a feminist, my desire to follow my own path is motivated and legitimated through my appeal to moral ideals of equality, justice, and freedom. Thus, like the pietists, I am following and striving to inhabit norms beyond and above myself.” For more details, please see: Weir, “Feminism and the Islamic Revival,” 332.
4.4.3 Pious Women’s Intentionality vs. Forced Undoing of Piety

The question of intentionality is one of the main issues that differs my study from Bucar’s dianomy. Instead of tactical moves, my pious feminist participants were comfortable talking about their intended purposes such as promoting the headscarf as a women’s right and forming strategic alliances in the civil society. However, in my reading, the most interesting case of intentionality in the narratives is about the counter-habituation logic behind the headscarf ban. Like the majority of my pious participants, Meral was convinced the headscarf ban aimed at “undoing” piety. Meral perceived the ban as a strategic counter-habituation of the headscarf. For her, it aimed to replace the habit of pious women’s veiling with the new habit of forced unveiling; it was not about granting pious women freedom and choice. Autonomy, freedom, and choice constituted an additional justification frame so that secular women, especially feminists, also supported the ban. Meral presented three counter-arguments against this prototypical secular feminist support for the headscarf ban: 1) Even if the headscarf was forced upon pious women, the ban was not a solution; it replicated the same patriarchal damage as the state took over the role of the male family members. 2) Contrary to secular feminist presumptions, chosen/informed piety did not precede the habit of piety, and thus, the headscarf. 3) The ban was the most prominent obstacle against informed piety because it locked up pious women in their pious circles, limited their opportunities for multi-engagement other sources of knowledge, and therefore, possibilities of arriving at an informed decision about piety. Or, in Aristotelian terms, the ban limited pious women’s chances for becoming “really virtuous.” In this regard, as Meral argued, “…the headscarf is not an obstacle against pious women’s agency, limiting pious women’s choices is.”

I find Meral’s emphasis on the need for availability of choices and engagement with multiple sources of knowledge particularly important for understanding how the self-acclaimed pious feminists in my study go beyond the habit of piety, bring together *phronesis* and *téchne*, and creatively transform their dual struggle (for the headscarf and for the women’s rights) as a pious feminist struggle in their own terms. According to Nedelsky, we are conditioned by our relationships, but this conditioning “does that mean there is not actual creative capacity” in our interactions with others. To the contrary, Nedelsky argues the “positive” part of the Western

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liberal autonomy “requires a capacity not to be bound by existing patterns of thought, institutions, or relationships (…) a capacity to go beyond habit, beyond the expected, the conventional, at least in small ways to be imaginative and innovative (…) so that suit one better, or improve things for others.” In Nedelsky’s relational framework, this distinct creative capacity that goes beyond the habit can best be understood in terms of Kantian/Arendtian enlarged mentality and judgment, that is accomplished by “taking into account the perspectives of others in forming one’s own judgment,” and not “knowledge or certainty” or the prototypical Western liberal notions of unconditioned reason, independence, or resistance. Similarly, for Nedelsky, in the course of determining what is one’s own, one has to make judgments and, while doing so, one needs to seek the consent of others in her community of judgment. Relational autonomy, in this manner, requires continuous creative multi-engagements with different perspectives and the imaginative capacity to take various standpoints on such perspectives. During this process, one has to be aware of one’s own presuppositions because “the process involves an ongoing interpretation of comparing one’s initial judgment in the use of multiple standpoints that one has taken” and “an ongoing iteration of comparing one’s initial judgment with another perspective, considering whether to revise one’s initial judgment with another perspective, or so.” Hence, based on Nedelsky’s analysis, I suggest that when Meral says it is limiting pious women’s choices (and not the headscarf) that impedes pious women’s freedom and agency, she addresses the relational harm in limiting pious women’s creative capacity for enlarged mentality and real judgment. Without the exercise of real judgment and enlarged mentality (which requires existence of and engagement with multiple others), a pious woman, in this regard, can only be pious through the habit. I think that it is important to also notice here that if we limit our thinking about pious women’s subjectivity within a particular grammar of concepts or a single discursive tradition, we also deny pious women’s capacity for creative multi-engagement and overpower the discursive tradition as the most prominent source of pious women’s subjectivity. In Meral’s observation, the counter-habituation logic behind the ban did not work for a similar reason. As she exemplified, the ban led to different outcomes:

“During my years as a university student, we were three girls with the headscarf. (…) The other two girls uncovered their heads in order to get into school; I resisted. One of them

205 Nedelsky, Relations of Law, 48.
206 Nedelsky, Relations of Law, 58.
207 Nedelsky, Relations of Law, 58.
209 Nedelsky, “Receptivity and Judgment,” 236; Nedelsky, Relations of Law, 58.
took off her headscarf and she did not wear it again for 4 years. She didn’t wear it outside of the campus as well. She did not change any other part of her outfit; she was still modestly dressed. She only wanted to get her degree. (...) The other one, she took off her headscarf once, and then, she changed everything about the way she dressed, she was even more properly done up than the other girls without the headscarf. During those years, she said she only wore the headscarf because of her family, anyways. She spent her four years in the university like this. But, as soon as she finished university, all of a sudden, she covered herself again. I was shocked to observe both processes.”

In contrast, Meral witnessed some of her friends took off their headscarves when it was left to their own decision, rather than legal imposition or family obligation:

“There is another friend of ours, from CCWP, who worked actively against the ban for years and years. And one day, she decided to take her headscarf off, just like that. And this did not happen when she was 18. She was not under the influence of anyone in either case… Sometimes, people’s preferences, they change. Simple as that.”

Meral, thus, argued that habituation of piety cannot simply be undone; subjectivity always involved co-habituation of multiple discursive knowledges at the same time, which complicated the possibility of reverse-habituation, or forced “undoing.” Therefore, at the end of the day, Meral did not think the ban was successful in undermining piety. The undoing of the habit in itself (without pious women’s choice and consent) did not directly lead to contingent, creative consequences; it was the intentionality of the women that mattered. According to Meral, pious women could only undo the habit when they choose not to wear the headscarf on their own and instead choose to explore their piety in alternative ways that does not include the headscarf. After years of habituation, education, and active involvement with different structures of knowledge, for Meral, pious women could interrogate, criticize, dissent, and resist the traditions that they conform with, or they could change their “preferences” and decide to take off their headscarves on their own if it is left to their decision rather than the external authorities whether it is their male family members or the state.

4.4.4 Pious Feminism and Relational Interdependency

Now that I have covered pious feminist perceptions of informed piety and intentionality, I can address Meral’s and Zeliha’s contesting views on feminism and demonstrate the difference between progressive and pragmatic pious women’s approaches in my study. I argue in this part that, in contrast to Zeliha who considered piety and women’s rights as two distinct facets of her

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211 Meral Şenel, Interview, March 2011, Ankara.
212 Meral Şenel, Interview, March 2011, Ankara.
struggle, Meral integrated the two under her pious feminist stance in a way that the discursive significance of both remained coherent. Thus, while Bucar’s creative conformity can explain Zeliha’s active non-feminist involvement in the women’s rights movement in Turkey, Meral’s pious feminism further requires a relational approach.

Zeliha’s narrative on feminism is similar to Bucar’s discussion on one of her participants from Iran, Shahla Habibi, in the sense that Zeliha also rejected feminism despite her active engagement with the women’s movement. In Bucar’s discussion her interview with Habibi plays a formative role due to Habibi’s reaction when Bucar mistakenly called her an “Islamic feminist.” Although this incident happened after Habibi’s declared support for CEDAW in Sharia law and implicit references to feminist values, Bucar describes Habibi’s response as follows: “…she slams her hands down on her desk, cuts me off mid-sentence, and says, ‘I am not a feminist. Do not call me a feminist. I do not believe in your feminism.’ (…) Our interview stalls. For the next half hour she returns to the feminist label again and again, defining herself against it.” From that point onwards, Bucar argues that she has become more careful about her own feminist commitments interfering to her research and about the fact that “labeling any project focused on religious communities feminist is problematic.”

Similar to Habibi, during my interview with Zeliha, right after she introduced herself as “a secular, pious woman” and told that she considered secularism a “wider umbrella” of women’s rights, she declared straight away that she was not a feminist. Unlike Habibi, however, Zeliha admitted her interest in feminism and support for key feminist values. Nevertheless, Zeliha cited three reasons why she was not a feminist. Firstly, she found herself in conflict with some fundamental feminist issues regarding abortion, bodily rights, family values, and childrearing. In her words, “Feminists use a basic jargon, right? What do they say? They say, my

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213 Yet, I should also note that I have never encountered a reaction that is comparable to Habibi’s in magnitude. Largely, this might be because of the contextual difference between Iran and Turkey where an association with a Western project like feminism has different bearings on pious women. It might also be due to the difference in our research design where I treated the question of labelling as an explicit emphasis and started my interviews by directly asking about my participants’ preferences before I passed on to my open-ended questions, while Bucar’s emphasis seems to be different. Aside from “pious feminist” or “pious women,” to name a few, we debated terms such as “Islamic,” “Islamist,” “conservative,” and “headscarved” during our conversations. All three pious women’s groups preferred “pious” to the rest of the terms, while only my progressive pious participants preferred to be called “pious feminists.” For more details, see Chapter 2.

214 An eminent post-Revolution political figure who is also the director of a women’s NGO network in Iran.

215 Bucar, Creative Conformity, vii. For Bucar, Habibi’s response was a turning point in her research because it made Bucar rethink the limits of her own feminist interpretative framework, which led her “to misread, mishear, and misunderstand” women like Habibi.

216 Bucar enlists two main “historical-political reasons” regarding the problem of labeling projects on religious women’s communities feminist: 1) “It is a well-known narratives in gender and post-colonial studies that feminism was co-opted by those in the West who used the excuse of ‘protecting brown women from their brown men’ to implement a wide range of agendas that had little to do with improving women’s lives” 2) “One does not have to look far in current media coverage to find assertions that Islam to women’s oppression.” Despite her reservations about the term “feminism” in relation to her work, she also depicts that “to reject the term feminist outright is to privilege more problematic definitions of feminism.” Consequently, with metrical consideration, she uses the term “feminist politics” to refer to the types of action that “attempts to reshape the conditions of women’s individual or collective existence.” (Creative Conformity, xv-xvii).

217 Zeliha Leventgil, Interview, April 2011, Istanbul. In her words, “I acknowledge that I share feminist values. But, I have my differences, so I am not a feminist.”
body belongs to me. [They demand] sexual freedoms and abortion as women’s bodily rights. I cannot say this as a pious woman. I have reservations determined by revelation (vahiy).” 218

Secondly, Zeliha claimed she also differed from feminists on the solutions to women’s problems. As discussed earlier, alternative Islamic values such as loyalty and sacrifice were important for Zeliha to reformulate local, and therefore, more relevant solutions for women’s problems in Turkey. Thirdly, Zeliha did not believe suppression and vulnerability were particular to women: “Women are suppressed, it’s true, but I also think that some men are suppressed, too. I look at life from the point of view of justice. I do not look at life from a sexist point of view.” 219

Rather than a feminist endeavor, Zeliha considered her organization as “a safe community of trust amongst pious women” that brought together pious women who wanted to learn more about Islam. 220 Zeliha noticed that with more Islamic knowledge came more Islamic love. 221 Zeliha’s involvement in the women’s movement, however, has led to two unintended consequences. Firstly, her organization became a part of the women’s rights network in Istanbul. Secondly, as Zeliha became more informed about Islam, she started to notice biased clerical misreadings of the religious texts and to seek alternative ways to promote women’s God-given rights in her community. As a result, like Bucar’s discussion on Habibi, Zeliha’s narrative included tactical re-groundings of Islamic norms:

“It is thought that a pious woman could not go more than 90 km from her house. We have such misunderstandings about Islam. We broke these presuppositions. We organized trips to the Balkans, Middle East, and Europe. At the beginning, there were equal numbers of men and women. However, during our meetings, everybody saw that we were one big family, our group [composition] included mostly the ladies.” 222

Here, Zeliha makes three points. Firstly, Zeliha blends feminist critique into her Islamic pious approach. Secondly, like in Bucar’s discussion, Zeliha’s use of Islamic values (of trust, family, etc.) aims to allocate more room for women’s God-given rights (to travel more than 90 km without their husbands). This is a tactical move because rather than women’s freedom, Zeliha was motivated by unveiling the Truth about God-given rights of women. Thirdly, although it is quite implicit in Zeliha’s narrative, these tactical shifts have happened in the aftermath of a decade-long active involvement in both pious women’s movement as well as women’s rights

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218 Zeliha Leventgil, Interview, April 2011, Istanbul.
219 Zeliha Leventgil, Interview, April 2011, Istanbul.
220 Zeliha Leventgil, December 2009, Istanbul. As she put it, “If I said I am Muslim, then, I wanted to become an informed Muslim.”
221 Zeliha Leventgil, December 2009, Istanbul. This later became the slogan of Zeliha’s organization: “With Love, With Knowledge” (Sevgiyle, Bilgileye)
movement in Turkey, therefore, after Zeliha’s repeated multiple engagements with different sources of moral law, including feminism, secularism, and Islam—and their particular discursive formulations specific to the Turkish context.

As opposed to Zeliha’s hesitation about the feminist label, Meral called herself a pious feminist with great comfort. “I got involved in the civil society during my university years. But, if you ask me, I am a feminist ever since I have known myself,” she stated. According to Meral, feminism meant “collective action, resistance, and criticism towards all patriarchal structures of power.” In short, she argued, “If you work for women’s rights, if you have something to say about women rights, if you resist and criticize patriarchy and the patriarchal dynamics embedded in the society, you are automatically a feminist. This is why I am a feminist.” Meral could understand, however, that it was hard for both secular and pious women in Turkey to declare they are feminists: “In Turkey, when somebody asks ‘Are you a feminist?’ it is not easy to say ‘yes’ because you know that the question is asked to insult you in the first place. But I say it openly and proudly, I say, I defend women rights, and therefore, I am a feminist.”

Meral also added that her identification with feminism did not mean she agreed with “everything feminists say.” For example, similar to Zeliha, Meral was concerned about the issue of abortion. In Meral’s words, “When feminists say that my body only belongs to me, I cannot, for instance, ever support abortion. My faith does not give the right to terminate another living creature just because s/he is in my womb for a temporary amount of time.” According to Meral, a woman could and should do everything in her control not to conceive if she does not want a baby, but once the baby is conceived, she did not think it was in the power of the mother to decide on the life of another God-made creature. She added, “but this does not mean I cannot work with someone who defends abortion and other bodily rights. I just do not say I support abortion when I say I am a feminist.”

While abortion was a factor of Zeliha’s break from feminism, for Meral, it was not. Hence, Zeliha and Meral used similar arguments to justify opposite inclinations towards feminism. Similar to Bucar’s discussion on Habibi, Zeliha rejected

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225 Meral Şenel, Interview, March 2011, Ankara. For Meral, there were many uninformed critics who had no idea about the difference between “resistance against patriarchy” and “men-hatred” when they hear the word feminism. As Meral stated: “I am against the patriarchy. I do not hate men. (...) I do not see men as the enemy. I see patriarchy as the enemy.”
226 In contrast to Zeliha who thought feminism was exclusively concerned about women’s oppression, for Meral, feminism was a more general struggle concerned about all minority rights in Turkey. For example, Meral mentioned her organization (CCWP) partnered up with an LGBT organization in Ankara on a joint project proposal for an EU funding (which was not realized at the end.)
227 Meral Şenel, Interview, March 2011, Ankara.
228 Meral Şenel, Interview, March 2011, Ankara.
the feminist label despite her active dihanous involvement in the women’s movement. Meral and other self-declared pious feminists in my study, however, went one step further and considered feminism as a “wider umbrella” under which different feminisms, secularisms, and Islamic traditions can co-exist. They intentionally sought alternative ways to integrate feminist critique with Islamic conformity in explicitly pious feminist terms. They wanted a hybrid discourse of their own.

If we go back to the literal definition of autonomy, therefore, pious feminists searched for “their own law” in relational terms and wanted to live in accordance to it; they were not after tactical multi-engagements, almost accidental creative conformity, or individual independence. Their journey as pious feminists were intentional. Once they recognized the transformative power of their involvement in the women’s civil society as pious women with the headscarf, they knowingly tried to participate as much as they could.

I find two points important, here. Firstly, this process was not solely external or, in Burke’s terms, instrumental. The external rewards they enjoyed internally taught them how to become pious feminists and own their feminist struggle as pious women despite their religious interdependencies. Although Mahmood’s use of habitus could conceptually explain the first part of this process (internal performative significance of the external pious acts), I think that the second part (where pious women own their feminist struggle as a part of their own identity despite their religious interdependencies) requires a relational perspective. I suggest that Nedelsky’s relational autonomy or “autonomy that relies on relationship” can help to capture the missing piece of the puzzle here, by suggesting that “all moments of creation emerge out of the constellation of conditions that give rise to the capacity for creative interaction with one’s environment.” Secondly, this process also brings in mind the distinction between agency and autonomy. For Nedelsky, agency refers to “the making of a choice,” however “to choose autonomously (…) takes some kind of conscious work.” Similarly, Meral and her friends were ready to undertake that conscious work and encourage deeper civil society multi-engagements with different women in the women’s movement in order to become better pious feminists. Despite their conformity, they were aware of the transformative, creative power of their interdependent pious feminism, which challenged both the discourse and the habit.

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230 Nedelsky, Relations of Law, 57.
231 Nedelsky, Relations of Law, 62.
Similarly, while talking about her interdependent pious feminist approach, Meral focused on what Gergen calls “the reality of the ‘between,’ that urn-like form emerging from co-existence.” As a result, Meral was able to locate a new meaning for her struggle when she re-defined herself as a pious feminist without deprioritizing her pious struggle. Meral’s journey, therefore, also resembles Gergen’s “relational flow,” an idea I will discuss in detail in the next chapter, which refers to a continuous movement that brings two waves together: The first one is about preservation of meaning (so that Meral can preserve the meaning of her pious struggle); the second one is about creation of new meaning (so that Meral can respond to her shifting context as a pious feminist). The two waves are inseparable and interdependent, and together they challenge the assumption of separation between the moral and secular forms of knowledge.

Hence, the narratives of pious feminists in Turkey locate an important gap in the current literature on pious women’s agency that necessitates relational approach. Even the approaches that draw on the multiply-constituted self—including the works of Bucar, Shively, and Torab—fall short of accounting for three issues in the pious feminist narratives that I discussed above, namely, 1) the relationship between habituation and informed piety, 2) intentionality, and 3) pious feminism as a hybrid category.

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed the pious feminist narratives on agency with respect to the current literature on the field. Aside from different Western secular models of autonomy, I have also focused on Mahmood’s and Bucar’s alternative discussions of pious women’s agency. Rather than separating the sources of self-law and other-law and/or bringing them together as two fundamentally separate units, I have argued that pious feminists in Turkey interfused and synthesized their pious and feminist engagements and re-formulated their own, discursively interdependent pious feminist stance. In doing so, they resisted both Islamic and secular forms of patriarchy in Turkey, and not Islam and/or secularism. Hence, differing from both Mahmood and Bucar, they additionally challenged the idea that the self and the Other are distinct, bounded units that require a relational approach to subjectivity along with the discursive ethics of otherhood. Thus, I have argued that the pious feminist perspective in Turkey can best be analyzed in the intersection of Bucar’s dianomy, Gergen’s relational multi-being, and Nedelsky’s relational autonomy.

232 Gergen, Relational Being, 62.
My discussion has shown that pious feminists in Turkey did not compartmentalize habituation as a way of learning Islamic norms, and critique as an inherently Western value. Alternatively, “feminist skills” could be “habituated” and “a pious way of life” could be chosen. Rather than either phronesis or téchne, pious feminists combined skill with practical wisdom (and thus, production with action), and with the help of multi-engagement with different systems of knowledge, they arrived at an enlargement of the mind through which they became more informed Muslims and consciously re-constitute themselves as self-acclaimed pious feminists. Therefore, for pious feminists, their feminist struggle made them better Muslims, and their pious struggle made them better feminists.

Thus, in this chapter, I have argued that while secular feminists thought that a comprehensive change in the patterns of collaboration and disagreement necessitates expanding the boundaries of feminist friendship in a way that requires both distance and proximity, for pious feminists, it firstly requires the secular feminist be willing to recognize alternative pious forms of agency and autonomy. In the next chapter, I will bring together secular and pious feminist narratives I have gathered for this study and analyze what Gergen refers to as “relational flow” between the two groups in the women’s movement in Turkey.
Chapter 5
The Relational Flow of the Disagreement:
In Between Politico-Discursive Fixities and Feminist Iterations

Thus far, I have separately discussed alternative feminist vocabularies of the secular/pious disagreement in the narratives of my participants. Rather than solely dwelling on the more general, politico-discursive secular-pious divide, I have tried to reground the disagreement between the two women’s groups on secular feminist perceptions of feminist friendship (Chapter 3) and pious feminist perceptions of feminist autonomy (Chapter 4). In this chapter, I aim to provide an overall relational analysis of the dynamics of disagreement by bringing together the narratives of both groups. In doing so, I revisit two main themes that I have previously introduced. First, with the help of Gergen’s theory of the relational multi-being and the relational flow (see Chapter 4), I argue that secular feminists and pious feminists in Turkey coordinate two main “waves” in their relationship: one marked by the political fixities and ongoing polarizations of Erdoğan’s “New Turkey,” and the other by their actual, iterative civil society encounters in the women’s movement, which I refer to as “feminist iterations.” Second, by the recalling Arendt’s discussion of thinking as a thought event between the past and the future (see Chapter 1 and Chapter 3), I argue that, instead of recognizing the flow between the two waves, both women’s groups in my study felt stuck in the moment, trapped, exhausted, and hopeless about the future—unable to move.¹

Although the relationship between secular feminists and pious feminists, in this regard, may appear like a “battlefield” between two distinct forces at a particular moment in time, I suggest that these forces are not separate. They actually operate like an ocean wave by folding into one another. Reducing this flow into a single choice between secular modernity and pious modernity, therefore, not only fails to capture the complexity of the actual dynamics of disagreement between the two women’s groups, but also it limits the both groups’ imaginative capacity and the horizons of possibility. I suggest that reframing the disagreement as a relational flow, in this regard, might help both women’s groups to transcend such limitations, and possibly, transform their dual entrapment into a creative in-between through which new possibilities might

¹Here, I am influenced by Margaret Kohn and Keally McBride’s remarkable use of Arendt’s discussion to describe the unstable grounds of postcolonial theorizing and its problem of foundations, which according Kohn and McBride, involves more than contradiction, but it is “an opening to break away from the past and create a new form of politics in the future.” For more details: Margaret Kohn and Keally McBride, Political Theories of Decolonization: Postcolonialism and the Problem of Foundations (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 18-20, 153-154.
emerge—and, perhaps, one day, while standing for what is their own, they can both find a home
and not a battlefield.

5.1 Gergen’s Relational Flow and the Arendtian In-Between

In the first section, I would like to start by introducing the two main parts of the
theoretical frame that shapes my discussion in this chapter: 1) Gergen’s relational flow and 2)
Arendt’s discussion of thinking as a thought event in between the past and the future.

As I introduced in Chapter 4, in Gergen’s understanding of relational multi-being, co-
action results from coordination of our various relationships and the co-active confluences
between them. According to Gergen, therefore, through our interdependencies, we build
meaningful relationships and recognize them as ours.2 Like Kleinig’s discussion on loyalty and
friendship I introduced in Chapter 3, Gergen argues that, our interdependencies enable us to add
meaning to our actions, which Gergen names as “relational pathways.”3 Gergen believes this
process (of meaning creation) is always relational, never single-sided or determined by a single
source or variable.

We create relational pathways as we coordinate our relationships in a continuous
relational flow, which Gergen defines as a “continuous movement toward constraint on the one
hand, and an openness to the evolution of meaning on the other.” Hence, according to Gergen,
relational flow consists of two waves. The first one is composed of our past fixities and loyalties;
it is “essential to the creation of any meaning at all.” The second one “ensure[s] a sensitivity to
the shifting context;” it is about confronting the uncertainties of the future.4 For Gergen, like a
continuous, never-ending ocean wave, both waves “may appear for a frozen moment to be itself
alone. Yet, as the moment passes the wave disappears into the endless undulations from which it
is inseparable.”5 From Gergen’s relational approach, therefore, it is not possible to separate the
effects of the two waves from one another or determine which conversation pertains to which
discourse, tactic, or logic.6 We can only observe how we coordinate our particular relationships
at a given time and context. In this regard, Gergen’s relational flow is helpful for explaining the
disagreement between secular feminists and pious feminists in Turkey in four ways: 1) It helps

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5 Gergen, *Relational Being*, 46. I will also revisit Gergen’s relational flow in Chapter 5 to explain the relational flow of disagreement between the
two groups in between discursive fixities (the political secular-pious divide) and the shifting context of feminist iterations (during shared civil
society meetings in the women’s movement).
6 In contrast to Bucar’s dianomy, for example, as I argued in Chapter 4.
us to recognize that, despite its explanatory power, the secular-pious divide only constitutes one of the waves of the disagreement—the constraining first wave that separately gives meaning to both struggles. 2) The disagreement also has a more fluid side that is open to change and evolution of new meaning, driven by the feminist interactions between the two groups. 3) The two waves of the disagreement are never separate from one another; they are coordinated like ocean waves in each moment. 4) Due to the relative strength of the secular/pious divide, however, both women’s groups in my study remained doubtful about altering their current patterns of co-action.

Here, I think, Arendt’s discussion might clarify few points. In her discussion on thinking as a thought event, Arendt uses one of Kafka’s parables as a guiding metaphor where the past and the future appear as two clashing forces in a “rectilinear continuum,” which is broken when a man, Kafka’s “he,” inserts himself in between and finds himself in a “battlefield” where he is pulled towards different directions. “If he ever wants to stand his ground at all” as Arendt recaps (which is a shared concern of both pious and secular feminists in my study), he has to fight with both forces, at the same time.7 For Kafka, the past “presses him from behind, from the origin” and pushes him forward, and therefore helps him in his fight with the future, while the future “blocks the road ahead,” and helps him in his fight with the past as it pushes him back. For Arendt, from “the viewpoint of the man who always lives in the interval between the past and future,” thinking (as a prerequisite of judgment) takes place in this gap where “there are two or even three fights going on simultaneously: the fight between ‘his’ antagonists and the fight of the man in between with each of them.”8 With the help of Kafka’s parable, therefore, Arendt argues the present is a fleeting movement between the past and the future where the activity of thought takes place. The past, for Arendt, never passes away. It is a continuous force, like the future.

Arendt thinks that Kafka’s parable misses one important point. As soon as the man inserts himself to the continuum, Arendt argues, it is no longer possible to talk about the past and future in a two-dimensional, linear continuum. Therefore, resembling Gergen’s approach, although in a frozen moment, the two forces may appear distinct, as soon as that moment ends and the man inserts himself to the continuum, Arendt suggests that Kafka’s “he” adds a third dimension that is formed as a deflection of the two clashing forces, forcing them to meet an angle instead of being separated by a broken line. Hence, for Arendt, there is a “parallelogram” of forces, where

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8 Arendt, Between Past and Future, 10.
“the resultant diagonal whose origin would be the point at which the forces clash and upon which they act.” Arendt further argues that, the “diagonal force, whose origin is known, whose direction is determined by past and future, but whose eventual end lies in infinity is the perfect metaphor for the activity of thought” and its boundless possibilities for the enlargement of the mind. Thus, Arendt’s rendition of Kafka’s parable brings out two points: First, we arrive at the “perfect equidistance from the past and future” by the activity of thought and, second, arriving at an equidistant standpoint requires us to accept being “sufficiently removed” from both the past and future. That is, instead of nostalgia of the past or the lofty promises of the future, it requires us to confront the confusion and uncertainty of the present.

For both Arendt and Kafka, however, this optimal ending of finding the equidistance between the past and the future, is mostly “theoretical.” As Arendt puts it, what is more probable is that “unable to find the diagonal” and “worn out under the presence of constant fighting,” those who are in the middle would be more likely to persistently stand their “ground,” which is, at the end of the day, “a battlefield and not a home.” In doing so, they would forget their original intentions and be “aware only of the existence of this gap in time” in this “the enormous, ever-changing time-space.” That is, they would know “what they are fighting against” but forget “what they are fighting for”—which sadly resembles the current position of secular feminists and pious feminists in Turkey as I argued in Chapter 1.

In line with Arendt’s use of Kafka’s parable, in the following pages, I argue that, “to stand their ground” and to find a safe feminist space to call home, both secular and pious participants of my study felt as if they were in a battlefield between different forces as they inserted themselves into the continuum, fighting multiple simultaneous battles in between different political imaginaries, different feminisms, and the past and future imagined by each. Pulled towards opposing directions in this gap between thought and action, like in Kafka’s parable, both secular feminists and pious feminists in my study hoped that, one day, “in an unguarded moment—(…) [that] would require a night darker than any night has ever been yet,” they would be able to “jump out of the fighting line” and take “the position of an umpire,” which

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9 Arendt, Between Past and Future, 11.
10 Arendt, Between Past and Future, 12.
11 Arendt, Between Past and Future, 12.
12 Arendt, Between Past and Future, 12.
13 Arendt, Between Past and Future, 12.
14 Arendt, Between Past and Future, 12.
15 Arendt, Between Past and Future, 27.
they assumed, would lead to a more cooperative relationship between the two groups, beyond their different conceptions of feminist autonomy and perceived limits of feminist friendship.\textsuperscript{16}

Hence, from this perspective, this chapter delineates two seemingly contradictory, simultaneous waves in the narratives in my study, one of fixity and the other of fluidity. The first involves an effort to proactively preserve what both groups perceive as their own; the second indicates a desire to respond to the ongoing transformations in the women’s movement. While their fight with the past pushes both women’s groups forward to a more collaborative feminist future, their fight with the future pushes them back to their “obvious” or “irresolvable” opposition. Although the two waves might appear as two distinct waves in one particular moment, once that movement ends, it is possible to see that they actually operate as a relational flow. It is not possible to determine where one wave ends and the other starts. Nevertheless, both groups hope that, one day, they might meet at a hypothetical diagonal through which they can transform their broken line into a parallelogram of forces, and in this manner, become “sufficiently removed” from the secular-pious divide in Turkey. In the current moment marked by Erdoğan’s New Turkey, however, they mostly feel exhausted and embittered about fighting a relentless battle to stand their ground which, they reckon, will never end. In order for the two women’s groups in Turkey to transform their relationship, therefore, my study suggests that rather than reducing their relationship to its constraining first wave, both waves of the relational flow should be recognized—not as two distinct and separate waves, but as a flow, interwoven and submerged into one another.

5.2 The First Wave of the Relational Flow: The Political Fixities of the Past

In this section, I focus on the first wave of the relational flow in the narratives of my secular and pious feminist participants, which constrains the relationship between the two groups within the bounds of the more general, politico-discursive secular-pious divide. I am particularly interested in the way the current JDP period has affected the two groups’ mutual political fixities since 2002. I suggest that, according to the secular feminist participants of my study, the JDP period has shifted the secular feminist standpoint towards the women with the headscarf in two opposing ways. On the one hand, with JDP’s political rise, secular feminists could no longer ignore the pious women’s rights struggle, and as a result, they started to rethink about the headscarf from a slightly different, more self-critical position. On the other hand, with JDP’s pro-

\textsuperscript{16} Arendt, \textit{Between Past and Future}, 7.
pious, neocapitalist conservatism, secular feminists defensively hold on to their Kemalist ideals, avoided interacting with the pious structures of power, and kept a distant standpoint towards the pious women with the headscarf. According to the pious feminist participants of my study, similarly, the JDP period cultivated two opposing tendencies. On the one hand, pious feminists acknowledged that the political success of JDP has provided them more venues to spread their “pious” message in the women’s movement, on the other hand, they thought that, by claiming itself as the sole voice of the pious community in Turkey, JDP has offered limited room for pious women’s feminism. Thus, in JDP’s New Turkey, while the feminist iterations in the women’s movement in Turkey has brought the two women’s groups together on issue-specific platforms, the rising political polarizations have strengthened their mutual political fixities, set them further apart, and limited their perceptions of collaboration and collective action in the women’s movement within the boundaries of the secular-pious divide. In this part, I focus on the latter tendency in the narratives, which I refer to as the first wave of their relational flow. In the next part, I will provide a more detailed discussion on the repeated, shared civil society encounters between the two groups, which constitute the second wave of their relational flow.

In this part, therefore, I suggest that the first wave of the relational flow between secular feminists and pious feminists in Turkey is about their primary political opposition. It is the constraining part of their relationship that adds separate meaning to their struggles, anchors them in the secular/pious duality. It provides an immediate sense of security, certainty, and identity against the future’s uncertainty, fluidity, and unpredictability. I examine three particular themes in the narratives of my participants: 1) the rising secular fears, anxieties, and “neighborhood pressures,” 2) the declining pace of pious feminist activism, and 3) the question of JDP’s sincerity/hypocrisy.

5.2.1 JDP and Secular Feminists: Fears, Anxieties, Neighborhood Pressures

According to my secular feminist participants, JDP has indeed changed the political climate in Turkey. For secular citizens, this has mostly implied rising political polarizations, anxieties, fears, and neighborhood pressures starting from JDP’s first term in 2002, and more visibly after 2005. For my secular feminist participants, this environment was the most important barrier against thinking positively about a future feminist collaboration between secular and pious women’s groups.
For Rana Emir, for example, in JDP’s New Turkey, secular moderns have indeed become “anxious moderns”\(^{17}\)—a popular political term that was originally used in Binnaz Toprak and Ali Çarkoğlu’s study about the rise of religious conservatism, and what Şerif Mardin calls as “neighborhood pressure” (mahalle baskısı) in Turkey during JDP’s first period.\(^{18}\) According to Mardin, “neighborhood pressure” denotes the socially evaluative, scrutinizing power of the gaze in the Turkish society, which has always been an effective mechanism of societal control.\(^{19}\) In JDP’s first term, Mardin argues, through these invisible threads of neighborhood pressure, JDP has diffused, integrated, and encouraged a heightened level of religious conservatism, forcing secular citizens to self-censor themselves prior to acting or speaking. In contrast to the post-Kemalist reading of JDP’s relatively liberal, reformist, pro-active first period as a chance for pluralism and democratization, therefore, Mardin has pointed out, even during this period, JDP indirectly encouraged a new type of neo-capitalist, Sunni Islamic conservatism by re-regulating the unseen webs of neighborhood pressure. The secular moderns, and anyone who is excluded from JDP’s “new” pious modernity (not just Kemalist secular citizens, but also Alevi, Kurds, and non-Muslim minorities), therefore, grew apprehensive and restless as JDP revitalized the secular/pious dichotomy in its own terms.\(^{20}\) As Chapter 3 argued, for secular feminists, pious feminists’ possible political connections with JDP were the most important obstacles against expanding their boundaries of feminist friendship to pious feminists. Rather than a specific feminist issue of dissent, there was deep-rooted political distrust between the two women’s groups. For secular feminists, therefore, their disagreement with pious women was political, and not class-related or religious. For example, according to Mine Rendeci, secular feminists did not want to work with pious feminists because they did not want to be “fooled into” JDP’s political

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\(^{17}\) Rana Emir, Group Interview, April 2011, Istanbul.


\(^{19}\) According to Mardin, the gaze has been used as a tool for regulating and engineering the Turkish society since the Ottoman period, but with the JDP period, it has gained a slightly different momentum. See Şerif Mardin Interview, Vatan, May 15, 2007. [In Turkish]. One year later, a panel was organized about what Şerif Mardin meant by the term “neighborhood pressure.” The panel included Şerif Mardin, Binnaz Toprak, and Hidayet Şefkatlı Tükşal from the pious feminist organization, CCWP. The transcript of the panel along with some pictures can be found at: http://www.rusencakir.com/Prof-Serif-Mardin-Mahalle-Baskisi-Ne-Demek-Istemiyorum2028.


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project in the name of feminist solidarity. Seyhan Polat similarly claimed that, the two groups could not trust one another due to JDP’s asymmetric treatment of the two groups. As she stated, “The neighborhood pressure is only forced upon us, not on the Islamists.” Başak Haznedar, similarly, asserted that their fears were “not emotional over-reactions, fantasies, or excuses to otherify pious women;” for Başak, secular feminists were afraid because they thought they were losing the core of their identity with the rise of JDP’s religious conservatism. In her words, “20 years ago, it was unthinkable for a political party representative to say that if a woman shows her cleavage, she deserves to be raped! But now, this has become normal! Last year, I felt uncomfortable to wear a swimsuit at the beach for the first time in my life! It is very painful to admit this as a feminist… I feel extremely guilty about it.” Rana Emir gave distinct examples from her own life including (1) the time when a government official refused to shake her hand because she is a woman and (2) when she was forced to wear a full gown in a mosque although she was already wearing a lightly-tied headscarf, long-sleeved shirt, and trousers. For Rana, their hardliner secularist tendencies were not because they could not see anything but the headscarf when they talked to a veiled woman; it was because they could not see anything but their own anxieties about JDP and its growing intrusions into their secular lifestyles. From this perspective, for secular feminists, their disagreement with pious feminists mostly resulted from the rising secular-pious polarization during the JDP period in Turkey. They considered self-preservation as a way of resistance against the JDP’s Islamization project and its unseen threads of neighborhood pressure.

During the time of my interviews, the validity of secular feminist fears was highly questioned, and as Chapter 3 suggested, secular feminists were aware of this criticism. For my pious feminist participants, however, rather than the question of validity, the real problem about the secular feminist fears was the false link they assumed between a woman’s headscarf and her alleged support for JDP. Although secular feminists in my study were often careful about separating the women supporters of JDP from pious feminists in their narratives, according to the

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21 Here, Mine Rendeci argued that, it was easy to fall into JDP’s trap because JDP used the discourse of Muslim harm and injury very effectively to accumulate more power for itself. According to Mine, this was how JDP “fooled” the liberal intellectuals into its plan during the 2010 referendum. The referendum package introduced in 2010 included constitutional changes that: (1) provided more rights and democratic freedoms to people, and that (2) expanded the power of the government and the president and set the preliminary constitutional foundation for transitioning into a presidential system in the future—which was finalized after another highly contentious, polarizing referendum held in April 2017. During the referendum in 2010, the main opposition party, Republican People’s Party (RPP) proposed to pass the articles on rights and freedoms in the parliament and only take the matters the second set of provisions to the referendum which was declined by JDP. As a result, many left-wing, liberal intellectuals campaigned for a “Yes, but not Enough” position, and indirectly supported JDP in the name of democratization.

22 Seyhan Polat, Interview, April 2011.

23 Başak Haznedar, Group Interview, March 2011, Ankara.

24 As Mine Rendeci explained, for example, “Whether we can prove ourselves right or not, we feel it, we are afraid of the future of this country. I hope with all my heart that they [the critics] are right and we are wrong.” See: Mine Rendeci, Interview, April 2011, Istanbul.
pious experience, secular feminists miserably failed at this task because “they still do not think about the headscarf as a pious woman’s right.” 25 As Meral Şenel complained, “Our secular friends bring in the headscarf every single time JDP raises a controversial issue. (…) They do not empathize with our position. Automatically, they build a wall around them and everything revolves around them. Their world is the only world there is. Their fear is the only fear there is.” 26 Pious feminists challenged this in three ways.

Firstly, contrary to the common assumptions, they asserted “neighborhood pressure affected both groups in Turkey.” 27 Indeed both women’s groups in my study felt dually entrapped between different forms of neighborhood pressure. For secular feminists, while the pious community considered them “too Western or too feminist” (due to their feminist ideals), for more liberal/radical feminists, they were “neither Western nor feminist enough” (due to their Kemalist fixities). 28 Meanwhile, pious feminists felt they were “not pious enough” for the pious community (due to their feminist ideals) and “too pious” for secular women (due to their headscarf). 29 Despite their shared dual entrapment, both women’s groups suffered alone, not being able to see the wounds of the other.

According to Meral, pious women also suffered from neighborhood pressure, because, as she explained, “When people see your headscarf, they expect you to behave in a certain way, simply because of your headscarf” which, Meral thought, could become a very “heavy burden to carry.” 30 Meral provided a personal example: “We were like 13 or 15. When we laughed loudly in the bus, older people grumbled. ‘Look at them,’ they said, whispering ‘Does this behavior suit (yakaşımak) their headscarf, aren’t they supposed to be modest?’ Other girls also laughed, but because we wore the headscarf, we were the scapegoats.” For this reason, Meral thought, “those women who put on make-up and wear the headscarf (…) are trying to challenge what is expected from them. From where I see it, it is resistance.” 31 Meral summed up pious women’s dual entrapment as follows: “Patriarchal reading of the religion restricts us in the name of religion (…) and the state policy restricts us (…) in the name of secularism.” 32 Yelda Hakman Tekyol agreed: “On the one hand, once you define yourself as a pious woman, a part of the population

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25 Meral Şenel, Interview, September 2011, Ankara.
26 Meral Şenel, Interview, September 2011, Ankara.
28 See the narratives of Başak Haznedar, Demet Paksoy, Mine Rendeci, Filiz Doğan, and Seyhan Polat.
29 See the narratives of Zeliha Leventgil, Meral Şenel, Yelda Hakman Tekyol, and Melahat Tanış.
31 Meral Şenel, Interview, March 2011, Ankara.
finds you very, very dangerously pious. On the other hand, another part of the population deems you an infidel! Why? Because you don’t wear the full çarşaf (chador)!

Why? Because your headscarf is red!”

For Yelda, rather than JDP’s success, it was their involvement in the women’s rights movement that has helped them to put their struggle into the next level. From Yelda’s perspective, therefore, the growing political polarization during the JDP period continued to act as a barrier for dialogue. Rather than JDP’s success, pious women’s deeper involvement in the women’s rights movement have been transformative.

Secondly, pious feminists argued that, contrary to possible secular presuppositions, JDP was not the sole factor that has strengthened the secular-pious dichotomy in the Turkish political context; secular actors also contributed to the preservation and maintenance of this divide. Pious feminists argued that, the continued use of the secularist separation between the religious/traditional headscarf (başörtüsü) and political headscarf (türban) was, for example, a tactical move to “de-religionize the headscarf.”

For Melahat Tanış, by “ politicizing and de-religionizing the headscarf,” secular feminists were able to reject the headscarf without feeling guilty for (1) otherizing pious women although they call themselves feminists, and (2) not wearing the headscarf themselves although they call themselves Muslims. In her words: “If they [secular women] accept that I cover my head because of the will of God, they can respond in two ways. They can either declare (…) they are atheists, or they can go and look through Qur’an and see it is truly the will of God.”

For Melahat, secular women “declined both options” and claimed that the headscarf is not about the religion: “They say, they accept the headscarf, but because we wrap it in a different way, they say, the headscarf becomes political, therefore, they say, they do not accept our headscarf. In this way, politics becomes an excuse for them to invalidate our struggle.”

According to Melahat, the worst part was that secular feminists were genuinely oblivious to their discriminatory attitude, especially during the 1990s. In this regard, pious feminists like Melahat delineated that, by uncritically clinging on to their political fixities, secular feminists also contributed to the continuity of the secular-pious dichotomy, and hence, JDP is not the only factor that has intensified the secular-pious dichotomy over the last decades.

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33 Yelda Hakman Tekyol, Interview, September 2011, Ankara.
34 Melahat Tanış, Interview, September 2011, Ankara.
35 Melahat Tanış, Interview, September 2011, Ankara. Aside from two of my secular feminist participants who were non-Muslim, most of my secular feminist participants identified as believers. They did not, however, accept that the headscarf is a requirement of Qur’an. They said the Qur’an required covering the décolleté, not the hair. From their reading, covering the hair was a tradition, not an order of Qur’an.
36 Melahat Tanış, Interview, September 2011, Ankara.
As Melahat suggested, secular feminists in my study did associate a particular version of the headscarf with JDP supporters (and not pious feminists) that consists of: (1) a headscarf that covers the ears and neck (2) a separate band in the forehead, and (3) a hairclip that creates a slight “bump” at the crown of the head (hotoz) holding the hair at an alleviated level. If there was no “bump” or a “band,” secular feminists said they would not be very much concerned about the headscarf. Diverging from Melahat’s narrative, however, aside from the hardliner secularists in my study, the majority of my secular feminist participants were, at least retrospectively, self-critical about their despising attitude towards the headscarf during the 1990s and acknowledged that, in Turkey, “there is still much to learn about appreciating multiplicity and difference.” In Seyhan’s words, for example, “During 1990s, we [secular feminists] were very judgmental about the headscarf. Our understanding of modernity has left the religious symbols out, and therefore, the religious groups felt excluded from our project of modernity. We are, at least partly, responsible for their resentment. Our rejection created their political rise.” She then added with an ironic smirk, “It is kind of like the story of Frankenstein… We are the ones who created the monster.”

Thirdly, pious feminists questioned the reasoning behind the secular feminist support for the headscarf ban. As Meral stated, “If they are okay with a person having a certain political opinion without the headscarf, why are they against the headscarf because it is a political sign? I still cannot understand this.” Yelda confirmed, “I always say this: I take off my headscarf when I enter to the university but this does not change my religion, my belief, or my thoughts.” Similarly Melahat recalled a televised incident during a live broadcast in late 1990s when a veiled woman was forced to take off her headscarf. Empathizing with her shame and embarrassment, Melahat remembered the woman’s reply word for word twenty years later, “You made me uncover my head, but you can never make me change what is inside it.” According to Melahat, this reply captured the complex relationship between the headscarf and the process of

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37 Similarly, they called the women supporters of JDP hotozlar (the ones with the hair bump).
38 Rana Emir, Interview, April 2011, Istanbul. In doing so, rather than verbally adhering to the türban/başörtüsü dichotomy, secular feminists silenced themselves and preferred to use hand gestures to describe the difference between the two uses of the headscarf during my interviews. For example, in Rana’s words, “I am not opposed to the casually tied headscarf. I am opposed to this [pointing towards the forehead, gesturing the “band”], and on top of this [covering the ears and the neck] with this [putting her hand on top of her head with a circular angle, gesturing the “bump”], and the long coats. (...) I am opposed to the one that looks like a uniform, a nun’s uniform you know, with a touch of color.” Rana added, “A woman with the headscarf can, of course, be secular. But if she wears the headscarf like this [the band and the bump] with a coat down to here [points her shoes], there is no way I can believe her sincerity when she says she wears the headscarf because of her religious belief or choice.”
39 Seyhan Polat, Interview, April 2011, Istanbul.
40 Seyhan Polat, Interview, April 2011, Istanbul.
41 Meral Senel, Interview, September 2011, Ankara.
42 Melahat Tanış, Interview, September 2011, Ankara.
pious subjectivity formation which, as I discussed in Chapter 4, could not be undone or reversed by an external factor.\textsuperscript{44} As a secular feminist, Mine Rendeci provided a different interpretation to the same televised incident. For Mine, what that woman said that night “clearly revealed” the extent of pious women’s radical commitment to political Islam. In her words, “She said, no matter how much we explain, no matter what dangers lie ahead, no matter what freedoms are at stake, she said, we would not be able to change her mind!”\textsuperscript{45}

Instead of trying to place everyone under monolithic categories, Meral Şenel argued secular feminists have to be more open-minded: “When I see someone who wears a tailored suit and an Atatürk badge, I do not think about her possible political preferences, or a certain political party, because it is none of my business. But when they see my headscarf, they have a particular understanding of who I am, and they think it is their business to judge me (…) Pious women are not all made out of the same mold. But they try to put all of us into a single mold.”\textsuperscript{46} In my study, however, secular feminists could easily respond to the critiques of their receptivity and openness by dispensing similar observations about pious women. As Rana Emir pointed out, for example, “As soon as they [women with the headscarf] see us, they become aggressive and assume that we are prejudiced against them. I am not going to lie. True, we are terribly hopeless. But we do agree with them on some issues other than the headscarf, but they are not interested in those matters. JDP has completely polarized the two sides. It is such a shame.”\textsuperscript{47}

\textbf{5.2.2 JDP and Pious Feminist Resistance}

Aside from the intensifying the secular fears and anxieties, secular feminists also suggested that, JDP period has passivized the pious feminist resistance movement in Turkey. They observed that, although the headscarf ban was still enforced during the first three periods of JDP (until 2014), pious women did not resist the ban in this period like they did during the 1990s. This observation is important for two main reasons. Firstly, it shows that the more self-critical secular feminists in my study acknowledged the 1990s as the apex of the pious women’s resistance in Turkey. In this period, with the support of liberal, plural, and radical feminist groups, secular feminists thought, pious women’s resistance has placed a significant critique of the formerly less visible Kemalist inequalities. Since 2002, however, they argued, the spark of

\textsuperscript{44} See Chapter 4 for a detailed discussion.  
\textsuperscript{45} Mine Rendeci, Interview, April 2011, Istanbul.  
\textsuperscript{46} Meral Şenel, Interview, September 2011, Ankara.  
\textsuperscript{47} Rana Emir, Interview, April 2011, Istanbul.
pious women’s resistance started to fade. Although the headscarf ban was still enforced until 2014, secular feminists pointed out that pious women’s resistance grew quieter under JDP. Hence, secular feminists stood closer to the argument that, for pious women’s movement to regain its momentum, the structures have to reverse again.\footnote{Ebru Başar, Interview, April 2011, Ankara.} Secondly, this observation suggests that, during the JDP period, for secular feminists, pious feminist resistance movement in Turkey started to lose its credibility because, under pious structures of power, it grew less radical. Secular feminists thought that pious feminists failed to resist pious political structures. From the secular feminist perspective, therefore, this affirmed the assumed connections between the pious feminist movement and the JDP, and therefore, it contributed to the first wave of their relational flow by separating the two groups further apart and reducing the opportunities for collaboration between the two women’s groups.

For pious feminists like Meral Şenel, the problems with this explanation were that: (1) It assumed external political structures could fully determine pious women’s actions, and therefore, ignored the internal, autonomous dynamics of the pious women’s movement. (2) It also assumed that progression of the social movements had to be linear, and thus, it presupposed a continuously increasing path for pious feminist activism in Turkey. For Meral, although JDP has provided them new venues to spread their message as pious women, it has offered them limited space for pious feminism. For her, it was true that the “initial enthusiasm and protest character” of the pious feminist movement has declined after three decades of active resistance, but this was a natural outcome of their internal progression as a social movement. Like Meral, Yelda Hakman Tekyol also rejected any explanation that relied excessively on external pro-religious political structures. For Yelda, pious women eventually got tired of making the same argument about the same problem: “The truth is we are tired. We are very, very tired. When we are at a meeting where there are other women who do not wear the headscarf but who defend the right to wear it, we beg them with our eyes to bring up the issue before we do.”\footnote{Yelda Hakman Tekyol, Interview, September 2011, Ankara. Here, Yelda states “ağızlarının içine bakmak,” a common saying in Turkish that can be literally translated as “look inside their mouths.” I translated as “beg them with our eyes” which, I think, captures what Yelda tries to say in English better than the literal translation.}

For Melahat Tanış, this criticism was hypocritical because, during the 1990s, pious women were criticized because they were “too radical,” and a decade later, they were still criticized, but this time, because they have become “too passivized.” According to Melahat, “If JDP has passivized the headscarf movement, or if the headscarf movement has become more
mainstream, was not this what the secularists wanted? Was not our struggle too radical during the 1990s? Weren’t we ‘terrorists’?” 50 Similar to Meral and Yelda, Melahat argued, “without JDP, Islamic women’s movement in Turkey would not progress in the same way it did,” but this did not mean pious feminist movement could be considered as an extension of JDP. 51

Zeliha Leventgil, who openly supported JDP and rejected to be labelled as a feminist, also argued that, although JDP “has transformed the [political] atmosphere in Turkey” and provided more freedoms and opportunities for pious women with the headscarf, it was not the only factor that has shifted the protest character of the headscarf movement. For Zeliha, after three decades, the girls who used to wait in front of the university gates have grown up. As Zeliha explained, “You have a personal life. You get married. You have kids. You have a job. But the struggle is always there (...) We still protest, but in different ways. And thank God, it is different. I would not want to stand in front of the university gates today as I did 20 years ago!” 52

Zeliha also argued that, despite the JDP’s political power, secularists still continued to stigmatize, otherize, and exclude the pious women. Zeliha suggested, “The struggle has to continue until the whole mentality changes. Protesting in front of the university gates is no longer the way to go.” 53

For Ayşe Şengül, JDP had also negative effects on the pious feminist movement in Turkey. According to Ayşe, it was important to remember that, during the 1990s, the interests of pious women’s rights movement and the women’s piety movement were similar. As a result, during the 28 February period, the pious women’s rights movement had the support of the entire pious population. When they protested in front of the university gates for their right to religious expression and education, therefore, the pious community did not treat their resistance as a sign of immodesty. To the contrary, the more general pious community were supportive of their struggle for rights. However, when they, as pious women with the headscarf, resisted JDP’s avoidance of placing veiled women as parliamentary candidates, and instead of voting for JDP, started to support their own independent candidates during the elections by saying “No Headscarf (in the parliament), No Votes (for JDP in the elections)” (Başörtüsü Yok, Oy da Yok), pious feminists thought they were perceived differently by the rest of the pious population that supported Erdoğan almost unconditionally. In this regard, according Ayşe, it was wrong to

50 Melahat Tanış, Interview, September 2011, Ankara.
51 Melahat Tanış, Interview, September 2011, Ankara.
52 Zeliha Leventgil, Interview, April 2011, Istanbul.
53 Zeliha Leventgil, Interview, April 2011, Istanbul.
assume that pious feminist movement has grew silent under JDP’s pious structures of power. They continued to resist, but since they did not have the rest of the pious population behind them in their efforts this time (like they did during the late 1990s), their resistance did not make a significant impact.

In Ayşe’s words: “When you look at the wider populace… The pious, average Muslim citizens—they mostly vote for JDP. And they think, if you are not voting for JDP, everything you do harms JDP and helps the secularists.”

This was unfortunate for the self-acclaimed pious feminists in my study because, for them, the main contribution of JDP was that, in its first term, JDP helped the pious community let go their internal differences and unite under one roof. JDP helped the pious community to reinvent itself and associate a new meaning to the pious struggle. However, by the end of JDP’s second term in 2011, more progressive pious feminists like Ayşe thought it was evident that JDP could not be a melting pot for the pious community in Turkey. By refusing to account for the critical voices within the pious population, including pious feminists, according to Ayşe, JDP has lost this chance.

According to Meral, like the secular community, the pious community was also “anxious.” Although JDP had already consolidated its electoral power and politically restructured the institutions that used to be under the influence of the secular elite, especially the judiciary and the military, the pious community was still afraid of a possible closure of JDP and perceived every single criticism against JDP as a political move to side with the secularists, including pious feminist criticisms. As a result, when Meral and her friends campaigned for their own independent candidate during 2011 elections, she observed that, “Many women with the headscarf, or with the çarşaf (chador), they did not even look at us. Nothing. Nothing. Nothing. They passed us directly, showed us the back of their hands, refused to take our brochures, without saying a word!”

For Meral, the majority of the pious women who support JDP were not interested in any other pious option other than JDP. Meral bitterly admitted this felt worse than the secular feminist reactions: “The secular women, the Kemalist women, they would at least take our brochures, just out of curiosity, read it carefully to see what it is about. But the supporters of JDP, they would not even bother! They thought we were the enemy because, clearly, we were not voting for JDP although we were pious, although we wore the headscarf! The prototypical JDP voters think like that. Unfortunately.”

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54 Ayşe Şengül, Interview, September 2011, Ankara.
56 Meral Şenel, Interview, March 2011, Ankara.
For secular feminists, not only JDP’s political success has silenced the pious women’s rights movement and strengthened the secular fears and anxieties, but also, it has reduced the chances for different women’s groups to trust each other. As Demet Paksoy argued, “As soon as we say ‘us and them’ we create divisions. This all happened after JDP.”57 Kati Baruh also argued that JDP period has made it harder for different feminists to get together. She said, “it was already hard to appreciate plurality and diversity in Turkey, and JDP made it even harder.”58 As a result, she argued, “the differences became sharper between secular women and feminists, between Kurdish feminists and Turkish feminists, between women with the headscarf and feminists.”59 Seyhan Polat confirmed the general contention that JDP presented “Sunni Islamic piety as the only form of morality in Turkey,” and that it was getting harder to keep a positive attitude about JDP.60 Başak Haznedar felt deeply disturbed by the way JDP labelled, investigated, and profiled everyone since the Ergenekon trials (2007) by listening to phone conversations, monitoring social media accounts, and gathering information about civil society representatives. As she recalled, “There was this minister who said that he wanted to meet me precisely because I am not a feminist! Who is he to say that I am not a feminist? I am a feminist! How can he be so sure of himself?”61 According to Başak, this process of labeling and profiling everyone, has forced everyone to take a side: “If you do not wear the headscarf, does it make you a Christian? An atheist? Do you have to wear the headscarf to be a believer, to be pious, to be modest? This has become the new discourse on Islam and women in Turkey. It was not like this before. This is why we are afraid. It is going to be worse.”62 During our interview, right after Başak stated this, I reminded her about JDP’s more liberal first term. Başak replied by reminding me that JDP only served for its own political interests and these interests were determined by a single man, Erdoğan himself. For Başak, women were already working for the constitutional changes that have taken place during JDP’s first period (the efforts started in 2001). Rather than an achievement of JDP, these changes were achievements of the women’s movement in Turkey. According to Başak, JDP’s contributions to women’s rights in Turkey, including the rights of pious women, could only be a side-effect of its wider political project. As she stated, “Even the

57 Demet Paksoy, Group Interview, April 2011, Istanbul.
58 Kati Baruh, Interview, April 2011, Istanbul.
59 Kati Baruh, Interview, April 2011, Istanbul.
60 Seyhan Polat, Interview, April 2011, Istanbul.
61 Başak Haznedar, Group Interview, March 2011, Ankara.
62 Başak Haznedar, Group Interview, March 2011, Ankara.
ministers in the government do not have an autonomous sphere of action without the approval of Erdoğan. How can this system produce more freedom for anyone, let alone for pious women?”

For Ömür Çakmak, similarly, the 1990s was an era of more freedom for women. In Ömür’s opinion, after the constitutional referendum in 2010, “everyone somehow became more religious or more nationalist, and this shift is also felt in Turkish feminism.”

Mine Rendeci agreed, “We cannot do anything else to express our political discontent, so perhaps, that’s why we reject these [pious] women. Because that’s all we can do, really. They control everything else.” As the number of arrested journalists, academics, students, and lawyers mounted after the Ergenekon, Balyoz, and KCK court cases, Kati Baruh thought that, “JDP period led people to withdraw themselves from expressing political criticism just to make sure that they are not misunderstood by the authorities.”

In Rana Emir’s words, “They listen to our phone conversations. They arrest everyone without any relevant proof. They keep them in prison for years. Every single day, we hear horrible things about Silivri prison. Everybody is miserable. There is no hope.” Seyhan Polat agreed, “Fear is all around. When we call for political support and solidarity, people do not want to come out and express their opinions, or even, sign petitions.”

For secular feminists, therefore, if the elections become competitive again, this not only would alleviate the secular anxieties and contribute to pious women’s resistance movement, but also, it would provide more chances for different women’s groups to work together. As Mine asserted, “When JDP controls everything, we feel as if it is forced on us to change our perspective. The idea of collaboration does not come naturally as it should. We close ourselves up... But, if JDP loses its political power... It might be easier for us because, then, it would be our choice to collaborate [with pious feminists].”

5.2.3 Perceptions of Erdoğan and Erdoğan’s JDP: Sincerity vs. Hypocrisy

A third issue that my participants raised about Erdoğan’s JDP was its sincerity or hypocrisy. For supporters of Erdoğan, like Zeliha Leventgil, Erdoğan was a very sincere person,
for secular feminists, he was a hypocrite. When I asked Zeliha about JDP’s avoidance of the headscarf issue during the first three JDP governments (until 2014), for example, Zeliha had trouble with the way I formulated my question. According to Zeliha, who had already openly claimed her support for Erdoğan and JDP during our interview, the headscarf problem in Turkey was a shame (ayıp) for all parliaments in the last three decades; it was not a “political vice specific to JDP.” Zeliha had two main arguments against the way I framed my question. Firstly, Zeliha argued that JDP did not avoid to headscarf issue because it had never promised to raise the ban in the first place. For Zeliha, therefore, “political avoidance” meant making false promises; it did not mean continuously refusing to raise a particular issue in the parliament despite holding the absolute majority of the seats. As she argued, “JDP has never declared the headscarf issue as a priority, he [Erdoğan] never placed it as a part of JDP’s agenda.” Secondly, Zeliha argued, “if Erdoğan avoided the headscarf issue,” it was not because of his lack of commitment to pious struggle, but “because he did not want to aggravate the ‘anxious modern’ fears.” According to Zeliha, the main opposition party, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu’s RPP “avoided the headscarf issue” more than Erdoğan because Kılıçdaroğlu actually put his word on it and did not follow through.

I reminded her that even if Kılıçdaroğlu was genuinely committed to the cause, RPP did not have enough number of seats in the parliament to carry it out without JDP’s support. For Zeliha, this was proof of Kılıçdaroğlu’s hypocrisy. If Zeliha was to believe Kılıçdaroğlu’s words, she would have mistakenly thought that he was amicable towards the headscarf but, in reality, she could immediately see that Kılıçdaroğlu was not sincere because he enlisted Nur Serter as a parliamentary candidate for the second time. Nur Serter, a former academic in Istanbul University who is known for her involvement in the “persuasion rooms” during the February 28 process and active role during the 2007 Republican Marches, is a highly well-known anti-headscarf figure in Turkey. For Zeliha, it would be too naïve to expect RPP to change.

Zeliha admitted she had her personal disappointments with JDP, but still she believed in JDP as a political party and Erdoğan as a political leader. Zeliha supported JDP most notably

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70 Zeliha Leventgil, Interview, April 2011, Istanbul.
71 Zeliha Leventgil, Interview, April 2011, Istanbul.
72 Zeliha Leventgil, Interview, April 2011, Istanbul.
73 Zeliha Leventgil, Interview, April 2011, Istanbul.
74 Zeliha Leventgil, Interview, April 2011, Istanbul. Zeliha was disappointed about the JDP’s list of candidates before the 2011 elections (which was just announced during the time of interviews) where JDP only enlisted a single candidate with the headscarf and put her on the 13th slot. For Zeliha, “nominating a woman with the headscarf to the 13th slot is far worse than not nominating any women with the headscarf at all!” She continued to express her feelings as follows: “This made me really uncomfortable! Absolute defamation! If JDP did not put anyone on the list I would not get annoyed like this, believe me. I am utterly uncomfortable right now.”
because of Erdoğan’s sincerity; she considered Erdoğan the only political leader who could empathize with the headscarf issue. Zeliha’s brief personal encounters with Erdoğan also made her reaffirm her trust in him as a person: “My observation was that he was a sincere, genuine man, a man of his word.” Zeliha trusted Erdoğan although she thought “politics is dirty in general, everyone is trying to dig each other’s graves. No one is honest. Everyone feels the need to lie.” For Zeliha, JDP has indeed intensified the secularist fears, not because it was dangerous, but because it was more successful and progressive than the secular political parties. For Zeliha, secular feminists had a hard time digesting the fact that, rather than “stripping them from their rights” or “bringing back the Sharia rule,” JDP actually “enhanced women’s rights.”

Amongst my secular feminist participants, Dilek Fişek and Çağla Parlak also thought that the reforms JDP had undertaken in its first period had been favorable for women’s rights and freedoms in Turkey. In contrast, however, secular feminists like Başak Haznedar and Kati Baruh, who were more active during the process of negotiations, argued that, contrary to general assumptions, JDP adopted a hypocritical stance towards women’s rights and was actually reluctant to carry forward the reforms. Instead of contributing to their struggle, for Başak, “JDP has complicated the process in every possible way it could.” For example, as Başak explained, “For 11 years, we have worked to establish a commission for women’s equality in the parliament. And JDP waited only 45 minutes after the parliamentary vote to change the name of the commission and added the word opportunity. So right now, the name of the commission is: The Commission for Equal Opportunity between Women and Men. The message is loud and clear: Women and men are not equal; they only have equal opportunities.” Kati Baruh also observed that the developments during this period have taken place in spite of JDP, not because of it. In her words, “The legal reforms JDP has done stopped after 2005. After those first three years, everything either stayed as it was before or went worse. (…) The table that unites us gets smaller and thinner and it gets harder find a chair to sit around it.”

For many secular feminists in my study, JDP’s hypocrisy was not just limited to its use of women’s rights, but also true for its uses of justice, transparency, democracy, and equality.

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75 Zeliha Leventgil, Interview, April 2011, Istanbul.
76 Zeliha Leventgil, Interview, April 2011, Istanbul.
77 Zeliha Leventgil, Interview, April 2011, Istanbul.
78 Zeliha Leventgil, Interview, April 2011, Istanbul.
79 Başak Haznedar, Group Interview, March 2011, Ankara.
80 Başak Haznedar, Group Interview, March 2011, Ankara.
81 Kati Baruh, Interview, April 2011, Istanbul.
class of pious citizens, JDP has created its own clientele.\textsuperscript{82} It was true this process included some groups that have felt excluded under Kemalism, but, as Hale Ulu described, “The capital changed hands in Turkey, changed hands very quickly to Islamists, and the sources of this economic transfer have remained non-transparent and anonymous.”\textsuperscript{83} According to Mine Rendeci, rather than redistribution, JDP was aiming towards a complete systematic reversal. Similarly, for Rana Emir, JDP’s electoral victory was not a social awakening of a historically repressed class of pious citizens in Turkey (see Chapter 1); the central right political parties were always powerful in Turkish elections and pious citizens were more likely to vote for them. Regarding Erdoğan and other key members of JDP, Rana stated, “We know who these people are. Nowadays, they talk about democracy, about being the voice of the people… We know it is just a cover-up. They have a very distinct political goal in mind and it has got nothing to do with democracy.”\textsuperscript{84} For Rana, JDP knowingly distorted the truth according to its own advantages, and for this reason, as secular citizens, they had to firmly stand their ground even if it meant being wrongly perceived as hardliner, intolerant Kemalists. For Mine, women’s movement was also a part of JDP’s plan: JDP was actively financing pious women’s groups while secular feminists had to self-finance themselves.\textsuperscript{85} Both Mine and Rana refused to cooperate with JDP-related women’s organizations because they did not want to be a part of this patronage. According to Rana, “What JDP is doing is not community service; it is political rent-seeking. It has no ideology; it only seeks more profit, money, and power for itself.”\textsuperscript{86} Instead of reforming the already-existing structures, Rana argued that, JDP’s aim was to demolish old structures so that JDP could channel everything back to itself without allocating credit to previous efforts.\textsuperscript{87} Rana also argued this was why JDP has been trying to block all investment to Izmir, the city that is known as “the castle” of the opposition. In her words: “Izmir is the last castle of secularism in Turkey. And JDP is trying to get it under its domain by limiting the job opportunities. Most people support JDP just for the sake of their businesses.”\textsuperscript{88} Seyhan Polat agreed. Seyhan considered this as a carefully planned strategy for JDP’s “remaking” of the “New Turkey:” JDP wanted to negate everything that is associated with the “old” Kemalist way-of-life, including the pre-existing infra-structures.\textsuperscript{89} Not

\textsuperscript{82} Çağla Parlak, Interview, Interview, March 2011, Ankara
\textsuperscript{83} Hale Ulu, Interview, Interview, March 2011, Ankara.
\textsuperscript{84} Rana Emir, Interview, April 2011, Istanbul.
\textsuperscript{85} Mine Rendeci, Interview, April 2011, Istanbul.
\textsuperscript{86} Rana Emir, Interview, April 2011, Istanbul.
\textsuperscript{87} Rana Emir, Interview, April 2011, Istanbul.
\textsuperscript{88} Rana Emir, Interview, April 2011, Istanbul.
\textsuperscript{89} Seyhan Polat, Interview, April 2011, Istanbul.
only JDP wanted to rebuild new institutions or new posts, but JDP also wanted to physically reconstruct the actual buildings, roads, parks and alter the entire city landscapes.\footnote{Seyhan Polat, Interview, April 2011, Istanbul.} As a result, Seyhan argued, JDP raised its votes by short-term investments that only benefit its own patronage, rather than financing long-term investments that could benefit everyone.

In its undoing of Kemalism, Başak thought that JDP has emptied the concepts of “democracy” “modernity” and “economic development” as well. For Başak, as JDP increased its votes, Erdoğan has become a man with too much political and economic power “who thinks he can get away with everything he does, so he acts in any way he wants.”\footnote{Başak Haznedar, Interview, March 2011, Ankara.} Başak added, “This is why I am scared. JDP’s projects are successful, but they are empty inside. Their claims for democracy, for modernization, for economic development, they are all empty.”\footnote{Başak Haznedar, Interview, March 2011, Ankara.} According to Ömür Çakmak, JDP has employed a very manipulative, populist strategy where there was no match between what was said and done.\footnote{Ömür Çakmak, Interview, April 2011, Istanbul.} Similar to Rana and Seyhan’s observations, Ömür also argued that JDP intentionally confused “the distinction between the state and the JDP”\footnote{Ömür Çakmak, Interview, April 2011, Istanbul.} As Ömür explained, “JDP manipulates and distorts key political concepts in a specific way so that they contribute to its advantage.” For this reason, Ömür suggested, “in this sense, JDP is a very postmodern political party. The only good out of JDP’s postmodernity is that everything is out in the open now. No one knows what to do about it, but everyone knows everybody else’s position. The ones who used to protest, they still keep on protesting. But still, like before, everyone gets censored and no one is free.”\footnote{Ömür Çakmak, Interview, April 2011, Istanbul.}

In this part, I have so far discussed the two women groups’ perceptions of JDP and how it has affected their relationship. I have argued that, although JDP’s political success has initially led secular feminists to confront their “white Turk” privilege and reconsider their relationship with pious women from a slightly more self-critical standpoint, all in all, instead of challenging the discursive separation between the secular and the pious, JDP period in Turkey has bolstered the divide. Instead of providing a creative discursive in-between where new possibilities can emerge out of the foundational political duality of Turkish politics, JDP period in Turkey has intensified and ensured the continuity of the past politico-discursive fixities and preserved the
separate meanings behind the secular and the pious women’s struggles, constituting the constraining part of their relationship and the first wave of their relational flow.

5.3 The Second Wave of the Relational Flow: The Feminist Iterations

Although the constraining side of the relationship between secular feminists and pious feminists in Turkey has anchored both women’s groups in their past political fixities, there is also a more fluid side to their relationship (and to their separate relational subjectivities) that is open to evolution of new meaning. In this final part of my discussion, I focus on this relatively less recognized second side of the relationship between the two women’s groups in my study, which is iteratively constituted by the shared civil society encounters. Compared to the emphasis my participants placed on the secular-pious divide, this part of the narratives appeared weaker. However, since these shared encounters provided potential openings for transformation that might one day make a collaboration possible, for the specific purposes of my study, it was equally effective and significant.

My discussion in this part has three sections. In the first section, by adopting Seyla Benhabib’s concept of democratic iterations, I suggest that, we can think about the encounters between the secular and pious women’s groups in Turkey as feminist iterations. Unlike Benhabib’s original term, what I call as feminist iterations in my study are not necessarily deliberative or democratic. To the contrary, they are often based on subjective, unrefined, one-sided observation, and a complex mix of verbal and non-verbal social cues. However, I argue that, even under these limitations, feminist iterations in the women’s movement in Turkey still gradually manifest incremental shifts of perceptions and attain a pedagogic role that teaches both women’s groups how to communicate with one another as feminists despite their political disagreements. In the second section, I pass on to the barriers against feminist iterations in the narratives of my participants; and in the third section, I review the two groups’ perceptions of the ways to ensure the continuity of the iterative shared civil society encounters that might make a transformation possible in the future.

As I discussed in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4, feminist iterations in the women’s movement have led my participants to rethink their disagreement in alternative feminist vocabularies: secular feminists in terms of feminist friendship and pious feminists in terms of feminist autonomy. In the last part, therefore, I will briefly repeat my findings on these two chapters, and provide a more general framework to think about feminist iterations that make these alternative
vocabularies possible as well as the innate interconnectedness between the two waves of the disagreement: one led by political fixities and the other by feminist iterations.

I suggest that, while the first wave separates the two groups further apart by intensifying their political fixities, the second wave offers an opening for bringing them together. Although the latter opportunity is very limited in the narratives of my participants compared to the influences of the secular-pious divide; it is potentially transformative. Every time secular feminists and pious feminists dismiss the results of their feminist iterations by claiming that their personal efforts would not be able to provide a comprehensive change in future, they are, in effect, choosing to fixate on their past patterns, and in this way, they contribute to the continuity of the secular-pious dichotomy without necessarily recognizing it. Thus, together with my discussion in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4, this part of my discussion provides an opportunity for the recognition of this choice and its consequences in the women’s movement in Turkey.

5.3.1 Feminist Iterations Between Secular Feminists and Pious Feminists in Turkey

Benhabib defines democratic iterations as “linguistic, legal, cultural, and political repetitions-in-transformation, invocations which are also revocations” that are “renegotiated in the public sphere of liberal democracies.” They are complex processes that have both “liberating and repressive potentials.” They might lead to resolution of conflict as well as the contextualization of various different narratives. Benhabib also delineates the power of democratic iterations as a learning tool and uses the term iteration in Derrida’s terms where “every repetition is a form of variation.” Benhabib argues: “Iteration is the reappropriation of the origin, it is at the same time its dissolution.” Benhabib, therefore, rejects the linearity of identity construction and de-construction as two separate processes.

In this regard, I call the repeated shared civil society encounters that bring together different women’s groups, including secular and pious feminists, feminist iterations because, I think, they might be considered as feminist “repetitions-in-transformation, invocations which are also revocations” that are renegotiated in the women’s movement. Although the feminist

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iterations in the women’s movement in Turkey are rarely liberal or democratic conversations (unlike Benhabib’s democratic iterations). I argue that they iteratively present feminist openings for both women’s groups to see their political fixities from a different light. Like democratic iterations, feminist iterations in my study are contingent in terms of their results.

In this manner, feminist iterations in my study are performative in the sense that they performatively teach both groups about feminist collaboration and how to become better feminists. As discussed in Chapter 4, performativity, according to Butler, is a “reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects it names.” Butler’s argument is two-fold. Butler, firstly, recasts performativity “as a specific modality of power as discourse.” Secondly, differing from the bounded acts of performance, Butler’s understanding of performativity requires reiteration and repetition of norms that discursively guide the body towards certain behavior. This involves both “reenactment and re-experiencing” of already-experienced norms and meanings, therefore, Butler differentiates performativity from imitation, parody, pastiche, theatricality, or fabrication of will or choice. For each reiteration of doing and/or undoing of the norms, Butler argues, carries a chance for success or failure that is absolutely contingent. Hence, it is possible to think about the feminist iterations in my study as spontaneous, contingent, and potentially transformative performatives, that are carried out in the form of “complex communicative exchanges,” which are opaque and liminal as opposed to deliberative and democratic. Each particular iteration in the women’s movement is, therefore, contingent in terms of its results. It is not possible to predict its results upon its completion. Despite the power of the secular-pious divide, therefore, the feminist iterations in the women’s movement in Turkey cannot be predetermined in advance.

In the narratives of my participants, the feminist iterations appeared as learning tools. Through repeated interactions in the women’s movement, they became feminists, and as they learned more about feminism, they started to question their identities as secular and pious women

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101 Hence, they do not fulfill the three normative pillars of Benhabib’s approach on deliberative democracy that rests on egalitarian reciprocity, voluntary self-ascription, and freedom to exit and association. For more details, see: Seyla Benhabib, *Claims of Culture: Equality and Diversity in the Global Era* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2002): 106.
103 Butler, *Bodies That Matter*.
106 Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 97. (Bilge, 13)
107 Here I refer to Maria Lugones’s discussion on liminality and complex communication. For Lugones, liminality is not just a creative in-between where self-transformation takes place. It offers communicative openings as well as communicative impasses (like democratic iterations). For Lugones, to overcome communicative impasses, instead of liberal conversations that rest on deliberation and transparency, we need complex conversations that rest on awareness of multiplicity and opacity. For more details: Maria Lugones, “On Complex Communication,” *Hypatia* 21, 3 (Summer 2006): 75-85.
in Turkey. By offering them chances for confronting one another on different occasions, the shared meetings in the women’s civil society taught them “the meaning of feminism beyond its textbook definition,” as Başak Haznedar stated as a secular feminist. As a pious feminist, Meral Şenel delineated the iterative character of this process: “It started with simple dialogues between two persons. Then, when they [secular feminists] began to trust us, they introduced us to their friends. By touching each other’s lives, we saw that, some of them started to think differently about the headscarf—slightly, but still, differently. And this pattern will continue. First two persons, then two other persons, and then two more…”108 For Meral, this process was not devoid of failures or negative consequences. In the course of their involvement in the women’s rights movement, Meral thought that each shared encounter has been a chance for both sides to “recognize the pluses and the minuses of both sides of the debate.”109 Or, as Dilek Fişek put it as a secular feminist, “the civil society teaches us to grow, it disciplines us, it nurtures us.”110 For Emine, both the positive and the negative encounters between the two groups contributed to this process. For both secular and pious participants of my study, therefore, this potentially transformative, iterative process in the women’s movement was non-linear, gradual, and uncertain in terms of its particular results. Although this contingency offered a possibility for transformation in the future, due to its unpredictability and uncertainty, both women’s groups found it easy to seek comfort in the certainty and predictability of the political secular-pious divide, and therefore, were inclined to return back to the constraining first wave of their relationship from time to time. The two waves of the relational flow were indeed merged into one another in the narratives in my study; it was nearly impossible to tell where one ended and the other started.

As Chapter 2 suggested, in the Turkish context, the secular and pious women’s groups started to come together and confront one another in the women’s movement during the late 1990s, most notably, after the Habitat II conference held in Istanbul in 1996. After Habitat II, the campaigns for the Turkish Civil Code (2001) and Penal Code (2004) amendments also brought together different groups to achieve the same goal, however, for both secular and pious feminists, the most important platform after Habitat was the CEDAW working group sessions in Ankara, where secular and pious feminists found repeated chances for confronting one another during the three-day working group sessions.

110 Dilek Fişek, Interview, January 2012, Istanbul.
For the members of the CEDAW coordination committee, this project offered regular meetings in between 2003 and 2005. According to both secular and pious feminists in my study, during the initial planning phase of the project, the coordination meetings mostly affirmed mutual prejudices. For instance, even when secular feminists were admitting their prejudices about the headscarf, the narratives in my study suggest that, the discursive separation between the secular and the pious interpretative frameworks remained unchallenged. For example, during one of such meetings, Ebru Başar recalled the time when Gaye Tekin Uslu slipped off her headscarf as follows: “It was a very small, intimate meeting—we were at most 10 to 12 women (...) It was a very hot summer day in Ankara where Gaye felt the need for slipping off her headscarf. And then, one of the senior secular woman in the committee turned to Gaye and said, ‘Gaye, you are truly brilliant. I only recognize it now because I just could not listen to you with your headscarf!’”¹¹¹ For pious feminists in my study, by the end of the project in 2005 and in the years to follow, this started to gradually change as pious women became a more integral part of the women’s right movement in Turkey. In Meral Şenel’s words, “At the beginning, we could not even speak to some women just because we were wearing the headscarf. They used to say that we had to take our headscarves off in order to talk comfortably. But, we persisted [not to take our headscarves off] and we did find a way to talk to one another.”¹¹²

By choosing to be a part of the women’s rights movement and not remaining only as a women’s piety movement, both Meral Şenel and Yelda Hakman Tekyol thought they have found a new medium to raise awareness about the headscarf problem in Turkey: women’s rights. With this new medium, according to Meral, they were also able to transform their pious struggle. As she put it, “We did not have a pious women’s struggle until we learned about women rights. Before then, when we got together, our primary aim was to help others; it was not to help ourselves. We did not know the meaning of struggle or activism, human rights or women’s rights. We learned all of these things from other women and other women’s organizations. It was a defining period for us.”¹¹³ In this regard, Meral acknowledged that, they have learned from the experiences of the Kemalist women in the women’s movement: “If we leave out the headscarf issue, we have learned a lot from Kemalist women regarding women’s issues and rights in Turkey. We have learned to look at things from a perspective that we did not consider before.

¹¹¹ Ebru Başar, Interview, April 2011, Ankara.
¹¹² Meral Şenel, Interview, September 2011, Ankara.
¹¹³ Meral Şenel, Interview, September 2011, Ankara.
We cannot deny this.”\textsuperscript{114} As Yelda Hakman Tekyol also suggested: “As we re-founded our pious struggle on women’s rights, we realized that (…) you do not need to be pious in order to suffer from the problems of unemployment or violence like we did. We recognized women are oppressed in general, not just us, not just pious women.”\textsuperscript{115}

According to Meral, if the women’s movement could teach pious women about the women’s rights, and even, make them call themselves feminists, they thought that, their involvement in the women’s rights movement could likewise teach secular feminists about the headscarf as a women’s right to piety. Meral trusted the pedagogic value of the women’s movement as learning mechanism. Filiz Doğan also trusted this process. According to Filiz, secular feminists were already going through a change. The change was slow and hardly visible perhaps, but she explained it as follows: “We used to meet at the universities, we used to only meet at the heart of the city. Now, my organization is going out of the city center, out of the universities. We started to doubt our contributions to the women’s movement if we lock ourselves up in our own zone. We want to get to know different parts of the city and different women.” Filiz added, “We are ready to accept criticism. We are ready to act on it. The change will come, but it will be gradual.”\textsuperscript{116} From the pious side, Meral Şenel agreed with Filiz: “At the beginning, the meetings were held in universities, state institutions—the places where we had to take off our headscarves to get in. The organizers were oblivious about our problems. They kept choosing locations like that.”\textsuperscript{117} Meral recalled, “We knew we would not be able to get in. But the organizers assured us that our headscarf would not be a problem. So, we went. We knew we would not be able to pass the gates. But, we went anyway.”\textsuperscript{118} This was how pious women like Meral once again found themselves waiting in front of university gates years later. Rather than students, however, they were at the gates as feminists, and this time, secular feminists were also with them, witnessing the absurdity of the situation perhaps for the first time. Meral remembered that, when secular feminists saw that they truly could not pass the gates, they started to apologize for the inconvenience and tried to persuade them to take off their headscarves just to be a part of the meeting. For Meral, during this period, secular feminists started see the headscarf as a problem of pious women’s freedom. In her words, “They started to see that our freedoms were indeed being limited by the state. They started to recognize the headscarf problem as a reality of

\textsuperscript{114} Meral Şenel, Interview, September 2011, Ankara.
\textsuperscript{115} Meral Şenel, December 2009, Ankara.
\textsuperscript{116} Filiz Doğan, Interview, February 2011, İzmir.
\textsuperscript{117} Meral Şenel, Interview, September 2011, Ankara.
\textsuperscript{118} Meral Şenel, Interview, September 2011, Ankara.
Turkey.” During the time of my interviews when the ban was still applicable, Meral argued: “Now, secular feminists can no longer ignore our problem or assume that we can simply enter a public institution (…) This proves that the other side accepted our problem. They began to see us. We are no longer invisible. This is what we have achieved.”

For Meral, therefore, the feminist iterations have already ignited a positive change. As Yelda exemplified, “Consider someone like İpek Hakan, for example. Ten years ago, she was amongst the ones who insulted us. 5 years ago, she started to say, she believes the headscarf should be free at the university level, but she said, she has doubts about work life. (…) A month ago, during a meeting, she said, women with the headscarf should not be teachers, but they can work elsewhere. Her limitations are still there, but she is also going through an important change.” Yelda considered İpek’s transformation particularly important because she knew “İpek is straight about her thoughts; she is very sincere,” Yelda said, “She would not say one thing to us and then try to maneuver in another setting.” Although the path that has led to the pious women’s rights movement in Turkey was very challenging for pious women, in Meral’s words: “We managed to put the headscarf issue in all international reports. United Nations, European Parliament… We managed to achieve this through battling our way with these women, and then only hours later, we also found ourselves circle dancing altogether [laughs].” For Meral, therefore, their path to a more plural understanding of feminism involves both a battle and a circle dance with secular feminists in Turkey. Reducing it to only a battlefield of two distinct forces might provide a temporary illusion of certainty and predictability of the future, but it undermines the significance of feminist iterations, restricts opportunities for further collaboration, and limits both groups’ opportunities for improving and refining themselves as relational beings. In the next section, I will discuss the barriers against feminist iterations in the narratives in my study.

5.3.2 The Barriers Against Feminist Iterations

While acknowledging the positive aspect of feminist iterations, my participants also admitted the uneasiness they felt during these encounters due to their contingency, uncertainty,
and risks of failure. As Kati Baruh argued, “Imagine us in a partnership with pious feminists. If we fight in the middle, then it restricts every other organization in their future collaborative attempts. Maybe this is why some groups do not want to get together.”

Hence, in my study, the contingency of feminist iterations and its risks of failure were sometimes perceived as a barrier against willingness to cooperate although, from Butler’s perspective, this contingency gives feminists iterations its creative component that can make a relational transformation possible. In the highly polarized political context of Turkey, however, both groups, but especially secular feminists, thought that since they were not fully in control of the results of this process, a probable failed attempt could deteriorate their relationship even further, like the rupture discussed in Chapter 2. In this section, I will more closely examine the barriers in the narratives of my secular and pious participants against the feminist iterations in the women’s movement in Turkey. In the next section, I will pass on to the ways to ensure the continuity of feminist iterations despite the risks involved in this task.

According to secular feminists, the most important barrier that can block future attempts of collaboration was political indoctrination. More hardliner secular feminists associated this tendency single-handedly with the pious women’s groups, while the majority of my secular participants explicitly acknowledged that both secular and pious women’s groups were guilty of this tendency. According to Filiz Doğan, for example, when it came to the relationship between secular feminists and pious feminists, it was hard for both groups to escape the circularity of the disagreement. In her words, “When someone disagrees without suggesting an alternative, no one can really respond constructively. Without an alternative to discuss, what is the purpose of discussion?”

As discussed in the first section, Filiz was concerned about pious feminists’ possible involvement of JDP and other JDP-led political institutions, especially the Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı). Filiz was particularly alarmed about the Directorate of the Religious Affairs (Diyanet) because of the observable increase in its political power since 2010. For example, Filiz was deeply concerned when I told her, like her organization, pious feminists had a project about women’s reproductive health, but instead of targeting women in the community centers and partnering up with municipalities, pious feminists

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125 Kati Baruh, Interview, April 2011, Istanbul.
126 Filiz Doğan, Interview, February 2011, Izmir.
targeted the female students in the Qur’an courses and partnered up with Diyanet. By giving this example, my intention was to point out towards the existence of similar agenda preferences between two women’s groups, however, Filiz interpreted it differently. “This is the real danger,” she said, “The real danger is to educate women about reproductive health as if it is a part of religious education. It means that their purpose is religion, not women’s education. It means they are putting religion above women’s rights. This also means they want to justify what they are doing by getting under the wings of the state, the wings of the Diyanet, which has already started to increase its influence tremendously.” Since our interview in 2011, the political power of the Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet) has increased even further. As a recent study argues, although it still lacks legislative power, Diyanet can now be considered as an “ideological state apparatus” in Althusser’s terms under the current JDP rule. However, it is important to note here that working with Diyanet did not necessarily mean that pious feminists uncritically complied with its views on religion. To the contrary, as another recent study argues, pious women columnists in Turkey (including feminists among them) often criticized Diyanet for only representing the Sunni Islamic values and leaving out Alevis, Christians, Jews, and other religious minorities in Turkey.

For pious feminists in my study, the secular feminist hesitancy was not about the Diyanet or JDP, or the political links between pious women’s groups and JDP. From their perspective, the most important barrier that sabotaged the continuity of feminist iterations was Kemalist prejudices about pious women; it was the blockages in the minds of secular feminists. According to Zeliha Leventgil, for example, the disagreement between the two groups has never been about a specific issue other than the secular feminist hatred towards the headscarf. Unlike the majority of my secular feminist participants (except the hardliners) who thought the resentments were mutual, therefore, for Zeliha, it was one-sided. “As soon as the secularists see the headscarf, the sides are drawn.”

Zeliha identified four techniques of otherization secular feminists used during the CEDAW working group sessions in 2003: Devaluation, marginalization, stigmatization, and if all three fails, singling-out. Firstly, in Zeliha’s use, devaluation (değersizleştirmek) stands closer

128 Filiz Doğan, Interview, February 2011, Izmir.
131 Zeliha Leventgil, Interview, April 2011, Istanbul.
to the secular feminists’ ignorant, arrogant eye discussed in Chapter 3. As Zeliha described: “As soon as we entered the room, the moderator warned us (…) They tried to de-value the headscarf. They tried to de-value us. They only cared about our existence if we confirmed their take on the issues.”¹³² According to the Flying Broom’s transcript of the working group sessions, however, the moderators warned both secular and pious participants when the discussion diverged from systemic issues of discrimination against women in Turkey—such as when the participants started to talk about their own personal feelings or experiences that are unrelated to the discrimination. Secular feminist participants in the working group sessions, however, did voice their concerns about the headscarf every time pious women brought it out.¹³³

Secondly, according to Zeliha, in the working groups, the headscarf issue was the only issue that was ignored. Zeliha, thus, thought secular feminists wanted to marginalize the headscarf issue: “Kurdish women were there. Everyone listened to their demands. But, not ours.”¹³⁴ For Zeliha, this did not make sense: “Imagine my position, everyone who I might consider marginal had a say in that meeting, but I did not!”¹³⁵ According to Yelda, this was indeed a common disappointment in the pious women’s community: “Some criticized it [shadow report] because we [pious women] were equated with the lesbians! Some could not believe they equated us with the Kurds!”¹³⁶ For Yelda, “These feelings were mutual. Kurds and the LGBT community were also upset they were in the same category [laughs]!”¹³⁷ Although Yelda agreed with Zeliha that secular feminists gave the most trouble to the women with the headscarf, divergently, Yelda also emphasized its positive consequences: “All we [all three groups] had was one sentence. But, still, it was better than nothing. At least, we were able to meet with some women who were on our side (…) and they were able to convince their friends to put that one sentence in the report.”¹³⁸

Thirdly, according to Zeliha, secular feminists stigmatized pious women and called them “terrorists” although they perfectly knew that “the women who were waiting in front of the university gates were just protestors.”¹³⁹ As feminists, rather than standing in solidarity with pious women throughout the 28 February process, Zeliha contended that, many secular feminists

¹³⁶ Yelda Hakman Tekyol, Interview, September 2011, Ankara.
¹³⁷ Yelda Hakman Tekyol, Interview, September 2011, Ankara.
¹³⁸ Yelda Hakman Tekyol, Interview, September 2011, Ankara.
¹³⁹ Zeliha Leventgil, Interview, April 2011, Istanbul.
chose to stay in solidarity with their Kemalist ideology during the late 1990s. Yelda and Meral also admitted this as a disappointment, but they also reminded that, during that time, there were also secular feminists who were brave enough to defend the rights of pious women and stood in solidarity with their struggle for rights.\textsuperscript{140}

Lastly, if all three failed, instead of admitting they were mistaken, Zeliha observed that, secular feminists “singled her out” and stayed prejudiced towards all other pious women—claiming Zeliha was an exception to the rule.\textsuperscript{141} Meral and Yelda also mentioned this as a common technique that secular feminists used, however, for Meral and Yelda, it also presented an opportunity for pious feminists. It meant that, as “exceptional” pious women in the eyes of secular feminists, they would become a part of the feminist community, build new relationships, and therefore, form more relational pathways, and through these pathways, help secular women confront their prejudices about all pious women. For example, according to Yelda and Meral, even the 2005 CEDAW meeting in New York, which has led to the biggest rupture between the two women’s groups so far, was a chance for secular feminists to confront their prejudices about the women with the headscarf. When “the questions came one after the other from the international community”\textsuperscript{142} during the meeting in New York, they thought that secular feminists noticed the pious feminists from a different perspective that they have not considered before. And with it, Meral claimed, “they also noticed their own prejudices about the headscarf.”\textsuperscript{143}

According to my secular feminist participants, the problem of otherization in the women’s movement was two sided. If secular women otherized pious women and discredited their commitment for women’s rights; pious women otherized secular women and discredited their relationship with Islamic piety. According to Oya Hiçyılmaz, for example, like secular women and their “extreme rejection of the headscarf,” pious women could also “hijack” a civil society meeting.\textsuperscript{144} Oya recalled that, during a conference they organized about political freedoms in Turkey, a pious woman with the headscarf took the floor and vigorously asserted that the “JDP government should have already banned alcohol and gotten rid of secularism.”\textsuperscript{145} As a result, Oya argued, “the focus of the conference was completely forgotten. The discussion got so intense that we wished she did not come.”\textsuperscript{146} According to Oya, for a more cooperative

\begin{footnotes}
\item[140] Yelda Hakman Tekyol, Interview, September 2011, Ankara.
\item[141] Zeliha Leventgil, Interview, April 2011, Istanbul.
\item[142] Yelda Hakman Tekyol, Interview, September 2011, Ankara.
\item[143] Meral Şenel, Interview, March 2011, Ankara.
\item[144] Oya Hiçyılmaz, Interview, February 2011, İzmir.
\item[145] Oya Hiçyılmaz, Interview, February 2011, İzmir.
\item[146] Oya Hiçyılmaz, Interview, February 2011, İzmir.
\end{footnotes}
relationship between secular feminists and pious feminists in Turkey, both sides had to keep an open eye all the time “especially when they think they are hundred percent right.” As Oya stated, “The two sides flip and reverse very quickly in Turkish politics. Everyone is both a victim and a killer, indeed.”

As a secular feminist who supported the right to headscarf, Deniz Çolak also defended that, whether it is secular or Islamic, all forms of political indoctrination are obstacles against meaningful dialogue between different women’s groups in Turkey. As an example, Deniz shared her observations about what happened after a silent protest during WomanIst (Kadınİst) in 2010, where the majority of the participants were JDP supporters. According to Deniz, when Erdoğan, as the Prime Minister at the time, took the floor and said men and women cannot be physically equal, the Istanbul Feminist Collective (İstanbul Feminist Kollektif) “opened up a sign that said something like: Every time you say men and women are not equal, another one of us dies.” For Deniz, this was very powerful because, since 2009, the number of women deaths due to violence started to increase in an unprecedented rate in Turkey. Deniz considered what happened after the silent protest “a sociological experiment” when, “all of a sudden, the security guards entered into the conference hall and started to beat up the silent protestors (...) and the women that were brought in, supporters of JDP, went crazy, chanting and shouting, supporting the security guards and the prime minister, and not the feminists who were being kicked out! 98% of the participants yelled out to the Prime Minister, ‘Turkey is proud of you!’ As if (...) those women who were being kicked out were not struggling for women’s rights, including theirs!” Deniz, therefore, thought that it was important to keep a critical eye on both sides rather than defending or criticizing “a political ideology like a soccer team.”

Mine Rendeci and Rana Emir mentioned in their narratives that, they did not think pious women were as “self-critical” and “ready to take the blame” as secular women were. According

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147 Oya Hiçyılmaz, Interview, February 2011, Izmir.
148 Oya Hiçyılmaz, Interview, February 2011, Izmir. During our conversation earlier, I brought a quotation from one of Elif Shafak’s novels, “Kimdim ben? Hem katil, hem kurban”—which can be translated as “Who was I? Both the killer and the killed/victim.” Here, Oya Hiçyılmaz refers to this quotation. For more details, see: Elif Şafak, “Şehrin Aynaları” (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2000)
150 For a video of Istanbul Feminist Collective’s silent protest (only the beginning): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=60Vx0X6LEGU>
151 Deniz Çolak, Group Interview, March 2011, Ankara.
152 An online counter of women deaths due to violence in Turkey shows that the number of victims almost doubled in 2009 compared to the previous year. See http://www.anitsayac.com/?year=2008 for the year 2008 (66), and http://www.anitsayac.com/?year=2009 for 2009 (121). On the website, it is possible to see the names of the victims at the bottom of the page. The year 2015 is the current peak where the number of deaths rose to 292: http://www.anitsayac.com/?year=2015
154 Deniz Çolak, Group Interview, March 2011, Ankara.
to Mine, for example, pious women often portrayed themselves as “eternal victims” and they never took any responsibility regarding the criticisms about the harm by the JDP government.\footnote{155 Mine Rendeci, Interview, April 2011, Ankara.} Although Mine explicitly “singled out” (in Zeliha’s terms) the feminists amongst pious women while making this argument, I think it is important to note that, as Arendt argues, taking the blame and feeling guilty about JDP’s actions would have meant pious feminists were standing in solidarity with JDP on these matters, and not with the women whose rights were at stake. Nonetheless, however, according to Mine, if pious feminists voiced their criticisms against pious forms of patriarchy as loudly and ardently as they voiced their criticisms against secular forms of patriarchy, the barriers against feminist iterations would diminish greatly. In the next section, I will discuss the ways that can help both groups to ensure the continuity of feminist iterations despite these barriers.

5.3.3 The Continuity of Feminist Iterations in the Future

According to many of my participants, to ensure the continuity of feminist iterations, there is the need for purpose, intention, and continuous effort. Firstly, as Oya Hiçyılmaz argued, a specific purpose could indeed bring together secular and pious women. For example, during a seminar, she witnessed that, secular and pious women “At first, they fought a lot. But because they had to finish a given task, they had to talk to each other. At the end, they started apologizing to one another.”\footnote{156 Oya Hiçyılmaz, Interview, February 2011, İzmir.} If the purpose that brings together the two groups is comprehensive enough, Oya thought, the two groups would continue to work together. Secondly, according to Filiz Doğan, a common purpose could be enough for temporary strategic engagements between the two groups, but it was not enough for the two groups to work together as equal partners. For Filiz, the two groups should also intentionally choose to seek out further opportunities for collaboration. As Filiz highlighted, this should come naturally to both sides to be meaningful and iteratively successful. It should not be considered as a necessity (zaruriyet) or a duty. However, as Kati Baruh pointed out, “Weirdly, collaborative work happens organically in a way that is not organic at all. It requires initiation and intention. It does not happen without effort. Actually, without effort, it is doomed to fail. It has to be active to remain alive. Or else, it gets harder and harder to mobilize. It is all about building a reflex and keeping it alive.”\footnote{157 Kati Baruh, Interview, April 2011, Istanbul.} In this regard, Kati warned that it did not make sense to be unrealistically optimistic about feminist iterations in the
women’s movement and simply assume that they would do all work by themselves (even if these iterations are intended, purposeful, and come naturally). Thirdly, therefore, as Kati argued, even if the feminist iterations continued, this would not be possible to transform their rectilinear battlefield into a parallelogram of forces without continuous effort.

Although pious feminists also thought that the continuity of feminist iterations similarly required willingness to cooperate and mutual effort, secular feminists and pious feminists in my study had different opinions about what constitutes this effort and where it should be directed. As Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 argued, secular feminists and pious feminists had different accounts of the current dynamics of disagreement between the two women’s groups in Turkey. While pious feminists thought the problem was about acceptance of difference; for secular feminists, it was about trust. For pious feminists, therefore, in order to ensure the continuity of feminist iterations, both groups needed to show genuine effort in terms of accounting for different opinions besides the Kemalist secular conception of women’s rights in Turkey, especially its conceptions of autonomy and independence. Secular feminists, on the other hand, thought that different women’s groups first had to trust each other, and thus, to ensure the continuity of feminist iterations, both groups have to show continuous effort in terms of keeping their commitment to women’s rights. As a result, for the continuity of feminist iterations, while secular feminists preferred long-term projects that presented them more opportunities for trust-building and getting to know one another more closely; pious feminists thought repeated strategic encounters during single-issue platforms could provide more chances for pious women to put across their standpoint without unnecessarily disputing with secular feminists.

For my pious participants, it was almost impossible for secular feminists to change their minds about the headscarf—that is, pious women’s primary issue of difference—and therefore, instead of seeking secular feminists’ consent in intensive working group sessions and not getting anything out of their efforts, they thought it was more efficient for them to make sure that they put across their standpoint in clear terms during single-issue platforms. This did not mean that pious feminists in my study declined to participate to deeper engagements with secular women. To the contrary, pious feminists in my study were more willing to participate into any form of collaboration than secular feminists who appeared to be doubtful and hesitant. Pious feminists in my study preferred single-issue platforms because, in these settings, the two women’s groups were less likely to argue over the headscarf issue so that there would not be another rupture like the one that happened after the CEDAW meeting in New York in 2005.
But secular feminists interpreted pious feminists’ preference of strategic cooperations differently. According to secular feminists, pious feminists preferred strategic engagements because they were after their own political interests, and not the interests of all women. As I discussed in Chapter 3, secular feminists did not prefer what Aristotle refers to as utility friendships, including means-based, strategic partnerships and tactical calls for solidarity. They considered accord and trust as signs of an elevated level of friendship, and in their secular feminist communities, they regarded friendship as a relationally self-constitutive part of their own identities. Instead of similarity and sameness, the basis of secular feminist friendship was loyalty, perseverance, and the willingness to stick up with one another in both fair and foul weather. In order to collaborate with pious feminists, therefore, secular feminists had to re-imagine their relationship with pious feminists as an ends-based, character friendship, not as a strategic partnership.

For pious feminists, this was just an excuse. From their standpoint, secular feminists could not see pious feminists as potential feminist friends because they simply could not think about the headscarf as a women’s right. They refused to account for pious women’s rights because they could not think about feminist autonomy outside of its Western liberal definitions. Pious feminists acknowledged the headscarf was their priority and primary issue of concern, but this strategic inclination towards the headscarf issue did not mean they did not support all women’s rights as secular feminists wrongly claimed. To the contrary, according to pious feminists, it was secular feminists who strategically equated interests of all women with their own Kemalist secular ideals so that they could discredit the pious women’s active involvement in the women’s rights movement in Turkey.

Hence, although both women’s groups thought they were doing their best in terms of putting effort into their relationship and were committed to the ensuring the continuity of feminist iterations in the women’s movement, due to their different perceptions of the main feminist issues of disagreement that separated the two groups, they were trying to solve different problems on their own rather than consulting one another and trying to identify the problem and find the solution together. In this regard, the continuity of feminist iterations is important not only for its possible transformative consequences, but also for both groups to more accurately understand their relationship in the women’s movement.

Without this deeper understanding, my study suggests that although feminist iterations might challenge and relationally reconstitute both groups separately, a general sense of
exhaustion eventually takes over. Far from being “sufficiently removed” from both the secular and the pious imaginaries by a “diagonal force, whose origin is known, whose direction is determined by past and future, but whose eventual end lies in infinity,”158 my study therefore suggests that, currently, secular feminists and pious feminists in Turkey are feeling exhausted and tired of fighting in the same battle for decades, persistently trying to stand their ground and preserve who they are. Knowing “what they are fighting against” but not “what they are fighting for,” both women’s groups feel like they are in the middle of a battlefield, fighting a relentless battle in between the secular modern and the pious modern imaginaries (and different pasts and futures prescribed by both).159

In order to activate the transformative power of the feminist iterations, therefore, based on secular feminist and pious feminist perceptions in Turkey we can argue that both groups have to recognize the continuous need for re-evaluating their perspectives no matter how strongly they feel about being right. Indeed, in my study, irrespective of their inclinations towards self-reflection and self-criticism, both groups were convinced that they were right. For instance, although secular feminists did question their exclusionary tendencies towards the pious women with the headscarf from a self-critical eye during our interviews, they were nevertheless convinced that the disagreement was primarily political and did not have much to do with the two women’s groups actual experiences in the women’s movement. For pious feminists, the disagreement was wider and more structural; it was infused into every segment of life, including the women’s movement in Turkey. Pious feminists were certain that secular feminists were unable to think about feminist autonomy in alternative pious terms. As a result, when secular feminists asked pious women in-depth, personal questions in order to really get to know them in person, most pious women did not interpret this as a way of expanding boundaries of friendship and loyalty. Rather, they interpreted it as interrogation and othering. Only more progressive pious feminists considered this secular feminist reaction as an opening for iteratively rebuilding trust. By recognizing this as a chance for deeper engagement with secular feminists, as I discussed in Chapter 4, only this group of pious women in my study was able to create a relational, dually critical, alternative conception of pious feminist autonomy that does not situate Islamic piety and feminism as two distinct, fundamentally separate knowledges. Once again, however, since secular feminists were more concerned about pious women’s intentionality than

158 Arendt, Between Past and Future, 12.
159 Arendt, Between Past and Future, 27.
autonomy, pious feminists’ highly-interesting critique of feminist agency, which convincingly challenges both the Western liberal and compliant models in the wider literature, remains unheard by secular feminists in Turkey.

Pious feminists, however, were proudly aware of their feminist accomplishments. According to pious feminists, their involvement in the women’s movement had already transformed the pious women’s movement in Turkey as they undertook the demanding task of making new connections, building new friendships, and re-evaluating pious women’s subjectivity from a feminist standpoint, as well as re-evaluating feminist subjectivity from a pious women’s standpoint. As self-acclaimed pious feminists, they have already expressed their commitment to both God-given and secular rights of women as they resisted both secular and pious forms of patriarchy in Turkey. Rather than a separation between the Western liberal and Islamic values, their version of pious feminism was based on a synthesis that intertwined feminist critique with pious affirmation. This required them to enlarge their standpoint beyond the pious modern imaginary and the assumption of a separation between the secular values and Islamic ideals. For a transformed relationship between secular and pious feminists in Turkey, therefore, pious feminists thought that it was secular feminists’ turn to undertake this challenging, unsettling, reconstitutive task that requires self-transformation.

Secular feminists were indeed only partially aware of pious women’s transformation in the women’s movement. They seemed to only half-hear the pious feminist message because, for them, the real transformation had to be about friendship, loyalty, and trust, and not pious women’s autonomy. Contrary to pious feminist presuppositions, their concern about pious feminism was not about their pious interdependencies, either. By placing loyalty as a central value of feminist friendship, secular feminists highlighted their secular feminist interdependencies and provided a relational conception of feminist friendship within their own groups. Like secular feminists who failed to recognize the full extent of the pious feminists’ transformation in the women’s movement, pious feminists also seemed to only half-hear secular feminist interdependencies that cannot be explained by the individualistic Western liberal feminist models, and thus, similarly failed to recognize them as “complex beings.”

In this regard, I think it is crucial to think about the disagreement between secular feminists and pious feminists in Turkey as a relational flow. Since the two waves of the disagreement are submerged into one another in a way that it is not possible to identify where one wave ends the other one follows, by the help of this relational model, it is possible to see that
no matter how receptive or open-minded secular women or pious women feel about themselves, there is the need for continuous re-evaluation of the two standpoints. Without this continuous re-evaluation, both women’s groups can easily fall back to the prescriptions of the secular-pious divide and seek comfort in its certainty and predictability. But, if they continuously re-evaluate where they stand, they might be able to realize that each shared meeting offers them a choice and a chance of relocating their relationship: They can either choose to preserve their mutual fixities like they have done in the past, or they can choose to trust the feminist iterations despite the risks and uncertainties this task involves.

5.4 Conclusion

Thus, after analyzing secular feminist perceptions of friendship (in Chapter 3) and pious feminist perceptions of autonomy (in Chapter 4) as alternative feminist vocabularies to rethink the secular-pious divide in the women’s movement in Turkey, in this chapter I reflected on the overall dynamics of disagreement between secular feminists and pious feminists from a relational perspective. In the intersection of Gergen’s relational flow and Arendt’s discussion of thinking as a thought event between the past and future, I argued that the relational flow between the two women’s groups coordinates two main waves: a constraining wave that is marked by the deep-seated secular-pious opposition and a potentially transformative wave that is marked by the actual feminist iterations in the women’s movement. Despite the continuous relational flow between the two waves, I suggested that, at a particular moment, in line with Arendt’s use of Kafka’s allegory, this may resemble a battlefield where the two women’s groups are in between two distinct forces, pulled towards opposing ends. However, once that moment ends, it is possible to observe that the waves are actually submerged into one another. In each reiteration, there is room for fluidity and change as well as fixity and further conflict. I also argued that, in this relational flow, as Arendt suggests, secular feminists and pious feminists in Turkey can only arrive at “the perfect equidistance” between their past fixities and feminist iterations through the activity of thoughtful self-reflection. The evaluative and predictive power of the secular/pious binary in Turkey, therefore, nullifies this need to think. This is dangerous because it not only provides an incomplete account of the complex relationship between the two women’s groups, but it also formatively limits both groups’ imaginative capacity for enlarged thought and horizons of possibility for further collaboration, coalition, and cooperation in the women’s movement. My study, in this regard, proposes that willingness to rethink the secular-pious divide
from a relational perspective, in alternative vocabularies and categories, might be an iterative push towards breaking away from this tendency and expanding women’s horizons of possibility.
In my dissertation, I have analyzed a particular gap of time in the relational flow between secular feminists and pious feminists in Turkey based on my one-on-one and group interviews in between 2011-2013—an interesting in-between period in recent Turkish politics that marks the beginning of JDP’s authoritarian turn.

I have emphasized two seemingly contradictory, simultaneous waves in the narratives of my participants, one of fixity and the other of fluidity. As I argued in Chapter 5, the first was an effort to proactively preserve secular modern and pious modern imaginaries; the second indicated a desire to respond to the ongoing transformations in the women’s movement in a more self-critical, inclusive manner. With the help of Arendt’s use of Kafka’s parable, I have argued that while their fight with the past pushed both women’s groups forward and towards a more collaborative feminist future by the help of their iterative shared civil society encounters, their fight with the future pushed them back and “blocked the road ahead” where all discussions began and ended with the two groups’ different reactions towards Erdoğan’s New Turkey. Both groups hoped that, one day, they might perhaps be able to become “sufficiently removed” from the secular-pious divide and take the position of an umpire. However, at the time of my interviews, according to both feminist groups, their relationship seemed like a silent battlefield: two-dimensional, oppositional, linear, and painfully predictable.

Although the secular-pious divide can only account for the constraining first wave of the relational flow between secular feminists and pious feminists in Turkey, it still remains as the most dominant framework to think about the relationship between the two women’s groups in my study. This common failure to recognize the interconnectedness between the two waves not only limits opportunities for collaboration and collective action between secular and pious women’s groups, but it also restricts the possibilities for the two groups to self-transform and reconstitute themselves since, from a relational perspective, subjectivities are formed through coordination of our different relationships. I have argued that, in order to transcend these limitations, there is the need for thinking beyond the boundaries of both the secular and the pious by refocusing our attention towards the actual interpersonal relationships between secular and pious women’s groups in Turkey.

Although my main interest lies in the more fluid side of the disagreement between the two women’s groups in my study, in Chapter 1 and Chapter 2, I started my analysis with the
constraining first wave of the relational flow, where I introduced the previous literature on the historical progression of secular-pious divide in Turkey by tracing its institutional development and evolution in the women’s movement.

In Chapter 1, I went over the key political junctures in the constitution and progression of the Kemalist/secular and the Islamic/pious political interpretative frameworks, or the secular modern and the pious modern imaginaries in Turkey. I highlighted that both imaginaries evolved as products of Ottoman/Turkish modernization, and they were respectively led by religious and secular (military/bureaucratic) elite. Both imaginaries aimed to offer the best mix of Ottoman, Islamic, and Western secular values that could correspond with the particular needs of society. With the foundation of the Republic, the Kemalist reading of the political history has become the primary state ideology which assumed a clear break between the backwards, traditional, Ottoman Sharia order and the forward-looking, modern, and secular Turkish Republic that has its moral roots on an “enlightened” version of Islam. Although the Kemalist reforms have managed to rebuild a new modus vivendi for the society within a remarkably short period of time, with the introduction of the multi-party system, pro-Islamic populist parties started to attract more electoral support. Pious modern imaginary has thus emerged as a strategic criticism against Kemalist secular modernity. According to this reading, Kemalism did create a break in the history by leaving Islam completely out, not between backwardness and progress, but between the state and the society. With the rise of political Islam that started in the 1980s and eventually led to the first electoral victory of JDP in 2002, JDP asserted that it has put an end to this separation between the state and the society by re-introducing the missing link: Islamic values. Like Kemalism that has denied the continuity between the secularization efforts during the Ottoman Empire and the Republic, JDP similarly denied the continuity between JDP and the preceding pro-pious political efforts. Despite continuously shifting borders and ongoing negotiations between secular and pious political actors, I have argued in this chapter that the defining oppositionality between the two imaginaries has remained the same and both imaginaries have become tools to control and consolidate political power in Turkey. Although their transformative, or generative/creative power, over the society has been replaced by a rather degenerative discursive circularity, the two imaginaries retained their power over the people.¹

In Chapter 2, I carried this discussion to the level of the women’s movement in Turkey and traced out the evolution of the secular/pious divide in Turkish feminism. Since the previous

literature only offers separate histories of the two women’s groups, I turned to the narratives of my participants on the key shared civil society encounters between the secular and pious women’s groups in Turkey. I presented a detailed account of the rupture between the two women’s groups in the aftermath of the CEDAW 2005 project. I argued that, before the rupture in 2005, the two groups had joined their efforts in the civil society from 2003 to 2005.

It is possible to make two observations about this rupture. Firstly, it can be considered as a lost opportunity for Turkish feminism. By splitting the coordination committee into two, secular feminists and pious feminists have lost the opportunity to learn from their mistakes and continue coordinating their efforts in the women’s movement. Secondly, it shows that without a commitment to relationship, feminist coalitions do not always produce new beginnings or result in new solidarities. For coalitions to work well between secular feminists and pious feminists in Turkey, there is the need for continuous effort, patience, and willingness to try again. Thus, in Chapter 2, I delineated the need for a relational historiography of the disagreement in addition to the separate historiographies of the secular and pious women’s rights movements in Turkey for three main reasons: (1) to understand the full complexity of the actual interpersonal relationships between the two groups, (2) to avoid reducing their complex relationships to the secular/pious, and (3) to identify alternative feminist vocabularies of disagreement.

In Chapter 3 and Chapter 4, I focused on the relatively more fluid side of the relational flow between the two women’s groups and tried to locate alternative vocabularies by closely interconnecting applied theory with ethnographic data. I proposed that, in addition to the more general secular-pious divide, the disagreement between the two groups is also about (1) limits and limitations of feminist friendship and loyalty—for secular feminists, as I discussed in Chapter 3—and (2) the failure to recognize pious forms of women’s autonomy and pious women’s feminism—according to pious feminists, as I discussed in Chapter 4.

In Chapter 3, I offered a detailed analysis of secular feminist perceptions of loyalty and friendship by following Stephen Mitchell’s “relational matrix” that brings together three dimensions of relationality: the self, the other, and the relationship between the two. In the intersection of Aristotelian friendship, Kleinig’s relational discussion on loyalty, and Islamic thought on love and friendship, I firstly examined my secular participants’ perceptions of feminist friendship in their own organizations. I suggested that secular feminist friendship is

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about loyalty and trust, instead of similarity or sameness. With the help of Kleinig’s account of loyalty, I highlighted two important dimensions of secular feminist friendship: (1) perseverance to stand by a friend during difficulty and hardship, and (2) associative or relational character of secular feminist friendship, in which the costs associated with perseverance are considered self-constitutive, and therefore, not as painful as consequences one has to bear for the sake of commitment to friendship. Contrary to the prototypical view that restricts secular feminism within the bounds of Western individualism, in Chapter 3 I delineated the self-constitutive role of loyalty, friendship, and community in secular feminist perceptions.

Secondly, by reviewing the literature on feminism’s relationship with its own “arrogant eye,” “loving eye,” and “knowing, loving ignorance” within, I analyzed the limits and limitations of secular feminist friendship through the narratives of my participants on their pious Other. I suggested that secular feminists considered pious women in the women’s movement as complex, strategic, political beings. Deviating from a clear-cut subject-object dualism, secular feminists were willing to recognize the complexity of pious women with the headscarf. I argued that self-critical reflection and seeing the complexity of the Other have guided secular feminists to become more receptive towards self-transformation. For the actualization of transformation, however, they were not enough. Secular feminists in my study acknowledged the lack of dialogue between the two women’s groups as a problem of the women’s movement in Turkey. From their standpoint, this was not a one-sided problem resulting from secular feminist unwillingness. If pious feminists were more vocal about their critiques of religious forms of patriarchy in Turkey or the Islamic rights of women besides the right to headscarf, they thought the two groups could find a common ground and expand their boundaries of feminist friendship to each other.

After examining secular feminist perceptions of the self and the Other, in the last part of Chapter 3, I tried to locate incremental shifts in secular feminist perceptions that take place in between the self and the other. I argued that secular feminists adopted a more receptive stance in response to relational questions that guide them to think about pious feminists in relation to themselves instead of separate, disparate, monolithic Others. From a Kantian/Arendtian framework, I suggested that the idea of a future collaboration with pious feminists encouraged secular feminists to hypothetically expand their feminist loyalties to pious feminists and, in this way, re-imagine the relationship between the two groups in a way that the previous risks involved with this task were no longer considered a loss. While doing so, rather than direct
confrontation or strategic partnerships, secular feminists preferred gradual feminist iterations in the women’s movement. In Chapter 3, therefore, I argued a comprehensive change in the collaborative patterns of secular feminists in Turkey requires an enlarged understanding of feminist friendship and loyalty that has to be coupled with iterated shared civil society encounters between different women’s groups in Turkey. That is, it necessitates both “distance and proximity” so that the two groups might reach an “equidistant” feminist standpoint together, in both thought and action.

In Chapter 4, I moved on to the pious feminist side of the debate and offered a detailed analysis of pious feminist perceptions of autonomy—which, according to my pious feminist participants, secular feminists failed to recognize. I argued that my study locates a gap in the literature and calls for a relational approach on pious women’s autonomy that does not situate Islamic piety and feminism as two distinct alternatives, or fundamentally separate knowledges.

To demonstrate my point, I first outlined common models of pious women’s agency in the literature, and reviewed each one with respect to the pious feminist narratives in my study. I started with the models of pious women’s agency based on an individualistic conception of autonomy. I argued pious feminists in Turkey highlighted the ways in which the headscarf has helped them to confront, resist, and try to alter the structures of Islamic patriarchy, but not Islam itself. My pious participants also considered their engagements with the Islamic tradition empowering because, through these engagements, they could offer non-patriarchal rereadings of the religious norms such as tevekkiül (acceptance) and achieve instrumental rewards, such as building their own communities of pious women. However, individualistic models of pious women’s autonomy could only explain pious feminist autonomy partially.

Along with resistance and empowerment, my participants also emphasized the agentic significance of religious affirmation, compliance, and acceptance in their narratives that individualistic models of pious women’s autonomy cannot account for. In the second part of Chapter 4, therefore, I introduced a detailed analysis of Saba Mahmood’s highly-influential study on pious women’s agency and her theoretical framework that brings together Butler’s performativity, Foucauldian ethical formation, and Aristotelian habitus. I argued that although Mahmood’s work can accurately be applied to the narratives of my participants on habitual piety, it cannot account for the second stage of pious feminist subjectivity formation in my study that combines habituation of piety with informed choice.
Thirdly, Chapter 4 debated main critiques of Mahmood’s work before introducing Elizabeth Bucar’s concepts of dianomy and creative conformity, which embrace multiple sources of women’s freedom, and in this way, can account for pious women’s compliance as well as critique. I suggested that Bucar’s approach stood closer to the narratives of my pious participants compared to the previous approaches. Yet, the narratives of progressive pious feminists also challenged the underlying assumptions of Bucar’s dianomy.

Rather than separating the sources of self-law and other-law and/or bringing them together as two fundamentally separate units, I argued that pious feminists in Turkey interrelated and synthesized their pious and feminist engagements to reformulate their own, discursively interdependent pious feminist stance. In doing so, they resisted both Islamic and secular forms of patriarchy in Turkey, and not Islam and/or secularism. Hence, differing from both Mahmood and Bucar, they additionally challenged the idea that the self and the other are distinct, bounded units. I suggested that this required an explicit relational approach to subjectivity, along with the discursive ethics of otherhood, for two main reasons. Firstly, in addition to bringing habituation of piety together with critique and creativity, pious feminists in my study shared a relationship-centered, “interdependent” outlook on their identity both as pious women and as pious feminists. According to my participants, for example, unless supported by favorable relationships, the habituation of pious acts may not automatically be internalized during the early stages of pious subjectivity formation. Secondly, in the pious feminist narratives, agency appeared as a relational factor of disagreement between secular and pious women in the women’s movement. Agency is therefore a part of pious feminists’ own “grammar” of concepts—or at least a part of their vocabulary that they thought secular feminists did not adequately acknowledge.

In the final part of Chapter 4, I examined the particularities of the progressive pious feminist autonomy in Turkey with respect to three main issues: informed piety, intentionality, and feminism. From a relational framework in the intersection of Bucar’s dianomy, Gergen’s relational multi-being, and Nedelsky’s relational autonomy, my discussion revealed that pious feminists in Turkey did not compartmentalize habituation as a way of learning Islamic norms and critique as an inherently Western value: a pious way of life may be chosen, and feminist skills could be habituated. Rather than either *phronesis* or *téchne*, as a part of their pious feminist subjectivity formation process, pious feminists combined skill with practical wisdom (and thus, production with action), and with the help of multi-engagements with different systems of knowledge, they expanded their choices. For pious feminists in my study, their struggle in the
women’s rights movement made them better Muslims, and their struggle in the women’s piety movement made them better feminists. In this regard, the pious feminists in my study not only questioned the inherent assumptions of the Western liberal progressive imaginary with regard to Islam, but also the inherent assumption of separation between the two.

For my pious feminist participants, therefore, rather than a choice of acting for or against religion (as the submission/resistance model dictates), autonomy required a distinction between (1) Islamic patriarchy and Islam, (2) secular forms of patriarchy and secular values, and (3) imposition of Western feminist values and the women’s actual (both democratic and God-given) rights and freedoms. The pious feminist participants of my study, therefore, noted explicitly that while they resisted secular patriarchy they did not reject secular values or secularism per se. To the contrary, they argued that as a secular Muslim country in between the Middle East and Europe, the secular Turkish setting provided them many choices, and therefore, opportunities for becoming more informed Muslims. Besides, as Chapter 5 argued, pious feminists explicitly acknowledged that, aside from their disagreements about the headscarf issue, their engagements with secular women in the women’s movement taught them and helped them to become better feminists. Neither of their experiences with Kemalist secularism nor Islamic piety were bounded or pre-determined.

Secular feminist perceptions also challenged the secular/pious binary. As I introduced in my introductory chapter and in Chapter 4, the legacy of the secularization discourse in feminism and its claims of false consciousness towards the women participants of gender-traditional religions derives from feminism’s reliance on an overly individualistic definition of autonomy. This approach is often thought to assume radically independent agents in pursuit of moral life, and thereby, to neglect the substantial role of community in shaping individual lives. Pious feminists were inclined to portray most secular women in the women’s movement from this perspective. In contrast, as my discussion in Chapter 3 implied, when secular feminists think about the possibility of collaborating with pious feminists, rather than providing “hysteric representations” of the Islamic women as “les folles d’Allah” or carbon-copying individualistic Western liberal models of feminist autonomy against Islamic piety, they were primarily concerned about the limits of their own internal dynamics of loyalty and friendship as an impediment. I do not think a purely individualistic conception of feminist autonomy can capture

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the self-constitutive role of friendship in secular feminist narratives. Like pious feminists who delineated their interdependent approach towards feminism vis-à-vis Islam, secular feminists emphasized their interdependent approach towards feminist collective action vis-à-vis their interpersonal loyalties to their secular feminist friendships, and not ideological or abstract loyalties to secularism. Like secular feminists who failed to recognize the difference amongst pious women with the headscarf, my study in this regard shows that pious women with the headscarf similarly were not very keen about the differences amongst secular women with the Atatürk badges and the tailored suits.

My study also suggests that, in response to my question of a possible collaboration, the narratives of my secular and pious participants demonstrated different patterns. As Chapter 5 argued, for secular feminists in Turkey, the disagreement between the two women’s groups was primarily about the question of political Islam, and not about the actual relationship between the two groups in the women’s movement. For pious feminists, it was primarily about the pious women’s religiosity, which they thought secular feminists considered excessive and therefore located as a problem of feminist autonomy in the women’s movement in Turkey. As a result, while pious feminists provided a detailed log of events that have led to the rupture between the two groups in the aftermath of CEDAW 2005; secular feminists preferred to talk about the disagreement only at the level of political discourse. Secular feminist answers to my question of collaboration were highly self-critical, whereas pious feminist narratives remained critical about secular women before and after the question. Pious feminists were observably more eager about the idea of a collaboration because they thought such a collaboration would be an accomplishment for themselves; secular feminists were hesitant because they thought it might possibly mean losing a core part of their identity.

Thus, in my dissertation, I have challenged the assumption that situates the relationship between secular feminists and pious feminists in Turkey only as an obvious discursive opposition that does not require any further thinking outside of the secular-pious divide. From a relationship-centered, transformation-oriented, multi-discursive perspective, I have argued that the relationship between the two groups instead resembles a relational flow between their political fixities and feminist iterations, which are not separated from another, but rather fused into each other. While the constraining first wave in the narratives of my study, marked by the two groups’ perceptions of JDP’s New Turkey, mostly serve both groups to preserve their boundaries, the second wave driven by feminist iterations in the women’s movement creates new
opportunities for both collaboration and disagreement, convergence and divergence, otherization and counter-otherization, and as Meral Şenel puts it, both a battle and a circle dance. Through feminist iterations, therefore, the two groups might validate their old patterns of dissent further as well as form new relational pathways. The process is uncertain, contingent, and unpredictable. But nonetheless, it offers a degree of control for both secular feminists and pious feminists over their actual relationship in the women’s movement. As the Turkish political context becomes increasingly more authoritarian over the secular-pious divide where both women’s groups know “what they are fighting against” but no one can remember “what they are fighting for,”⁴ I think even this realization might be potentially and relationally self-transformative for both feminist groups in my study.

⁴ Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 27.
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