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**FETHULLAH GÜLEN'S PERCEPTION of
STATE and SOCIETY**

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Institute of Social Sciences
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of**

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by

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ABSTRACT

Fethullah Gülen's Perception of State and Society

by
Ebru Altinoğlu

This study is an analysis of the discourse of Fethullah Gülen, who is the leader of an Islamic community in Turkey, with respect to his perception of state and society. The main problematic of my study is to understand to what extent Fethullah Gülen advocates separation of state and religious affairs. My theoretical perspective includes three conceptual tools: Secularization, Civil Society and Social Movements. In my theoretical perspective, secularity as a feature of the state requires separation of state and civil society, and existence of social movements that do not target seizing political authority. From that standpoint, first I have tried to show that the Fethullah Gülen Community could be considered a social movement distinct from a sect or religious order. Secondly, by referring to the pluralism tenet of the concept of civil society, I have tried to understand Gülen's perception of the 'other'. I have indicated that, because he interprets Islam through tradition and in accordance with the changing conditions of time and space, he welcomes plurality within society. Yet, two main problems have emerged: first, Gülen's negative attitude towards social movements that engage in any kind of protest against the state, and second, the ideal society envisaged by Gülen, which is based on consensus rather than compromise. These two problems render the compatibility of his interpretation of Islam and the concept of civil society problematic. Lastly, I have tried to understand to what extent Gülen contents with disseminating Islam through civil methods. I showed that political means are despised and are not advocated to disseminate Islam. Political transformation is regarded only as a natural result of a long process of cultural and ethical transformation of individuals. With regard to separation of state and religious affairs, I have inferred that Gülen does not reject it under the condition it remains neutral and guarantees the free exercise of religions.

KISA ÖZET

Fethullah Gülen'in Devlet ve Toplum Anlayışı

Ebru Altınoğlu

Bu çalışma dini bir cemaatin lideri olan Fethullah Gülen'in devlet ve toplum anlayışının söyleme dayalı bir analizidir. Çalışmamın temel amacı dini bir lider olarak Fethullah Gülen'in din-devlet ayrımı (laiklik) karşısındaki tavrını anlamaktır. Bu amaç doğrultusunda teorik perspektifimi üç kavramsal araç oluşturmaktadır: Laiklik, Sivil Toplum, ve Toplumsal Hareketler... Devletin bir özelliği olarak laiklik, bir yandan devlet ve sivil toplum ayrımını, diğer yandan da doğrudan siyasi otoriteyi ele geçirmeyi hedeflemeyen toplumsal hareketleri ön koşul olarak dayatmaktadır. Bu noktadan hareketle çalışmamda, öncelikle Fethullah Gülen hareketinin tarikatten farklı bir toplumsal hareket olarak değerlendirilebileceğini göstermeye çalıştım. Daha sonra, sivil toplumun temel prensiplerinden olan çoğulculuk ilkesinden hareketle Gülen'in 'öteki'ne bakışımı analiz ettim. Gülen, İslam'ı gelenek içinden ve zaman ve mekanın değişen şartlarını göz önünde bulundurarak yorumladığı için toplumda çoğulluğu olumlu karşılamaktadır. Ancak yine de bu noktada iki sorun karşımıza çıkmaktadır: İlki, Gülen'in devlete karşı protesto hareketine başvuran toplumsal hareketlere karşı olumsuz tavrı, diğeri de öngördüğü ideal toplum modelidir, ki bu toplum uzlaşmadan çok oydaşıma dayanmaktadır. Çalışmamda son olarak, Gülen'in gerçekten sivil metodlarla İslam'ı tebliğ etmekte yetinip yetinmeyeceğini anlamaya çalıştım. Siyasetimn küçümsendiğini ve hiçbir suretle bir tebliğ aracı olarak görülmediğini, dini esaslara dayalı bir devletin ise ancak bireylerin kültürel ve ahlaki dönüşümlerinin doğal bir sonucu olarak beklendiğini ortaya koydum. Din-devlet ayrımı konusunda ise, devlet tarafsız kaldığı ve dinin toplumda özgür ifadesine ve yaşanmasına izin verdiği müddetçe kabul edildiğini belirttim.

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INTRODUCTION

This study is on the whole an analysis of discourse: An analysis of the discourse of Fethullah Gülen, who is the leader of a moderate Islamic community in Turkey, with respect to his perception of the state and society. My starting point was to understand, to what extent Fethullah Gülen, as a religious leader, advocated separation of the state and religious affairs. However such a question inevitably led me to ask certain sub-questions and to analyze Gülen's perception of society through the concept of "civil society, hence of diversity and plurality.

The reasons that led me to conduct a research on Fethullah Gülen's interpretation of Islam, are the distinction of his teaching with respect to the interpretation of state-religion relationships, and the scope of the appeal that this teaching attracts in Turkey. The Fethullah Gülen Movement is a branch of the *Nurcu* School established by Said Nursi in the 19th century. The *Nurcu* movement in the 1980s and 1990s separated into three main branches: the followers of the Fethullah Gülen Community, *Yeni Asyacılar*, and the group of *Yeni Nesil*.¹ At present, the most powerful, the most popularized, and the most influential one of these is the Fethullah Gülen Community.

¹ Uğur Kömeçoğlu, *A Sociological Interpretative Approach to the Fethullah Gülen Community Movement*, Unpublished Master Thesis, Boğaziçi University, Istanbul, 1997

The distinctive features of the movement are first, its anti fundamentalism and its effort to disseminate Islamic faith and morality without addressing to political action, and secondly, its emphasis on Turkish nation and the State.

The interpretation of Islam that Gülen offers is a novelty in Turkey. Since the appearance of the movement in the public sphere, we have been at great pain to actually label it, as is normally our habit. As M. Ali Birand confesses, the Turkish intelligentsia has this reductionist habit: “We cannot feel at ease unless we label them *irticacı* (politically reactionary), thus bad; or secular, thus good. We should either decide that they will establish a religious state, or believe that they are republican and Kemalist.”²

My aim is to go beyond this reductionism and to show that The F Gülen Community can be categorized neither in the first nor in the second group. Fethullah Gülen, as the leader of the movement does not argue for a holistic transformation of the society from above via legislative regulations/prohibitions, but he brings the inner/ethical transformation of the individual into the forefront. In this respect, the movement does not advocate political action as a means to establish an Islamic society. Yet many argue that this is not the true face of the movement. It is claimed that the disguised ultimate aim of the movement is to establish a religious state and to rule by prohibitive regulations. Therefore, my intention is to analyze Gülen’s arguments, his perception of state and society, and to sweep away the nebula that obscures the real picture.

² Mehmet Ali Birand, *Sabah*, 15.01.98.

In order to reveal Fethullah Gülen's perception of the state and society, I will refer to three conceptual tools: Theories of Secularization, Civil Society, and Social Movements. Beside secularization theory, I felt the need to refer to the concepts of Civil Society and Social Movement, because secularity of the state is not a substance in itself, but it requires the accompaniment of some other components, such as separation of the state and the civil society, and existence of social movements that do not directly target the state. In other words, those three concepts are related to each other, and one entails the other. As a result, I will start with the most comprehensive one which is secularization. Secularization will lead us to a distinction of the state and civil society. And the concept of Civil Society will require existence of social movements.

The First Chapter is devoted to the theoretical perspectives of the whole study, and includes Secularization, Civil Society and Social Movements Theories. In the Second Chapter, I will start analyzing Fethullah Gülen's discourse. In contrast to my theoretical sketch, I will begin with social movements theories. In the Second Chapter, I will try to investigate to what extent the Fethullah Gülen Community can be considered a social movement distinct from a sect or a religious order. The answer given to this question will enable me to assess the place of the community within civil society. In the Third Chapter, I will analyze another principle of the concept of Civil Society which is plurality. My questions in this chapter, through which I will try to understand Gülen's perception of society, will be the following: "How does Gülen perceive the society composed of different life strategies?", "What is the status of the 'other' in F.Gülen's interpretation of Islam?" and "What are the grounds of a relation with the 'other'?". The Second and the Third chapters will enable me to assess the compatibility of

Gülen's interpretation of Islam and the concept of civil society. In the Fourth Chapter, I will focus on Gülen's perception of state and secularity. Theoretically, secularity of the state requires the separation of state and civil society. Given an answer to the compatibility of Gülen's teaching with civil society, I will try to analyze to what extent Gülen advocates a separation of state and civil society, that is how he is contended with being a member of the Civil Society without any implicit intention of seizing the political authority and establishing a religious rule.

A BRIEF COGNITION OF FETHULLAH GÜLEN'S INTERPRETATION OF THE ISLAMIC FAITH

Fethullah Gülen defines religion as a set of principles or laws revealed by Allah in order to gradually impel people by their own will and choice towards the absolute good.³ Islam, according to him, is the name of the religion within which all the other religions have been unified by Allah.⁴ Accordingly, he asserts that they believe from the heart that Islam will prevail in the world once more, that Christianity will turn to its origins, and thus will submit to Islam, and that all over the world people will think and talk of the Prophet Muhammad.⁵ In this respect, he considers that the principal aim of Muslims is nothing but to explain about Allah and His Prophet, to make people love Them, and

³ Fethullah Gülen. *Prizma I*, Nil Yayınları, İzmir, 1996, p. 114. and Selçuk Camcı, Dr. Kudret Ünal (ed.). *Fethullah Gülen'in Konuşma ve Yazılarında Hoşgörü ve Diyalog İklimi*, Merkur Yayınları. İzmir, 1998, p. 281.

⁴ Camcı & Ünal (ed.). *op.cit.*, p.281.

⁵ Fethullah Gülen. *İnançın Gölgesinde*, Nil Yayınları, İzmir, 1996, p. 136.

hence to seek the grace of God.⁶ According to him, in the world there is no greater duty other than *irşad* (putting on the right way, showing the right road), *tebliğ* (dissemination of faith), *jihad* (struggle for faith) and to serve for the religion.⁷

“The name of our duty is *jihad*” F. Gülen says. According to him *jihad* has two aspects, namely the great and the small *jihad*. The great *jihad* is involved in a spiritual struggle. It is based upon the development of the inner being of an individual. The other one is a material struggle aimed at the outside world. In this sense *jihad* is defined as an action addressed under certain conditions in order at times to defend life, propriety, religion, generation, native country, and honor; sometimes to sweep away the obstacles preventing the praise in the Name of Allah (*I'là'yi Kelimetullah*). Yet he insists that the concept of *jihad* is a very comprehensive one and might be accomplished in various ways; such as taking someone to a meeting (*sohbet*), giving financial support, awarding scholarship to a student, establishing preparatory schools for university entrance exams, etc... However, he adds, today when *jihad* is mentioned people [Muslims] understand it to be concerned with violence and to threaten people... But the great *jihad* involves the spiritual life, it is the development of the inner depth of an individual, and the personal relation of one to Allah.⁸

He criticizes the fact that Sufism (*tasavvuf*) which, according to him, can be considered as the spiritual life of Islam, was driven away from the *medrese* (religious

⁶ *Ibid*, p. 198.

⁷ *Ibid*, p. 196.

⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 200-201, and Camcı & Ünal, *op.cit.*, pp. 105 & 217.

school).⁹ Gülen claims that it is difficult for those who do not believe in the spiritual life of Islam -Sufism (*tasavvuf*)- to achieve the certain knowledge of religion (*yakin*). Accordingly, one who wonders among the formality of books should be orientated towards the “essence” (*mâna*).¹⁰ Yet we should also note that Fethullah Gülen is as much against the Western style of mystic life -which neglects and even denies the mundane aspects of human being- as materialism which considers man only within his ‘body’.¹¹ In this respect, he admits that the movement, of which he is the intellectual leader, is a sufist movement (*tasavvuf hareketi*) in the sense that it is a path to approach Allah, a way to be a perfect man (*insan-ı kâmil*). Yet he distinguishes Sufism as being the spiritual life of the religion, from its organizational form which is sect or religious order (*tarikât*). He considers religious orders as organizations where sufist sentiments and ideas have been diversified and institutionalized based on the diversity of disciples or leaders of these orders. Considered in the sense of an organizational form, he asserts, that the movement is neither a sufist movement nor a religious sect.¹²

⁹ Camcı, *op.cit*, p. 202.

¹⁰ F. Gülen, *Fasıldan Fasıla III*, Nil Yayınları, İzmir, 1996, pp. 26-27

The following passages display the mystical aspect of Gülen’s teaching: “*Allah haşyeti ve muhabbetinden gecenin zülüfleri üzerine bırakılan birkaç damla gözyaşı ve herkesin uyuduğu saatlerde uyumayan gözlerle eda edilen zikirler, tesbihler, kılınan namazlar ve mütalâa edilen derslerin kalplere ne kazandırdığı ancak tatbikatla ve tadip-bilmekle anlaşılır.*” F. Gülen, *İnancın Gölgesinde*, Nil Yayınları, İzmir, 1996, p. 165.

“*Kalbinin bütün kapılarını Yaraticısına açıp onunla münasebete geçecek, O’na dert yapıp, O’nunla hasbihal edecek; en gizli arzularını ... O’na açacak... İçinde O’nunla derinleştikçe daha başka içlere, içler ötesi içlere kanat çırpıp yükselecek, nihayet gözlerin görmediği ve göremeyeceği, kulakların işitmediği ve işitemeyeceği ve kalblerin kavrayamadığı ve kavrayamayacağı göz kamaştırıcı ilimlere ulaşacaktır.*” F. Gülen, *Yitirilmiş Cennete Doğru*, TÜV Yayınları, İzmir, 1997, p. 31.

¹¹ Gülen, *Buhranlar Anaforunda İnsan*, p. 100.

¹² Camcı & Ünal, *op.cit*, p.236.

Fethullah Gülen criticizes Muslims for ignoring not only the spiritual aspect of Islam by driving away sufist cognition from the *medrese*, but also for not considering the cosmological dimension (*kevnî ilimler*) that deals with natural sciences. If, to be involved in the Sufist reality which means discovering and perceiving the boundlessness of the universe in a subjective way, is one of the tripods of Islam¹³, another is ‘reading the Book of the Universe’, meaning researching in a methodological and objective manner the laws of the universe. This Book is called ‘*Şeriat-ı Fitriye*’. It is the original source of all the laws of Allah; such as laws of physics, chemistry, biology, mathematics, etc... In other words, *Şeriat-ı Fitriye* is the constellation of the laws related to the creation and the functioning of the universe, and life. Since Allah, with His Will and Omnipotence has written the Book of the Universe, the laws of nature constitute a book full of the wisdom of God, and these laws are all warnings and examples that should always be addressed. They are also guides for human societies since anything against the general harmony of the universe is doomed to collapse.¹⁴ Dealing with the natural sciences is a precondition for being successful in disseminating the faith. For Gülen says:

“Our era is neither the era of Fatih or Yavuz, or of sword or cannon; nor the era of rendering hearts (*gönül*) enthusiastic by love and divine inspiration (*ilham*). Our era is the era of positive sciences along with the divine inspiration, and all accompanied with contemplation and culture... [Therefore] every *mü'min* should read and investigate

¹³ Fethullah Gülen admits that Islam has three main aspects that we call tripods of Islam, which are reading Quran, reading the Book of Universe, that is being involved in natural sciences, and Sufism. Yet he adds to these three principle a fourth one which is discipline. Can, *op.cit.*, pp. 76-77

¹⁴ Interview with Nuriye Akman, Sabah, Ocak 1995, in Mustafa Armağan, Ali Ünal (ed.) *Medya Aynasında Fethullah Gülen, Kozadan Kelebeğe*, Gazeteciler ve Yazarlar Vakfı Yayınları, İstanbul, 1999, p. 35, and Eyüp Can, *Fethullah Gülen Hocaefendi ile Ufuk Turu*, AD Yayıncılık, İstanbul, 1997, pp. 76-77.; Fethullah Gülen, *Buhranlar Anaforunda İnsan*, TÖV Yayınları, İzmir, 1997, p.3 and 69

both religious and positive sciences, and he/she must be equipped with scientific and religious-spiritual knowledge (*ilim ve irfan*) ... He/she should read and contemplate, and should not waste any time what so ever. For an empty man has nothing to convey to other people. If we are not cognizant of at least philosophy, logic and of the main principles of certain sciences, such as physics, chemistry, astronomy, medicine and botany; and if we are not involved in religious sciences at the same level, as well, we can explain nothing to the others and we cannot persuade them.”¹⁵

Therefore, a *mü'min* (believer) is as much responsible for ‘reading’ all the events in the universe as reading the Quran, which is the other book –book in the literal meaning– of Allah.

According to F.Gülen, the third principle of Islam¹⁶ is reading the Holy Quran. The Quran has been considered as the manifestation of one of the qualities of Allah, which is *Kelâm* (Word). The Holy Quran and the Book of the Universe are the two faces of the same Reality. Gülen claims that the Quran requires a reading of a certain kind: Its reading should not be dogmatic, but on the contrary, should be open to interpretation. Some people, he says, think that if the principles of the Quran and *Sunna* are applied to actual life as they are without any interpretation, the universality of Islam could be achieved. He rejects this argument and states that the universality of Islam is impossible unless the interpretative logic also accompanies the literal reading of these

¹⁵ “Devrimiz ne Fatih ve Yavuz devri, ne kılıç ve top devri, ne de gönülleri sadece aşk ve ilhamla coşturma devridir. Devrimiz müsbet ilmin yanında ilham, onun yanında da fikir ve kültür devridir.... Her mü'min, hem dini, hem de müsbet ilimleri okuyup araştırmalı ve mutlaka ilimle ve irfanla mücehhez olmalıdır. İşyerinde, evde, dükkanda, yemekte, ... mutlaka okumalı, düşünmeli ve zamanının en küçük parçasını bile israf etmemelidir. Zira, boş bir insanın diğer insanlara verebileceği hiçbir şey yoktur. Fizik, Kimya, Astronomi, Tıp ve Botanik gibi ilimlerin en azından felsefesine, mantık ve düşünce temellerine ve ansiklopedik olarak fezlekelerine vakıf değilsek, keza, hiç olmazsa aynı seviyede dini ilimlere de itilamız yoksa, bu takdirde başkalarına bir şey anlatıp onları ikna etmek bir yana, delalet rüzgarlarına kapılıp gitememiz bile mukadder olacaktır.” Gülen, *İnancın Gölgesinde*, pp. 203-204.

¹⁶ This is not a hierarchical order of the main principles of Islam.

principles.¹⁷ Gülen gives the example of Christians and Jews, who were addressed with rather harsh expressions in the Quran. He claims that there is no rule requiring that the style used in the Quran (in order to express the obstinacy and enmity of some Jews and Christians toward ‘Truth,’) should also be used for every Jew or Christian in every era. It is certain that these verses are the verses of the Quran, he emphasizes, but it is not certain that these verses comprise all the Jews and Christians from the very beginning. Therefore, he concludes, historical events mentioned in the Quran should be considered in their own contexts; that is each event should be elaborated upon its own virtues. If we refer to the case of the Jews and the Christians, people when determining their attitudes towards them should take into consideration their actual manners of behavior.¹⁸

Gülen also stresses the importance of the interpretation of the Quran (*tefsir*) from another perspective. By combining the Holy Quran and the Book of the Universe, he states that there are many verses in the Quran about the modern sciences. Therefore, according to him, a contemporary interpretation of the Quran in light of the current developments of the scientific field is of crucial importance for the intelligibility of the Quran.¹⁹

Gülen underlines the fact that the application of some of the principles of the Quran and *Sunna* for real living, taken in their literal meaning (without leaving any space for diverse possibilities, that is without a contemporary interpretation) might lead to dogmatism. However, he claims that within Islam, especially within the *Hanefiye* (the *Hanafi* School of Islam), there is a wide range of perceptions and interpretations developed

¹⁷ Eyüp Can, *op.cit.*, p. 127.

¹⁸ Camcı & Ünal, *op.cit.*, pp. 155-156.

¹⁹ Interview with Hulisi Turgut, Sabah, Ocak, 1997, in *Medya Aynasında Gülen*, p.74.

to deal with changing conditions. In this sense, according to him, Islam does not allow for dogmatism.²⁰

Fethullah Gülen recognizes the *Hanefiye* School and the interpretation of Islam by the Turks as the form of Islam that he approves. According to him, Turks have not only allowed for the personal interpretation of Islam (*ijtihad*), but also they have welcomed the spiritual life of Islam –Sufism. He admits that such a perception of Islam might be called ‘Islam in Turkey’.²¹

²⁰ Can, *op.cit.*, p. 50, and Gülen, *İnançmın Gölgesinde*, p. 149.

²¹ Türkiye Müslümanlığı

CHAPTER ONE –

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

1) SECULARIZATION

a) A Conceptual Chaos

Secular / Secularization / Secularism: This group of concepts has been the subject of passionate discussion. Despite the apparent simplicity, the ambiguity of the concepts has seldom been overcome. I do use the word “ambiguity,” because, first of all, in a comparative analysis we come to realize that the French concept of ‘*laïcité*’ does not have an exact counterpart in English. The term ‘secularism,’ which is used as the counterpart of ‘*laïcité*’ does not mean the same. While *laïcité* is the condition or quality of not having a religious character, secularism involves an attempt to create such a condition. Secularism is a movement that intends to provide a certain theory of life and conduct without reference to a deity.²² For example, we can talk about “*laïcité de l’Etat*”, but not secularism of the state, or of “*laïcité des écoles*” but not secularism of schools. Furthermore, secularism has an exact counterpart in French, which is *laïcism*. Therefore, at the very beginning of my study, I would like to introduce the term ‘secularity’ as a counterpart of *laïcité*.

‘Secularity’ or ‘secularization’ -as the process leading to secularity- are very complex concepts. They comprise many different meanings, and they can be interpreted

²² Eric S. Waterhouse. “Secularism” in *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Ed. by James Hesting, Vol., p. 347.

in different ways depending on their context. This ambiguity sometimes leads to diverse conceptualizations while using the same word.

The reason for this complexity is that secularity is concerned with a certain type of relationship, in fact, a negation of relationship between religion/religiosity and diverse spheres of human activity. *It may vary from a state-religion relationship to an individual and his relation to the universe, i.e. his perception of life.*

Therefore, what we need is “not some new, academic definition, but to recognize that we already adopt several different meanings for the word, depending on whether we are referring to a society, a population, an institution, an activity, or a mentality.”²³ In other words, it is possible to talk about the secularity of an institution, such as the state or a school, meaning these institutions do not rely on religious principles in their organization and in the regulation and functioning of their proper affairs. Or, we may talk about a secular person, referring to the worldview of that person. A secular person makes no reference to a deity or a future life while determining his/her conduct.

Yet it is very important to note that secularization of an institution does not necessarily entail the secularization of the perceptions of life of the individuals within that institution. For example a state might be secular, while its population partly or largely is not; that is, its population might be composed of religious individuals, yet still does not want to establish a religiously based political organization.

²³ C. John Sommerville, “Secular Society/Religious Population: Out Tacit Rules for Using the Term ‘Secularization’ ” in *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Jun 98, Vol.37, Issue 2, p 249 (Downloaded from the internet via EBSCOhost Full Display)

In order to clarify this distinction, I will categorize secularity at two levels.

b) Definition of Secularity at Two Levels

According to the dictionary definition,²⁴ secularity is simply defined as the condition or quality of being secular –secular, meaning worldly rather than spiritual. As indicated above, depending on what we refer to as secular, this concept may take different meanings. For the sake of clarity, I will define secularity at two levels: First, as a characteristic of the society, including in all its spheres of activity, institutions, groups (population) and mentalities (worldviews). This might be comprehended as a ‘broad definition’ of secularity. The second level of definition involves a much narrower field of human existence. It designates a separation between the state and religion; i.e. in this case, secularity corresponds *only to a feature of the state, but not of its population*.

However, these two levels are not separated units. One includes the other; that is, secularity defined as a characteristic of the state, which I label as the narrow definition of secularity, is a sub-category of the secularity defined as a feature of society with all its institutions, population and life styles, worldviews.

(i) Secularity as a Characteristic of Society

If the adjective ‘secular’ means being worldly rather than spiritual, then secularity, in its broadest sense, that is, as a characteristic of society, designates separation between religion and temporal realities. It supposes that spheres of human activity –*political, social, cultural, intellectual, ethical* etc.- are freed from the ascendancy or influence of

²⁴ The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Third Edition copyright © 1992 by Houghton Mifflin Company. Electronic version licensed from INSO Corporation.

religion that may display itself in the form of a faith, a community, or a religious authority.²⁵ In the Occident the emancipation of diverse sectors of society and individuals from the influence of the Church and the Christianity professed throughout centuries. This process is called 'secularization'. By secularization "we mean the processes by which sectors of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols."²⁶

Secularization in the Form of Differentiation

Historically speaking, secularization first displayed itself in the form of differentiation. This form of secularization is very ancient, and it historically precedes the other forms/processes of secularization. In this case, secularization meant the separation of religious activities and groups from the others in a society.²⁷ Expressions such as "secular rulers," "secular judges," or "secular historians" meant those who had no connection with the "Church".

The French use is the adjective '*laïque*'. In the Middle Ages a distinction between the '*clerics*' (clergy) and the '*laïcs*' was made, since originally the word *laïque* is derived from the Latin word *laïcus* which means "of the people."²⁸ Hence, *laïque* meant the layers of the society which did not belong to the Church, which were not of the clergy but of the people. In other words, this first manifestation of secularization

²⁵ Maurice Barbier, "Esquisse d'une théorie de la Laïcité", *Le Débat*, 1994, p.74.

²⁶ Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Co., 1967, p.107 in Parker Palmer, *Religion, Political Modernization and Secularization: Case Studies in America, Turkey and Japan*, Berkley: Univ. of California, Ph.D. Thesis, 1970, p.27.

²⁷ Somerville, *op.cit.*, p.249.

only referred to a lack of official connection with religious institutions. Yet, the crucial point to note is that it does not mean that these people, who have no official connection with the religious institutions, are personally nonreligious –this was the implication of secularism that appears only in the 19th century as an anti-religious ideology or movement.

Secularization of Institutions and Activities

When discussing institutions and activities, secularization means the transformation of an institution or an activity that once had been considered religious in character into some thing not thought of as religious.²⁹ By qualifying “secular” an authority, an institution or a field of activity, then, we imply that they obey only their own principles that are either rational or of the natural order.³⁰ Secularization of the state apparatus or of schools (especially universities such as Cambridge and Oxford, whose instructors were obliged to be Anglican) as institutions, or secularization of politics, economy, art as fields of activities can be cited in this category.

Secularization of Worldviews: Secularism

When discussing worldviews, secularization is used to mean “a significant shift of attention from ultimate (religious) concerns to proximate concerns... The secularization

²⁸ **The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language**, 3rd Edition, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1992. (Electronic version licensed from INSO Corporation)

²⁹ Sommerville. *op.cit.*, p.2 (of the Internet version)

³⁰ Barbier, *op.cit.*, p.74.

of mentality, of course, can take a more decided turn against religion, in active doubt or open disbelief.”³¹

This is a very recent development in the process of secularization, and is a result of the movement of ‘secularism’. Secularism can be defined as a movement or ideology intentionally ethical, negatively religious, founded with the express intention of providing a certain theory of life and conduct without reference to a deity or a future life.³²

Secularism is a term that is used only in the Anglo-Saxon and Germanic countries where Protestant culture is dominant. This particularity creates the impression that secularism was essentially a protest-movement against the Protestant domination.

“Protestant tradition (with contrasts to the Catholic tradition) modified and even rejected the idea of differentiating between the political and the religious.... (R)egardless of the surrounding circumstances, Protestantism invariably challenged the very idea of a sovereign state distinct from civil society, thereby establishing a line of political thinking at odds with Catholic ideas on the subject.”³³ While the Catholic Church imposed itself as a power vis-à-vis and in competition with the state, the Protestant Church was not a power comparable to the Catholic Church with respect to its position vis-à-vis the state. It was an institution within the state, and more or less subordinated to the state.

³¹ Sommerville, *op.cit.*, p.3 (of the Internet version)

³² Eric S. Waterhouse, *op.cit.*, p.347

³³ Bertrand Badie, *Sociology of the State*, pp.89-90.

The underlying reason of this fusion was the unexpected consequences of the doctrine of *Christian liberty* of the Reformation movement. Martin Luther, as the father of the Reformation, asserted that no earthly person, office or law, whether civil or ecclesiastical, had any authority over the consciences of true Christians. Yet, on the other hand, he claimed that temporal, worldly or secular government was instituted by God to prevent the complete dominance of Satan, to keep men from 'tearing each other part'. Although, according to the doctrine of 'Christian liberty', true Christians did not need secular government, out of love of their neighbor, he asserted, they were freely supporting this divine institution, accepting public office, and doing what civil law requires.³⁴

However, the quasi-liberating, egalitarian tendencies of the beliefs of the early reformers allowed their opponents to blame them for peasant wars and political insubordination. The reformers responded by "re-emphasizing their original doctrine that secular government is a divine ordinance, that political obedience to the powers established is a Christian duty. (...) [Hence], the evangelical doctrine of *Christian liberty*, so far from diminishing the authority of secular rulers, actually increases it by reducing clerics to the political subjection proper to all Christians."³⁵ Furthermore, the nascent Protestant churches depended on rulers for protection against papists.

The resulting situation was a fusion of the political and the religious authorities. Under the circumstances secularism emerged essentially as a protest movement. "It is

³⁴ Harro Höpfl, "Martin Luther," in *Blackwell's Encyclopaedia of Political Thought*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, New York, 1987. p. 297-298

³⁵ Harro Höpfl, "Reformation Political Thought", in *ibid.*, p.425.

impossible to ignore the fact that serious social wrongs produced the reaction of which secularism was one of the fruits. The selfishness of the wealthy and influential classes, the unreasoning opposition to political and religious freedom, the solid dogmatism of theology, were all powerful irritants.”³⁶

Secularism owes its name and in large measure its existence to George Jacop Holyoake. The movement originated in 1849, and was regarded by Holyoake as an alternative to atheism. In 1851 Holyoake coined the word ‘secularism’ as a term that best indicates that scope of duty which belongs to this life.³⁷ For the term ‘secular’ comes from the Latin word *saeculâris*, which is derived from *saeculum*, meaning ‘generation’ or ‘age’. Hence, *saeculâris* means *of an age*.³⁸

Whilst the main impulses of the movement were derived from the social and political conditions, which led the founders to rebel against the accepted doctrines of life and thought of their day, its parallel influences were philosophical. “Its avowed separation from religion made it incumbent upon secularism to establish its claim to furnish a theory of life and conduct by an appeal to philosophy, and especially ethics. Positivism supplied a conception of knowledge affording a basis upon which it was held that religious considerations could be ruled out, and utilitarianism lent itself to be a non-religious explanation of the motives and ends of conduct.”³⁹

³⁶ Waterhouse, *op.cit.*, p.348.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Mehmet Ali Kılıçbay, “Laiklik ya da Bu Dünyada Yaşayabilmek”, *Cogito*, Vol. 1, Summer 1994, p. 15 and *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 3rd Edition, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1992. (electronic version)

³⁹ Waterhouse, *op.cit.*, p. 348.

However, I would like to note that it is impossible for the secularist movement to be an alternative to atheism, -i.e. not to deny but just to ignore religion- as Holyoake intended when coining the term secularism. This is because any religion initially aims at shaping all aspects of life, and makes no separation between the secular and the spiritual aspects of it. In the eyes of a devoted believer all his activities have a moral/religious value; i.e. he/she is supposed to be responsible for all his actions before God, and believes that he/she will be rewarded or punished for them. Whoever believes in God believes Him to be omnipotent, as involved in everything. Therefore, a believer may be inconsistent by neglecting the requirements of the religion upon his behavior, that is, he may act in contradiction with the principles of the religion. If secularism intends to be an alternative to atheism by not rejecting but ignoring religion, it should be underlined that, a theory that does not reject religion, but tries to establish a theory of life on a positivistic epistemology and a non-religious ethic, like utilitarianism would not be satisfactory.

When we talk about the secularization of mentalities, we mean a perception of life and universe based on positivistic epistemology –which denies metaphysics- and on a non-religious ethics, which makes no reference to a deity or a future life. Hence, it would be vain to expect a secularist attitude, *in the form of secularization of mentalities*, from any religion. Any action done by a ‘consistent’ believer would have a divine meaning in his/her perception of life. Yet from an outsider’s perspective, that is as an observer, or someone not involved in a religious life style, actions conducted by a believer might be considered secular. For example a physicist might be a religious person at the same time. What he deals with is a positive science that has its own

principles of research and analysis that requires pure rationality. From an outsider's perspective, it is obvious that the physicist is involved in a secular activity. Yet, within the frontiers of his personal worldview, the physicist is able to regard his activity as a path toward knowing the 'Truth', and he believes that he is able to locate his findings within a religious cosmology; that is, considering the laws of nature as the laws of God.

(ii) Secularity as a Characteristic of the State

This definition of secularity concerns solely the state, and not the population. As a characteristic of the state, secularity designates separation between state and religion. It comports two complementary aspects: "On the one hand, secularity implies that the state is entirely independent of all religion and the Church; on the other hand, it supposes that religions are totally free vis-à-vis the state."⁴⁰ This is a reciprocal liberation. Each expects the other not to interfere with one's proper sphere of activity.

Although this reciprocal separation or liberation is an ideal situation, it is seldom totally realized. The crucial point to emphasize is that, in all cases, secularization is a political question. It is always the state that initiates the process of secularization by trying to liberate itself from the ascendancy of the religious regulation.

Secularity, then, is the character of the modern state. Because only a modern state exists without the need of a transcendental legitimizing power such as religion. The modern state is able to legitimize itself by pursuing the general interest of the political community.

The emergence of the modern state and the secularization of the state are two processes that are intertwined. Nevertheless, at the roots of the secularization process is found a “battle of power” between the religious and the temporal/political authorities that was especially observed in the Catholic countries.

A brief history of the “battle of power”

When Christianity first appeared in the scene of history, the Roman Empire was at the peak of its power. As a result, the first Christians were rather indifferent towards political affairs.⁴¹ However, beginning with the collapse of the Western Roman Empire -i.e. the disappearance of a central, powerful political authority- the fragmented political structure of feudality offered an opportunity for the Church to claim for the *plenitudo potestatis*, i.e. accumulation of all the powers in the hands of the pope. Although, as B. Badie claims, in the 5th century, Pope Gelasius used the term *auctoritas* to define the power of the pope, and *potestas* for the power of the king, and hence made a separation between the realms of execution of the state and the Church, the terminology behind this separation facilitated the claims of the Church for the *plenitudo potestatis*.⁴² For *auctoritas* -a term used in the Roman administration system- represents the “the principle of the power,” and *potestas* -another term in Roman administration- the “execution of the power”. According to Walter Ullman, “the concept of *auctoritas*,

⁴⁰ Barbier, *op.cit.* p 74.

⁴¹ On the development of Western political thought, Mehmet Ali Ağaoğulları, Levent Köker, *İmparatorluktan Tanrı Devletine*, İmge Yayınları, Ankara, 1991 and François Chatelet, Olivier Duhamel, *Histoire des Idées Politiques*, PUF, 2nd ed.

⁴² Ağaoğulları, *ibid.*, p. 148.

which was used for the first time in the Roman Empire, represented the final and superior power that established the bounding rules for the action.”⁴³ Therefore, Gelasius, by giving *auctoritas* to the Church and *potestas* to the king, was in fact asserting the moral superiority -if not a total one- of the Church over the state. Between the 10th and 12th centuries when the feudal organization of the society was fully established, first the pope Gregorius VII, and then John of Salisbury, using the same terminology of Gelasius, claimed that the Papacy should have the *plenitudo potestatis*. Until the 12th century this was the predominant state-religion relationship within a society divided between the *clericus* and the rest, *laicus*.

By the 12th century some new achievements, such as the development of trade, the formation of a new class -the bourgeoisie-, and hence the revival of a city life, establishment of universities in these cities and the flourishing of a cultural and intellectual life, began to threaten the established state-religion relations. The bourgeoisie –a sector of the *laicus*- played an important role in this respect. Having obtained economic power, the challenge was now for political power that was dominated by the clergy and the nobles. This period was the crystallization of the conflict.

The organization of the emerging cities may be considered not only as the seeds of nation-states, that were to be a great challenge to the universalistic claims of the Church, but also the establishment of a political organization based upon the general interest/common good. The concepts of ‘general interest’ or ‘common good’ constituted

⁴³ Walter Ullman, *Principles of Government and Politics in the Middle Ages*, Methuen, 1966, p. 57, in .

in the following centuries the fundamental tenets of the modern state in the theories of Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau and etc.

Since the Catholic Church was believed to have a vocation that is involved in a total responsibility of the personal and social life, and was claiming to be a transnational power, it was imposing itself like an authority vis-à-vis and in competition with the state. As a result, especially with the emergence of the concept of nation-state, political authorities mobilized to emancipate not only themselves but also different aspects of the social life and people from the domination of the religious regulation. The principal reason of this intervention was to restore the absolute sovereignty of the political authority over its citizens. Consequently, the political authority refrained from lending its positive support to any religious denomination. But in some cases intervention of the political power resulted in the control and limitation of the religious organization, and led to the confinement of religion to the private sphere (i.e., religious ideas and symbols were not allowed to be expressed in the public sphere).

Therefore, we can conclude that in actual practice, either in the name of the public order or the general interest, the state imposes rules, even limits to religions. But, religions also demand the state to respect and guarantee the liberty of faith, and also to protect them and to guarantee their practice. Though these demands look like a paradox, if we consider the principle of separation of secularization, in fact, both state and religion might be satisfied if neither the state nor the religion intervenes in each other's "proper" sphere of function.

c) **Conditions of a Secular State: Separation of State and Civil Society**

M. Barbier argues that “defined as the separation between the state and the religion, [secularity], supposes a separation more fundamental between the state and society, which implies the constitution of a modern state, charged of attaining the general interest, and formation of a Civil Society where individuals freely pursue their particular interests.”⁴⁴ Modern political thought by making the separation between state and society, he argues, separates also the public sphere and the private domain... A modern state is, then, defined with its distinction from the society; a state transcending particular interests of individuals and pursuing the general interest of the political community. As soon as the state pursues only the general interest, a Civil Society is constituted, whereby individuals can act in full liberty in the pursuit of their particular interests. This separation between state and society brings the distinction between man as ‘an individual’ and as ‘a citizen’; hence the distinction between the human rights and the rights of the citizen. The rights of the citizen are the ones that ensue as a result of belonging to the political community that the state constitutes; these are the rights that citizens have as members of the state. Human rights (the rights of individual) are the ones that individuals possess as members of civil society.⁴⁵

This separation is an essential condition for the existence of secularity as a feature of the state. For, if secularization designates separation between state and religion, it supposes that the modern state be totally constituted, by liberating itself from

⁴⁴ Barbier, *op.cit.* pp. 74-75.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* p. 75

all religious ascendancy. The modern state thus, exists by itself and for itself. The state has no need for religion for its legitimization, nor does it serve religion. Also secularization supposes that there is a genuine civil society, independent of the state, and allowing complete freedom for religion. Hence as one of the human rights, religious liberty is to be exercised within civil society.

It is crucial to note that in this definition of secularity, the separation is made with respect to the state, but not to the society; that is, if religion is excluded from the state, it has its place within civil society, which will consist of both secularized and religious elements. Therefore, religion is not reduced to a private or personal affair, but can have a collective character and can freely intervene society. It can organize, develop diverse activities, publicly express its positions and can play an effective role in social life.

By the same token, a secular state, besides having no religious character, is also expected to be neutral vis-à-vis all the religions expressed in society. Neutrality indicates that the state recognizes all religions, and has the same stand towards each of them; i.e. it equally treats all religions. In other word, it should no favor one religious interpretation over the other.

Accordingly, a secular state cannot adopt an anti-religious attitude. Despite being secular, the state cannot profess and impose a secularist ideology –i.e. secularism, which is an anti-religious movement as indicated above. If this is to be done, the state risks destroying its neutrality, which is one of the consequences of its secular character. A state ceases to be secular if it systematically favors secularization of society and the

population. Because, the state will no longer be neutral, but will contribute to the decline of religion.

2) CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Secularity defined above as a feature of the state might satisfy both mutual liberation and free exercise of political and religious affairs separately. Yet, since secularity is a two-sided issue it supposes, on the one hand, that the state should be separate from religion, and on the other hand, that religion should stand apart from the state apparatus. In this respect, given the liberty of practice in Civil Society any religious expression or organization is expected to have no intention to seize political power.

In order to understand the compatibility of religious movements / organizations and Civil Society we need to review the concept of civil society, too. Yet, Civil Society theory alone will not be sufficient for us to understand the attitude of a religious movement vis-à-vis the political authority, since just like secularization, Civil Society is not an entity in itself. It is composed of institutions, associations and organizations based on the pursuit of private or collective ends, which are supposed to be diverse. Also the defining feature of these components of Civil Society –institutions, associations etc... – is that they are supposed not to target the state, but rather to aim at a certain liberation from the control of the state. In this respect the social movements theories will enable us to understand the form of organizations that do not target directly the state, but pursue either a policy of influence or aim at creating new identities, and thus change the ethical and cultural tissue of civil society.

a) **Definition(s) of Civil Society**

It is necessary to distinguish between the traditional and early modern conceptions of civil society. The traditional conception of Civil Society was inherited from Aristotle. It implies the unity of society and state, of civil and political societies. The traditional concept presupposed a corporate organization of the social realm, integrated by an inherited ethos. The early modern conception, on the contrary, involves *differentiation of society and state*, i.e. of civil and political society. However, it is possible to cite two versions of the early modern conception of civil society: the one that is introduced by Hegel, stressing pluralistic normative integration. And one, being one of the basic tenets of most liberal paradigms, that postulated individualistic, utilitarian forms of action.⁴⁶

To Hegel, the state - the political community- is not a mere instrumental entity concocted by human practical reason for the furtherance of individually oriented goals. He regards the state as an ethical entity. The state is the synthesis of universality and particularity, of Civil Society and family. These two elements cannot exist independently, for they are contained in each other. The family is the kind of human relationship based on particularistic altruism: the willingness to act not in one's own interest but for the good of the other members of the family. Action is not determined by self-interest. According to Hegel's dialectical construction, the family contains its own antithesis, namely, individuals who will grow up, leave the family and enter into

⁴⁶ Jean Cohen and Andrew Arato, "Politics and the Reconstruction of the Concept of Civil Society," in Axel Honneth, Thomas McCarthy (ed.all) , **Cultural Political Interventions in the Unfinished Project of Enlightenment**, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, & London, 1992, pp. 122-123.

the context of civil society. Civil society is the sphere of universal egoism. A person relates to all other human beings on the basis of his own interests.⁴⁷

The liberal conception of civil society, on the other hand, is not only founded on the distinction of society and state (civil and political societies), but also on a perception of the Civil Society as a countervailing domain vis-à-vis the central political authority –the state. Within such a civil society, individualistic and deliberate forms of action are supposed to prevail. This is the form of Civil Society that the rest of this study will be based on.

b) Civil Society as the Countervailing Domain vis-à-vis the Political Authority

We are principally faced with two contrasting society models: one within which a realm, other than the political, claims to exist; and the other where it does not. Feudal society is the example of the society where there is no separation of political and economic realms. “In feudal society... (t)here is only one social order, political and economic. There is no talk of Civil Society as distinct from the state... Political rank and economic function are firmly welded, and one entails the other. The political subject is also peasant, the owner of the land is also the ruler and judge.”⁴⁸

Within the contrasted model of society (liberal model) there are two “distinct” realms: The political and the socio-economic, which enable the construction of a

⁴⁷ On Hegel David Miller (ed.) *Blackwell's Encyclopaedia of Political Thought*, Blackwell Publishers Oxford, New York, 1987. and ‘Hegel and the Nation State’ in David Thomson (ed), *Political Ideas*, Penguin Books, 1969, pp130-143.

⁴⁸ Ernest Gellner, *op.cit.*, p. 55.

veritable civil society. Yet this distinction is not a sufficient criteria for the existence of a Civil Society. Within the societies where there is a distinction between the political and the socio-economic realms, there is supposed to be an internal contrast between these realms of activities, too. In other words, there can be a talk of Civil Society only when the socio-economic sphere functions as a countervailing domain vis-à-vis the central political authority. For as Gellner argues, Civil Society is “that part of society which stands opposed to the political structure.”⁴⁹

Therefore, the first *sine qua non* of Civil Society is “differentiation”, and the second is the “division of power”. Differentiation is a result of the *plurality* of institutions and associations that are active within the society. Individual self-interest and the pursuit of private or collective ends, which are supposed to be diverse, are the *raison d'être* of those institutions and associations. In this sense, Civil Society functions as the intermediate domain between the state and the individual. For it is the sphere where individual or collective interests are organized and expressed, and are conveyed not only to “others” within the Civil Society, but also to the political authority. This pluralistic ground prevents the state from establishing an ideological monopoly. This is because diverse ideas and life styles, which might be vulnerable to perish while not organized, in an institutional form would be protected against the ideological impositions of the state. Hence, we can define Civil Society as the “*idea of institutional and ideological pluralism, which prevents establishment of the monopoly*”

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

*of power and truth, and counterbalances those central institutions which, though necessary, might otherwise acquire such a monopoly.*⁵⁰

Accordingly, the survival of Civil Society depends first of all upon avoiding centralized authoritarianism. Within the societies that are dominated by a single political and economic ideology, and hence that have centralized all aspects of life, no rivalry is allowed. There is supposed to be one single truth for a guideline for both political life and personal conducts. No rival ideology is tolerated. Therefore, if we are to pinpoint once more, the content of the notion of Civil Society entails above all the end of uniformity, of monopoly of political and social organization. Civil society requires the approbation *a priori* that no one has or claims to have the monopoly of truth and information. In brief, pluralism is the main tenet of the concept of Civil Society.

By the same token, the establishment and survival of a pluralist Civil Society depends on the existence of some key institutional components. A pluralist Civil Society is supposed to include “public spaces, social institutions (mass media, the press), rights (to associate, to speak, to assemble), representative political institutions and an autonomous legal system...”⁵¹ The rights to organize, speak publicly, to assemble, to publicize are the key institutional components of civil society. And these components are all the main means of social movements, too. For *Civil Society is the indispensable terrain in which social actors mobilize to form collective action in order*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* pp.3-4.

⁵¹ Jean Cohen and Andrew Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, 3rd ed. 1995, p. 497.

to influence policy or to initiate change within society. Therefore, Civil Society and collective action are twin concepts. No collective action can securely take place without the guarantee for the right to assemble, to speak publicly and to publicize or to disseminate its ideas or faith.

c) **Collective Action and the Civil Society**

Collective action may have a form of political party whose aim is to directly seize the political authority, or it may take the form of a social movement, which aims at *creating new identities*, and thus *influencing policy* and/or *changing the social environment*.

Social movement defined as aiming at both influencing policy and/or changing social environment in the light of its *normative identity*, is a novelty that Cohen and Arato attribute to “new social movements”. According to Cohen and Arato, contemporary movements are in some respect “new”. This novelty is to abandon the revolutionary dreams in favor of radical reform that is not necessarily and primarily directed to the state. In other words, *contemporary movements do not target the state; they involve confrontations between social, civil adversaries within and over the institutions of Civil Society.*⁵²

Accordingly, what concerns us is the relation between contemporary collective action and Civil Society; that is, whether a social movement, which has a normative ideal, cohabits with Civil Society by aiming at changing “adversaries” within it, or on the contrary, it aims at seizing the political power and changing the political and thus

Civil Society via proscriptive legislation. In this respect, we need to understand which actions we consider as social movements. More specifically, we may pose question, “could we consider the Fethullah Gülen community as a social movement?” Our response to this question will allow us to argue for the compatibility or incompatibility of the F.Gülen Community with Civil Society, and hence to reveal whether it aims at seizing the political authority or is contented with converting the “adversaries” or the “others” within the society.

Social movement paradigms, in this respect, will be the last step in our theoretical sketch. Yet one paradigm will not be sufficient for the analysis of the Fethullah Gülen Community. Each paradigm will enable us to theorize certain aspects of the community, hence to argue that the Fethullah Gülen Community has certain characteristics of contemporary social movements.

d) Social Movement Paradigms

The theoretical field of social movements has been dominated by diverse paradigms. According to Cohen and Arato, until the early 1970s, the dominant paradigm was the social-psychological tradition of the Chicago School. The so called collective behavior theorists have focused on explaining individual participation in social movements by looking at grievances and values as responses to rapid social change and social disorganization. All collective-behavior theorists stress psychological reactions to breakdown, crude modes of communication, and volatile goals. Although not every

⁵² *Ibid.* p. 493 and 515.

theorist in this tradition considers collective behavior to be an abnormal or irrational response to change, nevertheless as Cohen and Arato stress, social-psychological tradition indicates an implicit bias towards regarding collective behavior non-rational. It presupposes from the very beginning that collective action derives from the *breakdown of Civil Society*.⁵³

However two other contemporary paradigms rely on the key features of Civil Society. As a result of the inadequacy of the social-psychological paradigm in explaining the timing, cognitive character, organizational forms, conducts and goals of the new emerging movements, the “resource mobilization” paradigm in the United States, and the “new social movements” paradigm in Western Europe appeared. The inadequacy became obvious in the 1960s and 1970s with the emergence of large-scale social movements in the United States and Europe. Actors in the New Left, civil rights and feminist movements hardly conformed to the image of anomic, fragmented, irrational deviants. They had concrete goals, clearly articulated general values, and interest and rational calculations of strategies.⁵⁴

Resource Mobilization Paradigm

There are two approaches within the resource mobilization paradigm. While the earlier considerations focused exclusively upon organizations, recent debates attempt to take

⁵³ *Ibid.* p. 496.

⁵⁴ On social-movement paradigms; Jean Cohen and Andrew Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, 3rd ed. 1995, pp. 492-521; Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison, *Social Movements, A Cognitive Approach*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1991, pp. 19-

into consideration the individual and motivating factors for participation in collective action.

In the post-1960s the collective behavior approach was challenged by what has come to be known as the resource mobilization (RM) approach (Zald and McCarthy). As opposed to collective behaviorism, the early RM theorists take their starting point for analysis in organizations and not in the individual. Thus they do not center around the question of why individuals join social movements, the rationality or irrationality of their intentions or behavior as participants but rather the effectiveness with which movements, that is movements organizations, use the resources in attempting to achieve their goals. Here the prime research question is not who the actors are or what motivates them, but rather why some movements are more successful than others. For, according to RM theorists, collective action requires first resources, and then mobilization of these resources through rational action. RM theorists demonstrated that sophisticated organizational forms and modes of communication were needed to mobilize collective action. Success, then, is defined as a function of how clearly organizational goals are defined and how effectively its available resources –people, material, and ideas- are put to use both in mobilizing support and in seeing to it that the established institutions take seriously the aims expressed by the movement. RM theorists also attempt to identify for every social movement a particular social movements sector, sometimes called industry, within which the various organizations coexist.

30; Cyrus Ernesto Zirakzadeh, *Social Movements in Politics, A Comparative Study*, Longman, New York, 1997, pp. 10-25.

The second approach that has developed in recent years and is portrayed as a branch of resource mobilization focuses on the personal motivations that led to participation in social movements. Sociologists such as Jenkins and Charles Tilly reject the emphasis on feelings and grievances, and the use of psychological categories, and the idea that unconnected individuals, motivated by social strain are the actors in social movements. Tilly defines the collective action in terms of the pursuit of common interests. These interests are built on conflict and power relations. Tilly focused on the goal of inclusion and on the acquisition of power, and investigated social movements as vehicles for a political socialization process. For him the success of a social movement involved the recognition of the group as a political actor or increased material benefits. Tilly is also concerned with the effectiveness of tactical decision-making. In describing this effectiveness, Tilly discusses social movements as moving from 'organization to mobilization' of resources around shared interest, and, finally to the realization of effective action in specific opportunity structures. Since the opportunity for collective action varies with historical and cultural circumstances, Tilly adds the dimension of historical context to his study of social movements.

A common concern which links the particularists and the more formalistic resource mobilization approach is explaining the sacrifices made by individual actors. In their common challenge to collective behaviorism, both emphasize the rationality of human action: actors are assumed to calculate the costs and benefits of participation in any action. A theory of social networks, which focuses on the "pull" of social pressure as a form of "solidarity" is used to provide an explanation of why calculating actors might choose to engage in behavior they might otherwise seek to avoid.

All these approaches may reveal certain features of the contemporary social movements. Yet, as underlined by Cohen and Arato, success defined in terms of inclusion in the polity and increased benefits, and the motivation described in terms of cost-benefit analysis is a shortcoming of the RM paradigm. For on the one hand, focus cost-benefit analysis neglects the aspect of ‘meaning construction’ and ‘normative ideal’ and on the other hand, success defined in terms of inclusion and acquisition of power obscures the implication of the “politics of influence” that aims at transforming both civil and political society from below.⁵⁵

The “politics of influence” leads to the alliance of social movements and Civil Society: *Influence* is a medium that is specifically suitable to modern Civil Society. Because modern Civil Society includes, as I indicated above, public spaces, social institutions such as mass media, the press, rights to speak publicly, to assemble, to publicize, and representative political institutions such as parties who have to responded to the tendencies of their electors. And all these components, at least theoretically, are open to discursive processes that inform, thematize, and potentially *alter social norms and political culture*.

A prerequisite of alteration of social norms and political culture is ‘meaning construction’ and development of alternative life strategies that constitute the normative identity of a social movement. In other words, contemporary collective actors struggle to construct new identities. It seems that the *raison d’être* of social movements shift from structural contradictions, economic conflicts and crises, or struggles for inclusion

⁵⁵ Cohen, *op.cit.*, pp. 504. & 508-509

in political society towards cultural concerns. Collective actors focus on social norms and collective identity; they reinterpret norms and reshape institutions within the society. This is another inadequacy or shortcoming of the RM theory.

New Social Movements Paradigm

Whereas the Americans were concerned with instrumentality of movements' strategy formation, that is, on how movement organizations went about trying to achieve their goals, the Europeans, that is, the "New Social Movements" theorists, focused on identity formation, on how movements produced new *historical* identities for society. Movements were seen as *historical* actors articulating *long-term trends* and *deep-seated social forces*.⁵⁶

Alain Touraine, who an important theorists of this approach, asserts that social movements are struggles around the institutional potentials of cultural patterns of a given societal type. In other words, according to Touraine, social conflicts between actors must be understood in cultural and normative terms; that is, social movements are normatively oriented interactions between adversaries with conflicting interpretations and opposed societal models of a shared cultural field.⁵⁷ In this respect, social movements are defined as not abnormal occurrences but creators of social life through their production and contestation of social practices, norms and institutions.⁵⁸ Since the cultural orientations of a society are at stake, social actors are involved in a

⁵⁶ Eyerman & Jamison, *op.cit.*, p.25 & 30. (italics are mine)

⁵⁷ Cohen & Arato, *op.cit.*, p. 510

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 510, 514.

conflict over the control of certain cultural domains within the society. Thus, actors engage in a permanent struggle around the reinterpretation of norms and creation of new meanings. Touraine defines this process as conflictual self-production.⁵⁹

Cohen and Arato redefine the concepts of action, collective action and social movement from an identity-oriented perspective:

“Action now refers to the capacity of human societies to develop and alter their own orientations –that is to generate their normativity and objectives. An action is *social* only if it is normatively oriented and situated in a field of relations that includes power and shared cultural orientations. A social *movement* involves a double reference to cultural orientations and social relations, opposed social projects and contested structures of domination”⁶⁰

D. Della Porta and M. Diani give us a concluding definition of social movements by combining four characteristics of social movements shared by various scholars. They consider social movements “as (1) informal networks, based (2) on shared beliefs and solidarity, which mobilize about (3) conflictual issues, through (4) the frequent use of various forms of protest.”⁶¹

In the following chapter I will analyze the Gülen Community based on these paradigms, and I will try to understand if the Community can be considered as a social movement.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 510.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 514-515.

⁶¹ Donatella Della Porta and Mario Diani, *Social Movements, An Introduction*, Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1999, p.16.

CHAPTER TWO – THE FETHULLAH GÜLEN COMMUNITY CONSIDERED AS A SOCIAL MOVEMENT

1) Distinctions from a Sect or a Religious Order

Della Porta and Diani, by putting into question the loose interaction process of social movements, and by contrasting it to the greater organizational rigidity and more hierarchical structure of religious organizations, claim that social movements should be distinguished from religious organizations. According to della Porta and Diani, social movements are “networks of interaction between different actors which may either include formal organizations or not, depending on shifting circumstances.”⁶² In this respect, they argue that a religious organization may be conveniently analyzed as a ‘sect’. For, they point out, “this concept takes into account the greater organizational rigidity and the more hierarchical structure that these organizations display by comparison with social movement networks... It also recognizes the higher degree of social control that is exerted over members.”⁶³

Although della Porta and Diani aim at distinguishing religious organizations and social movements, they in fact, offer us a tool to account for the difference of the F.Gülen Movement from any religious movement that could be considered as a sect. Della Porta and Diani put forth their argument in the following way:

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid., p.17.

“What ... ‘sect’ [does] not really capture [is] the interaction processes through which actors with different identities and orientations come to elaborate a shared system of beliefs and a sense of belonging, which exceeds by far the boundaries of any single group or organizations like a sect, while maintaining at the same time their specificity and distinctive traits.... To shift the emphasis from single organizations to informal networks allows us, furthermore, to appreciate more fully the space reserved for individuals within movements. Individual participation is essential for movements, and one of their characteristics is, indeed, the sense of being involved in a collective endeavor –without having automatically to belong to a specific organization. Strictly speaking, social movements do not have members, but participants. Participation of individual... can also develop within committees or working groups, or else in public meetings. Alternatively ... one may support a movement by promoting its ideas and its point of view among institutions, other political actors or the media. However, the existence of a range of possible ways of becoming involved means that the membership of movements can never be reduced to a single act of adhesion. It consists, rather, of a series of differentiated acts, which, taken together, reinforce the feeling of belonging and of identity”⁶⁴

Therefore, principally, it is a strict hierarchical structure and organizational rigidity that defines the sect. However, the F.Gülen community is a collectivity that has considerably large and loose boundaries. There is no initiation ceremony; that is, participation to the community is not involved in a single act of adhesion, as it is principally the case in a sect.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 17-18.

⁶⁵ Gülen points out that people listen to his sermons, and that some of them might have shared his sentiments and ideas. Thus he insists that he does not know who is involved. Interview with Ertuğrul Özkök, *Hürriyet*, Ocak 1995, in Armağan & Ünal, *op.cit.*, p. 21 and interview with Nuriye Akman, *Sabah*, Ocak 1995, in *ibid.*, p. 38.

Regarding the hierarchy, though, there is a “core community” which is the motor force of action, participants are not ranked in a rigid hierarchy. They have status depending on the degree of their commitment to the community. People within the core group are called *talebe / şakirt* (student), the second degree is composed of participants called *kardeş* (brother), in the third degree there people called *dost* (friend) and at the periphery people are *müstaid* (the potential fiends, people ready for the action).⁶⁶ The core group of the community, who are called *şakirt*, meaning student in Old Turkish, are the ones who take active position in the movement, and among whom hierarchy is considerably strict.⁶⁷ The students generally share common living spaces, like student houses or dormitories, where the metaphysical tension (*metafizik gerilim*) is shared and reproduced.

“Metaphysical tension is the inner enthusiasm; it is the potential of love, enthusiasm, and eagerness; it is the source of power that will provide the perpetual activity of our spiritual sentiments, which will direct us to religion and worship. An energetic heart means a soul vitalized with the spirit of action. But as the time passes by, this vitality may perish because of habit and familiarity (*ülfet ve ünsiyet*).”⁶⁸

⁶⁶ This categorization has been transferred from the *Nur* Movement, of which F.Gülen Community could be considered a sub-branch. Yet the forth category has been added by Fethullah Gülen. Kömeçoğlu, *op.cit*, pp.1-2.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p.15.

⁶⁸ “*Metafizik gerilim, iç coşkunluğu, aşk, heyecan ve şevk potansiyeli, manevi duygularımızın daima aktif halde bulunması, bizi dine ve ibadetlere sevk edip koşturacak bir güç kaynağıdır. Kalb merkezimizin daima enerjik bulunması, aksiyon ve hamle ruhuyla şahlanmış, canlanmış bir ruh halinin kesintisiz oluşu demektir. Ne var ki, zamanla bu canlılık da ülfet ve ünsiyet tozu-toprağıyla perdelenebilir; korlar küllenip, duygu ve latifeler sönebilir.*” Gülen, *İnancın Gölgesinde*, p. 145.

In order to prevent the mystical tension to disappear –since according to Gülen faith and prayer may turn into habit– a communitarian life style is strongly advised⁶⁹ and appear in the form of common living and meeting places –in fact inherited from the *Nur* Movement. These places are called *Işık Evler* (lighting houses), and considered by F.Gülen as the schools where the seed that will build the future is growing. Gülen describes *Işık Evler* as the following:

“These places are primarily the realms where the deficiencies of people resulting from being a human get corrected. They are sacred places in which plans and projects are developed, and in which the perpetuity of metaphysical tension is maintained....”⁷⁰

In these houses there are a few permanent residents who are mostly university students. Other participants of the community also come together to read and interpret both Said Nursi’s and Gülen’s at books in these houses. ⁷¹ *Işık Evler* are the spheres where metaphysical tension or the metaphysical life is kept alive.⁷²

Metaphysical tension is the driving force for the mobilization of all participants of the movement. So, these places serve for the socialization of the participants into a collective consciousness,⁷³ and reinforce the sense of being involved in a collective

⁶⁹ Gülen, *İnancın Gölgesinde*, pp. 171-172.

⁷⁰ “Buralar öncelikle insanların, insanlık yanlarından ötürü meydana gelebilecek boşlukların kapatıldığı yerlerdir. Plan ve projelerin üretildiği, metafizik gerilimin sürekliliğinin sağlandığı kutsi mekanlardır. ... Bu ışık komplekslerinde yetişen ruh ve mânâ erleri, ruhda, mânâda dünya fethine giden bu yolda Allah’ın ... kendilerine vermiş olduğu ışıkları, bomboş diğmalara boşaltarak onları mamur edeceklerdir. Öyleyse bu evler, yolsuz, yönemsiz, değişik cazibe merkezlerine göre kendini şekillendiren şabloncu nesillerin mamur edilip kendi ruh ve mana köklerine dönmelerini sağlayan birer tezgah veya birer mekteptirler” Fethullah Gülen, *Prizma II*, Nil A.Ş. Yayınları, 3rd ed. , İzmir, 1998, p.12.

⁷¹ Kömeçoğlu, *op.cit*, p. 61.

⁷² Gülen, *İnancın Gölgesinde*, 153 and 173.

⁷³ Kömeçoğlu, *op.cit*, p. 62.

action, which is the collective ideal of dissemination of faith. This collective ideal is shaped around the spiritual leadership of Fethullah Gülen, along with Said Nursi's scriptural guiding via *Risale-i Nur Külliyatı*.⁷⁴ People with different identities and orientations come to recognize the 'cognitive schemata' drawn by Gülen, and the *Nur* doctrines.⁷⁵ Gülen's interpretations, build on the *Nur* doctrines, constitute the collective identity – a system of beliefs – shared by the participants.

Beside being in the core group of the community and taking active position in the dissemination of faith by establishing close interpersonal bonds or micro level relations, which Kömeçoğlu calls the 'fraternization process' and which is to a large extent accomplished by the university students,⁷⁶ there is a wide range of possibilities of being involved in this collective ideal. As I indicated above, participation is never reduced to a single act of adhesion. Throughout his life Gülen has been addressing to the public all over the country. Due to his profession as an official preacher he preached in the mosques, and he has also been giving lectures at public conferences. Recently, tape and video cassettes and books have been added to this transmission process. Gülen points out that people listen to his sermons, and that some of them might have shared his sentiments and ideas. And, he insists that *he does not know who is involved*. However, within the rigid organization of a sect, any newcomer should have the approval of the head of the sect (*sheikh*) in order to be a member. Gülen explicitly

⁷⁴ Said Nursi, who is the founder of the Nur Movement, has changed the personal spiritual guiding tradition -which is the principal characteristic of religious orders- by replacing it with the scriptural guiding of *Risale-i Nur Külliyatı*, which is Said Nursi's written interpretation of the Quran. Şerif Mardin, **Bedüzzaman Said Nursi Olayı**, İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul 1995, p.62-63.

⁷⁵ Kömeçoğlu, *op.cit.*, p.2.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, p. 78.

rejects the idea that their collectivity is a sect –he uses the term *tarikât*– and asserts that he has never considered himself as a *sheikh*.⁷⁷

Owing to this, people who come to share the Gülen’s ideas may get involved in a series of different acts, which, when taken together, reinforce the feeling of belonging to the collective ideal of dissemination of faith. For example entrepreneurs invest especially in the Republics of the ex-Soviet Union; they finance the establishment of universities and high schools, or preparatory schools for the universities entrance exam; some establish TV or radio stations, or newspapers and magazines; others take active roles as teachers in those schools or as journalists; all of them are followers of Gülen’s advisees, and acting within an informal network of collective action.

Although with respect to its participation process the F.Gülen Community is totally distinct from a sect or a religious order, it has to be mentioned that within the inner circles, the community exerts a rather high degree of control over its members and expects obedience for the common decisions of the community. In other words, the inner discipline of the community, especially in the inner ranks is very strong.⁷⁸ This may resemble the organization of the community to a sect. However, this is not a “one-man rule”; collective decision making is the binding factor in the community. I would like to quote passages from Gülen’s speeches in order to explain what kind of a discipline and obedience he expects from his followers:

⁷⁷ Interview with Ertuğrul Özkök, *Hürriyet*, Ocak 1995, in Armağan & Ünal, *op.cit.*, p. 21 and interview with Nuriye Akman, *Sabah*, Ocak 1995, in *ibid.*, p. 38.

⁷⁸ Kömeçoğlu, *op.cit.*, p.67.

“For Muslims, especially for the ones who are committed in a common matter, to act separately (independently) means a drawback... I am ... for a collective solution for every problem. Let’s solve the great problems of the future through this mechanism, and never let us act separately.”⁷⁹

“Everybody should obey the consultation (*meşveret*) which is one of the fundamental pillars of Islam... and... if one day a duty is incumbent on someone, without any hesitation he/she should run to fulfil the required task”⁸⁰

Therefore, though the Fethullah Gülen Community has a hierarchical structure at the core, and exerts a certain degree of control over its participant and does not allow for the separate action, it nevertheless deviates from the classical definition of religious order or sect. For participation is not involved in an act of adhesion, there is not one single organization to adhere. But there are various ways of becoming involved in the collective ideal of dissemination of faith. Hence, there are different organizations all acting within an informal network of collective action for the pursuit of a collective ideal, which is the dissemination of faith. If we refer to della Porta and Diani, aim at distinguishing religious organizations and social movements, they in fact, these features of the Fethullah Gülen Community lead us to argue for the difference of the community from any religious movement that could be considered as a sect, and thus to consider the community as a social movement.

⁷⁹ “Müslümanların ve hele hele kader birliği edilmiş davada dava insanların münferit hareket etmeleri son derece sakıncalıdır... Ben... her meseleyi kolektif şuur içinde çözmekten yanayım... Geleceğin büyük problemlerini o çarkın [istişare mekanizması] içinde öğütelim ve kat’iyen münferid hareket etmeyelim.” Gülen, *Fasıldan Fasıla III*, p. 69.

⁸⁰ “Herkes, bir yönüyle İslam’ın temel rükünlerinden biri olan meşverete riayet etmeli... ve ... bir gün kendisine vazife terettüp ettiğinde hiç duraklamadan ve tereddüt yaşamadan “baş göz üstüne” deyip vazife yerine koşmalıdır.” Gülen, *Prizma I*, p. 34.

2) The Fethullah Gülen Community in light of Social Movement Paradigms

In the First Chapter I mentioned three main social movement paradigms: the Chicago School, Resource Mobilization Theory and New Social Movements Theory, and indicated that one paradigm would not be sufficient for the analysis of the Fethullah Gülen Community. Each paradigm will enable us to theorize certain aspects of the community, and thus to argue that the Fethullah Gülen Community has the defining characteristics of a contemporary social movement.

In explaining participation in social movements, the Chicago school stressed psychological reactions to breakdown, crude modes of communication, and volatile goals. This tradition considered collective behavior to be an abnormal or irrational response to rapid social change and social disorganization.

As Kömeçoğlu argues, it is difficult to consider the F.Gülen Community as an irrational response to a social breakdown. Actors of the community are not unconnected individuals motivated by social strain. On the contrary, *it is a collectivity that is based on the mobilization and organization of human and material resources through rational action on the basis of Islamic ethic and the common ideal of disseminating Islamic faith and ethic among the layers of society through a socialization process.*⁸¹

In this definition there are two aspects that are covered by Resource mobilization and Identity-oriented paradigms, respectively: One is the mobilization and organization of human and material resources through rational action, and the other one

⁸¹ Kömeçoğlu, op.cit, p.7.

is a creation of a normative ideal –an alternative life strategy which is based on Islamic ethic– and converting “others” into this ethic through a socialization process.⁸²

a) **Mobilization of Human and Material Resources and Strategic Action**

The Resource Mobilization paradigm has three main points that have been focused upon together and separately. The early RM theorists centered on the organizational forms of social movements and the effectiveness with which movements’ organizations use the resources in attempting to achieve their goals. Here the prime research question is why some movements are more successful than others. RM theorists demonstrated that sophisticated organizational forms and modes of communication were needed to mobilize collective action. Success is defined as a function of how clearly organizational goals are defined and how effectively human and material resources are put to use. RM theorists also attempt to identify for every social movement a particular social movements sector, sometimes-called industry, within which the various organizations coexist.

This approach enables us to understand the human and material resource management of the Gülen Movement. The Gülen Community has a very sophisticated organizational form. The human and material resources of the Community are university and high school students –who generally constitute the core group– entrepreneurs, professionals, financiers, and small tradesmen (*esnaf*). The professionals

⁸² *Ibid.* p. 13-14. In his thesis Kömeçoğlu emphasizes more the strength and transformative power second feature than the first. Yet I do give as much importance to the first aspect, which is mobilization

and university students constitute the human resources of the community, while entrepreneurs and small tradesmen generally provide the material resource by financing the establishment of certain institutions.⁸³

The success of the Gülen Community is its clearly defined goal -which is the dissemination of Islamic faith and morality- and the organization of the Community through an informal network of diverse institutions and organizations. As indicated by the RM theorists, the Fethullah Gülen Community has a particular sector or industry, within which various organizations coexist. Gülen defines this sector as the following:

“There might be different systems of service. Some establish schools of Quran, others may be involved in conversations at mosques, and others again may give lectures about Sufism (*tasavvuf*) ... Since I consider the works targeting *education* and *culture* more useful, I try to direct people who want to work for the community towards that path.”⁸⁴

“Various institutions of education, from primary schools to universities, with the grace of Allah, will be an opportunity for many people to meet Islamic sentiment and thought. And this is a very important step for the improvement (rectification) of nowadays’ individual.”⁸⁵

and organization of human and material resources through a rational and strategic action, as creation of a normative ideal in understanding the F.Gülen Community.

⁸³ For the role of diverse participants within the community see *Ibid*, p. 9, 69.

⁸⁴ “*Değişik hizmet sistemleri olabilir. Birisi Kur’an kursu açar, bir başkası camide sohbet eder, daha bir başkası da tasavvuf adına ders veriyor olabilir... Ben eğitime, kültüre dönük hizmetlerin daha yararlı olduğunu gördüğüm için himmet edecek insanları elimden geldiğince bu tarafa yönlendirmeye çalışırım.*” Interview with Nuriye Akman, Sabah, Ocak 95, in Armağan & Ünal, *op.cit.*, p. 39. (italics belong to me)

⁸⁵ “*Çeşitli yerlerde açılan ilkokullardan üniversiteye kadar eğitim müesseseleri –inşâallah- birçok insanın, İslami duygu ve düşünceyle tanışmasına vesile olacaktır. Ve bu günümüzün insanının ıslahı adına çok önemli bir adımdır. Ve bu vesileyle cami cemaatinin, imanın, vaizin, müftünün, imam-hatip ve ilahiyatın dışında, kadimden bu yana devam ede gelen önemli bir vazifeyi üstlenip eda edecek bir aydın zümre yetişecek...*” Gülen, *Fasıldan Fasıla III*, p.101.

Therefore, the sector within which diverse institutions coexist in the pursuit of the goal of dissemination of faith is the field of education and culture. Institutions established by the participants of the Gülen Community are mostly active in those fields. Student houses and dormitories, high schools and preparatory courses for the university entrance exam, universities in Turkey (*Fatih University*) and abroad; foundations like the Association of Journalists and Writers; media organs such as *Samanyolu TV* (STV), *Burç FM*, the daily newspaper *Zaman*, magazines like *Sızıntı*, *Aksiyon Fountain*, etc.⁸⁶ are the examples of those institutions and organizations that are located within and target the cultural and educational sphere of society.

The mobilization of human and material resources within those fields of activity for the implementation of the goal of the Community is also very sophisticated. Mobilization is stimulated, above all, by Fethullah Gülen. In other words, Gülen has the principal role in the mobilization of those resources:

“Wherever I go I have been giving advice to people. Without discrimination I have been saying to all our citizens: ‘Establish university preparatory schools, rise the level of our people’... The globalization of the world will bring about certain changes. For example, small tradesmen or small-scale trade, will disappear. Therefore, establish big trade organizations.”⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Ahmet Kurucan, from the preface of Gülen, *Fasıldan Fasıla III*, p.J.

⁸⁷ “*Gittiğim her yerde insanlara bazı tavsiyelerde bulunurum. Bütün vatandaşlarımıza, hiç bir ayırım yapmadan, ‘Üniversite hazırlık kursları açın, insanımıza seviye kazandırın’ dedim... Küreselleşen dünya, beraberinde bazı şeyleri getirecektir. Mesela, küçük esnaf, küçük ticaret, bunlar yok olup gideceklerdir. Büyük ticaret müesseseleri tesis edin.*” Interview with Ertuğrul Özkök, *Hürriyet*, Ocak 95, in *Medya Aynasında F. Gülen*, p. 21.

University students are in charge of establishing close interpersonal relations in order to expand the inner circles of community.⁸⁸ Others (professionals) participate to the common ideal either by directly conveying Islamic thought or representing the ethical aspect of Islam at the personal level in their own areas. Some are encouraged by the community to become missionary teachers in the colleges⁸⁹, in the university preparatory schools. Some use newspaper columns; others TV or radio stations... Businessmen and small tradesmen, on the other hand, provide the material resource. They are mobilized to finance the establishment of dormitories, school, universities, foundations, etc.

The second point focused upon by the RM theorist is to define social movements in terms of the pursuit of common interests. These interests are described as the goal of inclusion and the acquisition of power. The success of a social movement involved the recognition of the group as a political actor or increased material benefits. The RM theorists also emphasize the effectiveness of tactical decision-making.

This approach also allows us to reveal another aspect of the Gülen Community. As I will try to show in the following chapters, though the Gülen Community does not show any direct intention to acquire political authority, it nevertheless influences politicians. Due to the large scope of appeal that the cognitive schema drawn by Gülen attracts, certain politicians do not hesitate to meet Fethullah Gülen. Thus, Gülen, as a religious leader, obtains the opportunity to convey his opinions. This might be considered as an indirect inclusion within the political society. On the other hand,

⁸⁸ Kömeçoğlu, *op.cit.*, p. 68-69.

Gülen envisages the revitalization of Islam as a world power. Given that the community operates as a network composed of various institutions in different fields, 'to be a world power' could be understood in economic and political terms, as well as cultural power. For, the diversity of the institutions within which participants of the community take place enables them to affect, if not totally alter, many sectors of the society.

With regard to the tactical decision-making or strategic action, the Gülen Community is one of the best examples. Gülen explicitly wants his followers to act strategically.

"Whoever wants to stimulate a new faith, a new love and enthusiasm in his own society, either has to continue his struggle explicitly or implicitly within that society, or she/he has to migrate and look for other listeners of his messages. Those who prefer the first method should be very careful and prudent ... Generally a slight imprudence, carelessness, or a fault can worsen the circumstances and can turn the atmosphere to be unbearable."⁹⁰

As seen above, the main concern for prudence and strategic behavior is to preserve the already existing conditions that allow for a religious life and dissemination of faith. The ideal behavior is, then, to act by taking into consideration tensions that exist within society, and opportunities that emerge. The ideal behavior described by

⁸⁹ Ibid, p. 9 and 69.

⁹⁰ "Kendi toplumunda yeni bir iman, yeni bir aşk ve heyecan uyarmak isteyen herkes ya mücadelesini orada açık-kapalı devam ettirecek, veya hicret edip gönlünün ilhamlarına, takdimiyle vazifeli olduğu mesajlarına başka talip... araştıracaktır. / Birinci şıkta o inanç ve düşünceye gönül veren her ferdin, fevkalade dikkatli, tedbirli ve yenilmişlik adına ne varsa hepsini daha baştan aşması şarttır. ... Çok defa küçük bir dikkatsizlik, az bir yanlışlık, şarhların ağırlaşmasına, atmosferin de bütün bütün yaşanmaz hale gelmesine sebebiyet verebilir." Gülen, *Yitirilmiş Cennete Doğru*, p.7.

Gülen in the following quotation is a very good example of the tactical decision making mentioned by the RM theorists.

“They will know very well where to wait, and where to roar and cause a tumult. When adequate, self-sacrificing and like thunderbolts, they will fall onto the world; sometimes they will avoid being in a whirlwind and will wait for an off-shore breeze. They are quick, speedy and plucky, but they have no vain acts. Their thoughts are enlightened, their decisions are precise at hitting the right mark, and their conducts are moderate.... Regarding power, if they do not have the power equal to their adversaries, they do not neglect being technical. They are clever, intelligent but they have shallow appearances”⁹¹

Gülen even goes far to criticize the former generations for not having a tactical decision-making.

“The naïve and inexperienced souls who could not base their defense upon a moderate system, and who responded to hatred with hatred, and to anger with anger, could not preserve the balance, and by behaving wrongly they played into the hands of their adversaries.”⁹²

The third point and the common concern that links the particularists and the more formalistic resource mobilization approach is explaining the sacrifices made by individual actors. In their common challenge to collective behaviorism, both emphasize

⁹¹ “Onlar, beklenmesi gerektiği yerde beklemesini, kükreyip etrafı velveleye vermeleri icab ettiği yerde de kükremesini çok iyi bileceklerdir. Yerinde, cansiperane ve yıldırımlar gibi incekler dünyaların bağına; yerinde de tipiye, borana tutulmadan fevkalade sakınıp, meltemlerin eseceği mevsimi bekleyecektir. Seri ve atılgandırlar, ama hiç mi hiç karambole hareketleri yoktur. Düşünceleri aydın, kararları isabetli, davranışları da ölçülüdür... Kuvvetler muvazenesinde, hasımlarının gücüne denk iktidara sahip değillerse, teknik olmayı da ihmal etmezler. Zeki, idrakli fakat sığ görünümlüdürler.” Gülen, *Buhranlar Anaforunda İnsan*, pp. 56-57,

⁹² “Müdafaasını makul bir siteme bağlayamamış ve kine “kin”le, öfkeye “öfke”yle mukabele eden saf-derun toy ruhlar da muvazaneyi koruyamamış, yanlış hareketlere girerek hasımlarının eline koz vermişlerdi.” *Buhranlar Anaforunda İnsan*, p. 72.

the rationality of human action: actors are assumed to calculate the costs and benefits of participation in any action. A theory of social networks, which focuses on the “pull” of social pressure as a form of “solidarity” is used to provide an explanation of why calculating actors might choose to engage in behavior they might otherwise seek to avoid. Although we cannot consider all the participants in the pursuit of pure material benefits, due to the fact that the community is a network of diverse institutions and organization, being involved in such a network increases the opportunities of upward mobility especially for the participants who are originally of the periphery, of the deprived classes. For example, for a poor student, to establish close relations with a participant of the community, and to participate into the community, might allow him to be allocated to a dormitory of the community.

However, as Kömeçoğlu also argues, it should be noted that all the participants of the community are not of the deprived lower class of the society. As I indicated above, participants are composed of small and big businessmen, professionals from media, music, academy, etc. These people culturally and economically constitute the elite layer of the society. Not only does the actual case show the preponderance of the elite within the community, but also an elite guided movement is the vision drawn by Gülen.

“This high obligation should be taken up seriously by schools to mosques. As far as much as possible, it should be carried out by the enlightened and voluntary souls who achieved the cohabitation of mind and heart. For *mürşid* (the spiritual guide) and *âlim* (savant) are those mature people who have already reached the Truth in their own

souls, and who convey the sparks of inspiration they lit in their hearts to those of novices.”⁹³

Nevertheless, the elite layer of the community also could be considered as benefactors of the network organization of the community. For such a constellation of institutions of diverse fields of activities allow them to act like a pressure group or a lobby.

However, it would be misleading to argue that the cost-benefit calculation is the only motivating factor for participation into the community, though as emphasised above, increased material benefits or upward mobility is the inevitable –maybe unintended– result of it. As Kömeçoğlu argues, for certain people the basis of motivation is somehow different. “Participants at the core of FG community do not generally expect material rewards, since they plan their future through missionary projects based on Islamic altruism –to disseminate their faith, which is to say, cost-benefit analysis fails on self-sacrificial behavior of participants.”⁹⁴ Gülen also underlines this altruistic attitude by giving the following example:

“Someone asked ‘What are the financial resources?’ In Anatolia, our people take up this duty with so much devotion that they sell one of their two houses, or cars, and even if they have only one house they sell it and live then in rent.”⁹⁵

⁹³ “Bu yüce vazife, mektepten mâbede kadar, bütün millî müesseselerde hassasiyetle benimsemeli ve imkân elverdiği nisbette de kafa ve kalb izdivacına muvaffak olmuş, aydın ve hasbi ruhlara gördürülmelidir. Zira mürşid ve âlim evvela kendi ruhunda hakikate eren, sonra da sînesinde tutuşturduğu ilham kıvılcıklarını çıraklarının gönüllerine boşaltan olgun insandır.” Gülen, *İbid.*, p. 88.

⁹⁴ Kömeçoğlu, *op.cit.*, p.10.

⁹⁵ “Biri ‘Değirmenin suyu nereden geliyor?’ diye sordu. Anadolu’da insanımız iki evinden birini, arabasını satıp, hatta tek evini bile satıp kirada oturacak derecede fedakarlıkla bu hizmete sahip çıkarken...” Interview with M. Ali Birand, 32. Gün, Show TV. Ocak 98, in *Medya Aynasında F.Gülen*, p. 113.

Accordingly, I share the argument that the most striking shortcoming of the RM paradigm in analyzing the Fethullah Gülen Community is its ignorance of the normative ideals of the community. As underlined by Cohen and Arato, based on the cost-benefit calculation assumption, RM paradigm views the collective action as a rational game, and disregards, or neglects any problematic of meaning construction and the politics of influence. Focus on a rational game defined as a constellation of strategies and tactics aiming at the inclusion and acquisition of power is a one-sided reading of social movements, since it obscures any intention of influencing and altering the cultural and ethical tissue of the civil society,⁹⁶ which is central to the Fethullah Gülen Community.

b) A Movement based on a Normative Identity: Islamic Faith and Morality

The participants of the Gülen Community consider themselves as missionaries of Islam.

“The world is in urgent need of the messages we offer. Today the world is overburdened by the plurality and magnitude of its problems. So let’s help the world.”⁹⁷

The prerequisite of any missionary attitude is a meaning construction and development of alternative life strategies. As “New Social Movements” (NSM) paradigm asserts, collective actors shift their attention to focus on social norms and collective identity; that is, actors do not express themselves through direct political action, but become creators of social life through their production and contestation of social practices,

⁹⁶ Cohen and Arato, *op.cit.*, pp. 504 & 508-509.

⁹⁷ “*Dünyanın bizim sunacağımız mesajlara çok ihtiyacı var. Bugünkü haliyle dünya, üzerinde taşıdığı problemlerin ağırlığından ve çokluğundan dolayı iki bölüme ayrıldı... O halde gelin dünyanın imdadına koşalım*” Gülen, *Fasıldan Fasıla III*, p. 118.

norms and institutions.⁹⁸ Referring to Alain Touraine, social movements are struggles around the institutional potentials of cultural patterns of a given societal type. Social movements are normatively oriented interactions between adversaries with conflicting interpretations and opposed societal models of a shared cultural field.

If Gülen defines the main target of the community as disseminating a message which he describes as ‘our message’, as indicated above, then it could be argued that the Fethullah Gülen Community is a normatively oriented movement. It is situated within a shared cultural field, as Tourain suggests, within which there are points that the participants raise challenges and produce alternatives. Islamic faith and ‘Islamic Puritanism’ with respect to ethical issues constitute the basis of this normative identity.⁹⁹ The dominant life style is interpreted and challenged through the main pillars of Islam. What is specifically challenged is the great influence of the Western secular and utilitarian life style upon the Turkish people, and what is offered instead is to fix up the torn ties with the past through an Islamic understanding and reinterpretation.

“Western society has imposed so much upon our people its own intellectual style, its philosophy of life, its sensations and passions that our people cannot think, believe, read and write any more with their own references. Within the cursed understanding built upon the accumulation of the crumbs of cultures gathered together from twenty nations, its immobility has become a pain, and its effort or action has become a yearning.”¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Cohen and Arato, *op.cit.*, pp. 510, 514.

⁹⁹ Kömeçoğlu, *op.cit.*, p. 3, 76.

¹⁰⁰ “*Seneler var ki batı toplumu, kendi düşünce tarzını, hayat felsefesini, duyuş ve zevk alışlarını bizim insanımıza empoze ede ede, onu öylesine sersemleştirdi ki artık o, kendi gibi düşünemez kendi gibi inanamaz ve kendi gibi okuyup yazamaz oldu. Yirmi devletten derleyip toparladığı kültür kırıntılarıyla meydana getirmeyi planladığı mel'unlardan-mel'un bir anlayış içinde hareketsizliği bir ızdırıp, hamle*

“Throughout the recent past, we have witnessed nothing else than an abundance of idleness and misery of soul, along with lack of science (*ilim*) and contemplation... The spirit and the essence (*mâ'nâ*) that used to nourish us for centuries has been paralyzed, the nation has been alienated from its proper essence. Our world has been invaded by vagabonds, and our nation is bleeding.”¹⁰¹

“The youth has been made to forget their religion, their culture and their history, and the rootlessness has been so much extended that the new generations do not know their own culture, yet they are very skillful in despising it; although they are totally ignorant of religion, they are readily intolerant and prejudiced in slandering it.”¹⁰²

Though Gülen criticizes the Western life style and its destructive effects upon the Turkish nation, especially upon the youth, he emphasizes that their community is not based on critic. According to him, his followers are not composed of discontented people. On the contrary, it is a community of contented people who are supposed to infuse a new soul to the whole humanity.¹⁰³ So the community does not express its collective identity through strong opposition or political action.¹⁰⁴ Although they criticize certain aspects of the existing cultural environment, instead of strong opposition Gülen advocates a communitarian life style both in order to resist the

veya aksiyonu ise bir hasret oldu” Gülen, *Yitirilmiş Cennete Doğru* (Çağ ve Nesil – 3), TÖV Yayınları, İzmir, 10th ed., 1997, p. 64.

¹⁰¹ “Bizler yakın geçmişimiz itibarıyla, atâlet ve ruh sefaleti adına alabildiğine bir bolluk, ilim ve düşünce adına da yokluktan başka bir şey görmedik... Asırlarca bizi ayakta tutan ruh ve mâ'nâ durmadan baltalanmış, millet özünden uzaklaştırılmış, dünyamız serseriler tarafından işgal edilerek, bu ülkenin insanlarına kan kusturulmuştur.” Gülen, *Buhranlar Anaforundan İnsan*, pp. 102-103.

¹⁰² “Nesillere dini, kültürü, tarihi unutturularak köksüzlüğe öylesine revaç verildi ki; genç kuşaklar, kendi kültürünü bilmez, ama onu aşağılamada fevkalade mahirdir... dinden bütün bütün habersizdir, ama onu yerden yere vurmada müsamahasız ve peşin hükümlüdür.” Gülen, *Yitirilmiş Cennete Doğru*, p. 65.

¹⁰³ Can, *op.cit*, pp.23-25.

¹⁰⁴ These two important features of the Fethullah Gülen Community will be examined in detailed in the IV. Chapter, where I will try to analyse Gülen’s perception of state and secularity.

destructive influences of the other cultures and to develop, reproduce, and to disseminate an alternative morality and life style.

“In order to be able to resist against the subsequent attacks of adversaries, to preserve our national unity, to continue our vitality along with inspiring life to the others do we need or not to form a strong and unshakable community? When the world is attacking us in form of communities and mechanized units, how can we stand in front of them as individuals and merely equipped with guns?”¹⁰⁵

“One sole individual cannot resist with respect to corruption against the destructive communities ... Besides, he would be deprived form the spiritual inspirations (*feyz*), the advantages and the favors of being in a community. A person whose feet are not stepping on the ground of a community is like a leaf or a quill under the feet; if you blow from this side he flies to that side, if you blow from that side it flies to this side.”¹⁰⁶

“Forming a community [being within a community] is the most important shelter that will protect us against the traps established by our adversaries on the paths that we will pass through by social channels and branches, against their communitarian attacks; and against our spiritual adversaries which are the Satan, *nefs* (self) and the storms of sin.”¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ “Sayısız dişlerin ve dişlilerin (tek diş kalmışlar cemaatler halinde çok dişli olurlar) peş peşe amansız saldırıları karşısında mukavemet edebilmemiz, milli bütünlüğümüzü koruyabilmemiz,, hayatietimizi, ham de başkalarına hayat nefhederek sürdürüebilmemiz için cemaatleşmeye, evet sağlam ve sarsılmaz bir cemaat teşkil etmeye ihtiyacımız var mıdır, yok mudur? Dünya üzerimize cemaatler halinde ve mekanize birliklerle gelirken, onların karşısına fertler halinde ve tüfeklerle nasıl çıkabiliriz?” Gülen, *İnancın Gölgesinde*, p. 171.

¹⁰⁶ “Bir fert, dalâlet adına tahripkar cemaatler karşısında tek başına mukavemet edemez... Ayrıca cemaat içinde bulunmanın getireceği feyizlerden, sağlayacağı avantaj ve lütuflardan da mahrum kalır. Ayakları cemaat zeminine basmayan insan, ayaklar altında bir yaprak ve bir tüy gibidir; bu yandan üflersen öte yana, öte yandan üflersen bu yana savrulur.” Gülen, *Ibid.*, p. 172.

¹⁰⁷ “Hısumlarımızın içtimai kanal ve kollarla geçeceğimiz yollarda kurdukları sayısız tuzaklara ve onların cemaatçe hücumlarına, ayrıca manevi hasımlarımız olan Şeytana, nefse ve günah tufanlarına karşı yem olmaktan, boğulmaktan bizi koruyacak en mühim sığınak cemaatleşmedir.” Gülen, *Ibid.*, p 173.

Such a communitarian life style is practiced within 'alternative private spheres'¹⁰⁸ like *Işık Evler*. These places are created to protect the participants from the materialist and utilitarian environment of the 'outside' by continuously reactivating the so-called metaphysical tension.¹⁰⁹

"Someone who is not involved in a community but is living alone might be the victim of the illusions that will lead him/her to immorality and sinning... The atmosphere that we are effected by and the magnetic sphere we live in determine the type of visions we have... Therefore, whoever wants to imagine the visions that belong to Allah should be within the magnetic atmosphere of the houses that are full of those visions."¹¹⁰

If social movements are normatively oriented interactions between adversaries with conflicting interpretations and opposed societal models, those houses (*Işık Evler*) not only protect participant of the community from the dominant, yet the challenged perceptions, but also intellectually and spiritually prepare them to reshape the cultural patterns of the society. So actors of the community engage in a permanent struggle around the reinterpretation of norms and creation of new meanings. Social practices of daily life like interpersonal relations, especially gender relations, and education are principally targeted.

"In this context, going to pubs, bars and similar entertainment places, drinking alcohol are the characteristics of life styles of a public which need to be avoided by the

¹⁰⁸ Kömeçoğlu, *op.cit.*, p.12.

¹⁰⁹ For the function of these houses and for a detailed description of the communitarian life and morality practised there see *Ibid*, p.71-73.

¹¹⁰ "*Bir cemaat içinde bulunmayıp tek başına yaşayan insan, kendini fısk ve günaha sevk edecek hayallerin kurbanı olabilir... Neyin atmosferinde, neyin tesirinde ve neyin manyetik sahası içindeyse hayalimizde canlanacak serim ve suretler de daha ziyade o türden olurlar... Öyleyse Allah'a ait*

community members. Gender issues related to the public, like dating, premarital relations, intimate encounters and love affairs between man and woman before or outside the marriage are discarded.”¹¹¹

Based on such a morality they try to transform the life styles of the outsiders by establishing close interpersonal relations.¹¹² However, the movement works like an informal network of institutions such as private schools, dormitories, university, TV and Radio stations, newspaper, etc. At the institutional level, the transformation process takes a different form. TV and radio stations, or newspapers have religious programs / columns where the Islamic principles are directly conveyed. Yet it is rather an implicit atmosphere of the Islamic morality that differentiates those organizations. For example violence and sexuality are the two main motives that these institutions strictly avoid. The publicity of women as entertainment objects is not advocated, hence, it is not welcomed (though occasionally women singers appear on the STV Channel). At the private high schools or dormitories of the community, on the other hand, representation totally substitutes the explicit dissemination of the faith, as a method of influencing and changing souls. These schools do not have religious curriculum.¹¹³ Yet, the teachers are expected to be living examples of the religion.

ma'naları hayal etmek isteyenler, bu ma'naların kaynaştığı Allah evlerinin manyetik sahasına girmelidirler.” Gülen, *Ibid.*, p.153.

¹¹¹ Kömeçoğlu, *op.cit*, p.71.

¹¹² *Ibid*, p. 78.

¹¹³ This point is very often underlined on the STV Channel by the parents of students educated in the community financed schools.

“Although we do not talk to our students about Islam they adopt our behaviour, our tolerance and our feelings and then apply them to their lives, says one of the teachers.”¹¹⁴

By the same token, the conservative morality prevails in those institutions. Students are brought up to be respectful to their traditional and historical background.¹¹⁵ However, regarding gender relations those institutions display a tacit but apparent puritan Islamic morality, since these schools are segregated institutions. It is tacit, since segregated education is justified not on grounds of religion. Rather, scientific arguments are used. It is argued that in segregated schools at the high school level educational achievement is higher.¹¹⁶

In brief, as the New Social Movements paradigm suggests, the Gülen Community targets both the self-production of its participant by the reproduction of the Islamic faith and ethic via alternative private living spheres, and the transformation of the existing cultural patterns through the politics of influence.

As a conclusion I would like to refer once more to the definition of social movements, by D. Della Porta and M. Diani, which combines four characteristics of social movements shared by various scholars. They consider social movements “as (1) informal networks, based (2) on shared beliefs and solidarity, which mobilize about (3)

¹¹⁴ Kömeçoğlu, *op.cit*, p. 53.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

conflictual issues, through (4) the frequent use of various forms of protest.”¹¹⁷ The Gülen Community displays nearly all the other characteristics of social movements. The Fethullah Gülen Community is (1) an informal network composed of student houses, dormitories, high schools and preparatory schools for the university entrance exam, Universities, TV and radio stations (STV and *Burç* FM), a newspaper (*Zaman*), the magazines like *Sızıntı*, *Fountain*, Association of Journalists and Writers, finance and insurance companies, and hospitals; (2) based on a shared belief in the Islamic faith and morality, and a solidarity in protecting and disseminating this collective identity; which mobilizes about (3) conflictual issues such as rupture from the past and the tradition, or destructive influence of the Western secular and utilitarian life style; through (4) the permanent use of a pacifist form of protest, which involves the creation of alternative private living spheres, and the use of various forms of methods of persuasion to convert people.

¹¹⁷ Donatella Della Porta and Mario Diani, *Social Movements, An Introduction*, Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1999, p.16.

CHAPTER THREE –

FETHULLAH GÜLEN’S PERCEPTION OF SOCIETY and THE ‘OTHER’

F.Gülen defines community (*jamaat*) as composed of individuals who share the same sentiments and ideas.¹¹⁸ Modern society, however, is composed of diverse ‘communities’ or groups who ‘do not speak the same language’, yet who need to cohabit. Given that the Gülen Community is a social movement mobilized upon such a field of diversity and plurality, my questions regarding this chapter are the following: “How does Gülen perceive the society composed of different life strategies?”, “What is the status of the ‘other’ in F.Gülen’s interpretation of Islam?” and “What is the ground of relation with the ‘other’?” By the term ‘other’ I do intend both ‘other perceptions of Islam’ and ‘other worldviews –religious or secular’.

The theoretical ground of my analysis is the concept of civil society, with particular emphasis on ‘pluralism’. As indicated in the First Chapter, I used Gellner’s definition of Civil Society. He defines Civil Society as the “*idea of institutional and ideological pluralism, which prevents the establishment of monopoly of power and truth, and counterbalances those central institutions which, though necessary, might otherwise acquire such monopoly.*”¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ Eyüp Can, *Ufuk Turu*, p.23

¹¹⁹ Ernest Gellner, *op.cit.* pp.3-4.

Central to this definition is institutional and ideological pluralism. The content of the notion of Civil Society entails above all the end of uniformity, of monopoly of political and social organization. In other words, Civil Society is a terrain where people with diverse lifeworlds are supposed to cohabit. Furthermore the concept of Civil Society requires *the approbation a priori that no one has or claims to have the monopoly of truth and information.*

Accordingly, while investigating the status reserved for the 'other' in Gülen's interpretation of Islam, I will also be analysing whether the F.Gülen community, although it has emerged thanks to the pluralist structure of civil society, will naturally – since it is based on the pillar of *tevhid* (unity)– intend to transform civil society into a hegemony that will sweep away diversity within society.

1) Relation with the Infidel (upon the purpose of changing the souls)

It is a religious responsibility that characterizes a Muslim's relations with the 'other.' This attitude might be called altruism, for according to Gülen the principle aim of communicating with the other is to help him/her to gain eternal salvation.¹²⁰ According to F.Gülen, the world needs the messages that the movement will offer, since the world is overburdened by the problems it faces. So, he calls Muslims to help the world.¹²¹ In his respect, not only does he believe that all sectors of society needs a serious

¹²⁰ F.Gülen, *Prizma* , p.12.

¹²¹ F.Gülen, *Fasıldan Fasıla III*, p.18.

rehabilitation,¹²² but also, he says, they (the movement) seek to change the “face of the world.”¹²³

At first sight, those statements might be considered as a threat to pluralism. For, Gülen indicates that they target all the sectors of the society, and aim at changing the face of the world. Given that a community is the culmination of people sharing the “same ideas” and the “sentiments”, we could argue that what Gülen intends, in the long run, is to form a uniform society, which will, in fact, turn into a huge community.

What is, then, the status of the ‘other’ whom Gülen addresses as someone to be helped? The main principle of Gülen’s interpretation, regarding the relations with people is to accept them as they are, without taking into consideration their sentiments and opinions. Because, they are all human beings.¹²⁴ Yet he underlines that this does not mean to evaluate the ‘believer’ and the ‘unbeliever’ equally. However, this ‘inequality’ between the believer and the unbeliever is not a clear-cut evaluation; meaning a believer is not always in a higher status than an infidel. Gülen states that,

“... According to us, the position of the believer and the unbeliever is in proportion to their proper value”¹²⁵

In this statement it is not very clear what Gülen intends by ‘value’. Yet I do infer from another of Gülen’s speeches that by ‘value’ he refers to the qualities of man; that is,

¹²² *Ibid.*, p.192.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p.134.

¹²⁴ “*İnsanların duygu ve düşüncelerini hesaba katmadan, en azından insan olmaları asgari müstereğinden hareketle kendi konumlarında kabul edilmeleri şarttır.*” Gülen, *Fasıldan Fasıla III*, p.6-7

¹²⁵ “*Bizim düşüncemize göre inananla inanmayanın durumu kendi kıymetleri ölçüsündedir.*” Camcı & Ünal, *op.cit.*, p. 185.

regardless of the religious affiliation, he evaluates people according to their qualities that correspond to those of a veritable believer.

“The Western thought has many useful aspects. For example, systematic contemplation / thinking is a quality of a *mü'min* (believer). In my opinion, every *mü'min* is not a believer with all his/her qualities... The one who has such a quality, whether he is a Christian, a Magian or a Buddhist, has the quality of a *mü'min*... Allah treat people, at least on earth, according to their qualities.”¹²⁶

In this respect, being against individuals and their qualities are to be distinguished. According to Gülen in Islam the all creatures are to be loved for Allah. (*El Hubbü fi'llâh*). Hate for Allah (*El-Buğzu li'llah*), on the other hand, is oriented not towards human beings but towards sentiments, thoughts and qualities. Therefore, what should be hated are not individuals but immorality, *küfür* (infidelity), and the idea of polytheism.¹²⁷ In other words, Gülen is against the quality of ‘*küfür*’ (infidelity, unbelief), and the immorality that emerges as a result of infidelity.¹²⁸

“The attitude against the people whom we call ‘*kâfir*’ (unbeliever) is, in fact, against the quality of *küfür* (infidelity, unbelief). It is against the idea of idolatry, against polytheism, against the immorality that ensues from infidelity. Being against individuals and being against the quality of *küfür* are different issues... You might be against a bad conduct of a man. Yet this opposition is the figurative aspect of the issue. What the real aspect requires is to save this person from that bad behavior.”¹²⁹

¹²⁶ “Bati’lı düşüncenin öyle yararlı yanları vardır ki: Mesela, sistemli düşünme mü’mince bir sıfattır. Bence her mü’min, her sıfatıyla mü’min değildir... Böyle bir sıfatı taşıyan ister Hristiyan veya Mecusi olsun, ister Budist olsun mü’min sıfatı taşıyor demektir... Allah en azından dünyada insanlara muamelesini onların sıfatlarına göre yapar.” Interview with Nevval Sevindi, Yeni Yüzyıl, Ağustos, 1997, in Armağan & Ünal, op.cit., p. 96.

¹²⁷ Camcı & Ünal, op.cit., p.107.

¹²⁸ Interview with Gülen, Zaman, 23 June 1999, p. 3.

¹²⁹ “Kâfir dediğimiz insanlara karşı tavır esasen küfür sıfatına karşıdır. Put düşüncesine karşıdır, müşriklığe karşıdır, onunla birlikte gelen gayri ahlakiliğe karşıdır. Küfür sıfatına karşı olmak başkadır,

That is the point where the relation with the ‘other’ is involved in. Gülen does not advocate a personal relation with a *kâfir* (infidel) because of his thoughts, and does profess that he hates such people (*kalben buğz etmek*). Yet, he clearly pinpoints that a believer should be open to dialogue with a *kâfir*.¹³⁰ In fact, according to Gülen, a *mü'min* does not hesitate to communicate with any kind of thought and system. But, while one of the feet of a *mü'min* is with ‘seventy-two nations’, the other one should remain at the center, that is, should rely upon the religious principles. This is the precondition and the measure of involving in a relation with the ‘other’. For a dialogue with the infidel could be useful only if the believer has strong ties with the Islamic principles.¹³¹ It is easy to grasp his logic: The infidel is someone to be converted to Islam, or in other words, he is someone with some bad qualities that have to be changed. In this respect, a *mü'min*’s relation to him should only be with the aim of ‘changing his soul’.

2) Relation with the ‘Other’ on the Basis of Contextual Circumstances

Communication and relation with ‘the other’ is not based on an abstract, unchanging model. According to Gülen, the desire to ‘communicate’ with the world should lead

şahıslara karşı olmak başkadır... İnsanın bir kötü tavrına karşı olursunuz. Bu karşı olma, işin mecazi yanısıdır. Hakiki yanı ise, onu o kötü tavrından kurtarmayı gerektirir.” Interview with Nevval Sevindi, Yeni Yüzyıl, Ağustos, 1997, in Armağan & Ünal, *op.cit.*, p.87.

¹³⁰ “*Düşüncesinden dolayı şahsen münasebet caiz olmayan kâfire karşı kalben buğz etmekle beraber, kendisiyle her zaman diyaloga açık bulunmamız gerektiğini bilmeliyiz.”* Gülen, *İnançın Gölgesinde*, p. 119.

¹³¹ “*Onlar her çeşit düşünce ve sistemle münasebete geçmede beis görmezler. Ne var ki gönülleri, kiblenüma gibi hep kendi mihrablarını gösterir.”* Gülen, *Buhranlar Anaforunda İnsan*, p. 56. “*Mevlana’ya atfedilen bir söz var ‘Bir ayağım merkezde, dini esaslara bağlı, diğer ayağım da yetmiş küsür milletle beraber...’ Esasen bizim mesleğimiz de işte bu düşünce ile özetlenebilir... Elbette herkesle diyalog içinde olmanın bir ölçüsü olacaktır. İnsan, ayağını İslami prensiplere bağlılık içinde sağlam basıyorsa... bu diyalog faydalıdır.”* Camcı & Ünal, *op.cit.*, pp.140-141.

Muslims to think and act in harmony with the changing conditions while preserving the essence at the same time.¹³² Accordingly, Gülen professes that their intellectual reservoir drawing the schema of action is not an abstract model, or an abstract ideal to be realized in this world. It is the interaction with the ‘actuality’ that forms and reforms that action plan. Such an interaction is regarded as the only way to achieve success. Because, he argues that, one who does not take into consideration the differences of culture ensuing from the change in time and place is behaving against the universality of Islam, and is doomed to fail in spreading Islam.

The following passages from different books and sermons of Gülen clearly summarize his ‘interactive action plan’.

“If you seek to explain something to the world, you have to be in harmony with the world. In this respect, first of all, we have to get along well with our people; we have to be in dialogue with our own people.”¹³³

“Our-intellectual life, our plans and projects are mostly determined by action after the abridged (condensed) thought (*icmali fikir*).”¹³⁴

“Success is granted only to those who know the necessary principles of the pursued path, and who apply them; who behave in accordance with the conditions of his era...”¹³⁵

¹³² Gülen, *Buhranlar Anaforunda İnsan*, p.80.

¹³³ “Eğer sizler, dünyaya bir şeyler anlatmaya talipseniz, bütün dünya ile uyum içinde olmanız gerekmektedir. Bunun yolu da, öncelikle içteki kendi insanımızla iyi geçinip onlarla diyalog içinde olmanıza bağlıdır.” F.Gülen, *Fasıldan Fasıla III*, p. 202.

¹³⁴ “Bizim fikir hayatımızı, plan ve projelerimizi, icmali fikirden sonra, genelde aksiyon belirler.” Eyüp Can, *op.cit.*, p.15.

¹³⁵ “Her türlü muvaffakiyet, o yolda gerekli olan prensipleri iyiden iyiye bilip ona göre hareket eden, devrinin şartlarını idrakle hesaplı davranan ... talihliler için bahis mevzuudur.” Gülen, *Yitirilmiş Cennete Doğru*, p. 21.

“Those who remain ignorant and obstinate in front of the needs and necessities of the current milieu and the time will be crashed under the cruel treads of time, and no one will pay attention to their cry.”¹³⁶

For example, while drawing the schema of action in Turkey, he takes into consideration the actual tension between the so-called ‘seculars’ and ‘anti-seculars’, and calls his followers to accept the actual circumstances, and act in a moderate manner.

“If the religious people are thinking of living peacefully in this country, they should not contribute to the expansion of the conflict by challenging the fragile issues. Peace in a society can be achieved by mutual self-sacrifice. It seems better to leave some issues to the interpretation of time. Though the preservation of the essence, of the fundamental tenets is very important, my heart desires the acceptance of the actual process that we live in with its own features.”¹³⁷

Therefore, in contrast to fundamentalist Islamism, which rejects any reinterpretation and aims at upholding of the faith in its *full* and *literal* form,¹³⁸ Gülen’s interpretation of Islam seeks a compromise with the living world. Though originating from the sacred sources in order to protect and transmit Islam, this perception of Islam is not based on an abstract model that excludes re-interpretation and thus *other interpretations*; but it is open to experiences, to the cultural accumulation of this world. Though the doctrine is the basis of his interpretation, instead of pursuing an abstract

¹³⁶ “Muhit ve zamanın getirdiği ihtiyaç ve zaruretlere karşı lakayt kalan veya inat gösterenler, zamanın insafsız paletleri altında ezilip giderler de feryatlarına kulak veren bile olmaz.” Gülen, **Buhranlar Anaforunda İnsan**, p.106.

¹³⁷ “Dindarlar da bu ülkede huzur içinde yaşamayı düşünüyorlarsa, hassas meseleleri kurcalayıp kavga ortamının büyümesine katkıda bulunmamalıdır. Toplumda huzur ve barış, karşılıklı fedakarlıkla olur. Bazı konuları zamanın yorumuna bırakmak daha uygun gibi görünüyor. Özün, temel dinamiklerin korunması çok önemliyse de, gönül, içinde bulunduğumuz bu sürecin kendine has özellikleriyle kabul edilebilmesini arzı ediyor.” Interview with Hulusi Turgut, Sabah, Ocak, 1997, in Armağan & Ünal, **op.cit.**, p.76.

¹³⁸ Ernest Gellner, **Postmodernism, Reason and Religion**, Routledge, London and NY, 1992, p.2.

model of action to be applied under all circumstances, Gülen approves a continual interaction with the local, the traditional and the national, which also includes the ritual, hence different interpretations of Islam along with the doctrine. In other words, *Gülen interprets Islam through tradition.*

a) Scripture & Tradition

“Tradition” is one of the key concepts of the conservative thought. Yet not all forms of conservatism display a favorable attitude towards customs and traditions. One branch of conservatism is basically concerned with reclaiming the past. This approach identifies an ideal in the past –a Golden Age- and seeks constantly to return to this ideal state. The desire to “turn the clock back” is based upon a simple historical comparison between the past and the present. Beneath this comparison lies the argument that human society is in a steady decay, corruption, and only the past –the idealized Golden Age- can offer a firmer foundation for remodeling the present.¹³⁹

However, what is generally conceived as conservatism is the traditionalist approach. This approach maintains that every society has its own values, own traditions, and that history is the repository of accumulated values; it is the collective memory of the society. Social life is kept going basically by feeling, habit, emotional attachments, and traditions. And these widely shared, slowly evolved, tested traditions of behavior represent a type of *wisdom*, which is available to everyone, and which may serve society better in its dilemmas and crises. So, it is argued that without traditions

society would collapse. By the same token, *any impatient, violent discontinuity, aggressive rupture within history*, introduced in order to cure “illnesses,” is regarded only to be destructive and dissolvent of good institutions as well as bad ones. For in such a condition man cannot inherit, share, or *transmit anything enduring*.¹⁴⁰

Fundamentalist, political Islamist movements have the conception of history defined as decay. For, they idealize a Golden Age in the past when the Real Islam was thought to be firmly lived. Fundamentalists claim that Islam has been corrupted by the articulation of local traditions, hence of re-interpretations, to the main doctrine. They believe that the Reality is *one* and *transcendent*. Yet the concept of transcendence contradicts the actual. Therefore what is in the agenda of the fundamentalist movements is not the reconstruction of the actual life, but the reestablishment of the one and the transcendent Reality which had already been lived in the past.¹⁴¹ What they want to do is to uphold Islamic faith firmly in its full and literal form, free of compromise, softening, and reinterpretation of diminution. For they presuppose that the core of religion is doctrine, rather than ritual.¹⁴² As Gellner asserts, not only are they “opposed to alien unbelief, or to bowdlerizing reinterpretation, but (they are) also deeply

¹³⁹ Andrew Heywood, *Political Ideas and Concepts*, The Macmillan Press Ltd., London, 1994, pp.289-290. and David Miller, Janet Coleman and all. (ed). *The Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Political Thought*, Basil Blackwell Ltd, Oxford, 1987, p. 52

¹⁴⁰ On conservatism, David Thomson (ed.), *Political Ideas*, Penguin Books, London: 1969, pp.119-128.

¹⁴¹ Ali Yaşar Sarıbay, *Postmodernite, Sivil Toplum ve İslam: Teorik Bağ*, İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul, 1994, pp. 193-194.

¹⁴² Gellner, *Postmodernism, Reason and Religion*, Routledge, London and NY, 1992, p.2.

concerned with countering *folk distortions of Islam*, legitimate superstitions and *ritual accretions*,”¹⁴³ which constitute elements of custom and tradition in a society.

The fact that some fundamentalist Islamist movements reject to view Islam as tradition leads Orientalists to establish a contradiction as ‘the High Islam versus the Low Islam’. “Low Islam of saints” is defined as ritualistic, mediation-addicted, ecstasy-given, hierarchical, and popular. “High Islam of scholars and rulers,” on the other hand, is scripturalist, puritan, universalist and individualist.¹⁴⁴ According to this dichotomy, High Islam prevailed at the center, and it had been a minority accomplishment of a privileged group, a form of faith practiced by a cultural elite, while the Low Islam remained peripheral. Low Islam, at the periphery, is thought of as an escape for people from their miserable conditions. From that standpoint, fundamentalism led by religious scholars, and accepting only the scripture as the source could be considered within the High Islam since fundamentalism is the ‘enthusiastic’ version of High Islam.¹⁴⁵

However, I would argue that Gülen’s interpretation of Islam does not conform to this dichotomic separation of the lived Islam. On the one hand, far from a fundamentalist approach, and ‘inspiring’ of the conservative school, Gülen argues that a society could be everlasting only if preserves its ties with the philosophy and the values that it was established and developed upon.¹⁴⁶ On the other hand, he insists on the preservation of the main tenets of Islam, too. Therefore, Gülen’s interpretation

¹⁴³ Ernest Gellner, *Conditions of Liberty: Civil Society and Its Rivals*, Penguin Books, London, 1994, p.16. (italics belong to me)

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p.23 and 50

¹⁴⁵ Sunar, *op.cit.*, p.10.

¹⁴⁶ Gülen, *Buhranlar Anaforunda İnsan*, p. 87.

comprises both the features of High and the Low Islam. Though considering the Islamic ‘scripture’ -Quran- the main source of religion, and being based on the scripturalist community of *Risale-I Nur Külliyyatı*, Gülen does not totally¹⁴⁷ deny the traditional aspect of the religion, which is the Folk or the Low Islam. He explicitly asserts that they have close connections with the custom and the tradition *along with* the “Book” and the *Sunna*.¹⁴⁸ The Folk Islam, which comprises Sufism, in this respect, is one of the main bodies establishing the ground for a contemporary interpretation of Islam.

“We have to accept the historical facts. Is it possible to ignore the accumulation brought by so many saints, religious leaders..., and the ideas that have entirely been appropriated by the Muslims?”¹⁴⁹

“While the lancet of Book [Quran] and *Sunna*, that our conscience use continually, cuts of all our spiritual pains, the written works of *mürşids* (spiritual teacher) and *müceddits* (who renovates, innovator) with their curing manners that change in accordance with the era, and the eternal realities within these works, are the remedies that are certainly going to cure our injuries.”¹⁵⁰

Furthermore, Gülen considers Sufism as the spiritual life of Islam and claims that without being involved in that spiritual life it is impossible to achieve the real knowledge of religion (*yakin*), and he asserts that Sufism –the Folk Islam– constitutes

¹⁴⁷ I do use the word ‘totally’ because, as indicated in the introduction part, Gülen is against the organisational form of Sufism, that is, religious orders, *tariqat*.

¹⁴⁸ Eyüp Can, *op.cit.*, p.41.

¹⁴⁹ “*Tarihi gerçekleri kabullenmek mecburiyetindeyiz. Hz. Muhammed (sav.) deryasından kovasıyla, kepeciyle su alan şu kadar gavs, kutup ve imaların getirdiği birikimi ve topyekün Müslümanlara mal olmuş düşünceleri bir çırpıda elin tersiyle bir yana itmek mümkün müdür?*” Gülen, *İnancın Gölgesinde*, p.225.

¹⁵⁰ “*Vicdanımızın elinden düşmeyen Kitap ve Sünnet neşteri, bütün manevî yaralarımızı kesip atarken, asırlara göre değişen tedavi usülleriyle, mürşid ve mücedditlerin eserleri, bu eserlerdeki ölümsüz hakikatler de manevî yaralarımızı en kısa zamanda iyileştireceğinden şüphe duyulmayan birer ilaçtır.*” Gülen, *Ibid*, p.149.

one of the corner stones of Islam, beside scripturalist approach.¹⁵¹ By the same token, he emphasizes that the Turkish interpretation of Islam has its own features, one of which is its openness to the mystical life of Islam.

“... (T)he impact of the socio-economic conditions of a society upon its moral values, upon its psychological structure, cannot be rejected. The impact of social structure cannot be rejected. The Turkish nation, due to its aptitude to *ijtihad* (personal interpretation) did interpret the Book and the *Sunna* in this manner... Islam, in us, is open to the mystical life of Islam, along with the Book and the *Sunna*.”¹⁵²

Therefore, in Gülen’s interpretation scripture and tradition are not contradictory but complementary aspects of Islam. And this fact –that is Gülen’s emphasis both upon scripture and tradition- to some extent renders invalid the classical distinction between High Islam and Low Islam.

b) Change in order to conserve

My initial argument in this chapter was that Gülen, in order to transmit the message of Islam, seeks a compromise with the lived world. If we consider the intellectual arena as a market where diverse life strategies are exhibited, whoever wants his ideology or worldview to appear appealing, and thus to be appropriated by the masses has to carefully follow the main trends of the market. The globalization process as a result of the incredible development of the information technologies rendered this cultural market very competitive: since the whole world became ‘accessible’. Therefore, if

¹⁵¹ F.Gülen, *Fasıldan Fasıla III*, p. 26-27

¹⁵² “Bir toplumun ahlakına, psikolojik yapısının, sosyo-ekonomik durumunun müessiriyeti inkar edilemez. Sosyal yanının müessiriyeti inkar edilemez. Türk milleti içtihadta açık yanları itibarîyle, kitabı, sünneti, böyle yorumlamış. İcmaî öyle anlamış... Müslümanlık bizde kitabın, sünnetin yanında İslam’ın ruhi hayatına açık, tasavvufa açıktır.” Eyüp Can, *op.cit.* pp.33,35.

someone wants to sell his 'product' he should adjust it according to the changing appetites. So does Fethullah Gülen.

While advocating the conservation of the main tenets of Islam –which he calls abridged (condensed) thought (*icmali fikir*) he is not against change in Islamic thought. Edmund Burke's approach to change could be a guideline to understand Gülen's understanding of change and continuity within the Islamic thought.

Edmund Burke, who is the father of modern conservatism, claimed: "*We have to change, in order to preserve.*" Social progress, according to him, lies in an extension of values already embodied in the life of society, rather than in some distant goal, whose realization leads the suspension of things that are actually enjoyed. He is against revolutionary change, but not change. Gradual, small reform, according to him, is the best way of a successful change, while preserving the fundamental tissue of the society.¹⁵³

Though Burke refers to change in the social tissue, we could adopt the same argument to Gülen's interpretation of Islam, too. If rupture within the cultural accumulation of a society could be avoided by small reforms, and hence continuity of a society could be assured; by the same token, the continuity of Islam can also be achieved by small reforms within the Islamic thought in accordance with the changing conditions of time and space.

¹⁵³ David Thomson (ed.), *Political Ideas*, Penguin Books, London: 1969, pp.119-128.

Being someone who aims at the spread and the perpetuity of Islam all over the world, Gülen, does not hesitate to welcome change in the Islamic thought. On every occasion Gülen emphasizes his concern for the essential, for the fundamental tenets of Islam, but he also professes the backwardness of today's Islamic interpretation and livelihood vis-à-vis the requirements of the era. So, he views 'change' to be inevitable for the perpetuity of Islam.

"It is a very important problem to re-determine the national direction. Our concern for the national sentiment, the national ideas, manners, custom, tradition, the Book and the *Sunna* is reserved. *But it is a fact that, throughout the changing time, our national sentiments and ideas could not adapt themselves to the requirements of the era, and could not display the necessary motivation... In a sense, we are faced with a process of a mutual setting of accounts and of an agreement with the contemporary era [self-criticism].* It would be more apt to leave some things to the interpretation of time, but the protection of the essential, of the founding dynamics is also very important."¹⁵⁴

"Certain ideas should be allowed to flourish. Otherwise, there might be regression in the actualization of changes and transformations required by the era. If there is no reform, the reformist spirit disappears, reformists souls do not emerge. However, especially in our days, where the time passes by very rapidly, and the changes develop very fast, although we also have to continue to maintain the fundamental traits, the reformist souls are very much needed."¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁴ "Milli istikametın yeniden tayin edilmesi çok önemli bir mesele. Milli duygu, düşünce, örf, adet, gelenek, kitap, sünnet, ve din ile alakamız mahfuzdur. Fakat değişen zaman içerisinde, milli duygu ve düşüncelerimizin, çağın icapları ile uyum sağlayamadığı ve yeterli motivasyonu gösteremediği de bir gerçek... (B)ir yönüyle çağla hesaplaşma süreciyle karşı karşıyız. Bir şeyleri zamanın yorumuna bırakmak daha uygun olacak ama özün, temel dinamikleri korunması da çok önemli." Eyüp Can, *op.cit.* p.41, 43. (italics belong to me)

¹⁵⁵ "Bir kısım düşüncelerin yeşermesine imkan verilmelidir. Aksi halde, çağa göre değişim ve dönüşümlerin yaşanmasından gerileme olabilir. İnkılap olmaz, inkılapçı ruh kaybolur ve inkılapçı ruhlar ortaya çıkmaz. Oysa ki, temel çizgilerin korunması ile birlikte, bilhassa zamanın çok hızlı aktığı, değişimlerin çok süratli geliştiği günümüzde inkılapçı ruhlara ihtiyaç vardır." Interview with Nevval Sevindi, *Yeni Yüzyıl*, Ağustos, 1997, in Armağan & Ünal, *op.cit.*, p.98.

According to Gülen, change is not only something desirable for the universality and perpetuity of Islam, but it is also a historical fact, a natural process that all the civilizations have passed and will pass through. The motor force of these changes, according to him, is the interaction among diverse civilizations.

“Throughout time, civilizations have passed through a vaccination, that the elderly call ‘*telakkuh*’... This vaccination was occurred in the Ottoman period, too. So, today we have a great cultural accumulation varying from cultures of Byzantine, Helen, Hun, and Hittite civilizations, to the faith, moral and the living styles of Seljuks, Ottomans ... From this point of view, although the architects of thought, the intellectual workers, who want to build a new world in the future, may make use of our proper dynamics as their own sources, they will come across many residuals both from the ancient civilizations and of the actual events. In fact, Islam is not against such an interaction. Since, due to the fact that Islam is a universal religion that embraces everybody, wherever it reaches, it either leaves the principles that are not totally in contradiction with Islam as they have been, or it absorbs them.”¹⁵⁶

Therefore, according to Gülen, Islam does not reject interaction with diverse cultures and change as long as what is to be appropriated does not contradict with the main pillars of Islam. In this respect, change and continuity goes hand in hand; since what is desired is a synthesis of the ‘inherited’ and the actual.

“A real renovation is to develop new and clearer sciences of contemplation by synthesizing all the values that have been filtered and inherited from the past, with the

¹⁵⁶ “*Medeniyetlerin zamanın akışı içerisinde, eskilerin “telakkuh” dedikleri bir aşılardan geçmiş olmaları söz konusudur... Bu aşılama ve aşılama Osmanlı döneminde de yaşanmıştır... Dolayısıyla bugün bizim için Bizans, Helenizm, Hun ve Hitit kültüründen, Selçuklu ve Osmanlı inanç, ahlak ve yaşayışına kadar zengin bir birikim söz konusudur. Bu açıdan, gelecekte yeni bir dünya inşa etmeyi düşünen düşünce mimarları ve fikir işçileri kaynak itibarıyla öz be öz kendi dinamiklerimizi kullansalar bile, onun içinde gerek geçmiş medeniyetlerden ve gerekse hâl-I hazırda yaşanan şeylerden bir hayli alıntılar bulacaklardır. Esasen, Müslümanlık da böyle bir etkileşimin karşısında değildir... Çünkü İslam, herkesi kucaklayan evrensel bir din olması dolayısıyla, geldiği yerde kendine tamamen ters olmayan kaideleri yerinde olduğu gibi bırakır, yerinde özümser ve kendi bünyesine alır.” Camcı & Ünal, *op.cit.*, p. 143.*

actual ideas and spiritual knowledge (*irfan*), while preserving the purity that remains at the roots, in the seed. Self-renovation is a phenomenon that occurs at the metaphysical level. It is a renaissance at the level of soul. It is a resurrection while keeping the ties alive with the sacred (*mukaddesat*) and history”¹⁵⁷

Due to the fact that renovation within Islamic thought is a result of interaction with the traditional, the local and the actual, pluralism is not an alien concept to Gülen’s interpretation of Islam.

3) Traditionalist Pluralism

Not to reject the local and the traditional already means not to deny the ‘other’, in other words, to allow for plurality in society.

According to Gülen, the existence of different ideas is a result of human nature. It is a result of the intellectual ability and activity of human being. He regards intellectual diversity as a historical fact.

“Diversity is a natural feature of our society and geography... Anatolia, where different nations and tribes have lived, is a geography of colors, a geography of richness.”¹⁵⁸

“We have to accept the historical facts. Is it possible to ignore the accumulation brought by so many saints (*gavs*), religious leaders (*imam*) from the ocean of Hz. Muhammad, and the ideas that have entirely been appropriated by the Muslims? ... Every natural disposition (*meşrep*) represents a reality, and substitutes an important

¹⁵⁷ “Gerçek yenilenme, kök ve çekirdekteki safveti koruyarak, veraset yoluyla geçmişten süzülüp gelen bütün kıymetlerin, halihazırdaki düşünce ve irfan buğularıyla sentezleri yapılarak daha yeni, daha berrak tefekkür ilimlerine ulaşmaktır... Kendini yenilemek, tamamen metafizik çizgide cereyan eden bir hadisedir ve ruh planında bir diriliştir. Mukaddeslerine, tarihine sınırsız bağlılık içinde bir diriliş...” Gülen, *Buhranlar Anaforunda İnsan*, pp. 53-54.

¹⁵⁸ “Çeşitlilik bizim toplumumuzun ve coğrafyamızın tabii bir boyutudur... Anadolu çeşitli kavim ve kabilelerin yaşadığı bir yer olarak bir renklilik, bir zenginlik coğrafyasıdır...” Camcı & Ünal, *op.cit.*, p.147.

pillar in its own sphere... Each community has a different strategic reality. Furthermore, every individual and every community has a milieu and a cultural structure; that is the case not only in our country but also in other world nations.”¹⁵⁹

Gülen argues that being against diversity or trying to take measures against the emergence of diverse ideas means being against nature and historical fact. He wants those differences to be admitted and to be explicitly professed. For he sees nothing problematical about diversity with respect to Islam. However, we do come across a problematical point in his assessment of the ‘others’. While he talks about diversity and plurality of ideas, he mainly refers to the diversification within Islam, rather than other worldviews. This is not to mean that he ignores other worldviews or does not include them within the cultural plurality of the country. However, as I will try to show in the following paragraphs, his benevolence regarding the plurality, hence, diversity of ideas mainly covers other interpretations of Islam. What leads me to make such an inference is the fact that while mentioning diversity Gülen underlines the differences in strategy or method of dissemination. For example, through one of his speeches he asserts that in Turkey many differences of thought have emerged. Yet he immediately adds that within such a wide spectrum of ideas, some differences of ‘line and pattern’ are very normal

¹⁵⁹ “Tarihi gerçekleri kabullenmek mecburiyetindeyiz. Hz. Muhammed (sav.) deryasından kovasıyla, kepeğiyle su alan şu kadar gavs, kutup ve imaların getirdiği birikimi ve topyekün Müslümanlara, mal olmuş düşünceleri bir çırpıda elin tersiyle bir yana itmek mümkün müdür?... Her meşreb kendi sahasında bir hakikati temsil edip, mühim bir rüknü ikame etmektedir... Her cemaatin stratejik realitesi başka başkadır. Ayrıca her ferdin ve cemaatin bir muhiti ve sahip olduğu bir kültür yapısı vardır; bu yalnız bizde değil, diğer dünya milletlerinde de böyledir.” Gülen, **İnancın Gölgesinde**, p.225.

and should be welcomed as beneficial.¹⁶⁰ The following passage is another example for the same sort of emphasis.

“Characters and ideas will be different. To take measures against this means being against the human nature, against nature and historical facts. The real problem is that the borders of the just and the reality should not be forced and should not be hurt; that the differences of thought and method should not reach and push the essentials; that there should not be deviations of intention and aim; and that the just opportunities and means should not be substituted by unjust ones.”¹⁶¹

Therefore, by “differences” Gülen particularly means divergence of ‘strategy’ of dissemination of Islam. His attitude vis-à-vis those differences is to encourage his followers to appreciate everyone who serves Islam, regardless of the character of the person involved or the degree of his/her service.¹⁶² For he asserts that Islam is a divine system that embraces everybody. It is a system that welcomes everyone regardless of one’s character, sentiments or religious affiliation (sect). He also emphasizes that Islam has been rendered too rigid, and confined to a narrow frame causing the perception that Islam has no allowance for the liberty of life of the ‘other.’¹⁶³ As a response to such attempts of rigidity, he asserts that no one should interfere with or criticize other ways of service (dissemination of faith).

¹⁶⁰ “Ülkemizde pek çok düşünce farklılıkları doğmuştur. Bu kadar geniş yelpazede bazı çizgi ve motif farklılıklarını da gayet normal, hatta bir yönüyle de faydalı kabul etmek icab eder.” F.Gülen, *Prizma*, p. 45.

¹⁶¹ “Meşrepler ve düşünceler farklılık gösterebilecektir. Bunun önüne geçmek, fitratın, tabiatın ve tarihi gerçeklerin önüne geçmek demektir. Asıl mesele, hak ve hakikatin cidarlarının zorlanmaması, örselenmemesi, düşünce ve metot farklılıklarının usule, yani esaslara varıp dayanmaması, maksat ve gayede şapmaların olmaması ve hak vesile ve vasıtalarından vazgeçip batıl vesilelere sapılmamasıdır.” Gülen, *İnancın Gölgesinde*, p.225.

¹⁶² Gülen, *Prizma*, p.213.

¹⁶³ F.Gülen, *ibid.*

“There might be different systems of service. Some establish schools of Quran, others may be involved in conversations at mosques, and others again may give lectures about Sufism (*tasavvuf*) ... Everyone should mind only his own business. Everyone should be welcomed as he/she is. Since I consider the works targeting *education* and *culture* more useful, I try to direct people who want to work for the community towards that path.”¹⁶⁴

“Although others label us as “the media empire”, we have preferred the means of media that is composed of TV, radio, newspaper and magazines as a way, as a method to serve our religion. They, also, are pursuing another path... At this stage, it is appropriate neither for us nor for them to criticize or slander because of the differences of the chosen methods... Now... shall we say “Are the *çarşaf* (women’s outdoor overgarment) and *şalvar* the fundamental pillars of the religion, are they among the principles of faith that you are building everything on them?” No... Everyone has found a way apt to his thoughts and in accordance with his/her natural aptitude and capacity, and everybody is continuing and should continue the service in that *couloir*.”¹⁶⁵

It is obvious that Gülen is not against plurality with respect to the diversity of interpretations and of the methods of dissemination of faith. Furthermore, he expresses the main requirement of the existence of civil society, which is ‘*approbation a priori that no one has or claims to have the monopoly of truth and information*’, as a principle of the relation with other groups within Islam.

¹⁶⁴ “Değişik hizmet sistemleri olabilir. Birisi Kur’an kursu açar, bir başkası camide sohbet eder, daha bir başkası da tasavvuf adına ders veriyor olabilir... Herkes kendi işine baksın. Herkesi olduğu gibi kabul etmek gerekir. Ben eğitime, kültüre dönük hizmetlerin daha yararlı olduğunu gördüğüm için himmet edecek insanları elimden geldiğince bu tarafa yönlendirmeye çalışırım.” Interview with Nuriye Akman, Sabah, Ocak 95, in Armağan & Ünal, *op.cit.*, p. 39.

¹⁶⁵ “Başkalari medya imparatorluğu adını taksalarda biz TV, radyo, gazete, dergilerden oluşan basın-yayın yoluyla dinimize hizmet etmeyi bir yol, bir metod olarak benimsemişiz. Onlar da farklı bir yol tutturmuş gidiyorlar... Bu aşamada ne bizim onlara, ne onların bize benimsenen metod farklılıklarından dolayı ta’n ve teşnide bulunmaları yakışık alır... Şimdi... biz de tutup şöyle mi diyelim: ‘Çarşaf veya şalvar dinin asli unsurlarından mı, iman esasları arasında midir ki her şeyi onun üzerine bina ediyorsunuz?’ Hayır... Herkes kendi istidat ve kabiliyetleri doğrultusunda, düşüncelerine uygun gelen

“Everyone who loves Allah and His Prophet should be loved and treated with great respect because of Allah and His Prophet. *No one should say ‘only my way is the just way’, but others should be allowed to exist, too.* A Mü’min (believer) can say that ‘my method is just, good, beautiful, right and it hits the right mark,’ *but he cannot say ‘Only my profession, only my way is just (hak)’*”¹⁶⁶

“Religion will display its real identity... Those who seem bigoted, rigid, who do not allow or who are not thinking of allowing anyone else within the religion except themselves, perhaps, will be crashed under their own thoughts.”¹⁶⁷

The benevolence and tolerance towards different groups within Islam has two main legitimization grounds: a substantial –religious– and a pragmatic ground. What leads Gülen not to criticize and intervene with other Islamic groups is first of all a theological neglect originating from the Quran. He quotes from the Quran the following verse: “*Deal with yourself, others’ different manners should not busy you*”.¹⁶⁸ The other one is a more pragmatic concern.

“The methodological differences in revitalization; the difficulties of compromise with respect to the novelties that penetrated into the intellectual and cultural life of our nation during the last two decades, about which should be preserved or got rid of; the differences of manner and method in inspiring a new soul to the society; the differences of views about how to carry the past with all its vital dynamics into the future. All these factors seem to bring us problems along with hope. Therefore, while

yeri bulmuş ve o kulvarda hizmetine devam ediyor, devam etmeli de. Meşrebinin muhabbeti ile yaşamalı, başka meşreplere dil uzatmamalı.” Gülen, *Fasıldan Fasıla III*, pp.95-96.

¹⁶⁶ “Allah’ı ve Resûlü’nü seven ve anlatan herkes, Allah ve Resûlü’nden ötürü sevilip tebcih edilmeli, muhterem bilinmeli ve kendisine saygı duyulmalıdır. ‘Sadece benim yolum haktır’ demeyip, başkalarına da hayat hakkı tanınmalıdır. Mü’min, ‘Benim meşrebim, usulüm haktır, hoştur, güzeldir, doğrudur, isabetlidir’ diyebilir; ama ‘Sadece hak benim mesleğimdir, benim meşrebimdir’ diyemez.” Gülen, *İnançım Gölgesinde*, p. 230. (italics belong to me)

¹⁶⁷ “Din kendi gerçek hüviyetini ortaya koyacaktır. .. Bu bağnaz gibi, katı gibi görünen, kendilerinden başka kimseye din içinde yer vermeyen, vermeyi düşünmeyen insanlar, bunlar da belki kendi düşünceleri altında kalacaklardır.” Interview with Ertuğrul Özkök, *Hürriyet*, Ocak, 1995, in Armağan & Ünal, *op.cit.*, p.24.

¹⁶⁸ Interview with Oral Çalışlar, in Armağan & Ünal, *op.cit.*, p.70.

walking towards the future as a whole nation, tolerance will be the most powerful gun against the handicaps that ensue from the differences and the difficulties of compromise.”¹⁶⁹

From that point of view, intolerance, or a total rejection of other perceptions might create obstacles for the movement. Tolerance, in this respect, is a means to keep the way clean; that is, tolerance means not to irritate and activate the already existing tensions or not to create new ones. This is the only way to assure security and peace, which are the most important factors for a veritable functioning of the strategy of the Gülen Community, which is the dissemination of Islam through persuasion.

With regard to the attitude towards people of other religious and secular affiliations, the fundamental attitude is tolerance, too. According to Gülen, tolerance does not mean to be influenced by others' ideas and to join them; it is to accept people in their own status, and to try to get along well and to cohabit peacefully.¹⁷⁰

The fact that Gülen's teaching is not an abstract model but open to experiences of this world, leads Gülen to encourage his followers to look for similarities rather than differences in their relations not only with religious but also with secular movements. In this respect, Gülen introduces the concept of '*the least common concerns*'. He tries to find out certain common concerns even with a Marxist. For example, he argues that it is

¹⁶⁹ “Derlenip toparlanmadaki üslup farklılığı, son bir-iki asırdır milletin düşünce ve kültür hayatına giriş yeniliklerden hangilerinin atılıp, hangilerinin alınacağı hususundaki mutabakat zorluğu; topluma yeni bir ruh üflemedeki usul ve metod ayrılığı; geçmişi bütün hayatı dinamikleriyle geleceğe taşımadaki mülâhaza nüansları, dolu dolu ümitlerimizin yanında, bize sıkıntılı günler de yaratacağa benzer... İşte bütün bir millet olarak istikbale yürürken, her köşe başında önümüzü kesmesi muhtemel ayrılık, farklılık ve mutabakat zorluklarından kaynaklanan handikaplara karşı en tesirli silahımız, en sağlam sığınak ve tabyamız da hoşgörü olsa gerek...” Camcı & Ünal, *op.cit*, p. 189.

¹⁷⁰ “Hoşgörü başkalarının tesirine girerek onlara iltihak etmek değil, başkalarını kendi konumlarında kabul ederek, onlarla geçinmesini bilmek demektir.” Camcı & Ünal, *op.cit*, p. 181.

possible to find out common concerns with the Marxists living in Turkey on the ground of 'national issues'.

“Rejection of divinity and the perception of religion as opium... are not issues to be despised. But their sensitivity about the national affairs, ... about the continual exploitation of the country by diverse nations, is very important. Even their struggle for an independent nation in political, economic, cultural and legal spheres should be taken into consideration in the name of the “least common concerns.”¹⁷¹

Gülen idealizes the period of the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad called ‘*Asr-ı Saadet*’ (The Era of Felicity / Prosperity), as the zenith of tolerance.¹⁷² The Act of Medina (*Medine Vesikası*) is regarded as the proof of the fact that tolerance originates from the religious sources; The Quran and the Sunna.¹⁷³ The Prophet Muhammad after migrating to Medina concluded a legal and social contract among the Medinian people which were composed of both Muslims and Jews. By this act, religions other than Islam were also allowed to be freely practiced.

According to Gülen, toleration meets its limits when there is an act which infringes one’s liberty.

“To accept everyone with his own convictions, thoughts, in his actual situation. That one thinks in this manner, and behaves in that manner; this one thinks in this manner, and behaves in that manner. If his ideas and conducts do not disturb me I should tolerate him... Some may be thinking under the influence of Marx’s philosophy, or

¹⁷¹ “*İnkâr-I Uluhiyet ve dinin bir afyon gibi görülüp algılanması... küçümsenecek şeyler değildir. Ama, onların milli meselelerdeki duyarlılığı ve ülkenin sömürülüp geri bırakılması ... değişik milletler tarafından sürekli istismar edilmesi mevzusundaki hassasiyetleri çok önemlidir. Şu ana kadar siyasi, iktisadi, kültürel, ve hukuki planda ‘hür bir millet’ olmamız için kavga vermeleri bile asgari müşterekler adına değerlendirilmesi gereken şeyledir.*” Gülen, *Fasıldan Fasıla III*, p.201.

¹⁷² Camcı & Ünal, *op.cit*, p.174.

¹⁷³ Camcı & Ünal, *op.cit*, p. 179.

some may be Leninist.... The only thing is that they should not set limits to my liberty”¹⁷⁴

We have seen that Gülen welcomes not only the differences of interpretation within Islam, but also other religions and ideologies that already exist within society, and that he seeks a compromise with each of them upon the least common concerns. Toleration, in this respect, is viewed as an obligation. For he says, “we have to learn to get along well with everybody and to unite upon the least common concerns, and we have to apply them.”¹⁷⁵ The main reason of this obligation seems to be a theological principle; which is *vahdet* (unity). However, the principle of *vahdet* renders the issue of pluralism problematical in the long run.

“If the people who have nourished from the same source, and who passed through the same up bringing cannot come to an agreement among themselves, how will the people who offer the message of *vahdet* (unity) to a huge world be successful?”¹⁷⁶

Had not I taken into account Gülen’s considerations of society, I would easily argue that the concept of *vahdet* referred to compromise and a peaceful cohabitation within the society composed of people of diverse ideas and sentiments. However, Gülen’s *ideal society* is a unified entity. Since this is a very crucial point, I would like to directly quote from two different speeches of Gülen, where he expresses his conceptualization of society,

¹⁷⁴ “Herkesi kendi kanaatları, kendi düşünceleri içerisinde, kendi durumuyla kabul etmek. O şöyle düşünür, şöyle davranır, bu böyle düşünür, böyle davranır. Onun düşünce ve davranışı beni rahatsız etmiyorsa, ben onu hoş görmeliyim... Kimileri Marks’ın felsefesinin tesirinde düşünebilir, kimileri ise Leninisttir... Elverir ki, benim hürriyetime bir had koyucu olmasın, beni iz’aç edici olmasın.” Eyüp Can, *op.cit.*, p.114.

¹⁷⁵ Gülen, *Fasıldan Fasıla*, p. 111.

“A society, which has come together through the union (uniformity) of sentiment, thought and imagination, and which has achieved the maturity of soul as a result of the same training, is in a veritable order and is promising. However, the crowds who have grown up with different ideas and remarks, and who have not passed through a good training is a collectivity of turmoil and disorder / trouble in which greed, hatred and disgust go the rounds.”¹⁷⁷

“A nation that is composed of individuals who have different ideals and who pursue separated ways; along with its government, which is the mirror of the nation, will always totter, will fall into instability, will lose its way, and then will totally be swept away as a result of diverse paradoxes... The strength of a nation and of a state depends first upon the liveliness, excellence and activity of its composing parts which are the individuals and the families, and then upon their union around a unifying ideal.”¹⁷⁸

These two passages about the ideal society seem to have authoritarian motives that contradict Gülen’s benevolent attitude towards plurality within society. For, in these statements, what is intended is a consensually based society rather than a compromised based one. While compromise means to come to an agreement upon the least common concerns in order to live peacefully, consensus involves a uniform agreement. Since it is nearly impossible to come to a uniform agreement within the society such an ideal might comprise authoritarian intentions.

¹⁷⁶ “Aynı kaynaktan beslenen, aynı terbiyeden geçmiş insanlar eğer uzlaşmıyorsa, koskoca bir dünyaya İslam’ın vahdet mesajını sunan insanlar bu mevzuda nasıl başarılı olacaklar ki...” Gülen, **Fasıldan Fasıla**, p. 111.

¹⁷⁷ “Duygu, düşünce, tasavvur birliği ile bir araya gelmiş ve aynı terbiye ile ruhda kemale ermiş bir toplum, fevkalâde bir nizam içinde ve istikbal va’ d edicidir. Farklı düşünce ve mütalaalarla gelişmiş ve iyi bir terbiye görmemiş yığınlar ise, içinde ihtirasların, kinlerin, nefretlerin kol gezdiği bir kargaşa ve huzursuzluk topluluğudur.” Gülen, **Buhranlar Anaforundan İnsan**, p.69.

¹⁷⁸ “Fertleri ayrı ayrı ideallere gönül kaptırmış, ayrı yollara düşmüş bir millet ve o milletin endan aynası sayılan hükümet, daima sendeleyecek, istikrarsızlığa düşecek, güpegündüz yolunu şaşırarak, sonra da çeşit çeşit paradokslarla bütün bütün aşınıp gidecektir... Bir millet ve bir devletin sağlamlığı, evvela onu meydana getiren fert parçalarının, aile izotoplarının canlı, ceyyid ve aktif olmalarına, sonra da bunların bütünleştirici bir ideal etrafında birleşmelerinde aranmalıdır.” Gülen, **Buhranlar Anaforundan İnsan**, p.107

There is another problem with his understanding of plurality. Though Gülen do not reject the existence of diverse ideas and associations unified around those ideas within the society, he has a very negative attitude towards movements that are involved in any kind of protest against the state.

“Very negative propaganda means injuring the state...Throughout my life I have been against provocation and boycott. And from now on as much as I can I will continue to be against it.”¹⁷⁹

The fact that Fethullah Gülen is against any kind of protest movements targeting the state renders problematical his perception of the associations and organizations of the civil society. Yet, due to the fact that the Civil Society is conceptualized as the countervailing domain vis-à-vis state authority, it is inevitable for a veritable social movement to address any kind of protest against the states on the basis of its normative identity.

However, not only does the Fethullah Gülen Movement display no explicit protest character, but also Gülen, himself, is against any kind of protest movement targeting the state.

“In our country, certain Civil Society organizations sometimes come together under diverse names and titles, and they convey their opinions and ideas that are in a sense in the character of a memorandum, to the head of the state, to the prime ministry and to the army; and they want to use these statuses in behalf of their own ideologies... In fact, their legal positions before the law should certainly be determined. Are they in a position to order or dictate something to the legislative, executive and judiciary

¹⁷⁹ “Çok menfi propagandalar devleti darbelemek olur. Devlet çok önemlidir, devletsizlik anarşi doğurur, devlete itimat olmazsa değişik kargaşalar gelebilir. İslam'da kargaşa, boykot, anarşi olmuşsa bunu Hariciler yapmışlardır. Böyle bir şeyi Ehl-i Sünnet yapmamıştır... Hayatım boyunca provokasyona da boykota da karşı oldum. Bundan sonra da elimden geldiğince karşı olmaya çalışırım.” Interview with Ertuğrul Özkök, Hürriyet, Ocak 95, in Armağan & Ünal, op.cit., p.32.

institutions of the state, or not? State officials should never allow anybody, any institution –whatever their ex-posts are– to commit such disrespectfulness. We want to believe that we are living in a democratic milieu. We have difficulties to understand such militant attempts in a democratic environment.”¹⁸⁰

This does not mean that the followers of Gülen do not form a social movement. On the contrary, they include many features of a social movement. But what is not very clear is their view of other associations or organizations within civil society. On the one hand, Gülen accepts plurality within society –he even advocates accepting and communicating with a Marxist by trying to find least common concerns. But on the other hand, he displays a negative attitude towards the movements that express themselves through protest methods. For example, when a protest movement directly targets the state, he even goes as far as to call the manifesto of the movements a memorandum, and against democracy. That is an attitude against the spirit of the concept of civil society. If we look from the standpoint of the theory of secularism, such an attitude disturbs the principle of separation of the state and the civil society. Because the Civil Society is considered to be a countervailing domain vis-à-vis the monopolistic intentions of the state. But by trying to protect the state against critics and protests coming from members of the civil society, he, in fact acts contrary to his struggle. This is because he weakens civil society, which is the terrain of the

¹⁸⁰ “Ülkemizde bazen bir kısım sivil toplum örgütleri, çeşitli nam ve unvanlar altında bir araya geliyor ve cumhurbaşkanlığına, başbakanlığı, askeriyeye, bir anlamda muhtıra nevinden görüş ve düşüncelerinin iletiyor, bu makamları ideolojileri hesabına kullanmak istiyorlar... Aslında bunların kanunlar karşısındaki hukuki konumlarının mutlaka belirlenmesi lazım. Bunlar devletin yasama, yürütme ve yargı mevkiinde bulunan kurumlarına bir şeyler emretme veya dikte etme konumunda mı, değil mi?.. devlet yetkilileri, Türk toplumunun gözlerinin içine bakarak baka hiç kimsenin, hiçbir kuruluşun –eski görevleri ne olursa olsun- böyle bir saygısızlık yapmalarına izin vermemelidirler. Hür ve demokratik bir ortamda yaşadığımızı inanmak istiyoruz. Demokratik bir ortamda böyle militanca çıkışları anlamakta zorluk çekiyoruz.” F. Gülen, *Fasıldan Fasıla III.*, p.174-175.

mobilization of social movements vis-à-vis the state. However, it is not a hazard that he tries not to irritate the political authority; on the contrary is a strategic attitude. Yet, this strategic attitude should not be taken as *takiye*; it is already the nature, the real identity of the movement: Due to its method, the movement has to be in behalf of the state. We will explore this point in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR – FETHULLAH GÜLEN’S

PERCEPTION OF STATE and SECULARITY

We have already seen that secularity defined as the separation between state and religion supposes a separation more fundamental between state and society that implies the constitution of a modern state charged with attaining the general interest, and formation of a Civil Society where individuals freely pursue their particular interests. This separation is an essential condition for the existence of secularity as a feature of the state. For, if secularization designs separation between state and religion, it supposes, on the one hand, that the modern state be totally constituted, by liberating itself from all religious ascendancy. On the other hand, secularization supposes also that there is a veritable civil society, independent of the state, and leaving a total liberty to religion. Hence as one of the human rights, religious liberty is to be exercised in civil society.

However, in order to be a modern state, liberated from all religious ascendancy, religious communities, as part of the pluralist character of civil society, expressing and living their faith, are supposed not to explicitly or implicitly seize political authority, and, thus, not aim at a holistic transformation of society from above.

In the previous chapter, I have examined Gülen’s perception of civil society, through analyzing his understanding of the ‘other’ and of plurality, and his attitude towards the methods used by other social movements. The main problem I have come across in drawing conclusions concerning the compatibility of Gülen’s teaching and the

concept of Civil Society appeared to be his negative attitude towards the movements that make use of any kind of protest against the state. This is an obstacle before the strength of the civil society, which is supposed to be the terrain of the free exercise and the protective shelter of any kind of social movement, including religious ones, vis-à-vis the state. In other words, such an attitude renders the components of the Civil Society more vulnerable to the monopolistic impositions of the state.

From that standpoint, in this chapter I will try to understand, first, *why Gülen prefers to 'protect the state' against the critics and protests of Civil Society instead of strengthening its terrain of exercise*; and second, I will try to show *if Gülen is content with disseminating Islam through civil methods, but does not aim at political ones in the long run*. In other words, the question is to reveal if Gülen and his followers have any implicit purpose of seizing political authority and establishing religious rule in order to change society by proscriptive legislation that means the end of secularity of the state.

Before discussing Gülen's teaching with respect to state-religion relations, first, I would like to analyze how he perceives the state.

1) A Hobbesian Perception of the State

Fethullah Gülen, in his writings and speeches displays a Hobbesian perception of the state. Central to his perception is a comparison between the existence and the absence of a political authority.

Hobbes conceived man living originally in a *state of nature* without the benefits of government. In this state, the individual egoism and the goal of self-preservation controlled all the actions of man, who hence existed in a perpetual “war of everyone against everyone.”¹⁸¹ While Hobbes labeled this situation the “state of nature,” Fethullah Gülen, using a different terminology, defines any stateless situation as anarchy, and argues that it is characterized by a clash of different perceptions / interpretations, and of disorder and insecurity.

“Statelessness means anarchy. Statelessness means disorder. Statelessness is the fight of different understandings. Statelessness is instability... From this stand point, we must prefer between having a state or not.”¹⁸²

Gülen’s preference is for living under the state authority, regardless of whether it is democratic or not.

“I can say that I prefer the most anti-democratic state to statelessness.”¹⁸³

At first sight, it seems that Gülen has a secular attitude regarding the existence of a political authority/state. His argument is secular, for he does not put forth an assertion claiming that men live under the state authority because God wanted them to live so. Although, according to Gülen, the will of God constitutes the precondition of

¹⁸¹ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. by Macpherson, Penguin Books, 1985, chap. XIII, p.183-188.

¹⁸² “Devletsizlik kargaşa demektir. Devletsizlik nizamsızlık demektir. Devletsizlik değişik anlayışların birbiriyle vuruşması, yaka paça olması demektir. Devletsizlik istikrarsızlık demektir... Bu açıdan devletsizlik mi devlet mi tercihini yapmak mecburiyetindeyiz.” Can, *op.cit.* p.135.

¹⁸³ “Ancak en anti-demokratik devletleri dahi devletsizliğe tercih ettiğimi söyleyebilirim.” Interview with Oral Çalışlar, Cumhuriyet, Ağustos, 95, in Armağan & Ünal, *op.cit.*, p. 66.

all human activities,¹⁸⁴ his argument is based on a concern for *security* and *order*; that is, he prefers to live under an already established state authority, rather than to destroy it, and to re-establish a new one based on religious values.

Why is it preferable for him to live under an already existing state -a secular state authority-, rather than to destroy it? The reason is such an attempt would contradict the aim of the community and with its method to achieve this aim.

a) A Religio-Pragmatic Approach to the Existence of the State

F.Gülen talks about the “necessity” that can be interpreted as the aim of the movement:

“As a nation, we have to solve our problems of education, and spread our culture to the cultural life of the humanity.”¹⁸⁵

“The world is in urgent need of the messages we offer. Today the world is overburdened by the plurality and magnitude of its problems. So let’s help the world.”¹⁸⁶

It is obvious that by the term ‘our culture’ Gülen refers to the Islamic culture. ‘To spread Islamic culture all over the world’ might be the aim of both a radical and a moderate Islamist group. What differentiates them is the method they pursue to achieve this aim; *the dissemination of the faith through persuasion (tebliğ)* applies to the Gülen Community. This point is of crucial importance to the understanding of Gülen’s

¹⁸⁴ “Hemen her şeyin Cenab-ı Hak’ın lütfü, bereketi, ve inayetiyle olduğunu kabul etmeli ve böylece hem şirkten kurtulmalı, hem de bencillik adına nefsimiz içine pompalayacağı vehimlerden uzak kalmalıyız.” F. Gülen, *Prizma*, Nil AŞ., İzmir, 1996, p.3

¹⁸⁵ “Milletçe eğitim problemlerimizi çözmek ve topyekün insanlığın kültür hayatına kendi kültürümüzü hâkim kılmak mecburiyetindeyiz.” *ibid*, p.59.

perception of the state. According to Gülen's interpretation of Islam, *tebliğ*, meaning the dissemination of faith through persuasion, is the main, in fact, the only method to spread Islam to the *civilized* world.

“Perhaps for a certain period, violence used to be a method or a way, but the time has invalidated it. Now the prevailing principle is ‘*victory over civilized people is reached through persuasion*’.¹⁸⁷

Therefore, according to Gülen, violence is totally out of question as a method to spread Islam. He admits that in the past some people have been using this method. Yet, he asserts that the right result could be achieved only by the right means. Accordingly, he concludes, whatever is achieved by violent means will inevitably collapse. The following passages are quotations from his speeches where he expresses the incompatibility of Islam and violence.

“In order to fulfil this obligation [*irşad*] in accordance with its technique, it is the property of the Mohammedan path and very important for us to pursue the right means to get the right results... It is an infidel's quality to consider legitimate every opportunity that would lead to the result, and to seek the result with false [*batıl*] means... Peace (*huzur*) cannot be achieved with disorder and trouble. The way to improvement and to peace of the souls passes through penetrating the souls and through following the path of the Lord of Souls [the Prophet Muhammad]. It is the characteristic of those who aim to penetrate the souls, to not be able to find time to cause enmity due to dealing with friendship, being a defender of peace and order, and keep aiding the security forces and the army. Our duty is not to criticize insults,

¹⁸⁶ “*Dünyanın bizim sunacağımız mesajlara çok ihtiyacı var. Bugünkü haliyle dünya, üzerinde taşıdığı problemlerin ağırlığından ve çokluğundan dolayı iki büklümdür... O halde gelin dünyanın imdadına koşalım*” Gülen, *Fasıldan Fasıla III*, p. 118.

¹⁸⁷ “*Belki bir dönemde şiddet kullanma bir metod ve bir yoldu ama, zaman onu neshetti. Artık, ‘medenilere galebe ikna iledir’ düsturu hüküm-fermâ.*” Gülen, *Prizma*, p.25 (italics belong to me)

corruption and sins of people, but on the contrary, it is to examine our own souls and to worry about fulfilling our duty”¹⁸⁸

“In Islam there is no place for violence, harshness and fanaticism.”¹⁸⁹

“From this time on, any balance that is desired to be established by volatile acts will collapse very soon... and the first to be smashed under the ruins will be those responsible of this evil.”¹⁹⁰

“It is obvious that you could not and cannot achieve anything by violence and bad temper. It is needless to emphasize that when you knock the doors with love, respect and affection to the paths of dialogue are opened and that you can have the opportunity to explain the values that you represent.”¹⁹¹

“It is not enough to tell that you are a defender of love, affection and peace... The main problem is to realize such beautiful words in the real life, and to be able to represent them...”¹⁹²

As seen in the above-cited passages, Gülen constantly emphasizes how far they are from violent methods, and how necessary it is to have affection and dialog with respect to representing, explaining and spreading Islam. Gülen’s perception of state, his preference for any kind of state authority to anarchy and disorder, becomes more

¹⁸⁸ “Bu vazifeyi tekniğine uygun eda edebilmek için hak neticeye ulaşmayı yine hak vesilelerle ta’kip etmek, Muhammedi yolun hususiyetidir ve bilhassa bizler için çok önemlidir. .. Neticeye götürücü her vesileyi mübah görmek ve batıl vasıtalarla netice aramak kâfirce bir sıfattır... Huzursuzluk çıkararak huzur sağlanmaz. Gönüllerin salâh ve huzur, gönüllere girmekten ve Gönüller Sultanı’nın hareket tarzına tabi olmaktan geçer. Muhabbetten husumete vakit bulamamak, sulh ve asayişin müdafii ve muhafızı olmak ve emniyet kuvvetleriyle Mehmetçiğin yardımcısı olarak kalmak, gönüllere girmeyi dert edinenler için çok önemlidir. Bizim vazifemiz başkalarının küfür, dalâlet ve günahlarının kritiğini yapmak değil, bilakis kendi nefislerinizin muhasebesini yapıp, vazifemizi hakkıyla eda edebilme kaygısıdır.” Gülen, *İnancın Gölgesinde*, pp. 212-213.

¹⁸⁹ “İslamiyet’te sertlik, huşûnet ve bağnazlık yoktur.” Camcı & Ünal, *op.cit.*, p.105.

¹⁹⁰ “Bundan böyle kaba kuvvet kullanarak kurulmak istenen her denge kısa bir zaman sonra yıkılacak, ... ve yıkılan o enkazın altında, öncelikle o belayı başımıza musallat edenler kalacaklar.” Gülen, *Prizma I*, p.45.

¹⁹¹ “Sertlik ve hırçınlıkla bir yere varılamayacağı ve varılmadığı ortadadır. Sevgi saygı ve muhabbetle – kime ait olursa olsun- kapıların tokmağına dokunulduğunda diyalog yollarının açıldığı ve insanlara temsil ettiğiniz değerleri anlatma imkanı doğduğu izahtan varestir.” Camcı & Ünal, *op.cit.*, p.140.

understandable when we take into consideration the nature, identity and method of the movement: The existence of a state authority, by assuring order and peace, provides the movement with the minimum requirements of a milieu appropriate first of all to live and represent Islam. As we have seen in the previous chapters, self-transformation through reproduction of the Islamic faith and ethic by creating alternative private spheres is one of the defining features of the Gülen Community. A less democratic state might confine this liberty to a very narrow sphere; to the private lives / to the conscience of individuals, yet by guaranteeing the liberty of life, it gives the believers the chance to live their faith at the very subjective level. As the degree of democracy rises the liberty to represent the religion in the public sphere or to explain and disseminate it to the ‘outsiders’, hence to persuade them to convert to Islam becomes available. But all is guaranteed by the existence of a regulator political authority.

Therefore, though at first sight we had the impression that Gülen had a ‘secular’ and ‘utilitarian’ concern for ‘security’ and ‘order’ in defending the existence of a state authority, after penetrating into Gülen’s ideas it would be difficult to argue that Gülen’s concern for order is purely secular. I would rather claim that it is a religio-pragmatic approach. For, while he is aiming at preserving order and peace of the country, he is not going out of a religious perception of the world, since in reality he is targeting a peaceful atmosphere to live and spread Islam.

¹⁹² “*Muhabbet fedaisi ve sulhun temsilcisi olduğunu söylemek yeterli değildir. ... Asıl mesele, o güzel sözü hayata geçirip temsil edebilmektir...*” Cam & Ünal, *op.cit.*, p.133.

b) Absolutism?

If the essence of Gülen's argument is based on a Hobbesian understanding of the state, the question to be raised is whether this understanding has absolutist implications as concluded by Hobbes.

According to Gülen, the state is to be valued as an entity in itself; but this does not *necessarily* mean, he asserts, supporting the actual regime/system or the leaders. There might be points regarding the actual system that a Muslim does not agree with.¹⁹³

“For every issue we have to be moderate. It is a virtue to avoid exaggeration. I am not saying that I do support the unjust / unjustifiable actions of the state or of someone else... Yet I can say that I prefer the most anti-democratic states to statelessness. From this standpoint, I am against the abrading and despising of the meaning of the state.”¹⁹⁴

“We have to prefer between the state and statelessness. In such a situation... we are saying again: ‘the state considered as an entity in itself’. Yet this does not mean to accept the state administrators, despite all and with all their qualities.”¹⁹⁵

Accordingly, the actual regime may be criticized. Yet, we should always keep in mind the method of the movement. My inference was that the actual regime or government constituted the ground for the accomplishment of the holy obligation of dissemination of Islam. Accordingly, the unity and the dignity of the state should be cared for; that is critics should never be destructive of the state.

¹⁹³ Eyüp Can, *op.cit.*, p.29, 135.

¹⁹⁴ “*Her hususta dengeli olmak zorundayız. Aşırıktan kaçınma bir erdem vesilesidir ben burada devletin veya bir başkasının haksız uygulamalarını tasvip ettiğimi söylemiyorum. Ve zaten benden böyle bir tasvibin zerresi dahi sadır olamaz. Ancak en anti-demokratik devletleri dahi devletsizliği tercih ettiğimi söyleyebilirim. Bu açıdan da, devlet manasının yıpratılmasına gözden düşürülmesine karşıyım.*”

Interview with Oral Çalışlar, Cumhuriyet, Ağustos, 1995, in Armağan & Ünal, *op.cit.*, p. 66.

“Whatever is done for the present and for the future of this nation, it should never comprise destructive purposes. And whatever the actual condition is, the unity and the peace of the country should not be harmed.”¹⁹⁶

“Very negative propaganda means injuring the state. The state is very important, statelessness causes anarchy, and if the state is not relied upon, diverse agitations may come about. If there have been disorder, boycott, and anarchy happening in Islam, those were caused by *Hariciye*. *Ehl-i Sunna* has caused no such thing... Throughout my life I have been against provocation and boycott, and from now on, I will continue to be, as much as I can, too”¹⁹⁷

Gülen does as much as he can to prove that he and his followers are always on the side of the state. As we have seen in the previous chapter, he even goes further to criticize Civil Society organizations because of their critiques of state officials. Such an attitude could be explained only by the implications of some historical facts upon the religious communities in Turkey, rather than by pure secular statism. Gülen needs to emphasize his respect for state institutions. For, in Turkey religious groups have always been blamed for aiming at a counter-revolution. For a very long time, religious expression has been regarded as enmity against the regime. As a result, as I will try to explain in the following parts, Gülen and his followers (who do not make use of destructive methods, and who do not aim at a holistic political change) are inevitably obliged to emphasize respect for the ‘Turkish State’.

¹⁹⁵ “.. bu açıdan devlet mi devletsizlik mi tercihi yapmak mecburiyetindeyiz. Böyle bir durumda, ... yine zâtî bir değeri olan devlet diyoruz. Yoksa devleti idare eden insanların evsafıyla, her şeye rağmen onları benimseme, başımıza taç yapma gibi bir mesele söz konusu değildir...” Eyüp Can, **op.cit.**, p.135.

¹⁹⁶ “Bir milletin bugünü ve yarını adına ne yapılırsa yapılsın tahrip hesabına olmalıdır. Ve her ne olursa olsun bu ülkenin birlik ve dirliğine zarar vermemelidir.” Gülen, **Prizma I**, p.84.

¹⁹⁷ “Çok menfî propagandalar devleti darbelemek olur. Devlet çok önemlidir, devletsizlik anarşi doğurur, devlete itimat olmazsa değişik kargaşalar gelebilir. İslam’da kargaşa, boykot, anarşi olmuşsa bunu Hariciler yapmışlardır. Böyle bir şeyi Ehl-i Sünnet yapmamıştır... Hayatım boyunca provokasyona da

“It is very difficult and even impossible to prove that the alleged murders have not been committed by the Muslims... Because of this, as Muslim, we always have to emphasize that we are with our state and nation; and we have to explain this everywhere and in every occasion. Accordingly, both people who do not think like us in this country, and the political and military cadres will observe our behaviors maybe for 10, maybe for 20 years; and after this long observation period, when they can't detect anything against the country and the nation, they will be obliged to approve and accept us.”¹⁹⁸

Beside this pragmatic concern for respect for the state, there are also some theological and more substantial limits to being critical of the state. The individual is the central figure in F.Gülen's interpretation of Islam. His teaching aims at the ethical transformation of the individual. In this respect, the participants of the community are supposed to deal with their own transformation above all, rather than criticizing the state or the regime:

“When they are criticizing the state, the administration, and the system, are they fulfilling all their responsibilities towards Allah with respect to their personal piety? ... First of all, we should represent Islam on this ground that has been bestowed us to live... Our'an says 'mind only yourself / be in charge of yourself'.”¹⁹⁹

All these points may raise the question: Is this an 'impression management' – which is known in our current language as *takiye*– that *implicitly* aims at changing the

boykota da karşı oldum. Bundan sonra da elimden geldiğince karşı olmaya çalışırım.” Interview with Ertuğrul Özkök, Hürriyet, Ocak 95, in Armağan & Ünal, *op.cit.*, p.32.

¹⁹⁸ “*Faili meçhul cinayetlerin Müslümanlar tarafından işlenmediğini isbat etmek çok zor, hatta imkansızdır... Onun için Müslümanlar olarak bizler, daima devletimizin ve milletimizin yanında olduğumuzu vurgulamak ve bu düşüncemizi her zemin ve her fırsatta sürekli anlatmak zorundayız. Bunun karşısında gerek bizim gibi düşünmeyen bu ülke insanları, gerekse askeri ve idari erkan, belki bir 10 yıl, kimbilir belki de 20 yıl nabzımızı tutacak, davranışlarımızı yakın takibe alacak ve bu uzun takib sonunda vatan, millet aleyhine herhangi bir beyan veya davranış görmeyince, bizi tasdik etmek ve bağurlarına basmak zorunda kalacaklardır.*” Gülen, *Prizma I*, p.245.

regime and establishing a theocratic rule? In the present, for the sake of the realization of their ultimate goal, are they pretending to be friendly toward the system?

2) *Takiyye* (Dramaturgical Action)?

Takiyye is the term used in Islamic terminology for the behavior of the religious communities that disguise their real identity in order to avoid being persecuted by the state authority or by the public. Habermas enables us to theorize this action type through the “dramaturgical action” model. Dramaturgical action involves the purposeful and expressive disclosure of one’s subjectivity (feelings, desires, experiences, and identity) to a set of others who constitute a public. Here, at least two “world relations” are presupposed: an orientation to the subjective world of the actor and one to the external world. The “presentation of self” entails an effort to get one’s subjectivity and identity recognized. But from the standpoint of actor, normatively regulated interpersonal relations are considered only as social facts. Thus, dramaturgical action can take on latently strategic qualities and become cynical impression management. The dimension of collective action that encompasses the expressive assertion of an identity is, accordingly, not a matter of spontaneous expressiveness but involves a stylized and planned staging of one’s identity for the purpose of gaining recognition or influence.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁹ “*Bir yerde devleti, idareyi, sistemi tenkit ederken ferdi Müslümanlıkları adına Allah’a karşı bütün sorumluluklarının yerine getiriyorlar mı?... Evvela bizim için yaşama imkanı verilmiş, bahşedilmiş o zemindeki Müslümanlığı temsil edelim... Kur’an’ı Kerim ‘kendinize bakın’ diyor.*” *Ibid*, p.138-9.

²⁰⁰ Cohen & Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory*, p. 521.

Gülen advises his followers to take into consideration the conjuncture of the time and the milieu. Accordingly, he does not want them to be critical of the state or to talk about a regime change. Some claim that what we are exposed to, as the identity of the Gülen Movement, is a well-planned strategy, as indicated by the dramaturgical action model, for the purpose of gaining recognition. It is obvious that Gülen and his followers seek recognition of both the public and of the state and the military. Therefore, the question is, if his pacifistic assertions and moderate attitudes involve a disclosure of another disguised identity based on a latent aim of changing the regime.

a) Democracy and the Free Will

If we assume that one of the fundamental characteristics of the actual regime is democracy, due to the fact that only a democratic milieu guarantees the fundamental liberties, such as freedom of faith and speech, and thus enables the followers of the movement to practice their faith and to express themselves, hence to persuade others to become Muslim or “real believers,” it is easy to grasp the reason of Gülen’s acceptance of the rules of the game. This is very obvious, since even when defining democracy, Gülen refers to values and moral norms that prevail within society in order to describe what the liberties provided by a democratic regime encompass:

“Democracy is the system of liberties. But, due to the fact that we have to live together while being of diverse statutes and having different opinions, the ending point of our liberties is the starting point of other’s liberties. The values that are accepted by our people, certain ethical norms and the issues related to our national permanency and the unity of the country should be considered not as limits for the liberties, but as the

measures to make use of those liberties. Otherwise anarchy emerges, and in an anarchic milieu even the fundamental liberties cannot survive.”²⁰¹

“By serving the democratic milieu we live in, by appreciating the democratic rights and liberties, we are expecting that people will choose Islam by their own will. And we believe that this is a more healthy and more lasting way.”²⁰²

Hence, democracy is approached from a religio-pragmatist perspective too. However, the concept of free will is a clue for us to penetrate into the real identity of the movement, if that identity really differentiates it from what is apparent. As long as the movement considers the individual free will the basis of converting to Islam, democracy will be the best ground for the dissemination of faith. Yet, we can understand the accuracy of this assertion only by examining the role of the politics with respect to dissemination of faith in the eyes of Gülen. More precisely, assuming that there will always be people to be persuaded to convert to Islam –by their own will–, we could ask: Will there be a point where the believers will say, “Now it is time to establish our state on religious values, and from this time on the state will “persuade” the people”? More theoretically, will there be a point where *social interventionism* will turn into *political interventionism*, and -if we are to use theological terminology- where

²⁰¹ “Demokrasi özgürlükler sistemidir. Fakat farklı konumda, farklı görüşte insanlar olarak bir arada yaşamak zorunda olduğumuz için, özgürlüklerimizin bitiş noktası başkalarının özgürlüklerinin başladığı yerdir. Halkımızın kabul ettiği değerler, bazı ahlaki normlar ve milli bekamızı ve ülke bütünlüğünü ilgilendiren komular, özgürlükler için sınır değil, onları kullanmada birer ölçü olarak kabul edilmelidir. Yoksa anarşi doğar ve anarşik ortamda en temel özgürlükler bile kullanılamaz.” Interview with Hulusi Turgut, Sabah, Ocak 1997, in Armağan & Ünal, *op.cit.*, p.76.

²⁰² “(B)izler, içinde yaşadığımız demokratik zemini, demokratik hak ve hürriyetleri değerlendirmek suretiyle, insanların... kendi iradeleriyle Müslümanlığı seçmesini bekliyor... ve bu yolun daha eslen, daha kalıcı bir yol olduğuna inanıyoruz.” F. Gülen, *Prizma*, p.220

'*emr-i bi'il ma'ruf, neny-i ani'l münker*'²⁰³ will be not only an individual but also a political/legal responsibility?

b) Secular State & Religious Society

In this part, I will analyze to what extent Fethullah Gülen is contented with the religiosity of the society, that is, to what extent he accepts secularity as a characteristic of the state, and does not intend a political transformation. What we will show will enable us to decide whether what is in front of us is a purposeful and expressive fabrication and the disclosure of the feelings, desires and identity; that is, a false image for the purpose of gaining recognition; or it is really what is felt and what is desired, that is, the real identity.

In this respect, I will begin with his perception of secularity. Gülen puts forth a clear definition of secularity which he calls in some speeches 'the Western style secularity', and states that within these boundaries Islam and secularity of the state could be compatible.

"If secularity is understood as the state not being founded on religion, hence it does not interfere with religion or religious life; and as the faithful living his religion does not disturb others; and furthermore if the state will accomplish this task in a serious neutrality, then there is no problem"²⁰⁴

²⁰³ To implement the rule of Allah by encouraging the good and by preventing the bad.

²⁰⁴ "Eğer laiklik, devletin, dine göre şekillenmemekle birlikte, dine, dini hayata karışmaması, dindarın da dininin yaşarken başkalarına karışmaması şeklinde anlaşılacaksa ve devlet ciddi bir tarafsızlıkla bu meseleyi götürecekse, o zaman hiçbir problem yok demektir .." Interview with Mim Kemal Öke, Osman Özsoy, STV, in Armağan & Ünal, *op.cit.*, p.108.

Gülen claims that in a real secular system everybody can and should be able to freely express and live his/her religious sentiments and ideas,²⁰⁵ and he asserts that if secularity could function as it is in the West nobody would reject it.²⁰⁶ We can infer that Gülen distinguishes between secularity of the state and society. Accordingly, though religion is not regarded to be fundamental to the organization and regulation of the state, due to the neutrality of the secular state, religion is expected to be freely performed within the society. As a natural inclination, Gülen puts to the forefront religious freedom as a characteristic of the secularity of the state. If we refer to the theoretical sketch drawn at the very beginning of the study, surprisingly we realize that Gülen's definition of a secular state is not different from that of Maurice Barbier. In Barbier's definition of secularity, the separation of the religion and temporal affairs is made with respect to the state but not to society. In other words, according to Barbier, if religion is excluded from the state, it has its place within Civil Society that is composed of both secularized and religious components. Therefore, religion is not reduced to a private or personal affair, but can have a collective character and can freely intervene in society. Believers can publicly express their faith, organize, and develop diverse activities. That is exactly the religious life that Gülen dreams of. If there is no worship, he claims, and if, relying on a very widespread conviction, religion is confined to the individuals' conscience, it is doomed to deviate and corrupt.²⁰⁷ By the same

²⁰⁵ "Gerçek laik sistem içinde herkes rahatlıkla dini duygusunu , düşüncesini hem ifade edebilir, hem yaşayabilir ve yaşayabilmeli." Interview with Reha Muhtar, TRT-1, 1995, in *ibid.* p.106.

²⁰⁶ From an interview on Samanyolu TV, in Camcı & Ünal, *op.cit.*, p 282.

²⁰⁷ Gülen, *Fasıldan Fasıla III*, p.133.

token, he criticizes the actual understanding and functioning of secularity in Turkey, and claims that it should be reconsidered and revised.

“If we are going to understand secularity as the existence of a non-theocratic state that is not intervening with religious life; and the liberty of everybody to freely perform his religion in his own life, from that perspective, in Turkey everything should be revised once more.”²⁰⁸

According to Gülen, in Turkey beneath the crisis of secularization lies the confusion of the concepts of secularity (as a characteristic of the state) and secularism. He defines secularism as profanity and as an attempt to emancipate society from the influence of religion. This separation also corresponds to my theoretical structure on secularization where I also emphasized the confusion of concepts. What Gülen calls secularism corresponds to the broader meaning of secularization in my theoretical sketch, meaning emancipation of all the spheres of society, including institutions, activities, population, life strategies (worldviews), etc... from the influence and regulation of religion. And that is, in fact, what Gülen criticizes, and rejects.

“The problem of secularity has been understood from the very beginning as secularism (profanity, to remove all the influence of the religion from the social life).”²⁰⁹

²⁰⁸ “Laisizmi teokratik olmayan bir devletin dini hayata da karışmaması, herkesin kendi dünyasında dinini rahat yaşayabilmesi şeklinde anlayacaksak Türkiye’de her şeyi bir kere daha gözden geçirmek icap edecek demektir.” Camcı & Ünal, *op.cit.*, p.284.

²⁰⁹ “.. Bizde bu laiklik meselesi öteden beri tamamen sekülerizm (dünyevilik, toplumu dini etkisinden uzaklaştırma) olarak algılanmıştır.” Interview with Hulusi Turgut, Sabah, Ocak, 1997, in Armağan & Ünal, *op.cit.*, p.75. “Türkiye’de çok defa sekülerizm laisizmle karıştırılıyor...Sekülerizm dünyeviliktir... Laisizmi sekülerizm olarak anlayan kimseler, meseleye tamamen dünyevilik şeklinde yaklaşıyorlar. Bunlar idarenin içinde hiçbir uhrevilik olmasın, Ahiret düşüncesi olmasın istiyorlar.” Camcı & Ünal, *op.cit.*, p. 28.

Therefore, if we return to the narrower definition of secularity which only comprises the state, I can argue that Gülen does not reject the secular state provided that it remains neutral and guarantees the free exercise of religions.

Now, let's look from another perspective at Gülen's perception of secularity of the state. Secularity requires that religion does not interfere or even does not attempt to interfere with the political affairs. Then we need to ask whether Gülen advocates any political action as a means to disseminate Islam.

c) Political Action

Dealing with politics has a pejorative meaning in Gülen's understanding of Islam.

“With respect to the spiritual stage I have achieved, dealing with politics is a few steps downstairs. So, for me dealing with politics means descending a few steps.”²¹⁰

He is also against the politicization of Islam. Yet this is not for the sake of secularity of the state, but in order to protect Islam from the destructive implications of politics with respect to the universality of Islam.

“Politicization of Islam is a danger, but it is more dangerous for the religion rather than for the regime. Because the religion is everybody's religion. It is the name of the connection of the human being to Allah that everyone will respect, with which everyone will achieve the mundane peace.”²¹¹

²¹⁰ “Benim geldiğim manevi noktada siyasetle uğraşmak birkaç basamak aşağıdadır. Dolayısıyla siyaset benim için birkaç basamak aşağıya inmek demek olur.” Interview with Reha Muhtar, TRT-1, 1995, in Armağan & Ünal, *op.cit.*, p.106.

²¹¹ “Dinin politize edilmesi, siyasallaştırılması tehlikelidir, ama rejim için tehlikeli olmaktan daha çok, din için tehlikelidir. Çünkü din herkesin dinidir. Herkesin saygı duyacağı, herkesin onunla dünyevi huzuru temin edeceği, kalbi itminana ulaşacağı, insanın Allah'la irtibatının adıdır.” Interview with Mim Kemal Öke and Osman Özsoy, STV, in *ibid.*, p.108

“Islam, as a religion is based upon the enlightenment of the mind and the illumination of heart. It is based on the satisfaction of both mind and heart. Because of this, faith and worship precede everything. And the fruit of faith and worship is the good morality. The politicization of Islam, understanding and representation of Islam as a political system, in my opinion, is a great insulting to the spirit of Islam”²¹²

Gülen does not consider politics as an agent to transform the society. From a theological point of view, political issues are regarded as ephemeral; that is, political solutions are not eternal and are subject to change.²¹³ Therefore, politics cannot be a means to achieve the ultimate aim which is to spread Islamic thought and ethics across the world, and to change the face of the world.²¹⁴ Beneath this argument lies the belief that the source of all problems is the human being.

“We believe that at the roots of the current problems –administrative, political, military, economic, social, cultural etc.– remains the human being; that the human being is the source of all problems. By the same token, we believe that solutions of those problems could be provided only by dealing with human beings. Yes, these problems cannot be solved by political mechanisms. Though I am not totally rejecting the place and the role of politics, I think, it should be understood that politics is not everything... In this respect, perhaps we should not mention or even should not think of such issues that do not concern us and even the posterity.”²¹⁵

²¹² “İslam bir din olarak akli aydınlanma ve kalbi nurlanmaya dayanır. Aklın ve kalbin doyurulmasına dayanır. Onun için iman ve ibadet en önde gelir. İman ve ibadetin meyvesi de güzel ahlaklardır. İslam'ın politize edilmesi, siyasi bir sistemmiş gibi algılanıp, öyle takdim edilmesi, bana göre İslam'a onun ruhuna büyük ihanettir.” Interview with Hulusi Turgut, Sabah, Ocak, 1997, in *ibid.* p. 77.

²¹³ *Fasıldan Fasıla III.* p.136.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.134.

²¹⁵ “Bizler yeryüzünde şu anda cari olan idari, siyasi, askeri, iktisadi, içtimai, kültürel bütün problemlerin temelinde insanın bulunduğuna ve bu problemlerin menşeinin, kaynağının insan olduğuna inanıyoruz. Bu itibarla da problemlerin çözümünün, ancak insanı ele almakla mümkün olabileceğine inanıyoruz. Evet bu problemler siyaset yoluyla çözümlenebilecek cinsten değildir. Burada siyasetin yerine ve rolünü bütün bütün inkar etmemekle beraber, onun her şey olmadığının da bilinmesi gerektiğini düşünüyorum.” Gülen, *ibid.*, p.137.

Another point is the fact that the human being has a limited capacity, thus limited responsibilities. According to Gülen, a Muslim is responsible for fulfilling what is ordered within the borders drawn by Allah. Therefore, to elicit the acceptance of the “message” is not only beyond the capacity and power of the human beings, but also is not within their responsibility. Hence, from a theological point of view, to insist on serving with politics to procure acceptance is considered interfering within the omnipotence of God.²¹⁶

However I would like to argue that based on the strategy of the community, which is social interventionism, it would be a misinterpretation to claim that Gülen and his followers have no political aim.

2) A Long-Term Based Political Aim (Society– Community – Religious State)

The Fethullah Gülen Community has a political aim and this is not implicitly disguised, as some argue. However, *the political aim of the community does not target the actual regime (the democratic and the secular system)*. Gülen says,

“Today it is accepted ... that the real Islamic understanding and livelihood, which is based on science, reason, logic, heart and soul, and which is away from the daily politics, is not a threat for the country. In fact, we have never been a threat neither for the political regime, nor for the established order, as some suppose.”²¹⁷

In the above statement, Gülen is not trying to disguise the aim of the community.

²¹⁶ F. Gülen, *Prizma*, p.48.

²¹⁷ “Şimdi ise artık ilim, akıl, mantık, kalb ve ruha dayalı, gündelik siyasetten uzak, gerek İslami anlayış ve yaşayışın ülke için bir tehdit oluşturmadığı... kabul ediliyor. Aslında biz öteden beri hiç bir zaman bazılarının zannettiği gibi ne siyasi rejim adına, ne de kurulu düzen adına tehdit unsuru olmadık.” Camcı & Ünal, *op.cit.*, p. 167 and Gülen, *Fasıldan Fasıla III*, p. 165.

The aim of the Gülen community has a character that might be described, in Şerif Mardin's terms, as a long-time based political aim: *the revitalization of Islam as a world power*.²¹⁸

What is understood from Gülen's writings and speeches is that any political transformation depends upon the character of the society; that is, the criterion for such a transformation is whether or not the totality of the society has an Islamic identity; or whether or not the entire society has an Islamic worldview. According to Gülen, a Muslim state without *real* Muslim believers is impossible. As in many Islamic societies, the state is considered as an extension of the community; it is seen as a structure/institution to safeguard the community. The emphasis, hence, is not upon the state but upon the community.²¹⁹ Therefore, the argument follows: If a society has an Islamic identity; that is if it 'turns into a *community*' composed of people sharing common sentiments and ideas, the state is supposed to rule "naturally" within Islamic principles, and to implement the principle of "*emr-i bi'il ma'ruf neny-i ani'l münker*". Therefore, it is desirable for a Muslim that the entire society has an Islamic identity, and that, thus, the state be in charge of safeguarding this order.

"If the society had an Islamic identity, we could think that the state would watch over the system, the order and the public security... that it would order the good and the beautiful, and would prevent the bad and the ugly; and so we could say that there was nothing left for us to do. Yes, in a period when Islam was prevailing, the administrator might interfere with such situations; soldiers and security forces might be involved in, and they might prevent that *münker* (not allowed by canonical law) to develop in our social life. All these are the manners of manual intervention and prohibition.

²¹⁸ Şerif Mardin, *op.cit.*, pp. 251-252

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.35.

Nowadays the *münkerat* (things not allowed by canonical law) are not interfered with to such a degree, and the good and the beautiful is not encouraged as it is required... Manual intervention was valid through a certain period. We did not see that period. We wish from *Cenab-ı Hakk* (God) to show us the reality of this benefactions, too.”²²⁰

Although political transformation –a state charged with implementing religious principles – is something desirable, according to Gülen this is never to be considered as the *ultimate aim* of the movement. It is expected and intended that the transformation process –from an Islamic society to an Islamic state – is going to be a *natural* and *gradual* one, and that throughout this process the *free will* of the members of the ‘community’ –which is expected to expand day by day- will play the decisive role. Such a process can be called ‘transformation from below’. Therefore, Muslims should keep on disseminating Islam and should not be involved in political concerns.

“We have to accomplish the obligations bestowed upon us by serving from the opportunities of the democratic system. We are not so much interested in the change of the system or other things. If this issue, which is very often put into the agenda, is a task of the next-coming generations, what we are supposed to do is only to ease the way of fortune. Furthermore, the change of the system is not an issue to be so much exaggerated. In our country, many people who were considering the Republic as the unalterable principle yesterday are now talking about ‘the Second Republic’ or ‘New Democracy’. Therefore, new generations may get rid of this system and may establish

²²⁰ “Eğer cemiyet İslâmi hüviyette olsa idi, devletin nizam, intizam ve âsâyişi koruyacağını,.... iyiyi-güzeli emredip, fenadan, çirkinden alıkoyacağını düşünür, ‘eh bize iş kalmadı’ diyebilirdir. Evet, Müslümanlığın hakim olduğu bir dönemde, idareci bu durumlarda müdahale eder, asker ve emniyet devreye girer ve o münkerin içtimâî hayatımızda gelişmesine meydan vermeyebilirlerdi. Bütün bunlar elle müdahale ve men etmenin şekilleridir. Günümüzde münkerâta bu seviyede müdahale edilmediği gibi, iyi ve güzel de gerektiği ölçüde teşvik görmemektedir.... Elle müdahalenin bir dönemi, bir devresi var. Biz o dönemi görmedik. Cenab-ı Hakk(tan) bu reşahâtın hakikatini de bizlere göstermesini dileriz...”F. Gülen, *Prizma*, p.161.

a new one based on their intellectual world, own convictions, own experiences and beliefs. Why are we so much interested in this issue”²²¹

In another speech, he asserts that it does not interest him at all whether or not the next generation would intend to put into practice their perceptions and philosophies in the form of an administrative system.²²²

Therefore, not only is a revolutionary or a sudden change unintended for here and now but also believers are supposed not to be interested in such political concerns.

It seems that the process of transformation is regarded as a replication of the process of the genesis of Islam. Gülen claims that the life period of the Prophet Muhammad is a micro plan or a micro representation of all the events that are going to come about before the day of the Last Judgement. Accordingly, he draws the schema of action, leading from spiritual concerns to social and political ones as the following:

“Believers may want to establish a system according to their faith, and to live within this system. But it should not be forgotten that such an attitude is never to be the principal and ultimate aim, or ideal. In the period of Mecca, the Prophet of Allah, while transmitting his messages to the people he did not mention any word on that subject, and during 13 years of Mecca life, no verse on administration or politics -in today’s meanings- was revealed. On the contrary, verses about faith were revealed...

²²¹ “Demokratik zeminin nimetlerinden istifade ile, üzerimize düşen... vazifeleri yerine getirme mecburiyetindeyiz. Sistem değişikliği ve başka şeyler bizi çok fazla alakadar etmez. Bahsi sık sık gündeme getirilen bu mesele, gelecek nesillerin işiyse, bize sadece kaderin yoluna su serpme düşer! Kaldı ki sistem değişikliği o kadar büyütülecek bir husus değil. Ülkemizde dün Cumhuriyeti değişmez umdeler gibi tabu halinde gören niceleri şimdi, “ikinci Cumhuriyet”, diyorlar, “yeni demokrasi” diyorlar. Öyleyse o nesil kendi düşünce dünyalarına, kanaatlerine, tecrübelerine ve inançlarına göre bu sistemi atar erine başka sistem getirirler. Bu mesele niye bizi bu denli alakadar ediyor ki?”Gülen, **Prizma I**, p. 39.

²²² “Gelecekte o anlayış ve felsefenin çocukları kendi anlayış ve felsefelerini idari bir sistem halinde uygulamaya koyacaklarmış veya koymayacaklarmış, bunlar beni hiç ilgilendirmez.” F. Gülen, **Fasıldan Fasıla**, p.191.

People ... should not harm their struggle with such *unseasoned/ill-timed* ideas... The ultimate aim should be only and only Allah.”²²³

“In order to understand the strategy that our Prophet did pursue, the periods of Mecca and Medina should be very well comprehended in their all aspects. The life of our Prophet and His companions is the living and the representation of all the events in a micro plan, that are going to come about until the Day of Last Judgement (*Kiyamet*). During the 13 years of Mecca period, the Prophet of Allah did orient all His endeavor (His miraculous influence – *himmət*) to save the faith of people, to show the way of Heaven and to prepare the hearts. In a period when the strong foundations of faith were being laid, when the hearts and the minds were being repaired, there was not a firmly established community... During the Medina period, we see that issues about economy and society, law and war were put into the agenda, and the establishment of a city-state started. *This law which has not changed for any prophet, is not going to change in any period, neither.*”²²⁴

As a brief summary and a conclusion, first of all, it can be argued that the ‘dramaturgical action’ model –or *takiye*– is not an appropriate model to understand The Gülen Movement. If Gülen’s writings are carefully read, no serious observer can claim that Gülen is concealing his real aim by ‘image management’; that is, by drawing a false image for the purpose of gaining recognition. To the contrary, the ultimate aim of the community, its method, their perception of society, state, and secularity, etc. are

²²³ “İnanan insanlar, kendi inanç dünyalarına göre bir sistem kurmayı ve o sistem içinde hayatlarının sürdürmeyi isteyebilirler. Fakat unutulmalıdır ki böyle bir duygu asla maksad-ı asli ve gaye-i hayal olamaz. Allah Rasulü (sav), Mekke döneminde mesajlarının halka sunarken, bu konu etrafında bir kelime söylememiştir ve 13 yıllık Mekke hayatı boyunca, bugünkü idari, siyasi bir tek ayet nazil olamamıştır... İnsanlar bu tür mevsimsiz düşüncelerle kendi davalarına zarar vermemeli...Gaye-i hayal sadece ve sadece Allah olmalıdır.” *Ibid.*, p.84-85 (italics belong to me)

²²⁴ “Efendimizin takip ettiği stratejinin bilinmesi için Mekke ve Medine dönemleri bütün yönleriyle çok iyi kavranmalıdır. Efendimizin Ashabıyla beraber olan hayat-ı seniyyeleri, Kıyamete kadar cereyan edecek bütün hadiselerin mikro planda yaşanması ve temsil edilmesi demektir. 13 yıllık Mekke döneminde Allah Rasulü, bütün himmetini insanların imanlarını kurtarmaya, Cennet’e giden yolu göstermeye ve kalbleri hazırlamaya sevk etti. İman adına sağlam temellerin atılıp, kalb ve kafa tamerinin yapıldığı bir dönemde henüz tam manasıyla teşekkül etmiş bir cemaat yoktu... Medine döneminde ise, iktisat ve içtimaiyata, hukuk ve muharebelere ait mes’elelerin gündeme geldiğini ve bir site-devletin kurulma

available in the writings and speeches of Fethullah Gülen. Therefore, what we observe is the real identity of the Gülen Community.

If we start from our last point, it is obvious that Gülen envisages a political aim that we defined, with Şerif Mardin's term, as the revitalization of Islam as a world power. This revitalization might also involve the establishment of a political authority to rule within religious principles. However, this is a long-term consequence –rather than an aim– which is expected to be realized through a natural transformation process. The natural transformation starts at the very subjective level with the conversion of souls. For the principal aim is the cultural transformation of society. First, at the micro level, the souls are to be converted, then, the arithmetic accumulation of the converted souls will “naturally” constitute a society of the Islamic identity, which will, in fact, turn into community sharing the same sentiments and ideas. Thus, people willingly and naturally will establish a religious state since their personal lives will already be regulated by religious principles. The establishment of a religious state is not a concern for today's generations.

Beside being a natural result of a long process of cultural transformation, in Gülen's understanding of Islam, politics has no place with respect to the dissemination of Islam. In fact, the political interventionism is the method of the community, which is social interventionism. For it is not a project for a holistic transformation of society from above via proscriptive regulations. Transformation from below (i.e., transformation of the individuals) through establishing close interpersonal relations, or

çalışmalarının başladığını görüyoruz. Bütün peygamberler için değişmeyen bu kanun, başka hiçbir devirde de değişmeyecektir.” Gülen, İnançın Gölgesinde, p.207. (italics belong to me)

through representing Islam is the main method of the movement. In this respect, Gülen is not against the secular state, a Western style secular state, as long as it guarantees a mutual nonintervention between the state and religion, and the free expression and exercise of religion. On the contrary, he appreciates such a secular state. Such a milieu will enable the *mü'mins* to freely live and transmit their religion. By the same token, if democracy is also considered as another defining feature of the actual regime, Gülen does not display a negative attitude towards democracy, either. Democracy, for him, means the guarantee of exercise of the principal liberties including the liberty of faith. Gülen and his followers are not the enemies of the existing regime that is 'democratic' and 'secular'.

CONCLUSION

The starting point of my study was to understand if Fethullah Gülen, as the spiritual and the charismatic leader of an Islamic Community, could be considered a proponent of a secular state; that is, if he advocates a separation of the state and religious affairs. However, in order to adequately answer to this question I felt obliged to examine his perception of society and the 'other'. The reason is the content and the requirements of the concept of secularity defined as a feature of the state.

I defined secularity at two levels: as a characteristic of the society –which is the broad definition of secularity- and as a characteristic of the state –which is the narrow definition of secularity. The broad definition of secularity supposes that spheres of human activity –political, social, cultural, intellectual, and ethical etc- are all freed from the influence of religion. The narrow definition of secularity, on the other hand, concerns only the state, and not the population. It consists of two complementary aspects: On the one hand, secularity implies that the state is entirely independent of all religion; on the other hand, it supposes that religions are totally free vis-à-vis the state. Each expects the other not to interfere with the one's proper sphere of activity.

Yet secularity defined as the separation between the state and the religion, supposes a separation more fundamental between the state and the Civil Society too. While the state is in charge of the general interest, Civil Society is the terrain where individuals freely pursue their particular interests, including religious ones. In this respect if religion is excluded from the state it has its place within Civil Society that

includes both secularized and religious elements. Yet, Civil Society is not an entity in itself. It is the terrain on which social actors mobilize to form collective action in the pursuit of their particular interests in order to influence policy or to initiate change within society. Therefore, any study of the concept of Civil Society does necessarily lead to the study of social movements. For social movements are normatively oriented collective actions that do not directly target the state, but target Civil Society in order to initiate change based on its normative ideal.

Hence, in order to understand Gülen's attitude towards secularity as a feature of the state, I started with the last conceptual tool of my theoretical perspective which is the concept of social movement. My aim was to understand if the Fethullah Gülen Community could be considered a social movement. I referred to primarily two social movement paradigms: 'Resource Mobilisation' and 'New Social Movements' Paradigms. The inner organization of the movement, in this respect, allowed us to argue for differences of The Gülen Community from a sect or a religious order, which are characterized by a single act of adhesion, rigid organization and strict control over its members. Despite its hierarchical structure at the core, and a certain degree of control over its participant, the Gülen Community nevertheless deviates from the classical definition of religious order or sect. Participation to the community is not involved in an act of adhesion, since there is not one single organization to adhere. On the contrary, there are various ways of involving in the *collective ideal of revitalization of Islam through dissemination and persuasion*, upon which the community is established. Hence, different organizations, such as student houses and dormitories, high schools and preparatory courses for the university entrance exam and universities; foundations;

media organs, all acting for the pursuit of the collective ideal, form an informal network of collective action. Participation, then, is involved in the recognition of the spiritual leadership of Fethullah Gülen by sharing the cognitive schema drawn by him upon the Islamic faith and morality. Therefore, the Gülen Community is a normatively oriented movement. It is situated within a shared cultural field within which participants raise challenges and produce alternatives. Islamic faith, and Islamic Puritanism with respect to ethical issues constitute the basis of this normative identity. The dominant life style is interpreted and challenged through the main pillars of Islam. What is specifically challenged is the great influence of the Western secular and utilitarian life style upon Turkish people, and what is offered instead is to fix up the torn ties with the past through an Islamic understanding and reinterpretation.

Though Gülen criticizes the Western life style and its destructive effects upon the Turkish nation, especially upon the youth, the Community is not based upon strong opposition. That is the crucial point that poses problems about Gülen's perception of civil society: Not only does the community not express its collective identity through strong opposition, but also Gülen, as the spiritual leader of the community, is against any kind of protest movement targeting the state. Therefore, though Gülen criticizes certain aspects of the dominant life style, without totally rejecting it, he envisages rehabilitation of the whole society by transforming the cultural and moral tissue. In other words, this is not a holistic project to transform the society from above via legislation and prohibition, but to change the soul of the individual at the very subjective level. Instead of strong opposition and protest movements, Gülen advocates an alternative communitarian life style both in order to resist the destructive influences

of the other cultures and to develop, reproduce, and to disseminate an alternative morality and life strategy. *Işık Evler*, where participants of the community live or come together to read and interpret both Said Nursi's and Gülen's books, are the places where such a communitarian life style is practiced and, hence, the metaphysical tension is kept alive. Participants of the community develop and continually share, so, they reproduce a sacred atmosphere of piety, faith and also of brotherhood, distinct from the materialistic and hedonist lifestyles of the secular spheres.

Therefore, in accordance with the definition of a social movement, which suggests that a social movement is an informal network, based on shared beliefs and solidarity, which mobilize about conflictual issues, through the frequent use of various forms of protest, the Fethullah Gülen Community displays most of the characteristics of a social movement. The community is an informal network composed of different organizations, based on a shared belief in the Islamic faith and morality, and on solidarity to protect and to disseminate the collective identity; which mobilizes about conflictual issues such as rupture from the past and the tradition, or destructive influence of the Western secular and utilitarian life style; through the permanent use of a pacifist form of protest which involves creation of alternative private living spheres, and the use of various forms of persuasion as a method to convert people.

What we had at the end of the analysis of the Gülen Community through social movements paradigms was the potential that the movement could be considered as a 'member' of the civil society. Yet given the fact that, diversity and plurality of life strategies are of the main characteristics of the civil society, a social movement is also

expected not to aim at a monopolistic transformation. In this respect, Gülen's assessment about the 'other' was another point that enabled me to conclude about his perception of civil society.

The 'other' is both the infidel and the proponent of another interpretation of Islam. Regarding the relation with the infidel Gülen distinguishes between being against individuals and their qualities. What should be hated are not individuals but immorality, *küfür* (infidelity), and the idea of polytheism. In other words, Gülen is against the quality of 'küfür' (infidelity, unbelief), and the immorality that emerges as a result of infidelity. Although Gülen does not appreciate personal relation with an infidel, he encourages his followers to communicate with any kind of thought and system. Yet a dialogue with the infidel is considered to be useful only if the believer has strong ties with the Islamic principles. Therefore the basis of the relation with an infidel is to elicit his/her conversion to Islam. The goal of converting the 'other' by close interpersonal relations or at the institutional level, leads Gülen to encourage his followers to look for the 'least common concerns' with everyone, even with a Marxist. Therefore, people of other religious and secular affiliations are to be treated by tolerance, since tolerance is defined as to accept people in their own status, and to try to get along well, and to cohabit peacefully. Regarding other interpretations of Islam, also, Gülen's attitude is tolerance. Due to the fact that Islam is a divine system that embraces everybody, whoever serves Islam should be appreciated.

Therefore, Gülen is not against plurality (with some reservations). Furthermore, he also advocates the main requirement of the existence of civil society, that no one

should claim that his way is 'the only just one'. Which mean that no one should claim the monopoly of truth.

Gülen's benevolence for plurality is in fact the result of a pragmatist approach. According to Gülen, the desire to 'communicate' with the world should lead the Muslims to think and act in harmony with the changing conditions, while preserving the essence at the same time. In other words, in order to protect the universality of Islam both the tradition and the conjuncture is to be observed, and accordingly, the action plan to disseminate Islam is be adjusted. That is the point that differentiates Gülen's teaching from a fundamentalist Islamist movement, which rejects any reinterpretation and aims at upholding of the faith in its *full* and *literal* form.

Gülen's pragmatic approach regarding the interpretation of Islam, that is the fact that he seeks a compromise with the living world in order to offer them the message of Islam, leads many to argue that the switch from the 'sacred' to the 'social' is preparing the ground for the inner secularization of Islam. Yet I hesitate to come to such an easy conclusion while talking about the secularization of a religion. People who argue for the inner secularization of Islam through Gülen's interpretation are generally the 'outsiders' with respect to the community. What might seem to be a secular attitude from the standpoint of an outsider might still have a religious, thus sacred meaning for a believer. For example there is not doubt that dealing with the natural sciences is a secular field of activity. Yet from the perspective of a believer –who deals with natural sciences– there is no reason not to locate his/her activity within a religious cosmogony, meaning that he might be considering his field of activity as a path to understand the law of the universe created by God. Accordingly, to shift attention from the sacred to

the social could be considered in the same way. If the ultimate goal of the Gülen Community is the revitalization of Islam, flirting with the local and traditional, or seeking the least common concerns with everybody could not be considered simply as secularization. This is to base on the living world in interpreting Islam, instead of having an abstract model that excludes reinterpretation. In other words, instead of pursuing an abstract model of action to be applied under all circumstances, Gülen approves a continual interaction with the local, the traditional and the national, which includes the ritual, hence different interpretations of Islam, along with the doctrine. In other words, Gülen interprets Islam through tradition.

Not to reject the local and the traditional already means not to deny the 'other', in other words, it means to allow for plurality in society. For he sees nothing problematical about the diversity with respect to Islam. Hence, Gülen's assessments about the 'other' results in the acceptance of the plurality of diverse ideas and tolerance. In this respect Gülen's interpretation of Islam mostly satisfies the requirements of the concept of civil society. Yet there are two point that prevent a clear-cut inference about the compatibility of the Gülen's interpretation of Islam and the concept of civil society.

First is the 'ideal society' envisaged by Gülen. Gülen's ideal society is in fact a huge community, since he suggests uniformity of sentiment, thought and imagination as the determinants of a promising society. A nation that is composed of individuals who have different ideals and who pursue separated ways is considered to fall into instability and disappear. His assessments about the ideal society seem to have authoritarian motives, which contradict Gülen's benevolent attitude towards plurality with in the society. For in these statements what is intended is a consensual based society rather

than a compromised based one. While compromise means to come to an agreement upon the least common concerns in order to live peacefully, consensus involves a uniform agreement. Since it is nearly impossible to come to a uniform agreement within the society, such an ideal might comprise authoritarian intentions.

The second problem concerns methods of other social movements. Gülen is against any kind of protest movements targeting the state. Such an attitude renders Gülen's perception of the associations and organizations of the Civil Society problematical. Due to the fact that Civil Society is the countervailing domain vis-à-vis the state authority, it is inevitable for a veritable social movement to express its normative identity through various forms of protest. Therefore, two important problems emerge: First, Gülen's understanding of the plurality of ideas and their expressions is not without reservation. On the one hand, Gülen accepts plurality within society –he even advocates communicating with a Marxist on the basis of the least common concerns. But on the other hand, he displays a negative attitude towards movements that express themselves by protest against the state. This is, in fact, against the pluralist spirit of the concept of civil society. His reservation is for the dignity of the state vis-à-vis the critics rising from the Civil Society creates the second problem. If we look from the standpoint of the theory of secularism, such an attitude disturbs the principle of separation of the state and the civil society. This is because the Civil Society is conceptualized as a countervailing domain vis-à-vis the monopolistic attempts of the state. But by trying to 'protect' the state against the critics and protests coming from the members of the civil society, he, in fact, behaves to the detriment of his own terrain of exercise. In other words, such an approach is an obstacle before the

strength of the civil society, which is supposed to be the terrain of the free exercise and the protective shelter of any kind of social movement, including religious ones, vis-à-vis the state. And it renders components of Civil Society more vulnerable to the monopolistic impositions of the state.

Many scholars blame Gülen for being a statist. However, I would challenge this argument by stating that what leads him to behave in behalf of the state and to do as much as he can to not to annoy the political authority, is not a pure secular statistism, but rather a strategic attitude. Yet this strategic attitude should not be taken as *takiye*: it is already of the nature, of the real identity of the movement not to act against the state.

Fethullah Gülen, defines any stateless situation as anarchy, and argues that it is characterized by a clash of different interpretations, and of disorder and insecurity. Accordingly, he prefers to live under the state authority, regardless of whether it is democratic or not. At first sight it seems that Gülen has a secular attitude regarding the existence of a political authority / state. Gülen's perception of state, that is, his preference for any kind of state authority rather than anarchy and disorder, becomes intelligible when the nature and the method of the movement are taken into consideration. Since self-transformation through reproduction of the Islamic faith and ethic by creating alternative private spheres is one of the defining features of the Gülen Community, existence of a state authority, by assuring order and peace, provides the movement with the minimum requirements of a milieu appropriate, first of all to live and represent Islam at the very personal level. As the degree of democracy rises the liberty to represent the religion in the public sphere or to explain and disseminate it to

the 'outsiders', hence, to persuade them to convert to Islam becomes available. But all is guaranteed by the existence of a regulator political authority.

Therefore, though at first sight we had the impression that Gülen had a 'secular' and 'utilitarian' concern as 'security' and 'order' in defending the existence of a state authority, after penetrating into Gülen's ideas it would be difficult to argue that Gülen's concern for order is purely secular. I would rather claim that it is a religio-pragmatic approach. For while he is aiming at preserving order and peace of the country he is not going out of a religious perception of the world, since in reality he is targeting a peaceful atmosphere to live and spread Islam.

Therefore, Gülen's negative attitude towards the social movements that criticize the state, could be explained only by the implications of some historical facts upon the religious communities in Turkey, rather than by pure statism. Gülen has to emphasize his respect for state institutions. For in Turkey religious groups have always been blamed for aiming at counter-revolution. For a very long time, any religious expression has been regarded as enemy of the regime. As a result, Gülen and his followers, who do not make use of destructive methods, and who do not aim at a holistic political change, are inevitably obliged to emphasize for the 'Turkish State' in order to prove that they are not enemies of the regime.

However this emphasis does not prevent Fethullah Gülen from criticizing the current practice of secularity in Turkey. Gülen has very clear suggestions about the secularity of the state. He distinguishes between secularity of the state and that of society, and appreciates the Western style secularity which allows everybody to freely

live and express religious sentiments and ideas. For in the Western practice of secularity of the state, though religion is not regarded as to be the basis to the organization and regulation of the state, due to the neutrality of the secular state, religion can be freely performed within the society. That is exactly the religious life that Gülen dreams of. If there is no worship, he claims, and if, relying on a very widespread conviction, religion is confined to the individuals' conscience, it is doomed to deviate and corrupt. By the same token, he criticizes the current understanding and practice of secularity in Turkey, and claims that it should be reconsidered and revised.

Gülen also points out the confusion about the concepts of secularity (as a characteristic of the state) and secularism. He defines secularism as profanity and as an attempt to emancipate society from the influence of religion. This separation corresponds to my theoretical structure on secularization where I also did emphasis the confusion of concepts. What Gülen calls secularism corresponds to the broader meaning of secularization in my theoretical sketch, meaning emancipation of all the spheres of the society, including institutions, activities, population, life strategies (worldviews), etc. from the influence and regulation of religion. And this latter is, what Gülen criticizes, and rejects. Therefore, if we return to the narrower definition of secularity, which only comprises the state, I would argue that Gülen has no objection to a secular state provided it remains neutral and guaranties the free exercise of religions.

Looked at from another perspective, secularity requires that religion does not interfere or even does not attempt to interfere with political affairs. In Gülen's interpretation of Islam, political action is not only rejected as a means to transform the society but also dealing with politics is despised. Gülen is against the politicization of

Islam. But this is not for the sake of secularity of the state, but in order to protect Islam from the destructive implications of politics with respect to the universality of Islam.

However, the last point that I would like to mention is that because of the social interventionism strategy of the movement, it would be misleading to claim that Gülen and his followers have no political aim. This is an explicit goal, as certain argue. Yet, it does not target the existing regime; the democratic and the secular system. The ultimate goal of the Gülen community has a character that might be described, as a long-term based political aim: *the revitalization of Islam as a world power*. Yet according to Gülen, any political transformation depends on the character of the society; that is, the criterion for such a transformation is whether or not the totality of the society has an Islamic identity. The state is considered as an extension of the community; that is, it is seen as a structure/institution to safeguard the community. The emphasis, thus, is not upon the state but upon the community. Therefore, if a society has an Islamic identity; that is if it ‘turns into a *community*’ composed of people sharing common sentiments and ideas, the state is supposed to rule “naturally” with Islamic principles. However, although the political transformation –a state in charge of the implementation of religious principles– is something desirable this is not considered to be the *ultimate aim* of the movement. It is expected and intended that the transformation process –from an Islamic society to an Islamic state– is going to be a *natural* and *gradual* one. First, at the micro level, the souls are to be converted, then, the arithmetic accumulation of the converted souls will “naturally” constitute a society of the Islamic identity, which will in fact turn into a community sharing the same sentiments and ideas. Thus, people willingly

and naturally will establish a religious state. Yet the establishment of a religious state is not a concern for today's generations.

Besides being a natural result of a long process of cultural transformation, in Gülen's understanding of Islam, politics has no place with respect to the dissemination of Islam. In fact, the political method contradicts the method of the community. For it is not a project for a holistic transformation of society from above via proscriptive regulations. Transformation of the individuals through establishing close interpersonal relations, or through representing Islam are the main method, of the movement. In this respect, Gülen is not against a secular state, a Western style secular state which guarantees a mutual nonintervention between the state and the religion, and the free expression and exercise of religion. On the contrary, he encourages such a secular state. Such a milieu will enable the believers to freely live and transmit their religion.

The Fethullah Gülen Movement has been blamed for engaging in *takiye*, that is, of concealing its real identity. I totally reject this argument. If Gülen's writings are carefully read, no serious observer can claim that Gülen is concealing his real aim by an 'image management' by drawing a false image for the purpose of gaining recognition. On the contrary, the ultimate aim of the community, its method, their perception of society, state, and secularity, etc., everything is before the eyes through the writings and speeches of Fethullah Gülen. Therefore, I do not hesitate to argue that what is observed is the real identity of the Gülen Community. However when nourished with insufficient knowledge confusion or disappointment is inevitable...

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