

## **The Afterlife of Critique: The Communicability of Criticism and the Publicity of Polemic Concerning Public Debate in the Turkish Press**

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The philosophical activity of critique is intimately connected with the mundane activity of public criticism that takes place in newspapers. Drawing on the Kantian tradition of critical philosophy, we argue that four axes, namely, self-examination, liminal interrogation, concern with legitimacy, and the requirement of communicability, are implied by critical discourse and public debate. We then examine a recent set of polemics (between Doğan Akın, Ali Bayramoğlu, and Etyen Mahçupyan) in the Turkish press with the aid of these axes—as well as techniques for the analysis of informal reasoning—to determine what critical function such polemics may have. We conclude that critique survives as polemic in the Turkish press, but in such a way that the latter’s publicity vitiates the former’s communicability. The result is that polemics ultimately track the balance of power between social forces rather than being a transformative element within them.

*Keywords: critique, polemic, Turkish press, Kant, communicability, publicity*

A strong current—if not the very bedrock—of modern philosophy is that of critique constituted as reflection on the conditions of possibility of experience, aiming, thereby, to evaluate the legitimacy of our theoretical, practical, and aesthetic claims. From its inception in Kant through its transformations in German Idealism in the 19th century and the Frankfurt School in the 20th century, critical reflection has aimed to provide normative constraints on the activity of thinking in such a way that there would be a rational articulation between what we think and what we do, between theory and practice. Already in Kant, however, this philosophical concern with principles that make possible and therefore delimit what we may truly know and rightfully do is intimately connected with the mundane activity of public criticism that takes place in newspapers and journals, so much so that Kant states, “The same external constraint which deprives people of the freedom to *communicate* their thoughts in public also removes their freedom of *thought*” (Reiss, 1991, p. 247). This necessity of free public communication for critical reason becomes even more emphatic in the later development of critical theory as reason as such is viewed as a social institution with economic and political conditions.

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This means that it is not only interesting but also imperative to examine the state of public criticism in the landscape of contemporary media to gauge what form critique takes today and which possibilities remain open for it. Taking our cue from the opening of Adorno's (1973) *Negative Dialectics*, according to which "philosophy, which once seemed obsolete, lives on because the moment to realize it was missed" (p. 3)., we want to advance the claim that in the contemporary Turkish press, critique survives as polemic. This survival, however, undermines rather than realizes the capacities of reason to the extent that every sense of public criticism is co-opted by the publicity of polemic. Our argument develops in two parts. First, we delineate what we take to be the core elements of critique arising from the Kantian/idealist tradition to capture its sense and value as a self-reflection on the limits constitutive (or regulative) for our claims, whereby their legitimacy may be evaluated, which is inherently related to communicability. This discussion establishes the grid of intelligibility, for our analysis in Part 2, in terms of what one might call the four axes of critical discourse: (1) self-examination, (2) liminal interrogation, (3) concern with legitimacy (rights), and (4) the requirement of communicability. We then turn to Adorno's formulation of negative dialectic—as well as to some of his public interventions in debates in the German media in the 1960s—to make visible both the blind spots and the emancipatory potential of this notion of critique. Second, we examine a set of recent public polemics in the Turkish press between journalists, columnists, and academics to justify our view that the activity of critique (delineated in Part 1) survives as polemic.<sup>1</sup> Drawing on aspects of discourse analysis and techniques for the analysis of informal reasoning,<sup>2</sup> we argue that this afterlife of critique as polemic vitiates all four elements we articulate in Part 1 to the extent that the publicity of polemic exhausts the public communicability of critique. It is beyond the scope of this study to explain why this happens now and to such an extent, but our argument suggests lines of research with respect to the corporatization of journalism and authoritarian restrictions on the free press as explanatory factors.

### **Part 1: Critique as the Self-Examination of Reason**

Kant's reflection on the conditions of the possibility of experience is intimately bound to the question of justification. His key distinction between "question of fact" and "question of right" occurs at B 116–117 of the *Critique of Pure Reason* (Kant, 1781/1999), where he explicitly identifies his task as that of the deduction of what *legal title* we have to the employment of our categories, that is, whether we are *entitled* to apply them in experience. Therefore, the question concerning the objective validity of our categories is recast in terms of their justification: Subjective conditions of thought will have objective validity if it can be shown that no object of experience in general would be possible in their absence. It is important to emphasize the juridical sense of Kant's use of deduction in this context. Critical reflection on experience is to be distinguished from traditional metaphysical enquiry in that the latter is charged with having puzzled over the knowledge of substance (God, Soul, World)—"the question of fact"—whereas the

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<sup>1</sup> The set of polemics we examine is initiated by Doğan Akın and comprises two other authors, namely, Ali Bayramoğlu and Etyen Mahçupyan.

<sup>2</sup> Our methodology, therefore, comprises two principles: The philosophical concept of critique articulated in Part 1 provides both an analytic grid of intelligibility for the discourse analysis conducted in Part 2 and normative justification for our negative evaluation.

former must first establish the self-knowledge of the rights whereby a subject validates its claims to knowledge—"the question of right."<sup>3</sup>

Kant defines experience as empirical knowledge. So the conditions for the possibility of experience are those that are necessary for our capacity to make possibly true or false (cognitive) judgments about the world and ourselves. Experience of any kind presupposes this *cognitive* ability. This ability in turn requires that the subject unify its intuitions, which implies that it is active: I cannot simply inspect my mental states to have an experience, but rather must actively bring them to a unity. This activity, however, is complex. Most significantly for our purposes here, if subjective activity is necessary, then it must somehow be constrained. Or, in other words, there must be normative limitations on the subject's activity of representation. Kant denies the object the status of such a constraint because such a move would beg the question: It is precisely whether the subject has any right to claim a cognitive relationship with objects that is in question. These objectivity-conferring rules are the conditions under which a unified, implicitly self-conscious subject of experience is possible. Finally, these conditions are the pure rules that, prior to any experience, already determine what counts in general as an object of experience. Kant calls these pure rules or concepts that are necessary for the possibility of experience categories. They are objectively valid precisely because there could be no object of experience unless what is given in intuition had already been unified in accordance with the categories.<sup>4</sup>

Hence, philosophical enquiry must begin with a conception of experience as essentially reflexive and seek to legitimate those normative constraints that are presupposed by the very possibility of experience so understood. To make it clear that these normative constraints may not be empirical, that is, based on something given in experience and passively registered by the subject, Kant calls their status transcendental. Transcendental reflection, then, is essentially related to a concern with limits. This is evident in the three questions that Kant claims as exhaustive of the "interests of reason": (1) "What can I know?" (2) "What ought I to do?" (3) "What may I hope?" (Kant, 1781/1999, A 805/B 833). And Kant's insistence on the constitutive divide between the transcendental and the empirical is intended to legitimate critique as the self-grounding of reason. This self-grounding, or legitimation, implies the invocation of the conditions for the possibility of a unified, implicitly self-conscious subject of thought and action as well as the essential unity and teleology of reason

The reflexivity of conscious experience, therefore, determines from the outset the direction that critique will take: the problem of knowledge becomes that of self-knowledge by means of which we vindicate our rights to that which we already (take ourselves to) possess in fact. What is supposed to save

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<sup>3</sup> For a detailed explication of the stakes involved in this transformation, see Henrich (2008); Pippin (1989), especially Chapter 2.

<sup>4</sup> Two disclaimers are in order at this point: (a) It is not our aim to explicate the philosophical notion of critique as it originates and develops in the German Idealist tradition. Rather, we only draw on aspects of this tradition to articulate what we take to be crucial to and implied by any critical activity, including that involved in public criticism. (b) We do this because we take this notion of critique as in some sense constitutive of modernity. The vindication of this claim, however, is neither possible within the confines of nor required by the present study.

this movement from vicious circularity is "possible experience" as a limiting concept. Those of our claims that fall outside the limits of possible experience are condemned not as false, but as that to which we have no right. Moreover, the insistence to say something (anything) about what transcends the limits of possible experience can only generate illusions and contradictions. Critique is that activity of thought that already leads to that "point or line of contact" (Kant, 1977, p. 353) between the inside and the outside. Critical reflection, then, demands that one place oneself on the borderline.<sup>5</sup>

According to Kant, however, this concern with the limits and boundaries of reason, far from undermining the authority of reason, realizes its capacities and sets it up as a tribunal. For only thus can our disputes be resolved according to public rules or laws and our claims avoid the state of war between skepticism and dogmatism.<sup>6</sup> This is due in no small measure to how communicability is implied by the critical use of reason. The following note from "What Is Orientation in Thinking?" is worth quoting at length<sup>7</sup>:

*To think for oneself* means to look within oneself (i.e., in one's own reason) for the supreme touchstone of truth; and the maxim of thinking for oneself at all times is **enlightenment**. Now this requires less effort than is imagined by those who equate enlightenment with *knowledge*, for enlightenment consists rather in a negative principle in the use of one's cognitive powers, and those who are exceedingly rich in knowledge are often least enlightened in their use of it. To employ one's own reason means simply to ask oneself, whenever one is urged to accept something, whether one finds it possible to transform the reason for accepting it, or the rule which follows from what is accepted, into a universal principle governing the use of one's reason. Everyone can apply this test to himself; and when it is carried out, superstition and zealotry will be seen to vanish immediately, even if the individual in question does not have nearly enough knowledge to refute them on objective grounds. (Reiss, 1991, p. 249)

This passage succinctly captures the three elements of critique we have delineated, and it establishes how it is that those elements stand in a reciprocal relationship with communicability:

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<sup>5</sup> For Kant's distinction between "limit" and "bound," see Kant (1977, pp. 350–365).

<sup>6</sup> See Kant (1781/1999) A 395 and A 751/B 779. It is noteworthy that Kant's conception of critical reason as a tribunal in the absence of which one devolves into the self-proclaimed but vacuous victories and defeats of skepticism or dogmatism is prefaced by his acknowledgement that "our age is the genuine age of criticism, to which everything must submit" (A xi–xii). This distinction between critique as tribunal, in the absence of which we can only have a state of war, will be seen as pertinent to our examination in Part 2, where the etymology of polemic as war is clearly visible.

<sup>7</sup> This particular essay is written as an indirect intervention in a polemic between Mendelssohn and Jacobi concerning Lessing's (alleged) Spinozism. The polemic had more than a philosophical interest at the time, since Spinozism was seen as pantheistic, and therefore as denying the personal God of Christianity, a matter of significant public interest.

1. Reason is reflexive. In other words, its authority is inseparable from its capacity of self-examination. It is this activity of self-examination that is critique.
2. As such, its own authority is legitimated by its questioning of itself on the limits prescribing its public use—whether in science, morality, or art.
3. Therefore, every theoretical, practical, or aesthetic claim must be submitted to a process of justification before the tribunal of reason so set up to establish its rights.
4. Finally, this process of justification is that process of communication in which one is asked, or must ask oneself, “whenever one is urged to accept something, whether one finds it possible to transform the reason for accepting it . . . into a universal principle.”

Hence, critique is that mode of self-relation in relation to an other, which in principle refuses to accept whatever rule or claim that could not be accepted by all.<sup>8</sup>

What is involved in this demand for universalizability is nothing less (or more) than the demand to try to step back from one’s own particular interests, beliefs, and feelings to address oneself to an intersubjective public domain governed by rules that all can accept. The giving and taking of reasons so conceived, which Kant’s language formulates almost as an experiment to be performed on oneself—“simply to ask oneself,” “apply this test to himself”—gives expression to a concern with being a member not only of one’s own tribe. And since an individual who is motivated to communicate with others only does so based on her particular interests and beliefs, the critical demand may be expressed in less strong terms as the demand to inhabit the borderline separating one’s tribe from those of others. It is this concern and demand that Kant identifies as enlightenment, and their absence as zealotry and superstition. Enlightenment, then, or zealotry and superstition, are not a function of the presence or absence of knowledge; they are, rather, a function of the presence or absence of the negative—we might add, liminal—attitude toward one’s own claims to knowledge.

This zealotry and superstition are defined by Kant as the acknowledgment of sources of authority other than reason, one name for which is inspiration: “Captivating others with its authoritative pronouncements and great expectations,” the claim of inspiration disavows the concern and demand of reason, while “it still continues to use the language of reason” (Reiss, 1991, p. 248). Polemics—or as Kant calls it, “a confusion of tongues”—must soon dominate intersubjective exchange, for individuals follow

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<sup>8</sup> Two important theories that develop this aspect of universalizability pervasive throughout Kant’s works are by Habermas (1990, pp. 116–195) and O’Neill (2000, pp. 11–50). However, the connection we make between the demand for universality and an experimental and liminal attitude toward oneself would not be warranted by their interpretations and is closer in spirit to Foucault’s (2006) reading in “What Is Enlightenment?” Hence, here we draw not directly on Habermas’s concept of communicative rationality and discourse ethics, confining ourselves to Kant’s own formulations, because, for the purposes of this study, we want to remain neutral with respect to his commitment to the quasitranscendental status of such norms and their justification through a progressive historical narrative.

their distinct and incommunicable inspirations. The result is superstition as the subjugation of reason to facts: "Inner inspirations are inevitably transformed into facts confirmed by external evidence, and traditions which were originally freely chosen eventually become binding documents" (Reiss, 1991, p. 248).

Before we turn to an evaluation of contemporary polemics in the Turkish press through the lens of this conception of critique, it is indispensable to briefly consider some of its problems. It is not our aim in this study to vindicate all aspects (or all interpretations) of Kantian critique. Rather, and relative to our analysis of the publicity of polemic in Part 2, the claim we advance implies not that critical reason (in its Kantian conception) is valid *tout court*, but that certain of its elements remain constitutive of modernity, survive its failures, and enable us to evaluate some of those very failures. We propose to develop this step in our argument by invoking Adorno's notion of immanent critique. This notion is helpful for our case because (a) Adorno is mercilessly critical of certain aspects of Kantian reason, while acknowledging its emancipatory potential, and (b) some of his contributions to debates in the German press and radio in the 1960s enact precisely that connection between critique and public criticism that we wish to examine in the case of the Turkish press.

Two of the significant criticisms of Kantian critical reason are its formalism and liberalism. The former challenges its conception of reason as devoid of any meaningful content—because its demand for universalizability abstracts from particular beliefs, feelings, and interests, in the case of subjects, and intuitions, in the case of objects—thereby purchasing formal universal validity at the expense of any particular motivating force. In other words, if I successfully ask myself the question we referred to above—"Could it be accepted by all?"—then I would be left with no motives to engage in a genuine communication. The latter charges that the sense of freedom operative in this type of critique is liberalism's negative freedom from material conditions. In other words, Kantian freedom too is abstract, thereby privileging opportunity over happiness and obedience over rebellion. Both criticisms imply that Kantian critique legitimates our categories in principle without bothering about how they may be tainted already by our empirical motives and conflicts as well as by our material conditions. In short, they deny the real possibility of there being a critical standpoint removed far enough from our actual sayings and doings and from which we could evaluate them.<sup>9</sup>

Adorno agrees with the charges of formalism and liberalism without thereby impugning the idea of rational critique as such. He formulates a notion of immanent critique in which, without presupposing any transcendental (i.e., universal and necessary) legitimacy for one's own standpoint, particular philosophical (or any other) positions collapse under the weight of their own conflicting assumptions. Brian O'Connor (2005) claims that this activity involves attention to internal antinomy (contradiction), which is a function of conflicting tendencies within a given position, rather than attention to external antinomy, which becomes visible only when a given (in itself consistent) position is contrasted with another position (also consistent in itself). But, to put it in the terms we propose here, what enables immanent critique is that demand and concern for reason, which aim to overcome the tribalism of one's own and every other

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<sup>9</sup> Both criticisms have a venerable history going back, most influentially, to Hegel and Marx. For a succinct exposition of their salient aspects, see Habermas (1990, pp. 195–217).

position. Far from rejecting the elements of critique articulated above, Adorno's notion radicalizes its force by including the dependence of the critic on what she criticizes. It thereby renders visible the complicity of the subject and the object in the activity of criticism:

The detached observer is as much entangled as the active participant; the only advantage of the former is insight into his entanglement, and the infinitesimal freedom that lies in knowledge as such. . . . This is why the very movement of withdrawal bears features of what it negates. (Adorno, 2006, p. 26)

The contradictions so revealed in a given position are not simply mistakes or errors to be chalked up to personal shortcomings, but indications of the society that makes possible those positions. In other words, what is at stake in immanent critique is not the damning of one's opponent or the claiming of victory, but insight into the social conflicts that are at the root of who we are and who we have become. From this perspective, for instance, the formalism and liberalism implied in Kant's concept of critique are markers not of his lack of intelligence, but of the extent to which social relations had already become abstract and dominated by the assumptions of liberalism. This does not absolve us of responsibility; rather, it leads to the acknowledgement of guilt. Nor does it imply the bromide "everything is partial," because some are more entangled in and benefit from conflicting social tendencies than others are.

The refusal of this incessant questioning of our assumptions creates, in public criticism, a situation not unlike that described by Kant in terms of zealotry and superstition.

Discussion, which . . . like the public sphere, is an entirely bourgeois category, has been completely ruined by tactics. . . . Each of the hegemonic cliques has prepared in advance the results it desires. Discussion serves manipulation. Every argument, untroubled by the question of whether it is sound, is geared to a purpose. Whatever the opponent says is hardly perceived and then only so that formulaic clichés can be served up in retort. No one wants to learn. . . . The opponent in a discussion becomes a functional component of the current plan. . . . Either these cliques want to make him into something usable by means of engineered discussion and coerced solidarity, or to discredit him before their followers, or they simply speechify . . . for the sake of publicity, to which they are captive: pseudo-activity can stay alive only through incessant self-advertisement. (Adorno, 2005, pp. 268–269)

We claim that one consequence of this eclipse of critique by polemic is that public opinion can rarely, if at all, exert sufficient pressure on those holding power to bring about change. This is for the simple but fateful reason that it is not polemic's concern to engender a public through communication. Instead, polemic serves to put on display simultaneously the two currencies of opinion in circulation in a society.<sup>10</sup> First, there is the public opinion of elections, referenda, newspaper articles, parliamentary discussions, televised political debates, and so forth. These present those opinions we wish other people to

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<sup>10</sup> See the translator's note 9 in "Critique" (Adorno, 2005, p. 384). The distinction between public and nonpublic opinion is Franz Böhm's.

believe are our true opinions. There is, however, also nonpublic opinion, which comprises those beliefs that are our actual beliefs. Their coexistence, which should be cause for despair due to the inconsistencies thereby made visible and difficult to disavow, is actually celebrated in the language of polemic; this is because its intended audience is neither the actual nor the ideal public, but people who are measured in accordance with their membership in one's own tribe.

We now turn to our examination of a set of contemporary polemics from the Turkish press to show more concretely this afterlife of critique as polemic and its substitution of publicity for communicability.

## **Part 2: The Publicity of Polemic and the "Columnization" of Public Debate in the Turkish Press**

The set of polemics we propose to examine starts with a piece by Doğan Akin and comprises two other authors, namely, Ali Bayramoğlu and Etyen Mahçupyan.<sup>11</sup> A quick overview of the charges and countercharges is in order.<sup>12</sup>

Akin's central argument is that while Bayramoğlu appears to sprinkle criticism of the governing Justice and Development Party (AKP) into his columns in the daily *Yeni Şafak*, their innocuous (or merely tolerated) nature make them a more insidious form of legitimation for those in power (as they stifle genuine opposition). He advances this argument in three main movements. First, he points out that Bayramoğlu's claim to be protected by his support of conservative/Islamist causes in the past as they were then subjected to oppression is disingenuous because authors who provided similar support, but were in turn strongly critical of AKP's authoritarian policies or corruption have been fired or otherwise let go from *Yeni Şafak*, whereas he, Bayramoğlu, remains. Second, he takes him to task for criticizing the business deals, which concern allegations of corruption, between certain media groups—in particular, those owned by Aydın Doğan—and governments in the past, while remaining silent about or positively

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<sup>11</sup> We could have chosen other polemical exchanges in the Turkish press for our analysis. Such exchanges occupy a prominent place in print and broadcast media in Turkey, and two other recent examples involve Ahmet Altan and Ahmet Hakan, and Nuray Mert and Ali Bayramoğlu. Our analysis may be applied, *mutatis mutandis*, to these and others; and the type of discourse and reasoning exemplified in our polemical set is in fact far reaching in its influence. We consider our particular set of polemics as exemplary in part because of the multiple roles its participants have in public life, their visibility, and their influence.

<sup>12</sup> The authors in question occupy multiple roles and span several professions, such as journalist, academic, political advisor, and consultant. In this study, however, these multiple roles are peripheral to our central argument; hence, our gloss simply as "authors." The opinion pieces or criticisms in question are Akin (2015a, 2015b, 2015c), Bayramoğlu (2015a, 2015b, 2015c), and Mahçupyan (2015, 2016). The polemic spans July through August 2015. The interview is dated March 28, 2016. The latter, although it is not explicitly a polemical intervention, has direct bearing on some of the issues raised by the polemic at issue. Hence, it is included here. All translations from Turkish are our own. Ali Bayramoğlu has written columns in several daily newspapers, including *Sabah* and *Yeni Şafak*; Etyen Mahçupyan wrote columns in the newspapers *Taraf* and *Zaman*, and he served in 2014 as chief advisor to the then prime minister Ahmet Davutoğlu.



praising those deals between the Albayrak Group—who own, among other things, *Yeni Şafak*—and the present government, concerning which there are also allegations of corruption. Third, he juxtaposes pieces written by Bayramoğlu in different periods treating similar themes, between which there appear to be inconsistencies.

Bayramoğlu's response, in turn, charges a number of associations between the newspapers in which Akin worked in one capacity or another in the past and (a) allegedly corrupt business deals between them and former governments and (b) complicity or compliance with government oppression of journalists regarded at the time as critical of government or State policies. He also claims that Akin's T24 news website was funded by questionable acquaintances. Finally, he suggests that when Akin pleads for genuine criticism of the government, he is really motivated by an idea of criticism as personal attack.

Mahçupyan, who joins the fray with the avowed aim of defending Bayramoğlu from Akin's criticisms, reiterates the allegation that T24's funding derives from questionable sources, explains that the present government's business deals with certain conglomerates is an attempt to establish media groups supporting it—in response to those against it—and charges that Akin's kind of journalism is detached from and lack influence over Turkish society. Moreover, he sees Akin's criticisms as essentially motivated by hatred.

This admittedly schematic overview is not intended to capture all of the points raised by the three authors. Nor does it attempt to evaluate their facticity. In the light of the Kantian claim discussed in Part 1, this study does not take the problematic of critique to be primarily a function of the presence or absence of knowledge. Lest there be a misunderstanding: We do think that knowledge—for instance, whether the allegations mentioned in these polemical arguments are true or false—is important. It is precisely the task of journalists to investigate their facticity to inform the public.<sup>13</sup> But we wish to examine what becomes of the concern and demand of critical reason in what might be called the "columnization" of the media.<sup>14</sup> To this end, we emphasize not so much the veracity (or lack thereof) of the claims as the tactics employed in their expression by analyzing the salient features of their informal reasoning.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> We should also acknowledge that we are not simply neutral observers of the polemic we examine. We have definite views regarding who is right and who is wrong, we sympathize with some but not others, we are convinced by some arguments and reject others, etc. If our examination deliberately brackets our personal views, it is not only to restrict the scope of the present study but also to enact (partially) that sense of critique that is eclipsed by polemic.

<sup>14</sup> We think that the logic of polemic and its eclipse of the logic of critique described here in the context of the press and public debate (between figures who are typically defined as "columnists") has been affecting other forms of media—one sign of which is that the very nature and role of the media in society is contested in our polemical set; we also think that there are important analogies and disanalogies between this and what is referred to, in the context of the United States, as "punditry."

<sup>15</sup> Multiple taxonomies of arguments and fallacies are commonly used in informal logic. In what follows, we rely on the terms provided in Sinnott-Armstrong and Fogelin (2010), especially pages 353–364.

The most common type of argument deployed in the pieces at issue is ad hominem, which may be distinguished into three kinds: deniers, silencers, and dismissers. Ad hominem deniers deny the truth of a claim or the validity of an argument based on the character or position of the speaker. For example, rejecting the claim that there is pay inequality in an institution in favor of men, because it happens to be made by a woman, would be an ad hominem denier. Ad hominem silencers, however, deny not the truth of a claim, but the right of someone to make that claim based on the person's status or authority (or lack thereof). Refusing to consider the claims of a nonmember in an institution, regardless of the truth or falsity of those claims, is an instance of this, when membership is a formal condition to speak in that setting. Ad hominem dismissers work by calling into question the character, integrity, or motives of the speaker as unreliable and untrustworthy. Dismissing someone's support of a given policy, for instance, because this policy will benefit him, implies that the only supporting reason for this policy is his self-interest.

An important feature, which is usually misunderstood, of ad hominem (denier, silencer, and dissembler) arguments is that they may or may not be justified. In other words, the mere fact that an argument includes information about the character, status, or personality of the speaker in its premises does not make it unjustified (or fallacious). Because there may be contexts in which such information might be relevant to what the person is saying. For example, in jury trials, it may be legitimate to call into question the reliability of a known perjurer to generate doubt about his testimony. What he says might still be true, but we would be justifiably skeptical with respect to his testimony. The upshot is that the evaluation of ad hominem arguments as fallacious is straightforward only for unjustified deniers, which appeal to a personality trait that is irrelevant to the truth of a particular conclusion. In every other case, one must look for additional information and the circumstances of a particular case to determine whether such appeals are or are not relevant to the claim at issue.

This is emphatically so in the case of ad hominem dismissers appealing to inconsistency (of a person) over time and those cases traditionally labeled as *tu quoque*.<sup>16</sup> One way of questioning someone's reliability is to cite the inconsistent beliefs or contrary positions she has upheld over time. One may also deny someone's right to criticize others for doing something that she is doing herself. The gist of both is that the person in question is not reliable (or is hypocritical) and therefore not to be trusted. If such uses of ad hominem are to avoid devolving into fallacies—it is possible that hypocrites may tell the truth sometimes; we may change our mind about something in light of new information—then one must provide justification for why we have a right to expect consistency in such and such contexts. In other words, one must offer a minimal critique of the conditions of possibility legitimating the right to make claims in a given argumentative context.

The trouble with the set of polemical writings under examination is not that they rely almost exclusively on ad hominem arguments of one kind or another; rather, it is that they make no attempt to justify their own right to such arguments. Akin's pieces go the farthest in showing some awareness that

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<sup>16</sup> *Tu quoque* is Latin for "you also," or "you are another." It more or less corresponds to the situation described by the English idiom, "The pot calling the kettle black," which almost literally matches the Turkish *tencere dibin kara; senin ki benden kara*.

such justification is called for,<sup>17</sup> but this awareness remains stifled by the multiplication of dismissers of various kinds. Or, just when one sees a glimpse of such self-awareness, it is immediately projected onto the other (author) in the typical "Look who's talking!" of a *tu quoque*. Bayramoğlu (2015c), for instance, begins the piece "The Autopsy of Mold (3)" with the following "observation":

Morality concerns, first of all, one's own self. It is a matter of self-examination, self-accounting, self-regarding doubt and question. He who starts with the other, in etiquette as well as in morality, goes over to the other side of the scale. . . . First to one's own self, then to the other, without bending, twisting or distorting. (Bayramoğlu, 2015c, para. 1)

This sounds like a very promising beginning for what we referred to previously as the inherent reflexivity of critique; but it remains a merely rhetorical invocation, for he continues: "[So] is it not necessary to ask [of Akin] 'who are you?'" (Bayramoğlu, 2015c, para. 2). Each expecting from the other what the other demands from him, the result is a "confusion of tongues," in which the very language of critique as self-examination of the rights of reason to make claims is distorted to become exclusively other directed. This prevents the question of legitimacy from arising except merely as rhetorical appeal.

Another way in which *ad hominem* dismissers distort this aspect of critique, and thereby make it impossible to occupy the "borderline" that critical reason's concern with limits demands, is the confusion of explanation with justification. This too is pervasive in the pieces under examination, but two exemplary cases are found in Mahçupyan (2015, 2016). Consider, first, the following:

The AKP quickly formed its own media. This did not express quality journalism, but it did enable a certain voice to survive and generate resistance in the public sphere. Thus, eventually, the media not as journalism but as a battlefield emerged, besieging [media] bosses and reporters alike. (Mahçupyan, 2015, para. 2)

Whatever the merits of such an explanation for the current state of the media in Turkey, the important point for our purposes is that Mahçupyan implicitly deploys it as a justification for the abuses and corruption leveled by Akin's criticisms. Thus he suggests that a *de facto* situation can be its of justification, thereby skirting the problem of legitimation (or delegitimation) without addressing it. It is significant that the very metaphor of media as a battlefield recalls the etymology of polemic, which refers to war or battle (*polemos*) in Greek.

The second case is especially instructive for the way in which the language of polemic displays simultaneously public and nonpublic opinion—a situation that, as we have seen in Part 1, could only be experienced as shocking for Böhm. Against criticisms concerning the fairness of his indictment of some intellectuals, he responds with the following:

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<sup>17</sup> Especially the piece by Akin (2015b).

Their [he is speaking about Ahmet Şık and Nedim Şener] imprisonment was nonsense. But in discussion at the time were not these two people or Türkan Saylan. Starting with them, it was a debate among intellectuals. The essential issue concerns, still, how the secular [*laik*] section cannot come to terms with itself. Perhaps, as someone who comes from that secular section, I react needlessly sensitively, I feel the situation too much. But frankly it rubs me the wrong way.<sup>18</sup> I want those who are in the secular section to speak only after looking at the issue dispassionately, with common sense, fairly, and in wider perspective. (Mahçupyan, 2016, para. 64)

This passage too is couched in the language of public criticism (apportioning blame or innocence, differentiating between the essential and the accidental, calling for objectivity, implying the occupation of the borderline between the secular and its other, thereby achieving fairness); however, the occurrence of the expression “rubs me the wrong way,” which, in Turkish, implies that the source of one’s quarrel is inherently personal and mechanical, inverts the logic of public criticism to instead put on display an activity analogous to scratching an itch or clearing one’s throat. It may not be fair to so magnify one idiom used in the course of an interview, but we claim that its occurrence would have been unthinkable, had the very sense of rational critique not been completely eclipsed by the logic of polemic. In other words, what is troubling is not that an author might have such a feeling so much as its inclusion, as an acceptable move, in a discourse (putatively) aimed at the public.

Finally, the condition of universalizability, by virtue of which there is a reciprocal relationship between critique and communicability, is fragmented into the tribalism of polemic. One is never taken up and responded to in the pieces under examination except as already and always a member of some group other than our own. One is either secular or religious, a member of this or that business conglomerate, this or that media group, where these groups are regarded as incommensurable in principle and exhaustive of the public identity of a person. The consequence of such tribalism is that these pieces may be aimed only at those who are already convinced of the validity of one’s claims. No one ever comes out of a polemic so structured as different from how she entered it; no one may be transformed by a polemic. This applies equally to the author as it does to the reader. Thus, polemical criticisms of the type in question forego the very creation of a public through communication that, in Part 1, we argued for under that element of critique as a liminal activity. This is true in the philosophical sense of the interrogation of the limits that make possible our claims; but it is also true in the anthropological sense of liminal: The ritualized participation in such polemic has no transformative effect on the public status or identity of an individual. Despite the fanfare and publicity it creates, polemic ultimately tracks the balance of power between social forces on the field at a given time and place. It thus leaves untouched the status quo.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> What we translate here as “rubbing the wrong way” is the Turkish idiom *gıcık kapmak*. Literally, it refers to having an itchy throat that causes coughing. It implies that some person or thing irritates, vexes, provokes, annoys, or infuriates one. So we could have translated it in a number of ways, including “gets under my skin.” The point we want to emphasize is that the use of this expression marks the irruption of an inherently personal or subjective element into public discourse.

<sup>19</sup> In other words, the failure of this kind of polemic from the perspective of critique is not that the pieces in question are not in depth enough, or scientific enough, or article-like; we are not judging one genre of

### Conclusion

We have argued that critique survives as polemic in the Turkish press. This survival is equivocal: It appears to suggest that the principles of freedom and rational communication are alive and well in the contemporary public sphere, whereas an examination of one group of polemics reveals that the demand and concern of reason is overtaken by the publicity of polemic. This is because the elements of self-examination, interrogation of limits, justification of rights, and communicability, which we argued in Part 1 to be constitutive of the activity of critique, are lacking in the polemical criticisms we examined in Part 2. Even though our study is limited in scope to a particular group of polemical writings, we think that the structure we evaluate here and the claims we so justify apply also to other contemporary popular polemics from the Turkish media. Our study is also limited in that the social and political explanation for the equivocal survival we describe and evaluate here needs to be provided. We think that two elements of such an explanation will be the corporatization of journalism and authoritarian restrictions on freedom of the press. Moreover, we believe that these two elements will be related. However, the explanatory question is not a part of our study.<sup>20</sup> We hope to have demonstrated that it is imperative not to be captivated by the publicity of polemic and mistake it as the freedom of critique. Far from being the realization of our freedom, the problematic connection between the two might actually serve to hide our "unfreedom," not unlike the "instrumentalism that fetishizes means because its form of praxis cannot suffer reflection upon its ends" (Adorno, 2005, p. 269).<sup>21</sup>

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writing according to the rules of another. Rather, their failure is that they are not critical at all. This does not mean that polemical arguments can never be justified or effective. For two examples of what justified polemical criticism, enacting one or more of the elements of critique we articulate above, might be like, see O'Hehir (2016) and Sevinç (2016). The former takes on a recent *New York Times* article on Donald Trump's candidacy to interrogate one's complicity with what one criticizes. The latter piece concerns the recent polemic in the Turkish press between Ahmet Hakan and Ahmet Altan.

<sup>20</sup> The relationship between corporatization and authoritarianism is obviously a complex one, and a full account would have to look at not only ownership of media outlets but also the financial connections between capital and political power.

<sup>21</sup> It may be one of the reasons for its toleration by government authority. For a helpful discussion of the ambivalent nature of the concept of toleration in relation to political dissent, see Eğılmez (2012, pp. 431–447).

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