

AŞIK VEYSEL'S POETIC PHILOSOPHY: FORGING A UNIVERSAL HUMANISM FROM TRADITION AND THE REPUBLIC

Ş. Filiz

ABSTRACT

This article examines Aşık Veysel's poetry as a distinctive form of philosophical thought in which Turkish folk tradition, Republican ideals, and universal humanism are brought into a coherent meaning-form unity. The study aims to show that Veysel's poems should not be read merely as examples of folk literature or lyrical self-expression, but as texts that articulate a philosophical worldview grounded in human dignity, equality, knowledge, cultural continuity, and social enlightenment. Methodologically, the article employs textual, philosophical, and historical-cultural analysis, interpreting selected poems in relation to Turkish folk culture, Alevi-Bektashi heritage, Republican modernization, concepts of knowledge, and universal moral values. The findings demonstrate that Aşık Veysel transforms local and national themes - such as village life, soil, nature, Atatürk, the Republic, and Turkish identity - into universal reflections on humanity, existence, truth, and ethical responsibility. His poetry constructs an inclusive humanism that transcends sectarian, ethnic, and religious divisions, while affirming science, education, and cultural memory as foundations of social progress. The article argues that Aşık Veysel's poetic philosophy represents a significant contribution to modern Turkish thought, offering an "Anatolian humanism" that unites tradition, Republican consciousness, and universal moral horizons.

Keywords: Aşık Veysel, Poetic Philosophy, Anatolian Humanism, Republican Thought, Turkish Folk Culture, Universality, Human Dignity.

Akdeniz University, Antalya, Turkiye

Corresponding author:

Ş. Filiz, sfiliz@akdeniz.edu.tr

Citation:

Filiz Ş. Aşık Veysel's Poetic Philosophy: Forging a Universal Humanism From Tradition and the Republic // Adam Alemi. – 2026. – Vol. 28. – No. 2 (108). – P. 16–25. – DOI: 10.48010/yyggy950

Open Access

© The Author(s), 2026

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0). <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

Received: 17/02/2026

Accepted: 27/04/2026

Published online: 30/06/2026

Ашық Вейселдің поэтикалық философиясы: дәстүр мен Республика негізінде әмбебап гуманизмді қалыптастыру

Аңдатпа. Бұл мақалада Ашық Вейсел поэзиясы түрік халықтық дәстүрін, республикалық идеяларды және әмбебап гуманизмді мағына мен форма тұтастығы аясында біріктіретін философиялық ойдың ерекше түрі ретінде қарастырылады. Зерттеудің мақсаты - Вейселдің өлеңдерін тек халық әдебиетінің үлгісі немесе лирикалық өзін-өзі білдіру формасы ретінде ғана емес, адам қадір-қасиеті, теңдік, білім, мәдени сабақтастық және әлеуметтік ағартушылық қағидаларына негізделген философиялық дүниетанымды танытатын мәтіндер ретінде пайымдау қажеттігін көрсету. Мақаланың әдіснамалық негізін мәтіндік, философиялық және тарихи-мәдени талдау құрайды. Бұл тәсілдер таңдалған өлеңдерді түрік халық мәдениеті, аlevи-бекташи мұрасы, республикалық модернизация, білім тұжырымдамасы және әмбебап моральдық құндылықтар контекстінде түсіндіруге мүмкіндік береді. Зерттеу нәтижелері Ашық Вейселдің ауыл өмірі, жер, табиғат, Ататүрік, Республика және түрік бірегейлігі сияқты жергілікті әрі ұлттық тақырыптарды адам, болмыс, ақиқат және этикалық жауапкершілік туралы әмбебап ойларға айналдыратынын көрсетеді. Оның поэзиясында конфессиялық, этникалық және діни айырмашылықтардан жоғары тұратын инклюзивті гуманизм қалыптасады; сонымен қатар ғылым, білім және мәдени жады қоғамдық ілгерілеудің негізгі тіректері ретінде танылады. Авторлық ұстаным бойынша, Ашық Вейселдің поэтикалық философиясы қазіргі түрік ойына елеулі үлес қосып, дәстүрді, республикалық сананы және әмбебап моральдық көкжиектерді біріктіретін «анатoliaлық гуманизм» үлгісін ұсынады.

Түйін сөздер: Ашық Вейсел, поэтикалық философия, анатoliaлық гуманизм, республикалық ой, түрік халық мәдениеті, әмбебаптық, адам қадір-қасиеті.

Поэтическая философия Ашыка Вейселя: формирование универсального гуманизма на основе традиции и Республики

Аннотация. В статье рассматривается поэзия Ашыка Вейселя как особая форма философской мысли, в которой турецкая народная традиция, республиканские идеалы и универсальный гуманизм объединяются в целостную систему смысла и формы. Цель исследования состоит в том, чтобы показать, что стихотворения

Вейселя следует рассматривать не только как образцы народной литературы или лирического самовыражения, но и как тексты, репрезентирующие философское мировоззрение, основанное на достоинстве человека, равенстве, знании, культурной преемственности и социальном просвещении. Методологическую основу статьи составляют текстуральный, философский и историко-культурный анализ, позволяющие интерпретировать избранные стихотворения в контексте турецкой народной культуры, алеви-бекташийского наследия, республиканской модернизации, концепций знания и универсальных моральных ценностей. Результаты исследования показывают, что Ашик Вейсель преобразует локальные и национальные темы – деревенскую жизнь, землю, природу, Ататюрка, Республику и турецкую идентичность – в универсальные размышления о человеке, существовании, истине и этической ответственности. В его поэзии формируется инклюзивный гуманизм, преодолевающий конфессиональные, этнические и религиозные различия и одновременно утверждающий науку, образование и культурную память как основы общественного прогресса. Авторская позиция заключается в том, что поэтическая философия Ашыка Вейселя представляет значимый вклад в современную турецкую мысль, предлагая модель «анатолийского гуманизма», соединяющую традицию, республиканское сознание и универсальные моральные горизонты.

Ключевые слова: Ашик Вейсель, поэтическая философия, анатолийский гуманизм, республиканская мысль, турецкая народная культура, универсальность, человеческое достоинство.

Introduction

Contrary to common perception, the philosopher generates meanings by drawing from the practices of daily life, facts, and phenomena. The philosopher classifies these meanings and categorizes similar and dissimilar elements under specific concepts. When these concepts are organized within a systematic framework of thought, a mode of thinking emerges that is unique to that philosopher yet becomes part of the history of philosophy. Those who achieve this are "formally" endowed with the title of philosopher. The most defining characteristic that distinguishes a philosopher from other thinkers, poets, writers, bards, and researchers is the ability to categorize and classify the contents of experience derived from practical life under specific concepts.

Aşık Veysel (October 25, 1894 – March 21, 1973), as a Turkish folk poet, substituted the philosopher's concepts with his own verses, diffusing meanings throughout his poetry. In the history of philosophy, every philosopher has undoubtedly benefited, directly or indirectly, from their predecessors before establishing their own intellectual system. However, no philosopher has assumed the role of merely transmitting, reinterpreting, or preserving the thoughts of previous philosophers for their own age; they have not followed a path consisting solely of being a continuation of those who came before. The task of transmitting, updating, and keeping tradition alive belongs to poets and bards rather than philosophers. Yet, not every poet or bard has possessed the competence to etch their name into the history of the cultural heritage to which they belong.

In the Greek world, dramatic and poetic depictions based on the complexities and contin-

gencies of life were transformed into philosophy. We observe the foundations of this transformation in the epics written by Homer in the 8th century BCE, which shaped Greek thought and imagination for centuries. What emerges powerfully in these epic poems is both the individual's need for self-understanding and the desire to reveal our images of thought by scrutinizing them in an almost clinical manner [1, p. 38].

Aşık Veysel's most significant poems are works that reflect his philosophical depth, love for humanity, and devotion to nature. Some of his most renowned poems can be listed as follows:

Kara Toprak (Black Soil): One of his most powerful poems, depicting the relationship between humans and nature, death, and existence.

Uzun İnce Bir Yoldayım (I am on a Long, Narrow Road): A poem emphasizing life as a journey and offering an existentialist perspective.

Dostlar Beni Hatırlasın (May Friends Remember Me): A work dealing with the human desire to be remembered and the inevitability of death.

Güzelliğin On Para Etmez (Your Beauty is Worth Nothing): An example of his poetry expressing that inner values are more significant than outward beauty.

Beni Hor Görme Kardeşim (Do Not Despise Me, My Brother): A poem highlighting equality and brotherhood among all human beings.

Atatürk'e Ağıt (Elegy for Atatürk): A poem expressing his love for the Republic and Atatürk.

Beş Günlük Dünya (Five-Day World): A poem questioning the transience of life and how one should live in this world.

Aşık Veysel's poems have not yet transformed into philosophy in the same way Homer's did; however, they represent an effort to establish the

theoretical framework of the practical philosophy that we experienced during the founding of the Republic. In other words, practice has preceded theory. The primary reason for titling our study *The Poetic State of Philosophy (Felsefenin Şiir Hali)* reflects the effort to constitute one of the steps on the path toward the transformation of Aşık Veysel's poetry into philosophy.

Aşık Veysel holds a place in the history of Turkish folk culture that goes beyond the labels of a Turkish folk poet or bard. Like Yunus Emre, he proved his competence in carrying thousands of years of Turkish culture and thought into the 20th century with full vitality. Since the poetic and bardic identity crystallized in Yunus Emre created the "Yunus Emre philosophy," Aşık Veysel followed in his footsteps and became the "reborn Yunus" of the 20th century.

In studies conducted on Aşık Veysel, he is referred to and recorded with descriptions such as "poet with the saz," "bard of the fine road," "master of bards," "bard of the Anatolian steppe," "folk bard," "bard of modernization," and "the great bard of the Republic" [2, p. 1-83].

Aşık Veysel is one of these original bards. His poems, which bring Alevi-Bektashi philosophy closer to and merge it with Republican thought, also demonstrate that he possesses a 'secular' (laik) bard identity" [3, p. 43-52].

It should be noted immediately that Aşık Veysel's poems are more than just "bringing the Alevi-Bektashi tradition closer to the Republic"; they are a manifesto of Republican philosophy. Although he was raised in the Alevi-Bektashi tradition, by using the national language of Republican philosophy in his poems, he reaches a unifying point that transcends Alevism, Bektashism, and Sunnism - a point above sects and religions:

Yezit nedir, ne kızılbaş / (What is a Yazidi, what is a Qizilbash?)

Değil miyiz hep bir kardaş / (Are we not all brothers?)

Bizi yakar bizim ataş / (Our own fire burns us)

Alevi Sünnilik nedir / (What is Alevi or Sunni?)

Menfaattir varvarası / (It all boils down to self-interest) [4, p. 65-66]

Aşık Veysel puts forward a transcendental discourse - national on one end and international on the other - that seeks to end the centuries-old conflicts over "I-and-thou" (ego) claims among religions, the disputes between sects, and the

Alevi-Sunni polarization within the context of Turkey. In his poetry, the local and the universal are fused. The merging of the local with the universal is only possible through the adoption of a discourse that stands above religions, sects, and even ethnic origins. His poetic language summarizes these complex issues, which would otherwise require pages of explanation in prose, using pure and clear Turkish (arî-duru Türkçe) in short verses.

In his works titled *Deyişler* (1944), *Sazımdan Sesler* (1950), and *Dostlar Beni Hatırlasın* (1970) [2], the influence of the subjects found in Yunus Emre's *Divan* and *The Book of Counsel* (*Risale-tü'n-Nushiyye*) is profound.

Aşık Veysel's Humanism: From National Culture to Universality

In terms of themes, Aşık Veysel's poetry encompasses himself, his surroundings, his country, and the world. The foundation of all these themes is his own existence and his intellectual emotions. He adopted the dictum "know thyself," echoed since Socrates, as a guide in his poems. In almost all his works, Aşık Veysel articulates his awareness that knowing one's environment, country, and the world begins with knowing oneself. However, his self-knowledge is not limited to recognizing his personal characteristics; we understand from his poems that it also involves knowing his nature as a human being - the very thing that distinguishes him from others.

Aşık Veysel lost his sight in both eyes at a very young age. He experienced the most painful aspects of life firsthand, and his anxieties regarding what a person without sight could achieve persisted until his father bought him a saz and found a master to teach him. He then began to "know himself." In Veysel's life, knowing oneself means realizing what one is capable of doing; he understood profoundly that no one can know what they can achieve until they try. Once he began to play the saz, he realized that the only clue to what a person can do is what they actually do. This awareness continued until his death, as it does for every self-aware individual. However, for Aşık Veysel, self-knowledge was a more arduous path, intertwined with poverty, disability, and impossibility. He even named this journey "a long, narrow road" (*uzun ince bir yol*).

With the view that all people are open to ethical values and possess the opportunity, right, and duty to realize them, Stoics drew the deontological horizons of Socrates' ontological humanism [5, p. 114-115].

Aşık Veysel draws the deontological horizons of ontological Turkism/Turkic identity with the inspiration he receives from the philosophy of the Republic. It is possible to see in many of his poems that he tries to place his ontological bond with Atatürk and Turkism within a deontological framework infused with the spirit of universal ethical principles:

Nedir senlik benlik usandık ondan / (What is this "I and thou" [ego]? We are weary of it)

İrkımız neslimiz aynı kandan / (Our race, our lineage is of the same blood)

Yurdun yaralarını saralım kardaş / (Let us heal the wounds of the homeland, brother) [6, p. 32-34].

"Güzelliğin on para etmez / Bu bendeki aşk olmasa" (Your beauty is worth nothing / If not for the love within me). Here, love is seen not just as an emotion but as the element that determines human internal value. Veysel argues that beauty comes from internal love and sincerity rather than external features. This can be linked to Plato's concept of the «Idea»; because according to Veysel, love contains a higher spiritual reality beyond material beauty.

While Aşık Veysel evaluates all of humanity within absolute equality, he does not neglect to consider the fact that they are distinct in terms of their works, qualities, or in other words, their "clothes." The first step of his humanism, ontological Turkism, finds expression in these lines:

Kitaplar yazılmış nasihat dolu / (Books have been written, full of advice)

Birlikte güçlenir gençliğin kolu / (The arm of youth grows strong in unity)

Gençliğe emanet Atatürk'ün yolu / (Atatürk's path is entrusted to the youth)

Hepimiz bu yurdun evlatlarıyız / (We are all children of this land.) [7, Poem no. 43]

The cause of humanity constitutes the ontological basis of deontological humanism. Aşık Veysel's cause is, at the final point, the cause of humanity.

Aşık Veysel considered birth and death as breaking points marking the beginning and end of liberation from the temporary worldly "clothes"

worn throughout life. According to him, people weight, classify, respect, or oppress one another in this world by looking at these temporary, subsequently acquired qualities. However, for him, humans are absolutely equal in both ontological and deontological senses. Belittling others is a deontological flaw that becomes the target of Aşık Veysel's wrath:

Beni hor görme kardeşim / (Do not despise me, my brother)

Sen altından ben tunç muyum / (Are you made of gold and I of bronze?)

Aynı vardan var olmuşuz / (We were created from the same Existence)

Sen gümüşsün ben sac mıyım / (Are you silver and I sheet iron?) [7, Poem no. 25].

Aşık Veysel's Philosophy of Turkish Culture

Language, religion, science, literature, art, and economy are among the elements of culture. The philosophical processes that discuss how cultural elements are formed in any society, the birth and development of culture, the principles that ensure its end or continuity, and the conditions and effects of all these on social life constitute the philosophy of culture. In the 19th century, history and culture appeared to be two fields where intense debates occurred regarding whether they could be considered sciences in the face of classical positivism and later neo-positivism. However, since history - as an inclusive science - incorporates culture by allowing us to identify the elements and traces of cultural processes, we can say that debates in the fields of historical science and the philosophy of history were reflected directly in the debates in the fields of cultural sciences and the philosophy of culture. Cultural sciences reside within historical science, and the philosophy of culture is built upon these sciences.

The shaman, bakşı, or bards (ozan) were important figures among the people who led rituals. The musical instruments they used in these rituals were the drum and the kopuz. In addition to talents such as oration and playing the saz-kopuz-drum, they also combined various duties such as sorcery and medicine [7, p. 89]. Let us recall the expression "kopuz-çeşte" in one of Yunus Emre's poems. Aşık Veysel is the Yunus of the 20th century. Yunus's kopuz and Veysel's saz are instruments of the same spirit.

Among the ancient Oghuz Turks, the kopuz was sacred. Dede Korkut appears in every story with his kopuz; he always plays it while naming or praying. With the acceptance of Islam, the ozan-baksı tradition was largely abandoned. As Turks sought to adopt and spread the new religion, "Tekke Literature" (Sufi lodge literature) and the poets who created it emerged. However, the ozan-baksı tradition survived within the Alevi-Bektashi branch of post-Islamic folk literature [7, p. 89].

Aşık Veysel became the contemporary representative of the folk literature within the Alevi-Bektashi branch, originating from the ozan-baksı tradition. This tradition was profoundly represented by Yunus Emre 600 years ago. Aşık Veysel carried the traces of Yunus, Pir Sultan Abdal, Karacaoğlu, Kemter Baba, Visali, Kul Abdal, and similar folk bards into the present.

Aşık Veysel, who became the "ancestor bard" (ozan Ata) for the Turks in the 20th century, possessed both an outward, physically dark world and an inward, deep, wide, rich, and luminous inner world. He is a philosopher-souled artist who harmonizes and bridges both worlds [7, p. 15-16].

Üç yüz onda gelmiş idim cihana / (I had come to the world in [1] 310 [1894])

Dünyada bakmadan ben kana kana / (Without looking at the world to my heart's content)

Kader böyle imiş çiçek bahana / (Such was fate, smallpox was the excuse)

Levh-i Kalem kara yazmış yazımı / (The Pen of Fate wrote my lot in black) [7, Poem no. 81].

Historians of Ancient philosophy and culture record that in ancient Greece, people were prone to mental and physical pain. They provide examples from the lives of poets and fragments left by certain philosophers. Jacob Burckhardt, a cultural historian of Antiquity, compares the Greeks' propensity for mental pain with Eastern culture:

"One of the important characteristics of the Greek people was that they lived their suffering intensely and consciously. In contrast to the resignation (tevekkül) and serenity mixed with all kinds of contemplation in Eastern cultures, the Greeks were open and prone to spiritual and physical pain. Nations at their beginnings possess only a collective consciousness of life, and this may last until the advanced stages of civilization; however, the Greeks became individuals before others and experienced both the joy and the sor-

row of this condition" [8, p. 158].

In this ancient Greek poetry, spiritual and physical pains seem to be postponed until old age. There is no pain before old age arrives. In Aşık Veysel, however, spiritual and physical pain is experienced throughout his entire life. One must not overlook that there is still a difference here. The pains in ancient Greece are articulated by being placed within a supra-individual, general picture. In Aşık Veysel, they are defined as individual pains. Nevertheless, in Turkish folk literature, pains are not always treated solely as individual experiences. Yunus Emre's depiction of death and its aftermath is an example of this.

In Turkish thought, pain and disasters are mitigated by divine and human love and are placed upon a balance.

The Place of Knowledge in Folk Enlightenment

Aşık Veysel frequently emphasized that the mobilization for enlightenment, as a requirement of the Republican heritage and its underlying philosophy, must be unconditionally embraced by the Turkish people. While enlightenment in the West was represented by an elite group of writers, poets, scientists, philosophers, statesmen, and artists, Aşık Veysel extended Republican enlightenment to the entire populace. In this view, every individual, regardless of their position or status, assumes a mission within this mobilization to the extent of their power. His service as a saz instructor for five years (1941–1946) in the Village Institutes (*Köy Enstitüleri*) - which served as the driving force of popular enlightenment - demonstrates the profound importance he attached to the role of knowledge in folk enlightenment.

He calls everyone to school for the sake of art and civilization:

Okuldadır türlü san'at / (All kinds of art are in school)

Medeniyet membaıdır / (It is the source of civilization) [7, Poem no. 127].

Aşık Veysel considers the Village Institutes the foundation of knowledge and enlightenment:

Enstitü bir kovan misalidir / (The Institute is like a beehive)

Her türlü çiçekten alır bal yapar / (It takes from every flower and makes honey)

Yurdumuz içinde doğru bir yoldur / (It is a right path within our homeland)

Memlekete kanat takar kol yapar / (It gives wings and arms to the country)

Mahmudiye Hamidiye Çifteler / (Mahmudiye, Hamidiye, Çifteler...)

Enstitü köylere yapacak neler / (What great things the Institute will do for the villages)

Bu toplu fikirle dağları deler / (With this collective thought, it pierces mountains)

Kimisi makine kimisi bel yapar / (Some make machines, others make spades) [7, Poem no. 73]

Aşık Veysel also uses laudatory descriptions in his poems to depict how the People's Houses (Halkevleri) - established in 14 cities on February 19, 1932 - represented and advanced Republican enlightenment. In his poem where he characterizes the People's House as the "House of Truth/God" (Hakk'ın evi), he commemorates its founder Atatürk and İnönü for their labor [7, Poem no. 62]. Since enlightenment is a multifaceted social transformation, Aşık Veysel draws attention to the fact that the People's House was part of the Republic's enlightenment leap in every field, from architecture to fine arts.

In the twentieth century, during the Republican era, it is impossible to stand against the rapid developments in the world while still living with the fear of sin. In this new era, the fear of sin is the blindness that creates the "sleep of negligence" which must be overcome. This has nothing to do with faith or worship.

Dünya tebdil oldu durum değişti / (The world has been transformed, the situation has changed)

Kimi aya gider kimi cenneti / (Some go to the moon, some dream of heaven) [7, Poem no. 72].

In this poem, he discloses the East-West contradiction in a subtle yet very simple way. While journeys to the moon are made thanks to scientific developments in the West, the East still dreams of going to heaven. However, Veysel expresses in strong terms that the Republic of Turkey is not condemned to this fatalism of the East. With the Republic, Turkish culture has regained its roots. The fatalism and submissiveness of the "East" cannot be the path of the modern Republic of Turkey or the Turkish Nation. This path, followed fanatically for centuries, pushed us toward collapse. Our orbit is now to go beyond contemporary Western civilization, as shown by Atatürk. To this end, against fatalism, Aşık Veysel wants to explain that he overcame the difficulties in his own life and serves as an example.

Veysel Seeking Himself in the Manner of Yunus

In some of his poems, Aşık Veysel masterfully treats the philosophy of Wahdat al-Wujud (Unity of Being), the most mysterious and complex problem of Islamic Sufi philosophy. He does not employ Sufi definitions and concepts directly; instead, he explains Wahdat al-Wujud - meaning the unity of existence - through very short but effective verses based on his own experience. Perhaps more than explaining it, he seeks the unity of being from an existential perspective. He begins his quest from his individual existence, questioning his place in the universe and attempting to find the bonds between God and all beings. Wahdat al-Wujud is diametrically opposed to pantheism. In the West, Spinoza is among the first philosophers who come to mind regarding pantheism. The pantheist Spinoza advocates for unity in existence. While unity in existence means «everything is God», the unity of being (Wahdat al-Wujud) means "everything is from God." The former speaks of multiple gods (or God as the sum of all things), while the latter speaks of Tawhid (Oneness). The difference is that stark. Therefore, it is surprising that even some who hold academic titles confuse the two. Before moving to how existential Wahdat al-Wujud is handled in Aşık Veysel, it is necessary to briefly clarify a few essential points regarding this concept.

In Sufi literature, Wahdat al-Wujud does not mean the unity of beings, but the unity of Being itself [9, p. 307]. Wahdat al-Wujud is a state of knowing - possessing the perception and consciousness that there is no true existence other than Allah [10, p. 507].

As seen, while Wahdat al-Wujud argues that there is no real existence other than Allah and that the sole and absolute truth is Allah alone, pantheism either accepts the Absolute Being as inherent in relative beings or denies Him entirely and deifies the universe, which is His creation. Moreover, while pantheism is a mode of thought belonging to the West, specifically to Spinoza, Wahdat al-Wujud emerges entirely as an interpretation of existence belonging to Islamic Sufism. Consequently, Wahdat al-Wujud is neither "accepting Allah as other beings" [13, p. III/112] nor a pantheistic view of existence that is "not creation ex nihilo" like in Hinduism, which is often

mistakenly explained through Wahdat al-Wujud [12, p. 26; 13, p. 256-257].

Aşık Veysel says he constantly seeks himself between dream and reality. However, the subject finding themselves is an existential problem, and all lines between the real and the unreal disappear. Why are humans, animals, and other beings different? Are nature and man one? Are we a natural part of nature or a different and foreign attachment added to it later? As humans, do we consist of a "name" or a concrete reality? After saying "I searched for myself for years, I could not find myself in any way" in the first lines, Aşık Veysel continues - perhaps unknowingly - with a nominalist inquiry:

İnsan mıyım mahluk muyum ot muyum / (Am I human, a creature, or grass?)

Ekilir biçilir bir nebat mıyım / (Am I a plant that is sown and reaped?)

Yoksa görünüşte bir sıfat mıyım? / (Or am I just an attribute in appearance?)

Hiçbir türlü bulamadım kendimi / (I could not find myself in any way) [7, Poem no. 168].

Starting with a search for a difference between nature and man in terms of being transient beings, Veysel sensed that fundamentally man is nothing other than a natural being and that the claim of existence might consist merely of an attribute or a name. For him, man has an existence equal in terms of being and non-being. Man both exists and does not exist. This is the common characteristic of transient beings. The fact that man is ontologically part of nature outside of God reminds one of Spinoza's philosophy of nature and pantheism. However, his viewing God as transcendent over nature and human existence - and expressing this in a passionate, reproachful language that we might call the shathiya style - distinguishes him from Spinoza and aligns him with Wahdat al-Wujud [7, poems no. 168, 170, 41].

The first three lines depict a purely Spinozistic pantheism. In other words, "everything is God". The last line, however, describes the Wahdat al-Wujud of Bayezid Bistami, Mansur al-Hallaj, and Muhyiddin ibn Arabi. In other words, "everything is from God".

In another poem, he turns toward pantheism again:

Has bahçeye girdim güllere sordum / (I entered the private garden and asked the roses)

Çiçekte çimende izini gördüm / (I saw His trace in the flowers and the grass)

Mekândan münezzeh gizli sanırdım / (I thought Him hidden, exempt from space)

Kaplamış alemleri nazarım böyle / (But my vision sees that He has covered the whole world.) [7, Poem no. 105].

God is perceived as encompassing the world, or the world is perceived as consisting entirely of God. He is not a hidden, mythical, or mysterious being; He is as manifest as nature, or He is nature itself. Aşık Veysel emphasizes that when he looks at the world, he perceives "Everything is God". It should be noted that there is a categorical difference between pantheism and Wahdat al-Wujud. Despite this, Veysel handles this complex mystical problem in his poems with such mastery and pure Turkish that even the common people can understand it. This reiterates that Aşık Veysel deserves the title of "poet-philosopher".

With a Stoic attitude, Aşık Veysel seeks nature within himself and himself within nature. Whatever exists in nature is in Veysel's inner world; he has identified with it:

Arzusunu çektiğim Beserek dağı / (Mount Beserek, for which I long)

Elvan elvan çiçeklerin açtı mı / (Have your many-colored flowers bloomed?) [4, p. 167].

Aclan Sayılğan asks Aşık Veysel about this poem, noting that Mount Beserek was bare with neither grass nor flowers: "Master Veysel," I said, "where are the many-colored flowers on Mount Beserek? I saw only white, lime rocks." Veysel smiled and said: "Those flowers are inside me" [6, p. 32-34].

Veysel emphasizes that he comes from the soil and blends back into the soil, coming from nature and merging into nature:

Aslıma karışıp toprak olunca / (When I mix with my essence and become soil)

Çiçek olur mezarımı süslerim / (I will become a flower and decorate my grave)

Topraktır cesedim güneştir özüm / (My corpse is the soil, my essence the sun)

Hava yağmur uyandırır hislerim / (Air and rain awaken my feelings) [4, p. 37].

Aşık Veysel is a bard of existence, even a philosopher. While searching for his lost childhood and perhaps his lost existence through the relationship of identity he established with nature, and searching for his individual existence in the

parallelism he established with his village, region, country, and homeland, he determined the sustainability of Turkish thought and culture for the eternal existence of the Republic as his ultimate goal. On this path, he constructed poems that were "unifying like Yunus, socialist and revolutionary like Pir Sultan Abdal, striking like Dadaloğlu, and enamored with beauty like Karacaoğlu" [4, p. 116]. By creating a contemporary synthesis of previous Turkish philosophers, poets, and bards [7, p. 114, 117], Aşık Veysel - before starting to write his own poems—played and sang the folk songs of bards and poets such as Kul Abdal, Karacaoğlu, Pir Sultan Abdal, Kemter Baba, Aşık Veli, Aşık Visali, Şahan Ağa, Aşık Sıdkı, Yunus Emre, Erzurumlu Emrah, and Aşık Dertli [14, p. 18-48]. Taking chivalry from Köroğlu, he carries his spirit to the present [4, p. 168].

Neyin ne olacak elde neyim neyim var / (What will become of what? What do I have in my hand?)

Karacaoğlu, Dertli Yunus soyum var / (I have the lineage of Karacaoğlu, Dertli, and Yunus)

Mansur'a benzeyen bazı huyum var / (I have some traits resembling Mansur [al-Hallaj])

Ne sen var ne ben bir tane Gaffar / (There is no 'you,' no 'I,' only the One All-Forgiving)

Hayyam'a görünmüş kadehte meyde / (He appeared to Khayyam in the goblet and the wine)

Neyzen'e görünmüş kamışta neyde / (He appeared to Neyzen [Tevfik] in the reed and the ney)

Veysel'e görünür mevcut her şeyde / (He appears to Veysel in everything that exists)

Ne sen var ne ben var bir tane Gaffar / (There is no 'you,' no 'I,' only the One All-Forgiving) [4, p. 32].

Aşık Veysel refers to Omar Khayyam among Islamic philosophers and Neyzen Tevfik among our contemporary poets. Furthermore, since he was raised with the Alevi-Bektashi tradition, he addresses Hacı Bektaş Veli in his five-stanza poem, implying that he is a "son of the path" and requesting his spiritual support on this path:

Medet Mürvet deyip kapına geldim / (I have come to your gate seeking help and grace)

İsteğim dileğim ver Hacı Bektaş / (Grant my wish and desire, Hacı Bektaş)

İndim eşiğine yüzümü sürdüm / (I descended to your threshold and rubbed my face)

Kusurum günahım var Hacı Bektaş / (I have faults and sins, Hacı Bektaş) [4, p. 243].

He ensured the sustainability of Turkish cul-

ture. Veysel is the contemporary Dede Korkut of the Republican era and beyond.

The Deconstruction of Aşık Veysel's Understanding of Nationalism: Nationalism as "Anatolian Humanism"

Aşık Veysel's nationalism is a humanism built on geographical belonging and cultural continuity, moving beyond conventional definitions based on ethnicity or theocracy. The philosophical foundations of this understanding lie in Republican modernization and the deep historical layers of Anatolia.

For Aşık Veysel, "nation" is a secular concept symbolizing the transition from *ummah* identity to citizen identity. In his poems, nationalism merges with the "cause of humanity" - a supra-identity that transcends religious and sectarian divisions. The lines, "*Veysel sapma sağa sola / Sen Allah'tan birlik dile / İkilikten gelir bela / Dava insanlık davası*" (Veysel, do not stray to the right or left / Pray to God for unity / Trouble comes from duality / The cause is the cause of humanity) [15, p. 78], serve as a manifesto for this secular and unifying humanism. This approach can be seen as one of the purest reflections among the people of the Atatürkist Republic's secular and unifying nation project [16, p. 145].

The ontological basis of his nationalism is not race, but "soil" (toprak). The line "My loyal beloved is the black soil" [15, p. 152] expresses a deep existential commitment to the geography where one is rooted, rather than being a simple metaphor. This soil is not just the homeland of a specific ethnic group; it is a "site of memory" (hafıza mekanı) bearing the collective heritage of all civilizations that have lived upon it, from the Hittites to the Phrygians, Ionians to Romans, and Turks [17, p. 34-37]. In this context, Ancient Greek philosophy and myths born in Anatolia are not elements imported from outside, but "indigenous" parts of this heritage. As a living carrier of this historical continuity, Aşık Veysel constructs a civilizational nationalism that is inclusive rather than exclusive. His universalism codes "ignorance" rather than another nation as the enemy and sees salvation in "science" and "knowledge". This is a peaceful project that aims to secure an honorable place within the human family rather than sharpening borders [18, p. 41-53].

“Transhumanist Nationalism” as a Hypothetical Concept

Transhumanism is a philosophical movement that aims to transcend human biological limits through technology [19, p. 1-25]. When the fundamental principles of this movement are adapted to a nationalist ideology, a speculative model emerges that we might call “augmented nationalism” or “transhumanist nationalism.” In this model, national power and survival are indexed to the biotechnological competencies of citizens rather than cultural or historical heritage.

In this hypothetical ideology, the discourse of racial superiority is replaced by “augmented” biological superiority achieved through genetic engineering, cybernetic implants, and artificial intelligence integration [20, p. 9-12]. The nation is redefined not as those who share a common past, but as those involved in the project of building a common biotechnological future. Contrary to Aşık Veysel’s approach of embracing the heritage of the past, this model is entirely future-oriented and views history as a record of biological constraints to be overcome. This situation inevitably carries the potential to create deep ethical problems and new hierarchies. A biological caste system that could emerge between “augmented” citizens and those who remain “natural” could lead to a profound division within the nation, while also triggering “bio-imperialist” competition in the international arena [21, p. 85-87]. Such a project risks opening the door to eugenic practices that threaten human diversity and the foundation of human dignity [23, p. 210].

In his poems - where he paints a picture of a universal nationalist ideal based on national power, the survival of the motherland and nation, historical and cultural accumulation, and the elements of science and knowledge - Aşık Veysel is opposed to augmented nationalism or nationalism tied to classical racial theory that envisages the elimination of biological deficiencies and weaknesses.

In Conclusion: Aşık Veysel’s Stance Against “Augmented Nationalism”

To better understand the understanding of nationalism that took shape in Aşık Veysel’s intellectual world - which we may call “Anatolian

Humanism” - comparing it with the futuristic and hypothetical concept of “transhumanist nationalism” provides an illuminating thought experiment.

Aşık Veysel’s nationalism is an inclusive project that does not discriminate based on race, religion, or color, and synthesizes Atatürkist thought, secularism, and the ancient civilizational heritage of Anatolia. For him, the “nation” is not a biological code but a cultural family sharing a common love, history, and geography. The line “My loyal beloved is the black soil” is the ontological basis of this philosophy: belonging is based not on blood, but on the soil and the memory of that soil.

Anatolian Humanism, embodied in Aşık Veysel, is a project that aims to “augment” the spirit and culture. The other is a potentially eugenic and exclusionary project that promises to “augment” the body and intelligence. While Aşık Veysel’s project is an invitation to the collective spiritual heritage of humanity, the other risks building new and insurmountable biological walls between nations.

Ultimately, Aşık Veysel’s philosophy offers timeless wisdom that reminds us of the vital importance of protecting the fundamental values that make us human against the dizzying promises of technology in the 21st century. His poetry is the voice not only of a bard but also of a philosopher who has struck roots in these lands and extended his branches to all of humanity.

References

- 1 Robinson D.N. Psikolojinin Felsefi Tarihi [The Philosophical History of Psychology]. – Ankara: Dogu Bati Publications, 2020. (in Turk)
- 2 Milli Kutuphane Baskanligi. Asik Veysel Bibliyografyasi – II. Bolum: Makaleler [Asik Veysel Bibliography – Part II: Articles]. – Ankara: Milli Kutuphane Baskanligi, 2017. –// [Electronic source] URL: <https://www.millikutuphane.gov.tr/repo/Documents/775cb235-fcee-414a-978f-c3eb2075223c.pdf> (the date of referring: 04.02.2026). (in Turk)
- 3 Ergulen H. Asik Veysel Siirinde Alevi-Bektasi Dusuncesinin Cumhuriyet’le Yakinligi [The Proximity of Alevi-Bektashi Thought to the Republic in Asik Veysel’s Poetry] // Dunya Ozani Asik Veysel Sempozyumu Bildirileri 1 [World Bard Asik Veysel Symposium Proceedings 1]. – 2015. – 24–25 May. – S. 43–52. (in Turk)
- 4 Satiroglu A.V. Dostlar Beni Hatirlasin [May Friends Remember Me]. – Istanbul: Turkiye Is Bankasi Cultural Publications, 1971. (in Turk)
- 5 Zekiyan B. Humanizm (Insancilik) Dusunsell Iclem ve Tarihseel Kokenleri [Humanism: Intellectual Intension and Historical Origins]. – Istanbul: Inkilap Publications, 2005. (in Turk)

- 6 Sayilgan A. Asik Veysel [Asik Veysel] // Tore Dergisi. – 1973. – N 24. – May. – P. 32–34. – Ankara. (in Turk)
- 7 Ozdemir A. Iki Kapili Handa Asik Veysel [Asik Veysel in the Two-Doored Inn]. – Istanbul: Sivas Platformu Publications 17, 2013. (in Turk)
8. Burckhardt J. Yunanlar ve Medeniyeti [The Greeks and Their Civilization]. – Istanbul: Pinhan Publications, 2019. (in Turk)
- 9 Mahmud A. El-Munkizu mine'd-Dalal ve Tasavvufi Incelemeler [The Deliverer from Error and Sufi Investigations]. – Istanbul: Kayhan Publications, 1990. (in Turk)
- 10 Uludag S. Tasavvuf Terimleri Sozlugu [Dictionary of Sufi Terms]. – Istanbul: Marifet Publications, 1991. (in Turk)
- 11 Ibn Teymiyye. Mecmuu'l-Fetava III [The Collection of Fatwas. Vol. III]. – Cairo: Daru'l-Maarif, 1349. (in Arab)
- 12 Aydin H. Yaratilis ve Gayelilik [Creation and Purposiveness]. – Ankara: D.I.B.Y., 1991. (in Turk)
- 13 Safa P. Nasyonalizm, Sosyalizm, Mistisizm [Nationalism, Socialism, Mysticism]. – Istanbul: Ay Publications, 1975. (in Turk)
- 14 Taspinar K. Asik Veysel'in Uluslasma Surecine Katkisini Etnopedagogik ve Etnoandrogogik Acidan Degerlendirmek [Evaluating Asik Veysel's Contribution to the Nationalization Process from Ethnopedagogical and Ethnoandrogogical Perspectives] // International Journal of Ethnopedagogy. – 2023. – Vol. 3, N 1. – P. 18–48. (in Turk)
- 15 Satiroglu A.V. Dostlar Beni Hatirlasin [May Friends Remember Me]. – Istanbul: Inkilap Kitabevi, 2018. (in Turk)
- 16 Metin E. Cumhuriyetin Ozanlari: Halk Siirinde Modernlesme ve Kimlik [Bards of the Republic: Modernization and Identity in Folk Poetry]. – Ankara: Bilge-Oguz Publications, 2011. (in Turk)
- 17 Eyuboglu S. Mavi ve Kara [Blue and Black]. – Istanbul: Turkiye Is Bankasi Cultural Publications, 2017. (in Turk)
- 18 Tekin A. Asik Veysel Felsefesinde Evrensel Insan ve Baris Soylemi [Universal Human and Peace Discourse in Asik Veysel's Philosophy] // Folklor/Edebiyat Dergisi. – 2019. – Vol. 25, N 97. – P. 41–55. (in Turk)
- 19 Bostrom N. A History of Transhumanist Thought // Journal of Evolution and Technology. – 2005. – Vol. 14, N 1. – P. 1–25. (in Engl)
- 20 Kurzweil R. The Singularity Is Near: When Humans Transcend Biology. – New York: Viking, 2005. (in Engl)
- 21 Sandel M.J. The Case Against Perfection: Ethics in the Age of Genetic Engineering. – Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007. (in Engl)
- 22 Yilmaz A. Biyo-Ulus: Teknolojik Milliyetciligin Gelecegi [Bio-Nation: The Future of Technological Nationalism]. – Istanbul: Gelecek Publications, 2023. (in Turk)
- 23 Ferry L. Gendler Icin Bati Felsefesi [Western Philosophy for Youth]. – Istanbul: Turkiye Is Bankasi Cultural Publications, 2020. (in Turk)

INFORMATION ABOUT AUTHOR

Şahin Filiz

Professor, PhD, Akdeniz Universitesi, Antalya, Turkiye, email: sfiliz@akdeniz.edu.tr, ORCID ID: 0000-0002-4249-22-21

Шахин Филиз

профессор, PhD, Ақтеңіз университеті, Анталия, Түркия, email: sfiliz@akdeniz.edu.tr, ORCID ID: 0000-0002-4249-22-21

Шахин Филиз

профессор, PhD, университет Акдениз, Анталия, Турция, email: sfiliz@akdeniz.edu.tr, ORCID ID: 0000-0002-4249-22-21

