

THE GÜLEN MOVEMENT: PERCEPTIONS OF DEMOCRACY, SECULARISM,
RELIGION AND PUBLIC SPHERE

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Metin Özer

Boğaziçi University

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Thesis Abstract

Metin Özer, “The Gülen Movement: Perceptions of Democracy, Secularism,
Religion and Public Sphere”

This thesis aims to provide an investigation of the Gülen Community’s perception of the state, democracy and secularism as well as the public- private sphere distinction and to provide an evaluation of these perceptions with a theoretical framework, from a critical point of view. The main question for the thesis is whether the Gülen Community contributes to the transition to and the consolidation of democracy in Turkey. Thus, while the weak points in works done regarding this movement up until today will be brought out, its current socio-economic structure as well as the activities on the educational and political domains is going to be analyzed.

Taking into consideration the fact that this movement should not be studied only by looking at Fethullah Gülen’s perceptions, the themes that have commonly existed in interviews made with the Gülen movement members among whom nine of them were teachers, three of them were craftsmen and two of them were women interviewees would be analyzed critically.

Finally, thanks to these interviews, it would be looked at what kind of state model is desired by the movement and at how the concepts such as democracy, secularization and public sphere are perceived by the community with a critique based on a theoretical framework. Hence, this thesis further aims to find out whether the Gülen Community is a civic organization that promotes pluralism or not in Turkey which has a multicultural society and whether it contributes to the consolidation of democracy or not.

KEYWORDS: Fethullah Gülen, Democracy, Civil Society, Secularism,
Public Sphere.

Tez Özeti

Metin Özer, “Fethullah Gülen Hareketi: Demokrasi, Laiklik,
Din ve Kamusal Alan Algılamaları”

Bu tez, Gülen cemaatinin, devlet, demokrasi ve sekülerizm kavramlarını nasıl tanımlayıp kavradıklarını; özel alan ile kamusal alan arasındaki ayrımı nasıl yaptıklarını belirlemek ve bunlara teorik bir çerçeve ışığı altında eleştirel bir gözle bakarak değerlendirme yapmak amacıyla hazırlanmıştır. Tezdeki temel soru Fethullah Gülen hareketinin Türkiye’de demokrasinin yerleşmesine ve gelişmesine olanak sağlayıp sağlamadığıdır. Buradan hareketle, bugüne kadar bu hareket hakkında yapılan çalışmalarda var olan eksik noktalar belirtilip bu hareketin hâlihazırdaki sosyo-ekonomik yapısı incelenerek siyaset ve eğitim alanlarındaki eylemleri açıklanacaktır.

Hareketin sadece Fethullah Gülen’in düşüncelerine bakılarak incelenmemesi gerektiği göz önünde tutularak Gülen Hareketi içerisinde olduklarını belirten, içlerinde 9 tanesi öğretmen, 3 tanesi esnaf 12 erkek ile birlikte 2 bayan üye ile yapılan röportajlarda ortaya çıkan ana temalar eleştirel bir gözle incelenecektir.

Son olarak bu röportajların yardımı ile hareketin nasıl bir devlet modeli öngördüğüne, demokrasi, sekülerizm ve kamusal alan gibi kavramları nasıl tanımladıklarına bakılacak ve teorik bir çerçeve içinde bunlara eleştiriler sunulacaktır. Böylece Gülen Hareketinin Türkiye gibi çok kültürlü bir ülkede çoğulculuğu ön plana çıkartan bir sivil toplum hareketi olup olmadığı, demokratik kültürü derinleştirmeye katkısı olup olmadığı anlaşılmaya çalışılacaktır.

ANAHTAR SÖZCÜKLER: Fethullah Gülen, Demokrasi, Sivil Toplum, Sekülerizm, Kamusal Alan.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Fethullah Gülen, who has been an important figure in Turkey since the late 1960s, can be considered as a charismatic leader who has laid a foundation for his followers to apply his ideas, especially in the field of education in different environments. To analyze this movement that is seen as the continuation of the Nursi movement that grew from the Naksibendi Sect is a difficult task. My primary aim in this research was to look at the ideas of this movement, its worldview with respect to the debate between democracy and religion, the secularization issue and the role of religion as well as its educational, economic, and media activities. Given the difficulty of the task, first of all I looked at the literature regarding the Gülen movement and searched for a current analysis of it. When the literature about Fethullah Gülen and the movement he leads is concerned, it is possible to make a distinction between two separate tendencies. The first can be cited as the literature that mostly defends Gülen while explaining how this religious leader and the community formed by his followers contributes to democracy in Turkey as a civic organization whereas the second can be cited as the literature that criticizes Gülen and the movement for being a threat to the democratic regime in Turkey. Other than these two distinct tendencies in the literature, there are also some writers or academics who can be considered as the objective reader of the Gülen movement. For instance, it is possible to locate Hakan Yavuz among these objective readers and he explores the ideas of Said Nursi, the founder of the Nur Movement, and the movement's transformation as a result of new political conditions in Turkey. In the first chapter I tried to reveal the current analysis of the Gülen movement and I tried to explain in which fields the community formed by the followers of Fethullah Gülen is active.

Gülen became known in the late 1960s and in that period, the 1961 constitution that is considered by some academics as the most democratic and liberal constitution Turkey has had created a milieu that was suitable for religious organizations to be able to grow and survive. As the major threat in the 1960s was perceived to be the communist insurgency, it can be said that the state elites used the Islamic groups and with Özal's government which privatized the economy, education, and telecommunication networks, well organized Muslim groups among which we may also list the Gülen movement found feasible ground for themselves. When the current analysis of the Gülen movement is concerned, I noticed that the movement was analyzed, in general, from a historical perspective. More precisely, the Gülen movement is mostly located in Turkish Republican history as an organization that is analyzed with a historical viewpoint. That is to say, it is not analyzed separately from Said Nursi and the Nursi movement. Indeed I think that the Gülen movement in Turkey has reached the point where it should also be examined independently from any other religious groups as its goals and activities go beyond those who can be considered as its predecessors.

The second crucial step of this research was the analysis of the community members' ideas and perceptions of the issues I have already mentioned. Indeed when the literature about Gülen and his community are considered, it is clear that there is no effort to understand the movement's worldview by looking at the perceptions of the members of the community. In other words, the analysis of the Gülen movement is mostly composed of works that try to analyze the movement by looking at the works written by Fethullah Gülen, Said Nursi and at the activities realized by the organizations or associations belonging to the movement. Hence it can be said that the scope of these analyses remains limited as the researches fall short of their target.

For this reason, I focused on the members of the movement and I conducted interviews with fourteen people who consider themselves as members of the Gülen community.

Among these fourteen people, there were nine teachers three of whom had resigned from *Fem Dersanesi* and had started to work in another *dersane*. Three of these interviewees were craftsmen and two of them were women. At the beginning my objective was to conduct interviews only with the teachers who were working at *Beşiktaş Fem Dersanesi* but as the answers given by these teachers were similar I changed my focus from teachers to other members of the Gülen community such as craftsmen and women. I tried to reveal the perceptions of the community members with respect to notions such as democracy, civil society and the role of religion in constructing a civil society as well as their perceptions of the state. These interviews helped me to understand the idea, the worldview and the argumentation of the community better. At this point, I have to indicate that these fourteen movement members per se cannot be considered as representatives of the whole community but at least, as they are strongly influenced by Gülen's doctrine and they also emphasize that they feel as part or as members of the Gülen community, the interviews would be helpful in understanding the community's perception about the issues I cited above.

While analyzing the interviews, I tried to give a number of quotations from the interviews because the limitation of the interview as a source of information is in the narrative and the discourse itself. The reason for the long narratives in some parts of this work is that I also wanted to explain the social practices of the movement. For instance, I tried to show how the movement members act in their social life, how they unite, what they do when they come together, how they arrange the future

projects of the community, and so on. Thanks to benevolent and hospitable interviewees, I even entered the dormitories of the community where the students who are preparing for the university entrance exam were studying, or the places that we may define as private spheres of individuals. For example, one of the women interviewees who wear a headscarf invited me to her home and while her husband and her son were present, late at night, I had the chance of interviewing her face to face.

Besides this, I think that the answers given by the interviewees were genuinely their own answers. That is to say, they were not forced by a communal pressure to give answers in such a way. However, the similarities of the answers to some questions stem from the fact that all adherents of the community tried to draw a good image of the community while making the advertisement of it. However it can be said that the collective pressure did not affect all individuals of the community in the same manner. There were obviously some adherents who were strongly attached to the movement such as Mr. M and Ms. Y and some adherents that were less tied to the community such as Mr. S. Here it should be pointed out that although some of these members were strongly tied to the community; that does not mean that they were its slaves. There remains a place for the self-reflexivity of these members. For instance, there exist some issues on which the members of the community do not share the same ideas with Fethullah Gülen, such as the issue of the presidential system. In addition to this, some members did not hesitate to criticize the movement for being antidemocratic. This shows that becoming part of the Gülen movement does not mean that individuals turn into passive tools in the hands of authoritarian leadership. Indeed there are even some interviewees who were working in *Fem dersanesi* but they resigned in order to work in other *dersanes*. Anyhow, although

Gülen seems to be very open to change with his sympathy for modernity and he lays himself open to criticism, the community's worldview can be described in general as conservative and it can be argued that the principles of the community are based on an authoritarian network with a strong hierarchical relationship especially when gender issues are concerned. The man at the top and the women in the lower echelons of the community is evident.

Other than these issues, the following critique has to be taken into consideration seriously, even by the community. I noticed that when religious issues are concerned, the ultimate reference point for the community members is either Said Nursi or Fethullah Gülen. That is to say, the arguments of the community members rely mostly on *risales* or on the texts written by Gülen rather than on the holy book of Islam. That is to say, they introduce Fethullah Gülen as the ultimate representative of Islam and rather than relying on the scriptural text that is the Quran, they mostly refer to *risales*.

After having looked at the current analysis of the Gülen movement and the perceptions of the Gülen community members, its ideas and its worldview, I noticed that this research requires a further step. A definition of democracy as well as the clarification of some notions such as the state, secularization and the public sphere was needed in order to understand better the Gülen doctrine and the arguments of the Gülen movement. This was also helpful as a reference point for criticizing the perceptions and opinions of the movement members.

Anyhow, when compared to other works related to this issue, this research can be considered as an alternative to them since it differentiates itself with the analysis of the Gülen community's worldview and its ideas with respect to state, democracy, secularization and religion as well as the public sphere thanks to the

interviews conducted with the community members. Indeed, my argument is that the community's perceptions with respect to these conceptions cannot be understood only by looking at works that are based on some social activities of the movement or on the speeches of Said Nursi and Fethullah Gülen.

The second chapter explores the current studies regarding the Gülen movement and in this chapter while separating the literature with respect to this movement into two parts, I try to explain what makes these works superficial. I cite lots of examples from the side that defends Gülen and on the other hand from the side that attacks him. In addition to this, I offer an exploration of the social, economic and media activities of the Gülen community in order to highlight the enormous size of the community.

It is possible to claim that the Gülen Movement is analyzed, in general, from a historical perspective; in other words, the community's development is inextricably linked with the historical background that has provided such a feasible milieu for the community in order to be established and to be developed. Therefore, at the end of the second chapter I try to explain how the Gülen community's nature is different from that of the Nursi doctrine. More precisely, I argue that there is no strict continuity of Nursi doctrine which led to the conformation of Gülen's community. Indeed, even Said Nursi's life does not show a continuum with respect to the attitude towards politics and in addition to this, it is known that the Nursi movement was divided up into several parts after the death of Bediüzzaman Said Nursi. Hence, to analyze the Gülen movement on the basis of this historical background would not be adequate and an analysis of the perceptions of Gülen community with respect to democracy, religion and the public sphere requires a deeper research that mostly focuses on the members coming from different segments of the community.

The third chapter entitled “Critical Content Analysis of Interviews with Members of the Gülen Movement” highlights the themes that were dominant in the interviews and offers critiques of these themes that have appeared.

As the most important part of this research is the interviews of the members of the Gülen community, and the ultimate aim is to analyze the Gülen community’s ideas with respect to the state, democracy, secularization and the public sphere and so on, a definition of these notions and a theoretical framework have to be given. Therefore, the fourth chapter offers a critique of the interviews based on a theoretical framework on democracy, secularization and the public sphere while emphasizing the fact that the community’s stands on these issues are tilted towards conservative thought and pragmatism.

Finally, the conclusion part highlights the most crucial points that are emerged from the interviews while it discusses whether the Gülen movement should be considered as a movement that contributes to the consolidation of democracy.

CHAPTER II

CURRENT ANALYSIS OF THE GÜLEN MOVEMENT

Fethullah Gülen, the leader of the Nursi movement, is a leader who is inspired by Said Nursi, and is criticized by a number of writers in Turkey on the one hand and defended by some on the other. Most of the critiques are based on the idea that he is a threat to the regime and it is claimed that he is trying to destroy the republic. On the contrary, there are some who believe that he is a man who contributed to the development of free thinking and free speech as well as democracy in Turkey. Therefore, the analysis of current studies about his life and the movement is crucial. I will begin by looking at the current analysis of the movement by authors and academics.

The literature regarding this leader, Fethullah Gülen, considered charismatic by many of his followers, can be divided into two different parts. The ones such as *My Little World* written by Latif Erdoğan, *The Talk of New York with Fethullah Gülen* written by Nevval Sevindi or the series of *From Cocoon to Butterfly (Kozadan Kelebeğe)* edited by the Journalists and Writers' Foundation (*Gazeteciler ve Yazarlar Derneği*), an association established by the community, that is composed of articles written by lots of academics like professors Nilüfer Göle, Şerif Mardin or Ali Yaşar Sarıbay as well as reporters like Ertuğrul Özkök or Mehmet Ali Birand can be cited among the ones that glorify Fethullah Gülen in some way. For instance Ali Yaşar Sarıbay argues:

The Gülen Movement may contribute to the consolidation of democracy in Turkey while developing an Islamic approach that is compatible with human rights and democracy... Laic nationalism has a divisive character due to the fact that it depends on an ethnic basis. However religious nationalism may play a connective role in a society that is homogeneous with respect to religion.¹

¹ Mustafa Armağan and Ali Ünal, eds., *Medya Aynasında Fethullah Gülen: Kozadan Kelebeğe* (İstanbul: Gazeteciler ve Yazarlar Vakfı Yayınları, 1999), 182. “Fethullah Gülen hareketi, insan

My Little World is written by Latif Erdoğan who is also a relative and a disciple of Fethullah Gülen and it offers this leader's life to its readers within a narrative framework. In this book, it is claimed that Fethullah Gülen is a man who was born with great character and talents given by God. While talking about his life; Fethullah Gülen remembers very clearly a day in which he saw from the windows a military squad walking in the street. A soldier wearing a different cap from the other soldiers had drawn his attention and when that soldier was addressed by his friends with the name *Ebu Talib*, he gained more value in the eyes of Gülen since Ebu Talib was a great commander for him, due to the things that he had learned from his father.² Here, although there is no explicit praise, it can be said that Fethullah Gülen implicitly calls attention to his memory. On the other hand, he indicates that he could not remember the punishment given to him when he was caught by the military police in the airport, while he was sending Salih Özcan off on the hadj and it forms a discrepancy in his speeches.³ In addition to this, it is seen that Fethullah Gülen talks about his family members, including dervishes, and he attributes to his family members some features that may be considered as supernatural. Dreams have an important place in Gülen's life since he refers to them several times in his speeches. For instance Gülen explains that one day; a friend came to him and claims that he saw a prophet announcing that he would not come to Gülen's funeral if he got married. Gülen adds that he took this into consideration.⁴ The book called *Fethullah Gülen and His Vision* written by İ. Adil Sönmez is another work that can be

haklarına ve demokrasiye uygun bir İslam yorumu geliştirerek, Türkiye'de demokrasinin yerleşmesine katkıda bulunabilir... Laik milliyetçiliğin etnik temele dayandığı için parçalayıcı bir özelliği var. Buna karşılık dini milliyetçilik, özellikle dinsel bakımdan türdeş bir toplumda bütünleştirici rol oynayabilir."

² Latif Erdoğan, *Küçük Dünyam* (İstanbul: AD Yayıncılık A.Ş. , 1995), 43.

³ Ibid., 73.

⁴ Ibid., 63.

considered as to favour Fethullah Gülen. This book, from which I will quote in the following pages of this research, mostly contains the perceptions of Fethullah Gülen with respect to issues such as politics, Islam, and democracy, and it offers the allegations against Gülen and his community as well as the decisions of the courts. The book called *M. Fethullah Gülen: A Trial of a Portrait* written by Ali Ünal is another book that glorifies Gülen while mentioning his perceptions of Islam and his actions, especially in field of education.

There are other works that may be considered to be critical of Fethullah Gülen and the Gülen movement for being against the Republican regime and for abusing the democratic regime rather than helping its consolidation. Ergun Poyraz's book entitled *Kanla Abdest Alanlar* emphasizes to what extent the community and Fethullah Gülen should be considered as a threat or a danger for the regime. The book entitled *The Codes of Fethullah Hodja* written by Aytunç Erkin and prepared in the light of the comments given by Nurettin Güven is another source that is harshly critical of the Gülen movement. Nurettin Veren is a man who was very close to Fethullah Gülen for 35 years between 1966 and 2000. He defines himself as an old friend of Gülen for thirty five years and he was also one of the founders of the *Zaman* newspaper, *STV* and also the Journalists and Writers' Foundation. In addition to this, he has been active in establishing many schools opened by the Gülen community around the world but due to the clash of opinions and policies, Nurettin Veren was detached from the movement. He accused Fethullah Gülen of acting against the Turkish state by being an ally of CIA and he claimed that Gülen wanted to kill him. He became a member of the Workers Party (*İşçi Partisi*) in 2005, and he

also prepared some TV programs in *Ulusal* Channel with respect to these accusations about Fethullah Gülen and his movement.⁵

Books including interviews with Fethullah Gülen are another profitable source. Among these books, *A Month with Fethullah Gülen in America (Fethullah Gülen ile Amerika'da Bir Ay)* written by İsmail Ünal or *Eleven Days with Fethullah Gülen (Fethullah Gülen ile 11 Gün)* can be listed. The latter, by Mehmet Gündem who has also worked for a period in *Zaman* and *Milliyet* newspapers, is more beneficial with respect to Gülen's perceptions about the state, democracy, and politics and so on.

Turkish Islam and the Secular State: the Gülen Movement edited by Hakan Yavuz and John L. Esposito and *The Schools of Fethullah Gülen* written by Bayram Balcı analyze the Gülen movement from an academic point of view. The one written by Hakan Yavuz can be considered as a useful source analyzing the Gülen movement in all its aspects, and the latter written by Bayram Balcı particularly clarifies the development and the activities of the movement in the field of education.

Fethullah Gülen, who is a very charismatic leader according to his followers and an important figure in Turkish social and religious life, drew the attention of the public for the first time when he was working in *İzmir* as a religious man in a mosque in *Kestanepazarı*. In that city, Gülen gave sermons to the public and thanks to his success in oratory he gained popularity as his audience grew in number, day by day. Hence, this city can be considered as the place where the movement took its first steps. In that place, the activity of the movement started with the establishment of a charitable foundation named "The Turkish Teachers' Foundation" (*Türkiye Öğretmenler Vakfı*) and the first publication of the movement was the *Sızıntı*

⁵ Nurettin Veren, 13 October 2004, "Nurettin Veren Kimdir?" Retrieved from the website: <http://www.nurettinveren.net/modules/articles/article.php?id=3>, September 2006.

(Leakage) periodical edited by the same foundation. In this periodical that began its publication in 1978; Fethullah Gülen was also writing the weekly leading article with the pseudonym “Abdulfettah Şahin”.

As I will also discuss in the following chapter regarding the themes that I have drawn from the interviews I made with Gülen community members, the Gülen movement is considered by these members as a civic organization similar to the foundations that were numerous in the Ottoman Empire. Indeed, the charitable foundations established with different goals in the Ottoman Empire or the Republican period constituted an important role in Turkish social life since they were exempt from taxation. These foundations’ objectives were diverse; political, religious, social, ecologic, leftist or rightist. Another educational charitable foundation established close to the movement was “Akyazı High School and University Education Foundation” (*Akyazılı Orta ve Yüksek Eğitim Vakfı*). It has been strengthened with the economic support of its members, and in 1991 there were as many as 25 offices of this foundation in the different provinces of Turkey. Indeed this charitable foundation is described by Nurettin Veren, Fethullah Gülen’s old colleague and assistant, as the first place where the growth of the movement started. Veren explains that after they reached twelve houses in Izmir, they rented a house that belonged to Nefi Akyazılı who was the founder of the association I mentioned above. According to Veren, the first student dormitory was established in that land that belonged to Nefi Akyazılı. This foundation mostly deals with the university student dormitories in many provinces as they are considered to be the source of the religious organizations in Turkey.⁶ Nowadays the most important foundation of the community can be cited as the Journalists and Writers’ Foundation. This

⁶ Gülçin Tahiroğlu and Ayşe İrınbark, “Fethullahçı Sermaye Üzerine Özel Dosya,” *Aktüel Para* , no: 109 (Semptember 1996).

association's emphasize is especially on the concepts of tolerance and dialogue concepts and every years it organizes an award ceremony where many important figures in Turkey including the former President of the Republic, Süleyman Demirel, the sociologists Nilüfer Göle and the businessman Üzeyir Garih are invited and some of them are given awards.

When the Gülen movement is analyzed, the first area in which the movement is active seems to be education, however, this is not the only domain of activities for the community because the Gülen community is so developed that it has formed a network also containing finance and media institutions. Indeed, Bayram Balcı claims that all Islamic networks have, in general, close contacts with finance institutions as in the cases of *Faysal* and *El-Baraka*; and they do not distance themselves from capital and the acquisition of wealth. That is to say, Islamic movements do not hesitate to grow economically.⁷ At this point, it is clear that the Gülen movement has also grown economically and this economic growth contributes to the suspicions about the ultimate aim of the community. That is to say, whether the community targets the political domain and the state apparatus or not becomes a crucial question in analyzing the Gülen community.

Within the Gülen movement, it can be seen that the enterprises and the schools that have been established have close relationships. When the enterprises are considered here, I do not mean ones such as the *Işık* insurance company, which is managed by İhsan Kalkavan in some period and Mehmet Emin Hasırcılar, or the *Asya* Finance that has been established by the followers of Fethullah Gülen, but I mean the small enterprises belonging to the community members who also affirm that they feel as part of this movement. These community members are in general the

⁷ Bayram Balcı, *Fethullah Gülen Okulları* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları,2005), 155.

craftsmen or businessmen that are economically active in their provinces, and they are also members of the boards of trustees of the schools in many provinces. Indeed, these schools or companies such as the *Işık* insurance company or *Asya Finance* do not have official and legal ties with the Gülen movement. However, Fethullah Gülen himself confirms that this bank, *Asya Finance*, was established in order to help investors in Central Asia and it has facilitated the activity and the administration of schools in Turkey and Asia.⁸ This bank has been established by fifteen people close to the movement; and Mehmet Emin Hasırcılar, who is also one of the managers of the *Işık* insurance company, is a member of this group. The fact that the bank gathered 60 billion TL as a bank deposit only in two days shows how easily the movement could gather enough money.⁹ As I will also indicate in the following chapters, one of the members of the community, Ms. Y will explain how group members could find a large amount of money that was needed for the foundation of a student dormitory. There are members such as women that would not hesitate to give their bracelets to the movement's activities. In the initial stages of the establishment of *Asya Finance*, an association that is called "The Solidarity Foundation of Business Life", *İŞHAD (İş Hayatı Dayanışma Derneği)* has played an important role. This is not the only association formed by the businessmen sympathizers of the movement. It is seen that *TÜSİAD*, "Turkish Industrialist and Businessmen Foundation" (*Türkiye Sanayici ve İşadamları Derneği*) could not gather the whole community of businessmen in Turkey. For instance, one of the interviewees indicates that he is a member of *TUSKON* which means "Turkish Business Men and Industrialists Confederation" (*Türkiye İş Adamları ve Sanayicileri Konfederasyonu*).¹⁰ This association also includes lots of members who can be considered as sympathizers of

⁸ *Milliyet Newspaper*, January 5, 1997.

⁹ İrınbark and Tahiroğlu, "Fethullahçı Sermaye Üzerine Özel Dosya."

¹⁰ Interview by author with Mr. S, tape recording, Sakarya, December 2006.

the movement. In addition to this, although the schools that have been established all over the world are not directly related to Fethullah Gülen, it is clear that Fethullah Gülen is at the peak of the administration of these schools. Otherwise he would not suggest that the control of these schools can be transferred to the state administration, if necessary, as he claims that these schools should not be closed and that they have to continue their activities.¹¹ On the other hand, one of the interviewees, Mr. R, who has also worked in one of these schools as a teacher in Tatarstan, indicates that Fethullah Gülen was also present in the process of the appointment of the voluntary teachers to those schools. Indeed, it was Fethullah Gülen who arranged the drawing of lots to appoint these teachers to different schools in the world, when he was residing in *Altunizade Fem Dersanesi*, and after an appointment of a teacher was arranged, he prayed for each of these volunteers.

Our appointment to Tataristan was realized like this. In 1993, after a seminar, a lottery of between 150-200 voluntary friends like me was made and *Hocaefendi* was also present there...Every time a name was picked up from the box, *Hocaefendi* prayed for him.¹²

It is clear that education constitutes the primary objective of the movement as the activities and the projects of the community are mostly visible in that field. The businessmen, or the craftsmen of a province constitute the board of trustee, in each college or university and they mostly deal with the establishment of the new student dormitories in those provinces since the accomodation is one of the most important problems the students face in their education due to the limited means of the state and of the state universities that do not have enough residences. Indeed the high school or university dormitories can be considered as the most important source for

¹¹ Mehmet Gündem, *Fethullah Gülen'le 11 Gün* (İstanbul: Alfa Yayınları, 2005), 188.

¹² Interview by author with Mr. R, tape recording, Sakarya, November 2006. “*Tataristan şöyle oldu ilk gitmemiz. 1993 yılında seminerden sonra biz Hoca efendiyle beraber biz yaklaşık 150–200 kişilik bir grup, benim gibi olan arkadaşlarımla beraber bir kura çekimi oldu... Kurada Hocaefendi de kim ayağa kalkmışsa dua ediyordu yani.*”

gaining members or sympathizers of the movement. As I will also indicate in the following chapters containing themes drawn from the interviews, it is possible to argue that the movement turns the physical impossibilities of the state to its own profit by promoting an effective education to the students with the *dersanes* in order to make students successful in the university entrance exams and with other opportunities such as the accommodations for university students. These *dersanes* furnish a great power for the community, since most of the students that have been educated in those *dersanes* do not break their ties with the movement. For instance, community members such as teachers or craftsmen whom I interviewed have encountered the movement in general in those *dersanes*, and during their education at university, they did not break ties with the community. Therefore they have become teachers in those *dersanes* with the advice or the encouragement of their older brothers who have educated them. Some of these educational institutions can be cited as follows: The *dersanes* such as *Istanbul FEM*, *Istanbul Anafen*, *Izmir Körfez*, *Ankara Maltepe*, *Adana Işık*; the high schools like *Izmir Yamanlar*, *Fatih College*, *Ankara Samanyolu*, *Bursa Nilufer*, and so on. Other than these institutions, one of the most important institutions established by the community is *Fatih University*. It should be remembered that Nurettin Veren, who left the community after the 30 years that he spent with Fethullah Gülen, was also one of the founders of that university. It should be pointed out that although these schools or *dersanes* can be considered as the most important sources in strengthening the Gülen movement, in these institutions the education is not based on Gülen's doctrine. That is to say, there is no special effort to give the students a religious education in the courses or outside the classrooms. However, the teachers are members of the community and rather than trying to impose ideas on the students directly, they try to be models for them

while they become not only the teachers of the students but also their friends. The fact that the teachers do not impose religious ideas or beliefs directly on the students does not mean that they have no authority over these students. By becoming the friends and guides of these students, teachers who are members of the community form a hegemonic structure and although the education in these institutions is not based on Gülen's doctrine, it is clear that the students get a religious formation and their worldviews are shaped by Gülen's doctrine, as it can be understood from the members who become community members after having participated in an educational institution of the community.

The community pursues its activities not only in fields of the education or economics but also in the media. *Zaman* newspaper and *Samanyolu* TV are the most effective tools in the media that are used by the Gülen community. In addition to the *Sızıntı* periodical that I mentioned before, *Aksiyon* magazine can be listed as another publication of the community. In the initial stages of STV, after it started its broadcasting life, it is possible to say that it was more conservative when compared to the present. For instance, the women were not seen frequently on the TV screen and if they were seen, they were mostly the women speakers wearing headscarves. However, it is not an astonishing occasion now to see women on *STV* even if they do not have headscarves. It is clear that with the time that has passed, their broadcasting policies have changed.

Due to his opinions and speeches that I will discuss in the following pages, it is possible to consider Fethullah Gülen as the representative of moderate Islam in Turkey. He was even described in a Human Rights Report published by the American government as the leader of moderate Islam in Turkey. In that report, Fethullah Gülen is described as follows:

The attorney general of the DGM in Ankara charged Fethullah Gülen, the leader of a moderate Islamic organization, with planning to take hold of the state by force in August. The court case has continued until the end of the year.¹³

Due to the fact that Fethullah Gülen is considered to be a leader, he also attracted the attention of the politicians in Turkey. He is a leader who claims that he did not and will not engage in politics and he even made a proposal to the followers of the movement as follows:

Regarding the movement, neither now nor in the future, I want that the friends do not run for a position in the government and that they do not engage in politics.¹⁴

Although Gülen claims that he does not aim for the government and he does not want the movement to look for a position in government, it would not be possible to argue that he has no relations with the politicians at all. Fethullah Gülen always mentions that politics is not his aim and he emphasized that he is apolitical as he asserted that his ultimate goal is not about the government. However, it was easy to see him with many other politicians, especially in the times when he was in Turkey. It is possible to see this as related to the desires, and plans, of politicians who are willing to attract a religious leader who has the support of millions of people rather than believing that this was Gülen's choice. It is also possible to assume that this might be a plan of the assistants of Gülen; and they are trying to create an image which reflects Gülen as an important person who is getting on with all the political leaders and who gives them advises. Consequently it is true that Gülen has good relationships with both the old politicians and the new politicians. For example, in eras of Turgut Özal and Süleyman Demirel as the president of the republic, Gülen sent numerous letters to

¹³ Aytunç Erkin, *Fethullah Hoca'nın Şifreleri: Başmuavini Nurettin Veren Anlatıyor* (İstanbul: Kaynak Yayınları, 2005), 16. "Ankara DGM savcısı, ağustos ayında 'mutedil bir İslami cemaatin önderi' Fethullah Gülen aleyhinde, devleti şiddet yoluyla ele geçirmek amacıyla planlar kurduğu suçlamasıyla dava açtı. Bu dava yıl sonuna kadar devam etti."

¹⁴ Gündem, *Fethullah Gülen'le 11 Gün*, 235. "Hareketle ilgili olarak da arkadaşlar evvel ve ahir idareye asla talip olmasınlar, siyasete girmesinler..."

the president of the Turkish Republic to encourage them to open schools.¹⁵ Some politicians like Tansu Çiller and Ecevit made arguments that supported Gülen. Also Bülent Arınç who is actually an *AKP* member in the parliament said:

Fethullah Gülen is a very good man who is committed to the Turkish Republic and his government and who loves his country and endeavours as much as possible for the happiness of the people. Nobody should try to disparage him. He is a very honest man who cares about education.¹⁶

Abdullah Gül who is actually the President of the Republic has said: “I believe that it is not right to make Fethullah Gülen and his friends loose their vigour.”¹⁷ These words are enough to show how much respect that leaders of the government and politicians have for Fethullah Gülen. For most of politicians with whom Fethullah Gülen has met, Nurettin Veren, his old friend and present enemy was one of the leading active figure and mediators. Veren claims that he was the one who helped Fethullah Gülen to meet with politicians such as Süleyman Demirel, Bülent Ecevit, Raşan Ecevit, Tansu Çiller, Hüsametdin Cindoruk, Hikmet Çetin and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the old mayor of Istanbul. Most of these meetings have been realized either in their own houses, in the parliament or in the *Altunizade Fem Dersanesi*.¹⁸ In addition to this, the book written by Aytunç Erkin and entitled *The Codes of Fethullah Hodja, His Prime Assistant Nurettin Veren Explains* explains how the movement get relations with politicians. Nurettin Veren claims that he was the leading figure who was getting the recommendatory letters from politicians. For instance, Veren says that the opening of schools in the Turkish Republics in Asia was

¹⁵ Ergün Poyraz, *Kanla Abdest Alanlar* (İstanbul: Toplumsal Dönüşüm Yayınları, 2003), 375.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 379. “ *Fethullah Gülen Türkiye Cumhuriyeti’ne, devletine bağlı, ülkesini seven, insanların mutluluğu için alabildiğince çaba harcayan pırl pırl bir insandır. Eğitime önem veren tertemiz bir insandır.*”

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, op. cit.

¹⁸ Nurettin Veren, 13 October 2004, “Nurettin Veren Kimdir?” Retrieved from the website: <http://www.nurettinveren.net/modules/articles/article.php?id=3>, (September 2006).

supported by Turgut Özal who said he already knew Fethullah Gülen as he listened to his sermons.

Özal embraced the students of *Yamanlar* College. Our meeting with the state has been realized like this. I can say that it started with Özal. We went to Özal with Prof. Şerif Ali Tekalan and we introduced our students. Özal said that he supported this movement, that he knew Hocaefendi and that he had listened to his sermons before.¹⁹

Among the other leaders, there are many politicians such as Bülent Ecevit, or Mesut Yılmaz who had positive views about Fethullah Gülen and the movement. For instance Bülent Ecevit said in 1995:

Rather than to want to imitate the Islamic views that belong to the states that have outdated and repressive regimes, he explains that we have to develop an Islamic understanding that is peculiar to our culture and that is reflecting our national characteristics as well as the fact that the universality of Islam is not an obstacle for this. He indicates that Islam is compatible with democracy, modernity and improvement.²⁰

It is not possible to claim that Gülen always had good relations with all politicians. Interestingly, the movement did not have good relations with Islamic parties, such as the Prosperity Party (*Refah Partisi*) and its extension the Virtue Party (*Fazilet Partisi*) that has been closed by the Constitutional Court. For instance Gülen said that Necmettin Erbakan, the leader of Prosperity Party, should resign from the government in 1997 as he indicated that this task was too heavy a burden for him.²¹

In addition, Fethullah Gülen has close relations and meetings not only with the politicians but also with some religious leaders such as the Pope, who is the

¹⁹ Erkin, *Fethullah Hoca'nın Şifreleri: Başmuavini Nurettin Veren Anlatıyor*, 29. "Yamanlar Koleji öğrencilerini Özal kabul etti. Bizim devlet ricaliyile tanışmamız böyle. Özal'la başladık diyebilirim. Profesör Şerif Ali Tekalan'la beraber Özal'la gittik, çocukları takdim ettik. Özal, bu işi desteklediğini, Hocaefendi'yi tanıdığını, daha önce vaazlarını dinlediğini söyledi."

²⁰ Armağan and Ünal, eds., *Medya Aynasında Fethullah Gülen: Kozadan Kelebeğe*, 119. "Çağın gerisinde kalmış olan ve baskı rejimleriyle yönetilen bazı ülkelerin İslam anlayışına özenmek yerine, ulusal özelliklerimizi ve birikimimizi yansıtan kendine özgü bir İslam anlayışını geliştirmemiz gerektiğini, İslam'ın evrenselliğinin buna engel olmadığını çok güzel anlatıyor. İslam'ın çağdaşlıkla, demokrasiyle ve gelişmeyle bağdaşabileceğini belirtiyor."

²¹ *Hürriyet Newspaper*, April 18, 1997.

leader of the Catholic world. Under the cognizance of the Turkish government and in response to an invitation from the Pope Jean Paul II, Fethullah Gülen met him on February 9, 1998 in Vatican. This meeting was realized on the basis of a dialogue within religions and for the first time, Gülen was introduced as a global leader who represented the Islamic world. As I will also indicate in the following chapters, the community members attribute lots of importance and meaning to that meeting because even the head of Turkish Religious Affair Directorate had not met with the Pope before. Therefore, the community members introduce Fethullah Gülen as the main representative of the Muslim world.

Besides the statements given by some politicians like Bülent Ecevit, the series “From Cocoon to Butterfly” (*Kozadan Kelebeğe*) edited by the Journalists and Writers’ Foundation offers the articles and writings of numerous journalists from İsmet Berkan to Mehmet Y. Yılmaz, from Ertuğrul Özkök to Mehmet Barlas, and of lots of academicians from Prof. Şerif Mardin to Prof. Nilüfer Göle, from Prof. Toktamış Ateş to Prof. Nilüfer Narlı. I think that the ultimate objective of this book, edited by the association belonging to the Gülen movement, is to cultivate a good image of the movement in the eyes of society and to create a gloss of respectability, since it includes lots of writings gathered from many important figures belonging to various intellectual segments of society.

When the relations with the army are considered, it can be said that the Gülen movement takes great care to not oppose the soldiers in Turkey, since they are seen as the guarantor of the regime and they are greatly respected in Turkish society. In fact, they even tried to give an award to a commander, İsmail Hakkı Karadayı, who was Chief of General Staff in 1997. However, their attempt did not gain support from the army, and due to the fact that this invitation was rejected by Karadayı, the

Journalists and Writers' Foundation gave the award to Süleyman Demirel.²²

Although the Gülen movement has tried to create amicable relations with the army, they could not get rid of the pressures and threats of the army. The 1997 soft coup lumbered the movement with a heavy burden. In the decisions taken after this military soft coup, mixed education in *dersanes* became obligatory and the *dersanes* became the subject of strict controls by government inspectors. In 1999, another crisis happened in Turkey that was related with the movement. It was attested that some cassettes were found in which Gülen gave advices to his followers to take power in Turkey. Finally, although these assertions were not proved, Gülen abided by the consequences and had to leave the country in order to settle in the USA. Ever since, Gülen resides in Pennsylvania.

It is possible to argue that the power of the community mostly comes from the student houses in which university students live together. These houses are known as the *ışık evler* (light houses) and according to the interviewees, it is claimed that their number has greatly increased all over the world. The interviewees add that in those houses, four or five students reside and in addition to this, there may sometimes be visitors such as high school students who come to those houses in order to get assistance in their courses from their big brothers. The community's such behaviour is a tactic. For instance, a visitor coming to these houses faces the complete works of Said Nursi and known as *Risale-i Nur* and the books written by Fethullah Gülen. Not by force but due to anxiety and interest, students read these books and the first meeting of the movement members with the Said Nursi and Gülen doctrines are realized in such a way. Besides this, in half term or other vacation times, the newly arrived members or the students of *dersanes* go together with their

²² *Radikal Newspaper*, January 16, 1998.

big brothers to the student camps in different places such as boarding schools. In those camps, besides being prepared for the university entrance exams, these students also see their big brothers as reference patterns and the books written by Said Nursi and Fethullah Gülen are read. The complete work of *Risale-i Nur* is indeed considered by the community members as a commentary on the *Quran*. For instance one of the interviewees, Ms. Y, says:

When you first enter the community, due to the fact that you may not understand them they do not explain *Risale-i Nur* to you. It was not explained at first. However we continued to read them persistently. One day, we met with Abdullah Aymaz brother. We asked him how we could understand these books. He said: 'If you finished the complete work of *Risale-i Nur*, it will open itself to you.' I took these words seriously and tried to finish the complete works. Really, it has opened and become understandable to me... We read the commentary on the *Quran*. Sometimes we also read the translation but *Risale-i Nur* already fulfils that function.²³

The most powerful sources of Gülen are his sermons as many writers agree because of his success in preaching and the books that he has written until today. Today, the messages of Gülen are received by the community by modern communication media methods. The congregation was always able to keep up with the changing technology and some of the means of communication used by the congregation are: the *Sızıntı* magazine, cassettes, CDs, radio, *Samanyolu* TV, the newspaper *Zaman* and internet. The articles written by Gülen and interviews with him will help to evaluate his ideas about subjects like democracy, human rights and freedoms, republican and religious freedoms. The interview that took place most recently with Gülen was at the beginning of 2005, in the U.S.A. has been published in the newspaper *Milliyet*.

²³ Interview by author with Ms. Y, tape recording, İstanbul, January 2007. "...İlk girdiğiniz zaman anlatmıyorlar hocalar da hani bu insanlar yeni girmiş *Risale-i Nur* anlamazlar diye. İlk dönem anlatılmıyordu. Fakat biz ısrarla okumaya devam ettik inşallah. Bir gün bir yerde Abdullah Aymaz ağabey ile karşılaştık. Ona sorduk işte nasıl anlayacağız biz bunu. Demişti ki 'Bütün külliyatı bitirirseniz açılır *Risale-i Nur* size.' Ben onu çok yani kafama yer etti. İnşallah külliyatı bitirmeye çalıştım. Gerçekten de bitirdikten sonra açıldığını da gördüm... Tefsir okuyoruz yani. Yerine göre meal de okunuyor ama *Risale-i Nurlar* o ihtiyacı karşıladığı için."

In the book of Bayram Balcı entitled *Fethullah Gülen Okulları* (Fethullah Gülen Schools) it is indicated that in 1997; in the world in a total of 25 countries, there were 148 schools in which 26532 students were educated.²⁴ There are 3167 teachers in these schools and all these teachers came from Turkey from universities like Boğaziçi, Marmara, Istanbul and etc. Gülen talks about these teachers who work in these schools thankfully as he sees them as voluntary cultural ambassadors. Indeed, it would not be appropriate to call them as voluntary ambassadors because although some of them have chosen to become teachers while they were having an option in the university entrance exam for choosing other faculties that would bring them a more prosperous life in future, they are paid a salary. More precisely in order to be considered as voluntary, a person's work should not be paid a fee. However these teachers that are called as voluntary ambassadors are been paid for the services they offered. Moreover, their salary is not less than that of a teachers working as a state officers. Therefore calling these teachers as voluntary people would be exaggerated. 120 of these schools are in the countries which were established after the breaking of the Soviet Union and 74 of them are in Central Asia. In this continent, there are 1541 Turkish teachers who are educating 15442 students. Fethullah Gülen in his book *Ufuk Turu* suggests that with these schools the people living in Central Asia have received gratitude.²⁵ This feeling of gratitude has started as follows: Gülen admires some of the 11th century philosophers like Ahmet Yesevi, Bahaeddin Nakşibendi and he speaks highly of the dervishes that they have sent to Islamize Anatolia and make it easy to conquest Anatolia at those times.²⁶ For this reason Gülen mentions that these volunteers that are working in Central Asia are accomplishing the same duty as those dervishes. Bayram Balcı indicates that the

²⁴ Balcı, *Fethullah Gülen Okulları*. 190.

²⁵ Eyüp Can, *Fethullah Gülen Hocaefendi ile Ufuk Turu* (İstanbul: A.D. Yayıncılık, 1996), 222.

²⁶ Balcı, *Fethullah Gülen Okulları*.

ultimate aim of Gülen is the service of the Quran that means dissemination of Islam and in Turkish: *tebliğ*.²⁷ I agree with Balcı because Gülen's move into Central Asia gains power with the fact that *tebliğ* is also mentioned and prescribed in the Quran.

To sum up, it can be said that educational institutions such as schools, *dersanes* or dormitories, the student camps and with thousands of *ışık ev* all around the world, constitute the main impetus of the movement and with these key elements, the Gülen community manage to educate its youth that is known as the "Golden Generation".

Within the movement, it is difficult to show a successor of Gülen, or any one who can be considered as his future equivalent. The reason why Fethullah Gülen seems to be the unique leader of his community is according to Nurettin Veren, because he estranged those who are potential rivals, or successors, within the movement. For instance Veren explains that all the close companions of Gülen, except Abdullah Aymaz and İsmail Büyükçelebi are broken hearted due to Gülen's behaviour, and some of them such as Latif Erdoğan and İlhan İşbilen have been expelled from the community.²⁸

According to the community members Gülen is a very successful orator who can affect lots of people around the world. The most telling point, when his sermons and his oratory are considered, is his stagy address to his community and these skills. The historical events of the late 1960s have also played an important role in the growth of the movement since they promoted these conditions for the community to develop. Turkey had a democratic civil society as a result of the 1961 Constitution formed after the military coup. Moreover, during this formative period, the major challenge for the state was the communist insurgency, against which the state elites

²⁷ Ibid, p.273.

²⁸ Erkin, *Fethullah Hocanın Şifreleri: Başmuavini Nurettin Veren Anlatıyor*, 38.

did not hesitate to use Islamic groups. When the Özal government privatized the economy, education, and telecommunication networks, well- organized Muslim groups were empowered to carve new spaces for themselves. Under these better conditions, according to Hakan Yavuz, Gülen was able to translate privately formed piety into public activism. As a follower of Said Nursi, he sought for peace based on justice on earth and the hereafter, through intellectual and spiritual enlightenment.²⁹ Indeed Hakan Yavuz, who argues that Said Nursi was a democrat and an advocate of civil society, describes Fethullah Gülen as follows:

Gülen's tolerance and the value he gives to human kind are admirable. I observed his studies in schools in the Fergana Valley. They were a source of pride for me. His interpretation of Islam can gratify the necessities of our present time. He is a modern intellectual and theologian, whose ears are on the *Quran* and on the Sunna, while his eyes are on present problems.³⁰

Besides this, Şerif Mardin states what he seeks as the contribution of Gülen's articles as follows in an article published in *Zaman* newspaper on September 27, 1995:

The fact that Gülen insists on the importance of the relations between faith and the environmental conditions is among the most important contributions of his articles. This important role of this unifying intelligence that combines history, society and the individual together with faith and religion becomes clearer when it is remembered that there is no such approach among our social scientists... The principle of calculating future interests is attenuating the fabric of the community. Therefore following this path should not be the common goal of the community.³¹

²⁹ Hakan Yavuz and John L Esposito, eds., *Turkish Islam and The Secular State: The Gülen Movement* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2003), intro. XXIX.

³⁰ Armağan and Ünal, eds., *Medya Aynasında Fethullah Gülen*, 184. "Fethullah Hoca'nın hoşgörüsü ve insana verdiği önem gerçekten takdire şayan. Çalışmalarını, gidip Fergana vedisindeki okullarda inceledim. Benim için bir övünç kaynağı oldu. Gülen'in İslam yorumu günümüzün gereklerine yanıt verecek nitelikte. Kulağı Kuran ve sünnette, gözü ise güncel sorunlarda olan çağdaş bir ulema-aydın."

³¹ Armağan and Ünal, eds., *Medya Aynasında Fethullah Gülen*, 126. "Makalelerin önemli katkıları arasında, Fethullah Gülen'in çevre koşullarıyla iman arasındaki bağa ne kadar önem verdiğinin belirtilmesi, bence başta gelir. Tarih, topluluk ve şahıs gibi odak noktalarını seçkin bir görüşle, iman ve din ile ilişkilendirmenin, toplum bilimcilerimiz arasında bile nadiren gördüğümüz bir yaklaşım olduğunu hatırlarsak, bu birleştirici zekânın istisnai yeri daha da netleşiyor... Cemaatin zorunlu olarak birlikte getirdiği 'yarının menfaatlerini şimdiden hesaplama' ilkesi cemaat yapısını zayıflatıyor. Dolayısıyla bu yolda fazla ilerlememek herkesin gayesi olmalı."

In addition to this, Mehmet Ali Birand's thoughts about Fethullah Gülen are as follows:

The tension between the laics and the Islamists is increasing. We are moving towards opposing camps. We place all Islamists, pious people and the radicals who want to use the political Islam on the same category. We undermine their differences. Indeed there are lots of differences among them. There are those who follow a liberal approach, the ones that do not pursue to change the regime in Turkey and also the real democrats. They also state this clearly. I think that Fethullah Gülen is the most evident example of this category.³²

On the other hand, there are those such as Ergun Poyraz, or Hikmet Çetinkaya, who claim that Gülen is a leader whose ultimate aim is to demolish the republican regime and to establish an order of *Sharia*, a state ruled by *Sharia*, and to conquer the world government with these objectives. He builds up his arguments with the words of Fethullah Gülen. For example Gülen says:

According to a hadith quoted by Buharî and Müslim we say: "The Muslim people will be in command sooner or later".³³
Yes Europe is waiting for Islam and in the near future it will legislate its holder.³⁴

In Poyraz's book it is seen that Gülen describes their enemies in his book *Age and Generation (Çağ ve Nesil)* as follows:

The path in front of us is abrupt and very steep... In every corner, a ghoul that is tensed with grudges is waiting for the time to attack and the pretext for it... with the notions of retrogression, reactionaries, theocracy and fundamentalism in their mouths and all kinds of power in their hands.³⁵

³² Ibid., 193. "Laik kesim ve İslamcılar arasındaki gerilim bütün hızıyla sürüyor. Cepheleşmeye doğru kayıyoruz... Bizler tüm İslamcılar'ı, hatta dindarları ve politik İslam peşinde koşup bunu kullanmak isteyen radikalleri aynı potanın içine koyuyoruz. Aralarındaki farklılıkları görmezden geliyoruz. Oysa onların arasında da çok farklı renkler var. Liberal yaklaşımı benimseyenler, ülkenin sistemini değiştirme peşinde koşmayanlar, gerçek demokratlar da var. Bunu açıkça da söylüyorlar. Bence, bu kategorinin en belirgin örneği de Fethullah Hoca'dır."

³³ Poyraz, *Kanla Abdest Alanlar*, 173. "Buhari ve Müslim'de zikredilen bir hadisi şerife dayanarak diyoruz ki: 'Müslümanlar er geç bir gün mutlaka hâkim olacaklar'."

³⁴ Poyraz, *Kanla Abdest Alanlar*, 176. "Evet Avrupa İslam'a gebedir ve yakında hamlini vaz'edecektir."

³⁵ Ibid., 228. "Önümüzdeki yollar sarp ve yokuş... Her köşe başında bir sürü gulyabanî gayzla (kinle) gerilmiş hücum anı ve hücum bahanesi bekliyor... Dillerinde, irtica, gericilik, teokrasi ve fundamentalizm, ellerinde gücün her çeşidi."

In addition to this, it is shown how Gülen explains the method to be pursued in order to achieve these goals as follows:

Our belief in the fact that we will face an awakening as a society is strong. It is obvious that some preliminary arrangements have to be made for coming into being. In this subject, from school to temple, from temple to barracks, from barracks to dervish lodges, all essences in every stratum of the society will be evaluated and it will be benefited from all the current dynamics and aggregations.³⁶

This quotation from Fethullah Gülen is enough to show whether he is a representative of moderate Islam or not. It is clearly seen that Gülen and its community are activists. As Muhabbet Bilici argues, within the community there is an urgent need for service and resource mobilization. Bilici says:

The answer to the question of "what is to be done?" leads the movement towards a designation of community development based on social engineering. Pragmatism of the movement has to do with its commitment to social engineering. In order to generate maximum success within a short time and with the limited resources, the intelligent students, the wealthy businessmen and celebrities are seen as primary target groups... The entire discourse of the community is based on growth. The movement is confident about its ideas and believes that the best way to succeed is to have democracy and a market economy. It is the level of commitment to the ideal of expansion and growth that distinguishes the Gülen group from other Islamic groups because it is this priority that makes the movement more in need of legitimacy and consequently more prone to transformation.³⁷

Other than these issues, it should be pointed out that there have been lots of accusations against Fethullah Gülen. Most of them refer to the issue that Fethullah Gülen is an enemy of the republic and the Kemalist regime as he wants to destroy democracy by using democratic tools. For example, Poyraz claims that Gülen

³⁶ Ibid., 229. "Milletçe bir 'ba'sü ba'del-mevt' (öldükten sonra tekrar dirilmek) geçireceğimize inancımız tamdır. Bu büyük tekevvin (vücuda geliş) için bir kısım ön hazırlıklara ihtiyaç olduğundan şüphe yok. Bu mevzuda, mektepten ma'bede, ma'betten kışlaya, kışladan zaviyeye toplumun katmanlarındaki bütün cevherler değerlendirilecek, bütün dinamiklerden ve birikimlerin hepsinden istifade edilecektir."

³⁷ Muhammet Bilici, "The Fethullah Gülen Movement and Its Politics of Representation in Turkey," *The Muslim World*, Hartford, January 2006.

describes all systems outside the *Sharia* as the devil's path due to these following words:

...If they see the truth they will not follow that way. When a path that belongs to the demon is shown to them, communism, capitalism, fascism or any notion ending with "ism", what so ever they easily adopt it, they accept it as parliament and as the President of the Republic. The path is produced by humans; they embrace the devil's path.³⁸

Besides this, one of Said Nursi's most desired objectives was to establish a university that provided education in the Kurdish language in Van, in the eastern part of Turkey but in the letter he sent to Sultan Abdulhamit, he mentioned this topic while describing that area as *Kurdistan*. For this purpose, Poyraz also accuses Said Nursi, claiming that his aim was to establish a Kurdish state.³⁹

However, it should also be pointed out that in all cases brought in court by the advocates of Fethullah Gülen, the courts have decided that such accusations that are injurious and factitious accusations published in the newspapers should be formally denied. For instance Hikmet Çetinkaya who wrote an article on July 26, 1994 in *Cumhuriyet* newspaper accused Gülen of being an opponent of the laic and republican regime and he claimed that Gülen tries to recruite his followers to the military schools but Çetinkaya was found guilty and the court condemned him to an indemnity for violating Gülen's individual rights.⁴⁰

In order for an analysis, it is crucial to look at the perceptions of this religious leader, at the discourse he formulated and at the followers' perceptions. Before looking at Gülen's perceptions regarding notions such as democracy, the republic,

³⁸ Poyraz, *Kanla Abdest Alanlar*, 243. "...Doğru yolu görseler onu yol yordam edinmeyecekler... Düzen yordam edinmeyecek, o yolu tutup gitmeyecekler... Şeytan saltanatına ait bir yolu tutup gitmeyecekler... Şeytan saltanatına ait bir yol kendilerine gösterildi mi; komünizmdir, kapitalizmdir, faşizmdir, bilmem ne izm'dir, ne izm'dir... Şeytana ait bir yol olanların önlerine getirilip onlara gösterildi mi; hemen yol olarak, yordam olarak onu benimserler, parlamento olarak onu benimserler, Reis-i Cumhur olarak onu benimserler... İnsan karihatından çıkan yolu, şeytan yolunu benimserler!"

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 273.

⁴⁰ İ. Adil Sönmez, *Fethullah Gülen ve Vizyonu* (İzmir: Kaynak Yayınları, 1998), 5.

freedom of conscience, the public sphere, the role of the state and gender and so on it should be pointed out that there is no strict continuity of Nursi doctrine which led to the conformation of Gülen's community. Indeed, the Nursi movement has been divided into several parts within itself.

Furthermore, it is important to point out the fact that the Nursi movement has some degrees of membership. According to Ursula Spiler, these are: the students who are in charge of learning by heart the treatises of Said Nursi, more precisely the *risales*; the members called brothers who educate the students and organize the seminars and conferences while writing articles in the media; the members who constitute the elite group of the movement and called companions and finally a few adjuncts of Said Nursi who appeared after his death.⁴¹

Since the death of Said Nursi, separations have occurred. According to Bayram Balcı, the main reasons for this separation between the master's close friends who are known as the heritors were their attitudes towards the political class and its behaviour or perception of the military coup. But another reason for this division within *Nurculuk* is that, after the death of Nursi, these people started to compete for leadership. Indeed, the first separation was not because of the factors that Balcı indicated, but it was because of the clash stemming from the discussion of how the works of the master were going to be written. Hüsrev Altınbaşak was the leader of the group, which was composed of people who were known as the writers and who were interested in beautiful letters. These people were suggesting that the treatises must be written by hand and they had to run off copies in this format in order for them not to lose their sanctity, but this group could not maintain their position and in the 1970's they disappeared.

⁴¹ Balcı, *Fethullah Gülen Okulları*, 125.

After the first separation, the movement can be considered as divided into three. The New Asian Group (*Yeni Asya*) is one of these three parts. This group of people who are known with their closeness to Demirel, strongly argue that it is necessary to be political. In addition to this, this group in which there were leaders like Mehmet Emin Birinci and Mehmet Kutlular acclaimed some of the coups. For example, Mehmet Emin Kırkınıcı acclaimed the '80 coup and Bekir Berk the '71 coup. Nowadays Mehmet Kutlular is the leader of this group.

“New Generation” (*Yeni Nesil*) is another group which has separated from the New Asian group. Their aim is to publish more prestigious issues and to arrange symposiums with the aim of propagating the ideas of Said Nursi. *Moral FM* and the Istanbul Association of Science and Culture (*İstanbul İlim ve Kültür Vakfı*) are dominated by this group and some of the leaders are Nuri Güleç and Mehmet Emin Birinci.

Another group which is known as *Med Zehra* is inspired from a desire of Said Nursi; the *Medresetüz-Zehra* project, and the publishing house *Tenvir Neşriyat* belonging to this group is directed by Mahmut Sıddık. This group defends that Said Nursi emphasized the Kurdish issue and they suggest that after his death, his works about the Kurdish issue and the Kurdish identity were distorted.

Even though there has been a separation among the inheritors, they emphasize that they are all students of Said Nursi and in this way; they become more effective in influencing the people around them and in legitimating their power.

Fethullah Gülen did the same thing as the other inheritors and he emphasized that he is one of the students of Said Nursi, even though he never saw him in his life. In this way it was easier for him to be the leader of the movement which is named as Neo-Nur because he is the person chosen by Said Nursi. This event happened like

this according to Gülen's book *My Little World (Küçük Dünyam)*. One day Gülen and Mehmet Kırkinci joined a conversation made by one of the students of Bediüzzaman, who came to Erzurum, and some of the names that Gülen remembered from this meeting were Mehmet Şevket Eygi and Osman Demirci. Some time later Gülen learnt from a letter that came from the master that he was appreciated and Gülen writes about this event in his book *My Little World* as follows:

I don't know how long it had been but I suppose that it was a short time. A letter came from the master to Erzurum. I cannot remember whom the letter was dedicated to or to whom the master dictated the letter. But there were names that he send his respects to. At the end he was sending his respects to Fethullah Gülen and Hatem too. When I heard my name I was off the ground I was that happy, I had that much happiness a very few times in my life. Now where is that letter, I don't know that too. But that was enough for me. I didn't quit going to the meetings again.⁴²

Even though Gülen is not the only person that received the respects of the master in this letter, according to Gülen, this letter and the respects from the master show that he is the chosen one.

In the light of these facts discussed above, as the first approximation, it is seen that the Nursi Movement cannot be considered as a movement en bloc. That is to say, it cannot be considered as embodied in one ensemble. It is not possible to talk about a continuum since there have been several divisions among the movement due to their views regarding politics or the policies of the movement that have to be pursued. For instance, the group called *Med Zehra* was bringing the Kurdish issue to the foreground whereas the New Asian group in which there were some leaders such as Mehmet Emin Kırkincılar or Mehmet Kutlular had a more political stand and they

⁴² Poyraz, *Kanla Abdest Alanlar*, 256. "Ne kadar zaman geçti bilmiyorum; fakat kısa bir müddet zannediyorum. Üstaddan Erzurum'a bir mektup geldi. Mektup kime hitaben yazılmıştı, üstad bu mektubu kime dikte ettirmişti hatırlayamıyorum. Fakat selam gönderdiği isimler vardı. Sonunda Fethullah Gülen ile Hatem'e de selam ediyordu. Ben adımın zikredildiğini duyunca ayaklarım yerden kesildi zannettim; o kadar sevinmiştim, hayatımda o derece sevindiğim çok az vakidir. Şimdi o mektup nerededir, kimdedir onu da bilmiyorum. Ancak bu bana yetmişti. Sohbetlere gitmeyi bir daha terk etmedim."

had even acclaimed the 1980 military coup. Hence it can be said that there is no strict homogeneity within the Nursi Movement that has divided into several parts.

Consequently, the Gülen movement should not be considered as a continuum of the Nursi movement and although Fethullah Gülen is described as a leader who follows Said Nursi's leadership; that would not mean that his doctrine is completely the same as Said Nursi's doctrine. For instance, the way Fethullah Gülen and Said Nursi's formulate their arguments are different from one another. Gülen addresses to his readers and his audience in a more moderate tone whereas Said Nursi is mostly known for his rebellious character challenging oppositions. Not only their attitudes but also their objectives can be considered as distinct. Said Nursi's whole life passed with struggles that can be considered as local. For instance, one of his ultimate aims was to establish a Kurdish university in Van and he has written *risales* in order to oppose communism. In addition to this, I think that the fact that all *risales*' covers are red has significance. "Red" was associated in Roman mythology with the god of war, "Mars", and since red is a symbol of war; these *risales* which are covered in red color represent a campaign initiated by Said Nursi against communism. On the other hand, Fethullah Gülen's aims can be considered as more universalistic when compared to Said Nursi's aims. The universities, or the schools, as well as the student dormitories are enough to show the size of this universalistic objective.

Secondly, it should be kept in mind that Said Nursi's position with respect to politics does not show a continuum. More precisely, he was sometimes involved in politics, in being a member of "The Committee of Union and Progress" or "The Union of Mohammed", whereas in some periods of his life he totally avoided it, while he was writing his *risales*. It can be said that even the life of Said Nursi, who is seen as the preceptor of Fethullah Gülen, shows lots of variations with respect to the

position in politics, for this reason it would not be plausible to consider even Fethullah Gülen, and his doctrine, as a permanent train of ideas. That is to say, Gülen's ideas and the community constituting the Gülen movement should not be seen as static or homogenous and it should be kept in mind that Gülen's ideas may change with time.

Third, other than the heterogeneous nature of the Nursi movement from which the Gülen movement grew, it should be pointed out that in order to analyze the Gülen movement with respect to democracy and secularization looking at only Fethullah Gülen's ideas and perceptions as well as his activities or analyzing the Gülen movement through a historical perspective is not sufficient or adequate. For instance, the fact that Gülen claims that he has nothing to do with politics and that he advises his community not to enter politics or debates regarding politics, does not show that he or his community is apolitical. For this purpose, analyzing the Gülen movement while taking into consideration the perceptions of the members of the community that I preliminarily described as heterogeneous becomes more crucial and important for this work. Hence, after making a broad definition of democracy in the following chapter, I will focus on the interviews which I made with the members of the community in order to understand and to achieve a better analysis of the movement, and of its position with respect to notions such as democracy, secularism and the role attributed to the state.

Freedom of Conscience and Religion

Gülen assumes that the liberty and the freedom of the individual is the ability that a man has to decide on his own destiny. Only if an individual has freedom is it possible to say that he or she becomes a human being. Thereby, individuals may be conscious of their acts and they may assume their responsibility. In addition to this, Ünal says

that Gülen considers as the basis and the guarantee of the freedom of the individuals the fact that a human being is conscious of his/her own existence as well as the existence of one God. Gülen says that the degree of the liberty of an individual depends on the level of his/her loyalty to God.⁴³ At this point I argue that the value of an individual according to Gülen depends on faith. That is to say, according to him, an unbeliever would not have the same value as a faithful person.

He believes that freedom of conscience and religion is the freedom of everyone to choose their religion freely, their ability to answer the requirements of the religion that they have chosen in a comfortable way without facing any obstacles, their opportunity to receive the education that they need in order to fully live all the things they believe in, and their ability to transfer the system of their beliefs to others. He indicates that religion should not be seen only as a conscience issue and it has particular and social benefits. In the “New Hope” (*Yeni Umut*) magazine, in his article “The Freedom of Religion and Conscience in a Narrow Frame” which was published on April 2004, Gülen mentioned that some of administrations interfered with people’s religious applications and they made it hard for them to live according to their beliefs and even sometimes did not allow them to:

Nowadays the liberal and secular systems in which religion is totally separated from the government seem as if they embrace the idea that everyone can live according to what they believe, however it is very obvious that in many aspects irreligion is passionately supported and there are as cruel and intolerant attitudes as possible for religion and religious people.⁴⁴

Again in the same article Gülen argues:

The freedom of religion is a conscientious belief and furthermore it is about living all the heavenly principles which we believe came

⁴³ Ali Ünal, *M. Fethullah Gülen Bir Portre Denemesi* (İstanbul: Nil Yayınları, 2002), 464.

⁴⁴ Gündem, *Fethullah Gülen’le 11 Gün*, 322. “Günümüzde tamamen dinin devletten ayrıldığı laik ve liberal sistemler hemen herkesin inandığı şekilde yaşamasını benimsemiş gibi görünse de, pek çok yerde dinsizliğin şiddetle iltizam edildiği, dine ve dindara karşı da alabildiğine sert ve müsamahasız bir tavır takıldığı açıktır.”

from God, and telling them to others by writing or by expressions and no matter what happens fulfilling the rules that belong to it without any interference. On the contrary, in a situation where there are partial obstacles that prevent this or where there are some borders that are wished to be placed around religion with some considerations like this or that area; it is not possible to talk about the freedom of religion and conscience.⁴⁵

While claiming that we should be able to explain our religion to others he most probably tries to find a feasible ground to revitalize Islam and to disseminate it to other people in the world. He does not want to confine Islam to the private domain but rather stresses the role of public religion in the formation of morality, identity and a just community.

Gülen's Perception of Democracy

When the interviewer asked Gülen about his ideas of democracy and democracy in Turkey, he answered that democracy does not have a single type and there are many democracy types like Social Democracy, Christian Democracy and Liberal Democracy. What he answered to one question in the interview shows his perception of democracy:

Why can there not be a democracy that gives importance to Islamic feelings and thoughts and that connects its expansions to it! And in my opinion, in a developed democracy there should be the opportunity to live as a secular person in the world in peace and the opportunity to live the next world as a next world person. Whoever wants to live as a religious man (*sahabe*) should be able to live as a religious man (*sahabe*).⁴⁶

It is clear that Gülen refers to a liberal model of democracy and according to him, the human being is not just a secular identity but at the same time it has an *uhrevi*

⁴⁵ Ibid., 324. “Din hürriyeti vicdani bir kanaat olmanın yanında Allah’tan geldiğine inandığımız bütün semavi esasların yaşanması, icabında onların yazıyla, sözle başkalarına da anlatılması ve ne suretle olursa olsun ona ait kuralların engellenmeden yerine getirilmesinden ibarettir. Aksine, kısmen dahi olsa, onu yaşamaya bir kısım manilerin bulunduğu veya ‘şu alan-bu alan’ mülahazasıyla diyanete sınırlar konmaya çalışıldığı bir yerde din ve vicdan hürriyetinden söz etmek mümkün değildir.”

⁴⁶ Ibid., 102. “İslami duygu ve düşüncelere yer veren, açılımlarını ona bağlayan bir demokrasi neden var olmasın ki!” ve “Bence gelişmiş bir demokraside dünyayı seküler bir insan olarak huzur içinde yaşama imkânı da ahireti bir ahiret insanı gibi yaşama imkânı da bulunabilmelidir. İsteyen sahabe gibi yaşayabilmelidir.”

identity which means a spiritual identity and there is no way to obtain things that religion brings to him/her with secular considerations. In this regard Gülen often emphasizes that an individual needs metaphysics too and he emphasizes that because religion is an invincible power to prevent many harms, the government needs this undefeatable power of religion. He explains this issue as follows

Therefore our statesmen may transform individuals into spiritual human beings by benefiting from the undefeatable principles of religion and in this way they would make the assurance of security and public order easier. This doesn't mean that when there is religious education there will be no need for any laws, adjustments, men of law, and municipal police or law courts. These will still be needed but because it will be helpful to decrease the number of problematic people, their jobs will be easier.⁴⁷

Here, what is suggested by Fethullah Gülen makes the reader think of pragmatism. Pragmatism is the method for achieving the ultimate aim whatever the tools are. Success is the only measuring tool for all activities. Therefore if the activities bring success, whatever is needed as a tool or method can be used and this would not be considered as unfair. More precisely, the most important question in pragmatism is whether something is useful or not. If the answer is "Yes", this is a good thing and truth whereas if the answer is "No", this is wrong and bad. What Maksim Gorki has said to American billionaires simply helps us understand the essence of pragmatism. He said: "The ultimate question is not the method, but it is the conclusion."⁴⁸ In practice, there is no sense in talking about the rightness or falseness of an idea and of a theory because what is important is the fact that whether they are useful or not. Therefore the ultimate measuring tool is "success". What Fethullah Gülen says is the same thing but he does not express it explicitly. While talking about the undefeatable

⁴⁷ Gündem, *Fethullah Gülen'le 11 Gün*, 104. "Öyleyse devlet adamlarımız dinin yenilmez esaslarından yararlanarak, fertleri, birer maneviyat insanı haline getirebilirler ve böylece asayiş ve emniyetin teminini kolaylaştırırlar. Bu din eğitimi verildiği zaman kanuna, nizamla, kanun adamlarına, zabıtaya ve mahkemelere ihtiyaç kalmayacak demek değildir. Bunlara yine ihtiyaç olacaktır ama problemlili insan sayısının azalmasına yardım edeceği için işleri kolaylaştıracaktır."

⁴⁸ Harry K. Wells, *Emperyalizmin Felsefesi Pragmatizm* (İstanbul: Sorun Yayınları, 2004), 19.

power of religion in establishing public order and security, he simply insists on the idea of the success of religion. In other words, according to him, if religion helps to construct a society in which human beings have transformed into spiritual human beings and this brings security as well as the public order then the religious education must be considered as a good thing because what is important for Fethullah Gülen is not the appropriateness of an idea or of a suggestion but its conclusion. At this point, I argue that Fethullah Gülen uses a pragmatic approach in his speeches in order to make his arguments more plausible.

For Gülen, religion is a tool that must be used. Dewey describes religion as in the Oxford dictionary, as the recognition of a high invisible authority to which individuals owe obedience, respect and worship and that determines individuals' destiny.⁴⁹ Fethullah Gülen's ultimate aim coincides with the one suggested by Dewey: A theocracy in which religion forms the central place of individual and social life.⁵⁰ As Dewey, Fethullah Gülen also wants to enlarge the religious sphere. More precisely, every aspect of life can be considered as religious and in that way, the factors of religious life may gain an insight into all aspects of real life. Here I should also point out what these religious factors are. These are submission and invisible powers. Dewey explains how the factors of religion can be used as a weapon in class conflict. The one is the resignation of oneself to God and the other one is the fact that suffering and poverty will be awarded. Fethullah Gülen also refers to these factors in his speeches. For instance, the resignation of oneself has an important place in Gülen's doctrine. This resignation may either to God or to a higher authority such as the state. It is well known that Gülen gives a lot importance to respect for the authority. He insists on the idea of social order. These factors such

⁴⁹ Harry K. Wells, *Emperyalizmin Felsefesi Pragmatism*, 210.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 211.

as resignation and the hope of being awarded in return for poverty and submission are the weapons of Fethullah Gülen in establishing his doctrine.

Gülen indicates that Bediüzzaman was the person who said that 95% of the commands of Islam are about the individual, the rest is about the government, and he says:

If in the democratic frame, there were no restrictions like “public area”, people would live 95 percent and maybe 97 percent of their religion without causing anyone worries.⁵¹

Additionally, he mentions that religion is not only an issue of conscience and it has a place both in social life and in the administration. Gülen, emphasizing that there is no possibility of showing just one way and form of governing people, usually talks about the prosperity period of Islam and he declares that various caliphs were chosen in different ways. He often says that with a conscientious and mental combination Muslims will be developed like in the prosperity period and he suggests that democracy should be developed in a way that will satisfy these needs.⁵² Consequently we can say that Gülen emphasizes the fact that the democracy in Turkey cannot fully satisfy all the needs of individuals yet.

Gülen’s Public Sphere

Gülen says that a Muslim man should have the right to live the individual and family aspects of his own religion freely, without any restriction in any sphere. Here, what Gülen means are the restrictions that prevent the fulfillment of religious practices on the public sphere and he always emphasizes the need for the abolition of such restrictions. Gülen’s opinions may be considered as liberal, but they raise some other questions that were pointed out by Nancy Fraser. According to her, the problem for

⁵¹ Gündem, *Fethullah Gülen’le 11 Gün*, 92. “Demokratik çerçeve içinde kalırsa, ‘kamusal alan’ gibi kayıtlar koyarak daraltmalara gidilirse, insanlar dininin % 95’ini, belki de % 97’sini kimsenin endişelenmesine mahal bırakmayacak şekilde yaşar.”

⁵² Gündem, *Fethullah Gülen’le 11 Gün*, 102.

liberals is how to strengthen the barriers separating political institutions that are supposed to instantiate relations of equality from economic, cultural and socio-sexual institutions that are premised on systemic relations of inequality.⁵³ It is clear that Gülen also wants to strengthen the barriers separating political institutions and he insists on the idea that the state should not intervene on the issue of religious practices but this issue is mostly related to the following question: What counts as a public matter? What, in contrast is private? These questions are also at stake when analyzing Gülen's ideas although he thinks that religious education is not a private matter and it must be organized by the state in order to constitute a public morality, ironically he emphasizes the fact that state interventions regarding the practice of the religion should be abolished. I think the demand for the abolition of some restrictions that prevent individuals from realizing the basic precepts of the religion is quite legitimate, but what is offered by Gülen in this subject is an educational system that is supplied by the state in order to create a society, a morally educated society. Although Gülen emphasizes the importance of a pluralistic society, it seems that at the educational level, what is offered by him responds to the demands of only one public because he does not illustrate how the educational system would be inclusive of all the sectors of society. Nancy Fraser argues that Habermas idealizes the liberal public sphere and she claims that in this situation, non-bourgeois strata would have difficulties in the access to the single public sphere. It means that some groups may be excluded.⁵⁴ Thus, in the educational system of Gülen which gives much importance to religion, although it is not specified on the basis of which religion or culture the educational system should be established, the possibility of exclusion of some groups or exclusion regarding gender would pose some problems. Hence there

⁵³ Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere," In Craig Calhoun, ed., *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), 109-142.

⁵⁴ Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere," 109-142.

is a risk of shifting from one repressive mode of domination as Gülen calls it, to a hegemonic mode of repression. According to Eley, the new political domination, like the older one, would secure the ability of one stratum of society to rule the rest.⁵⁵ At this point the new stratum would be one that has the right of domination as the society forming this stratum may be considered as a society; respecting only Turkish-Islamic identity values. Hence, as Mansbridge argues, deliberation can serve as a mask for domination.⁵⁶

Maybe due to the influence of the years that he spent in the USA, Gülen gives importance to liberal democracy and he suggests that the rights of individuals should be led by the government as much as possible. Gülen's ideas about and perceptions of the basic fundamental principles and the essential values of the republic, and his propositions to create moral norms in the public and private spheres coincide with the ones proposed by Habermas. For instance, Habermas emphasizes that there must be a single public sphere and that the multiplicity of publics represents a departure from democracy. On the other hand, Fraser argues that in stratified societies, the subordinated groups have no area for deliberation among themselves about their needs, objectives and strategies; and in multicultural societies like Turkey for example, a single public sphere will privilege the expressive norms of one cultural group over the others, thus the multiple public spheres will achieve the ideal participatory parity better.⁵⁷ Indeed, as the Turkish state can be considered as a late capitalist society that has not achieved the full and successful institutionalization regarding the new principles and values of the republic, Fraser's criticisms of

⁵⁵ Geoff Eley, "Nations, Publics and Political Cultures: Placing Habermas in the Nineteenth Century," In Craig Calhoun, ed., *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992).

⁵⁶ Jane Mansbridge, "Feminism and Democracy," *The American Prospect*, no.1 (1990), 127.

⁵⁷ Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere," 109-142.

Habermas' bourgeois public sphere that she used in order to show the limits of democracy in late capitalist societies become plausible.

Gülen's Perception of the Role of the State

Patchen Markell, in his book titled *Bound by Recognition* argues that the state is a set of social institutions, which are among the central objects of identification onto which people displace, and through which they pursue the desire for independent and masterful agency.⁵⁸

Gülen mentions that it is necessary to respect government authority and he indicates that he never had a wish to rule the government. He mentions that he perceived Menderes as an Anatolian man and a brave person and that he listened to his speeches with great admiration. Gülen says: "There shouldn't be chaos in our nation; our nation shouldn't be left to anarchy."⁵⁹

Gülen suggests that even though the leaders of the actual regime are not governing in a good manner, we should respect government authority. While claiming that the government authority cannot be established on the basis of violence, pressure or outrage, Gülen points out that the fact that the public calls the government as "our government" is more valuable than the fact that the government calls its citizens as "my public".⁶⁰ What is crucial is that Gülen emphasizes that a nation can be considered as strong only if there is a unity of ideas, emotions and culture; whereas it can be considered as being fragmented and collapsed if it has lost its unity in religion and morality. Thus, religion is a very important concept for the survival of nations and it has a unifying, invincible role that no governor may neglect. Ali Ünal claims that Gülen, rather than being a partisan of state control, is a

⁵⁸ Patchen Markell, *Bound by Recognition* (New York: Princeton University Press, 2003), 25-32.

⁵⁹ Gündem, *Fethullah Gülen'le 11 Gün*, 85. "Milletimiz kargaşa yaşamasin, anarşiye sürüklenmesin."

⁶⁰ Ünal, M. *Fethullah Gülen Bir Portre Denemesi*, 468.

leader who wants the state's service to its nation to be based on individualism. He insists on the following idea:

The state should utilize this power of religion with a good religious education because a human being is not only a worldly being but also has spiritual aspects and it is impossible to gain the virtues that are offered by religion only with secularism.⁶¹

Gülen's respect for government authority can be observed also in his answers to questions about the headscarf issue. Because Gülen does not think of this issue as a religious principle and especially as an issue that is as serious as the five main obligations of Islam, he believes that it is better to let people make their own choice between the headscarf and going to school and he also indicates that his choice is education. Still he said:

Rather than expanding the public area- this is also narrowing the movement space of the people- in this period in which we are moving towards liberalism, it is better if we highlight the law of the individual and the freedom of conscience and provide the people the environment in which they can live according to the procedures, requirements and the issues of their religion freely.⁶²

It can be said that Gülen sees the state as a mediating institution that should resolve the problems within the country but his proposition on the basis of a Turkish-Ottoman nationalism or Turkish-Islamic discourse does not seem to be an adequate system because although this nationalism is not based on blood or race, it may exclude some strata within the society because Gülen believes that the free and democratic society requires public morality and that this morality cannot be effective without religion.

⁶¹ Gündem, *Fethullah Gülen'le 11 Gün*, 104. "İyi bir din eğitimi ile devlet bu gücü arkasına almaya bakmalı, ihmal etmemelidir. Çünkü insan sadece dünyevi bir varlık değildir; onun uhrevi yanları da vardır ve dinin ona kazandırdığı şeyleri seküler mülahazalarla kazandırma imkân ve ihtimali bulunmamaktadır."

⁶² Ibid., 179. "Kamu alanını genişleteceğimize- bu aynı zamanda insanların hareket alanını daraltmak oluyor- liberalizme gittiğimiz bir dönemde ferdin hukukunu ve vicdan hürriyetini öne çıkarırsak, insanlara dinin usulünü de fîrunu da (o esaslara bağlı ama onlara nazaran ikinci dereceden konular) rahat yaşama ortamını hazırlasak..."

When Gülen's speeches and writings are taken into consideration, it can be said that he is not an apolitical man as he claims. On the contrary he is trying to establish a political Islam concept. In Islam, it is known that the people who are governed are called "umma" (*ümmet*) whereas in nation-state the people who are governed are called as "nation". "Umma" is universal Islamic society that considers religious principles as the ultimate guide and "nation" is a set of people with a common language, religion, and culture; that is united for a common purpose and that is living together on a territory with an independent political identity while sharing a common destiny. Hence it can be said that the concepts of "nation" and "umma" concept are in essence conflicting. Fethullah Gülen who considers Islam as the ultimate cement for constructing a society and state is obviously emphasizing the role of religion as well as the "umma" idea more than nation state concept and therefore it is possible to argue that Fethullah Gülen is dreaming of a unique Islamic state that is formed by a unique "umma". The activities of the Gülen community that have reached a global dimension are other factors strengthening this argument.

Gender Issue According to Gülen

In his article, "The Woman in a Narrow Frame", (*Dar Bir Çerçevde Kadın*) Gülen explains his views about women. He suggests that women can undertake any duties, including leading of the government and he says that they are superior to men in some cases and they are worse in some other cases. He believes that the reason why the women have some duties in society is related to their physical structure, and he says that this should be seen as a task distribution between men and women.⁶³ Hence it can be said that although Gülen advocates, in his speeches, the integration of women into the workplace, he does not clearly articulate equality.⁶⁴ For instance, it is

⁶³ Gündem, *Fethullah Gülen'le 11 Gün*, 314.

⁶⁴ Yavuz, "The Gülen Movement," 29.

known that in the religious congregations of the Gülen movement, women and men are seated separately. And co-education started just one or two years ago in the congregation's private establishments that prepare students for various exams like ÖSS. Subsequently we come up with the question: How can a more liberal environment be established in a society where men and women cannot meet each other and exchange their ideas freely? Is this kind of an environment better for discussing the problems and issues of the country? Any society that is formed by a stratum respecting only male domination will probably disregard the rest of the society.

Gülen and Modernism

Progress is one important concept which Fethullah Gülen deals with and comments about. Progress, or the advancement of a nation, depends on the level of education of the members of that community, not only intellectually, but also spiritually. Moreover, it is a must that the individuals of the community reach a consensus regarding the object and the cause. Otherwise it would be impossible to talk about any advanced civilization. More important than knowledge, generations have to be educated, trained and disciplined according to national principles towards a common objective. More precisely, Gülen attaches a lot of importance to the unity of ideas, along generations and to the existence of an orientation towards a common goal. That is, the ancestors and the inheritors must move in the same direction and they have to be in coordination. On the contrary, a generation that does not take into consideration their ancestors' experiences will obviously bring on the retrogression of their nation.⁶⁵ It is clear that Fethullah Gülen who claims that he is always open to change, has conservative ideas and the conservative political style shapes Gülen's

⁶⁵ Ünal, M. *Fethullah Gülen Bir Portre Denemesi*, 463.

public discourse. Conservatism means the opposition to drastic change as well as the complacent embrace of established authority.⁶⁶ Fethullah Gülen is against any drastic change as he claims that unity of ideas and thought along generations is very important. He talks about the coordination of the ancestors and the inheritors. Indeed this conservatism found in Gülen's speeches and thoughts have a root. As it is known, after the death of Said Nursi the community was fragmented into several parts and the Nur movement moved towards the right of the Turkish political spectrum due to the communist threat. Hence it is possible to claim that the movement identity is based on nationalist and rightist conservatism. Indeed, Fethullah Gülen also positions his identity at the heart of conservatism, which according to Muhammet Bilici is a middle way between nationalism and Islam.⁶⁷ Bilici claims that Gülen's public identity is constructed within the amorphous sphere between Islam and nationalism.

According to Ahmet Kuru, Fethullah Gülen is trying to establish a bridge between modernism and Islam. In this regard Gülen is trying to terminate the monopoly of the West and he suggests that Islam should progress. Gülen thinks that Islam is a balance system between spirituality and materialism, between rationalism and mysticism and between this world and the next world, and Gülen indicates that Islam and modern science are closely related to each other.⁶⁸ Accordingly the successes that the schools have achieved in the Olympics and the prizes that are gained can be shown as examples of the progress of Islam that he wished to accomplish and the plan of being a role model for the West. With modern

⁶⁶ Peter Berkowitz, "The Conservative Mind," *Wall Street Journal* (Eastern Edition) New York, NY, 2007

⁶⁷ Muhammet Bilici, "The Fethullah Gülen Movement and Its Politics of Representation in Turkey."

⁶⁸ Ahmet T. Kuru, "Fethullah Gülen's Search for a Middle Way Between Modernity and Muslim Tradition," In Hakan Yavuz and John Esposito, eds., *Turkish Islam and The Secular State: The Gülen Movement* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2003), 117.

communication technologies and even with economic development, it is seen that the schools of Gülen keep up with all economic and technological innovations but in my opinion, there are some contradictions between the social arrangement that they suggest and the life that they actually live. For example, Gülen does not shake hands with women and the members of the congregation are as sensitive as possible in this subject but it is also true that in the TV channels they give roles to women in the programs and they are more flexible in this issue.

Other than that when the concept of civilization is considered, Gülen makes a distinction between modernization and civilization. First of all, he emphasizes that the civilization of a community requires an alternation and a development of ideas, opinions and other humanitarian and ethical aspects but modernization on the other hand requires only change and development of the physical aspects as well as the living means. Secondly he claims that some thinkers are consciously confounding these concepts in order to degenerate the national identity, the ethic of the community and its culture. Indeed, any civilization that is not based on morality and virtue will be transient and will not serve the well being of humanity.⁶⁹

As a result, it can be seen that Gülen thinks that in Turkey the freedom of religion and conscience is not fully obtained and his criticisms are usually about the restrictions in the public sphere and the role of the state, but even though he is critical, he is never as audacious as his master Said Nursi. Besides, when evaluating the articles and essays of Gülen it can be determined that the themes that mentioned most often are tolerance, compassion, love, asking for forgiveness and dialogue. It is possible to say that Gülen has a desire for a society which is ruled according to the fundamentals of Islam. Additionally, when compared to Said Nursi, we might say

⁶⁹ Ünal, *M. Fethullah Gülen: Bir Portre Denemesi*, 467.

that the movement of Gülen is much more successful due to the schools that he has opened and the investments that he has made in education.

According to Hakan Yavuz, the most important areas in which Gülen and the Gülen movement are open to criticisms are gender relations, silence on the Kurdish question, support for the 28 February 1997 soft coup and a duty oriented, non-critical educational system.⁷⁰ I agree with Yavuz that the gender issue, and the non-critical educational system are the most questioned and criticized concepts of the movement, but I will replace the other two criticized areas with Gülen's views on democracy, secularism, the freedom and liberty of the individual and, the distinction of the public and private sphere as well as the role of the state and state institutions. After having discussed how these issues are argued by Gülen, in the second chapter I will discuss democracy while trying to define it in a maximized manner. Finally, the fourth chapter will be the one which distinguishes this work from those that have been realized up until today. In the light of the questions I asked the interviewees regarding these criticized issues that I have already listed above, I will try to find out how these members of the Gülen movement construct their arguments about democracy and secularism and to what extent they can live according to these principles, although it can be said that this movement has already reconciled itself with democracy and secularism as Hakan Yavuz argues.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Yavuz, "The Gülen Movement," 29.

⁷¹ Ibid., 30.

CHAPTER III

CRITICAL CONTENT ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEWS

I have conducted fourteen interviews with Gülen movement members. Although some of the members of the community gave me permission to use their real names, I used pseudonyms for the interviews such as A,B,C and so on. At the beginning, my plan was to conduct ten interviews with ten teachers working at *Beşiktaş Fem Dersanesi* but when I finished six of these, I realized that almost all of the interviews seemed to be similar regarding the answers to my questions. I gave to these 6 interviewees names starting with A and ending with F. Although I thought that these interviews were fruitful, I wondered if I could have some other answers in order to show diversity within the movement if such diversity exists. More precisely I thought about interviewing some other people within the Gülen movement in order to see whether all the Gülen movement members, especially the members forming the intellectual body of the movement such as teachers thought in the same manner. Thus I conducted three interviews with teachers whom I called K, L and M who were not working at *Beşiktaş Fem Dersanesi*. Two of these interviewees were working at *Final Dersanesi* in Beşiktaş and the other one was working at *Kültür Dersanesi* in *Levent*. None of these *dersanes* have any contact with the Gülen movement. Before, these interviewees were working for the *Beşiktaş Fem Dersanesi* but for some reasons that I will discuss late in the following pages, they resigned and now they are working in those *dersanes* that I have mentioned and these *dersanes* have no relations with Fethullah Gülen. However, these interviewees are not totally detached from the movement. This split from the movement contains only a detachment with respect to the profession. It means that only the work environment of these people has changed. Regarding the commitment to the movement there is nothing that has

changed and I learned from the interviews that these teachers are still participating in the meetings and the activities with their colleagues who are still working at *Fem Dersanesi*.

Researcher- Could you please explain why you left the *dersane* if it is not private?

Mr. L- The circumstances necessitated this.

Researcher- But you did not leave the *hizmet*, is that so?

Mr. L- Needless to say that. I can affirm that I changed only my work place.⁷²

One may ask why I conducted these interviews with these teachers and my answer will be as the following. One of the interviewees whose pseudonym is R replied when I asked who the ones that are pioneering this movement:

In general, these are teachers and academicians who are on the foreground of the movement. It is a necessity. The most important element in education is teacher. Without teacher, you can do nothing to students...⁷³

Hence I think that the teachers form the intellectual body of the Gülen movement, since education forms the corner stone of this movement based on volunteerism. In addition to this, although the Gülen movement includes thousands of people, more precisely thousands of volunteers from different segments of society such as teachers, students, religious men, academicians, reporters, officers, women, craftsmen, dealers, and so on, the teachers probably form the group that reads most of the books, or the other written works about the discipline of the movement, as in the books of Fethullah Gülen and Said Nursi.

After having finished these nine interviews with the teachers, I focused on other members such as the craftsman and the dealer or employee that may reflect the

⁷² Interview by author with Mr. L, tape recording, Istanbul, October 2006.

“R- Neden ayrıldığınızı anlatabilir misiniz acaba özel değilse?

L- Şartlar biraz öyle gerektirdi. Ayrılmamız gerekiyordu.

R- Anladım. Fakat yine de hizmetle bağınızı koparmadınız.

L- Tabi ki tabi ki. Yani çalışma yerimi değiştirdim diyebilirim.”

⁷³ Interview by author with Mr. R, tape recording, Sakarya, November 2006. “Genel itibariyle öğretmen ve akademisyenler oluyor birinci planda. Çünkü onların olması icab ediyor. Eğitimde en önemli unsur öğretmendir. Öğretmen olmadan öğrencilere şey yapamazsınız yani...”

movement's perceptions regarding the questions I have asked. I called these participants Mr. P, R and S. I wanted to find out how the people other than teachers thought and how their worldview was shaped. First of all I interviewed an employee who identifies himself as a Gülen movement member and who is working as a mechanical engineer in a company. Then I interviewed two dealers in Adapazarı. These commercial men constitute the "craftsman group" of the movement and their role within the movement is crucial because they form the major suppliers of material resources needed by the movement. This craftsman group is one of the most important segments that supplies material resources to the students who are educated within the movement according to Gülen's doctrine. For instance Mr. R explains it as follows:

...There is a communion among members (here Mr. R refers to the meeting that they organize every week and in which they read and discuss books written by Fethullah Gülen and Said Nursi) and other than that there is trustees. "Trustee" means towering and the most entrusted people of a region. These people are death on the issues related to the movement. Suppose that there are needs for any lighthouse of students; what do they need? The arrangement of furniture is not a problem. When new houses are opened (Here Mr. R mentions the "lighthouses" known as *ışık evler*) the first need is the furniture issue. First of all, this furniture issue such as the need for carpets is solved and then the food assistance is supplied to these houses. For instance, one of our craftsman brothers says that he wants to supply the bread of one house because these are the students, they need assistance. These students go to that bakery and with the salute of our craftsman brother take every day, eight or ten loafs of bread without paying anything. The price of the bread is paid for instance by that craftsman brother.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Interview by author with Mr. R, tape recording, Sakarya, November 2006. "... Bir sohbet olur bir de onun haricinde mütevellî olur. Mütevellî demek o bölgenin, o muhitin biraz daha ileri gelen insanları meseleye vakıf olan insanları diyelim ki her hangi bir ihtiyaç, talebe evinin ihtiyacı var diyelim, talebelerin ne ihtiyacı var, genelde ne yapar talebeler? ... Eşya düzme konusu hiç problem değil. Yeni evler açılınca o sıkıntı oluyor. İlkten eşya düzenleniyor, halısı, mobilyası ne varsa ondan sonra da oraya değişik gıda yardımları yapılıyor. Mesela bir esnaf ağabeyimiz diyor ki ben bu talebelerin ekmek ihtiyacını karşılamak istiyorum. Çünkü bunlar talebe, öğrenci, yardımum olsun diyor. O arkadaşlarımız o fırına gidiyor, o ağabeyin selamını söylüyor her gün itibariyle, her gün 8-10 ekmek alıyor mesela o arkadaşlarımız ücret ödemedi. Onun ücretini o esnaf ağabeyimiz ödüyor gibi."

Another point that I have to make is as follows. While conducting these interviews I also had the opportunity of participating in a meeting organized by the teachers. This meeting took place in Mecidiyeköy, in a student hostel of *Fem Dersanesi* where many high school students were in preparation for the university entrance exam. When I entered the building, near the entrance there was a canteen and there, some young boys were watching a soccer game on TV. It was around nine o'clock in the evening and at that time there were still students in the study rooms with their teachers assisting them. In one of the teachers' room, where there were only some divans, a computer and some bookcases, the teachers whom I would interview were settled. This was not a meeting of trustees in which the funding issue of the movement is discussed, as Mr. R has pointed out that such meetings are held by the trustees and the others are held in order to cultivate themselves in scientific knowledge and the canon law. In the meeting there were around six or seven teachers, within these teachers there were some that work at the *Beşiktaş Fem* or *Levent Fem* and two or three of them were not working in any of the *Fem Dersanesi* but this does not keep them from being within the movement as I have already stated. At this meeting, what I noticed was that these teachers whether working at *Fem*, or not, were reading some book containing narratives regarding anecdotes about some dervish's lives and these narratives were read by one of the teachers. From the interviews I made I learned that the Gülen movement members read in those meetings in general *risales* written by Said Nursi or the books written by Fethullah Gülen and which are called as a series of *ırlanta* (brilliant). Mr. R explained it as follows:

...we cannot deal actively with *hizmet* (service) due to the fact that we are doing trade but a teacher from *hizmet* or a pupil from *hizmet* comes and reads to us some lines or paragraphs from *risales* or

Hocaefendi's books. It leads to good discussions and we try to do this as much as we can. I can say that I am greatly pleased by this activity.⁷⁵

When I participated in that meeting in a student hostel in Mecidiyeköy, I realized that reading Gülen or Said Nursi's books was not a must. After these twelve interviews, I realized that it was necessary to talk to women adherents of the community. The issue of women is a hot debate topic for which the Gülen Movement is often criticized. The role of women within the movement is always questioned, since the movement is accused of underestimating the value of women I asked interviewees some questions about the issue of woman but since these questions were answered by male interviewees, the issue was enlightened only from the point of view of the male members. Hence I decided to conduct some interviews with women members of the movement as I wanted to reveal their role and position within *hizmet* as well as analyze their answers to the questions I had already asked the male members. For this purpose, I interviewed two women whom I called Y and Z who are active within the movement in the zone of Göztepe in Istanbul. These women were adults. One was 47 years old and the other one was 57 years old. The interesting thing was the fact that both of them claimed that they started to live after having encountered the movement. More precisely, they claimed that they were regenerated after encountering the movement in their thirties and forties. For instance:

Researchers- Did your life change after becoming a part of this movement, or were you living as you are now?

Ms. Z- Definitely it changed. When I say my age I mean the years that passed after meeting the movement. That is to say I started to live after I met *hizmet*.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Interview by author with Mr. R, tape recording, Sakarya, November 2006. "Asıl olarak ticaretle uğraştığımız için aktif olarak hizmetle ilgilenemiyoruz ama hizmetin içerisinde olup öğretmen veya talebe arkadaşlar da olabilir onlar gelip birkaç satır risale okuyor veya Hocaefendi'nin eserlerinden okuyor. Öyle güzel bir sohbet ortamı oluyor ve ona devam ediyoruz yani elden geldiği kadar. Bundan büyük biz haz duyduğumu söyleyebilirim."

⁷⁶ Interview by author with Ms. Z, tape recording, Istanbul, January 2007. "R-Hareketle tanışmanızdan sonra hayatımızda değişiklikler oldu mu ya da ne gibi değişiklikler oldu acaba?"

I met one of these women interviewees in a house that belongs to the movement. More precisely it was a house belonging to a member of *hizmet* (service) and it was given to the movement's service. In that house I saw lots of stuff and tissue that were ready to be fastened by these women members and they said that they would be sold in a fête in order to bring some money that would be transferred to the movement's activities. Interestingly the woman interviewee participated in the interview with another female friend and she avoided any eye contact with me as she turned away towards the other side. I thought that this act was a result of a timid nature that I ascertained almost in every member of the movement. On the other hand, the other woman interviewee put me up as a guest in her own home very hospitably at late in the evening while her husband and her son were at home and the interview was realized in the living room one to one. Thus, although I perceive a timid character and nature in members of the movement, especially when talking about the women, it would be wrong to conclude that all the woman within the movement abstain from getting together with men. However, neither of these interviewees shook hands with me due to their life style.

Participation to the Gülen Movement, Is There Coercion?

Since there are hundreds of schools and thousands of *ışık ev* that belong to the Gülen community, though it is not possible to give a definite number, it would not be implausible to claim that there are thousands of people within the community including men and women. I argue that there is a policy followed by the community in order to increase the number of participants, or sympathizers. Almost all the teachers with whom I conducted interviews met the Gülen movement in their

Z-Kesinlikle oldu. Ben tanıştıktan sonraki yaşım diyorum. Yani ben hizmetle tanıştıktan sonra yaşamaya başladım.”

adolescent years, more precisely when they were at high school and they were attending the *dersanes* such as *Fem* in Istanbul or *Sur* in Diyarbakır. It is clear that the *dersanes* are the most important tools that help the Gülen movement to have such a following. It is obvious that there is no definite pressure on the students in the *dersanes* to make them join the community but there are other factors that help the students to become, or to feel as, a part of the community. For example, thanks to the financial and labor force power that is formed by hundreds of teachers or big brothers who are sacrificing their time to help the university entrance exam candidates, the community gains great appreciation both from the students who frequent the *dersanes* and their parents. Mr. M explains how he met the movement as follows:

When I was in the last year of college, there were some contacts and brothers who were going to university. They helped us in preparing for the exams. Due to the fact that my home was far away from the school, I stayed in their homes with these brothers. I graduated from the high school in this way. I was also thinking of becoming a teacher but they also advised me to become a teacher. Obviously, their advice had a great impact on my decision to become a teacher. Although some of them were not attending to the teacher's college, because they were engineers, they helped us as if they were teacher with our courses and in our exams. This good morality and character of these brothers became a model for us. Thus I think I made a good decision. Beginning to work in *Fem dersanesi* also happened in the same manner. During the years I passed in university, I was also with these people. With their advice, I began to work in *Fem*. So I started and I am continuing.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Interview by author with Mr. M, tape recording, Istanbul, October 2006. “*Ben ortaokul üçteyken üniversitede okuyan tanıdıklar vardı, ağabeyler vardı. Üniversitede okuyan arkadaşlar tabi ders yönüyle bizim işte yazılıya hazırlık yönüyle bize yardımcı oldular. Dolayısıyla ailemin de yani okulla arası biraz fazlaydı. Beni de araba tuttuğundan dolayı lise yıllarını üniversiteli arkadaşların, ağabeylerin yanında kaldım. Bu şekilde liseyi tamamladım. Tabi ben öğretmenliği istiyordum ama bunun yanında onların da öğretmenlikle ilgili tavsiyeleri oldu. Onlarda tabi bu konuda öğretmen olmam yönünde büyük bir etki uyandırdı. Onların da zaten bazıları öğretmenlik okumuyordu ama neticesinde mühendis de olsalar, farklı bir bölümde okusalar bizlere bir öğretmen gibi yardımcı oldular. Derslerimizde, yazılılarımız da yardımcı oldular. Bu şekilde o güzel davranışları, o güzel ahlaki bizlere örnek oldu. Dolayısıyla öğretmenliği seçmemde güzel bir isabetli düşüncede bulunduğumu görmüş oldum. Fem dershanesiyle tanışmış olmam da, üniversite yıllarımda da tabi aynı şekilde, aynı kişilerin, insanların içinde bulundum. Fem dershanesinde başlamam o kişilerin tavsiyesi üzerine oldu. Dolayısıyla başladık, o şekilde de devam ediyor.”*

Mr. L says the following:

When I was at last years of secondary or in the first year of high school, there were university students and they were also single; you know it is difficult for singles to find houses for rent but in the course of time there were these people. We may describe them as Anatolian people and they were going to Istanbul Technical University Engineering Faculty. We were also university students and as we were young, we called them our brothers. We had many questions that we could ask them. At the same time, we saw that they were reading some books and they were watching something. We also met with these books in this way as we like them due to the fact that they include topics that were argued within the framework of reason.⁷⁸

Among the interviewees, there were also some teachers who have pointed out that the clemency and the stress on nationalist feelings have affected them deeply in their decisions to join the community. Mr. D says that it is tolerance and clemency that attaches him to the movement.

If, there is one good reason for the fact that I am working in this institution, it is the clemency notion, it attaches me to the community. If there was no tolerance, I would not have been here for years and I would not have this respect for Hocaefendi... Due to the fact that Hocaefendi lives in this manner and writes such things, after I participated on his communions and I witness that he really has such values, I started to work in these institutions.⁷⁹

Other than these participation issues, financial capacity is also important for the community to attain this impact and influence and to gain new adherents or to

⁷⁸ Interview by author with Mr. L, tape recording, İstanbul, October 2006. “Ortaokul lise arası, orta3-lise 1 dönemi civarı, soru soracağımız insan, yani şöyle çevremde oturan, üniversitede okuyan ve yani az çok çünkü bekâr evleri malum, şey değildir, insanlar bekârlara ev vermek falan istemezler. Fakat zamanla baktık çevremizde olan insanlar vardı. Anadolu insanı diyebileceğimiz, aynı zamanda İstanbul Teknik Üniversitesi mühendislik fakültelerinde okuyan üniversite öğrencileri vardı. Tabi biz o zamanlar üniversite öğrencileriydik, doğal olarak yaşımız küçük olduğu için, ağabey olarak adlandırıyorduk. O insanların, şey yani sorularımız oluyordu o insanlara tabi ki. Derste yardımcı oluyordu bizlere. Onlarla şey yaparken baktık onlar bazı kitapları okuyorlar, bazı izledikleri şeyler oluyor, biz de o kitaplarla o şekilde tanıştık, hoşumuza gidip mantık çerçevesinde bazı şeyler işlendiği için oralarda.”

⁷⁹ Interview by author with Mr. D, tape recording, İstanbul, May 2006. “Şimdi benim bu kurumlarda çalışmamın önemli bir sebebi varsa o da bu topluluğun hoşgörü düşüncesidir. Bu hareketin hoşgörü düşüncesidir beni buralarda tutan. Yani bu hoşgörü düşüncesi olmasaydı ben buralarda olmazdım. Hocaefendiye karşı bir iltifat duygusu bu kadar beslemeyebilirdim veya bu kurumlarda bu kadar sene çalışmayabilirdim... Hocaefendinin bu yaşantısından dolayı ve yazdığı kitaplardan dolayı, gördüğümünden dolayı, sohbetlerine katıldıktan sonra ve bu duygulara sahip olduğunu bizzat gördükten sonra ben bu kurumlarda çalışmaya başladım.”

maintain the togetherness of the people within the community. An example that may show how broad the financial means of the community is would be useful. When a new student dorm is needed, the need for an appropriate land or building arises and this problem is easily solved by the community. Ms. Y explains:

The men have said to us that we have to do it with our own resources. Now we are gathering the money for the land. Its price is around 1.600.000 ytl. For each person, there is one meter square and that makes 900 ytl and we try to find it. Maybe I cannot build a dorm but I may find the money needed for one square meter. For instance, one of our sisters has given her bracelet.⁸⁰

Although some movement members express that the tolerance within the movement influences them to enter the community, it is seen that pursuing one's own economic self interest also plays an important role in recruitment to the community. For instance, I cited above that Mr. L has his first contact with the movement due to the difficulty in finding a lodge for a student. An 'Işık ev' became a solution for his residence problems during university years. These houses called 'Işık Evler' have lots of functions other than solving residence problems. In those houses, a communitarian life style is practiced within an alternative private sphere and this creates a milieu in which the movement members feel as protected from the materialist and utilitarian environment. Besides this protective role, those houses also prepare its residents spiritually and intellectually.

Becoming part of the community, either as a teacher or a craftsman, also means an economic guarantee for the members' future. The movement provides its members with job opportunities when they graduate from university and craftsmen

⁸⁰ Interview by author with Ms. Y, tape recording, İstanbul, January 2007. "Onlar da kendi çabamızla yapın dediler. Şu anda yaşadığımız bir şey. Şu anda arsa parası topluyoruz. Şimdi mesela büyük bir meblağ bir trilyon altı yüz milyar gibi büyük bir meblağ arsa. Arsa alındı şu anda. Metrekareye bölündü şu anda. Herkese 900 milyon düştü. Etraftan bunu bulmaya çalışıyoruz... Ben bir yurt yaptıramam belki ama bir metrekareyi bulurum belki üç beş arkadaşımın diye. Metrekaresine 900 milyon yani 900 ytl düşüyor. Bugün işte herkes kendi, mesela bir ablamız kendi bileziğini çıkardı verdi."

find an opportunity to earn their livelihood through trade realized among the members thanks to the close relationships within this informal network. Hence, as Ebru Altınoğlu argues, increased material benefits or the prospects of upward mobility are important motives that attract people to the community.⁸¹ Especially the members of the community who are originally from the deprived Anatolian classes and the periphery find a way within the community to make themselves recognized by the other segments of society.

However, this recognition issue and the mobilization factor are mostly related to the deprived poor classes which come from Anatolia. As I already stated, there are also rich businessmen, or professionals from the media, musicians or sportsmen. These people get a chance to increase their economic prosperity thanks to the solidarity within the movement. Mr. C on the other hand explains how he was affected as the following:

I first watched his cassettes when I was at the second or third grade of high school. I listened to him. Maybe it is due to the fact that I come from a nationalist family and he also stressed these nationalist feelings that I was impressed. Indeed no one told me to do this or that. I think that his speeches really affected me.⁸²

Indeed as Fethullah Gülen claims that there is no pressure in Islam and consequently there is no pressure within the movement, it can be argued that rather than repression, the influence or the impact of the movement on the members or on the potential members is not negligible. It is seen that the only motives that direct people into the community are not material benefits or economic welfare. There is also another motive that influences people. It is the emphasis on national feelings and

⁸¹ Ebru Altınoğlu, "Fethullah Gülen's Perception of State and Society," (MA Thesis, Boğaziçi University, 1999), 53.

⁸² Interview by author with Mr. C, tape recording, Istanbul, April 2006. "*Eserleriyle değil de kasetiyle tanışmam lise iki lise üç yıllarındaydı herhalde. Bir yerden denk gelmişti öyle bir kaset. Onu dinlemiştim, orda hoşuma gitmişti söyledikleri. Belki aile itibariyle milliyetçi bir aile olmamız, onunda milliyetçi vurgular üzerinde bulunması benim üzerimde etkili olmuştur. Yoksa birileri şöyle yap böyle yap dediği için değil yani. Onun bizzat kendi sözlerinin etkili olması diye düşünüyorum.*"

becoming part of a social network with a mission that makes people feel lucrative for the society. As Uğur Kömeçoğlu claims:

Participants at the core of the Fethullah Gülen community do not generally expect material rewards, since they plan their future through missionary projects based on Islamic altruism.⁸³

When women are concerned, I argue that they are also an important source of recruitment for the community. More precisely, they can be considered as a useful factor that helps the community to grow since they have an impact on their husbands and on their children. The women within the communities arrange the meetings that may include not only the members of the community but also the potential adherents or others. The key element used again is tolerance. Although there may sometimes be visitors who criticize these women for being under the pressure of men or the community, they do not answer back or start an argument. Ms. Y explains it as the following:

In general we prefer to read *risales*. The meetings may be at nights with the people we recognize as a family. The men and women are meeting in different rooms. In the mornings, we do it within the women. In the later meetings, we offer these women the books of Fethullah Gülen. We offer or we distribute them after we buy them...At home, the influence of the women is great. I may give ten examples. A woman came to the communions. Then she sent her children to the brothers and daughters. Then, she sent her husband and her family became a family of service...Of course we do not argue with them. We know that we have to first give them 'faith' and they will change their minds. For us to give her the faith, she has to come to our meetings. Therefore we are gentle and we do not oppose them. We always agree with them whatever they say in order to prevent a dispute and we try to win them over.⁸⁴

⁸³ Uğur Kömeçoğlu, "A Sociologically Interpretative Approach to the Fethullah Gülen Community Movement," (MA Thesis, Boğaziçi University, 1997), 10.

⁸⁴ Interview by author with Ms. Y, tape recording, Istanbul, January 2007. "*Genelde Risale-i Nur okumayı tercih ediyoruz. Geceleri oluyor ailece görüştüğümüz insanlarla. Erkeklerle kadınlar ayrı odalarda yapıyoruz. Gündüz hanımlarla oluyor. Sonra biraz ilerledikten sonra o hanımlara Hoca efendi'nin kitaplarını veriyoruz. Hediye ediyoruz ya da satın alıp dağıtıyoruz... Çünkü evde kadının etkisi çok fazla olduğu için mesela şu anda on tane örnek verebilirim. Hanım geldi sohbetlere. Çocuğunu ablalara, ağabeylere gönderdi. Arkadan eşini sohbetlere gönderdi ve aile hizmet ailesi oldu. Hanımın rolü çok büyük. Yani aileyi kurtarmak açısından çok büyük...Tabii ki de onlarla tartışacak değiliz. Biz biliyoruz ki önce ona imanı vermemiz lazım ki bakış açısını deęiştirsin. İman vermemiz için de sohbetlerimize gelmesi lazım. Onun için alttan alıyoruz yani hiç sesimizi*

Here, from what Ms. Y explains, it can easily be understood that the Gülen Movement members act according to a strategy. The ideal behaviour accepted and appropriated by the participants is tolerance towards others. Hence prudence becomes the key concepts of their tactics to get new participants. By idealizing such prudent and strategic behaviour, movement members admit that they try to catch the opportunities that may emerge as they take into consideration the tensions or the differences that may exist within the society.

To sum up, it can be said that the entrance to and the exit from the community is not realized by force. However there is a powerful influence that directs people into the community when they met with the movement for the first time. Due to economic capacity and manpower, the Gülen community does not face any difficulty in incorporating people. Furthermore, when the deficiencies of the Turkish education system are considered, institutions such as the student dormitories and the *dersanes* constitute with their attractive power the major magnet for the future adherents of the community.

Loyalty to Gülen and the Impact of His Doctrine on the Community:

Authoritarianism?

The community members' perception of Fethullah Gülen and Said Nursi is crucial because it helps us to understand to what extent the Gülen movement members act for the common purpose described by Fethullah Gülen.

When the interviews are analyzed, it can be seen that among the members of the community there is a great loyalty to Gülen and Said Nursi as well as devotion to the community. For them, Fethullah Gülen is a great leader of our contemporary time who has even gained the respect of the Pope. Mr. D illustrates this as follows:

çıkarmıyoruz. Genelde ne deseler haklısınız diyoruz hani tartışma boyutuna asla girmiyoruz. Kazanmaya çalışıyoruz.”

I think *Hocaefendi* is a different person. A unique person of our country who talks about goodness, a man who gives without taking ,who sacrifices himself for people to live together peacefully and a man who can express himself with his ideas. He is a great man. He is really one of the rare values of our country that has been accepted. He is a man that gained recognition. The Pope is the leader of the Christian world. The fact that these two leaders met cannot be considered as peculiar to themselves.⁸⁵

Another interviewee, Mr. C, talks about these two people as the leaders of the world: “First of all, a leader, two leaders of the world come together. That is a not a simple thing.”⁸⁶ Here the fact that Mr. D and Mr. C point out the importance of the meetings of these two leaders has significance. The members of the community claim that Fethulah Gülen is the representative of the Muslim world. So it is not the head of the religious affairs directorate but Fethullah Gülen who has been considered as the representative of the Muslims. Indeed, as it is known, since the abolition of the caliphate in Turkey after the foundation of the Republic there is no official head for the Muslim world as the caliphate. So I do not claim that the head of the religious affairs directorate has to be considered as the leader of the Muslim world. However, if someone has to be considered as the representative of the Turkish Muslim people in the world, this should naturally be the official head of the religious affairs directorate. In addition to this, the man with whom Gülen is compared with respect to power is the Pope, the leader of the Christian world.

Other than being considered as a very powerful and strong figure in the world by the community members, Gülen is a leader who is described as sunshine and he resembles to *asrın kutbu* which means more precisely the authority of the era. Mr. A

⁸⁵ Interview by author with Mr. D, tape recording, Istanbul, May 2006. “*Ben hocaefendinin farklı bir insan olduğunu düşünüyorum. Hakikaten almadan vere, iyilik üzerine konuşan ve insanların bir arada yaşaması için kendi hayatını ortaya koyan, fikirleriyle kendisini ifade edebilen, ülkemizin ender insanlarından bir tanesidir. Kendisi bir büyüktür. Hakikaten ülkemizin nadide şahsiyetlerinden biridir ve kabul edilen bir şahsiyettir. Fethullah gülen kabul edilen bir şahsiyettir. Şimdi Papa Hıristiyanlığın başındaki insandır. İki büyük şahsiyetin bir araya gelmesi sadece kendileriyle ilgili bir olay değildir.*”

⁸⁶ Interview by author with Mr. C, tape recording, Istanbul, April 2006. “*Öncelikle bir lider, dünya lideri olan iki kişi bir araya gelmişler. Basit bir şey değil herhalde.*”

says: “Today, not recognizing Said Nursi or Fethullah Gülen means: The sun is shining but you do not see it, your eyes are closed.”⁸⁷ Besides this, Ms. Y says:

My father always says that he used to go to his sermons. They were saying: “Only at the age of twenty we listened to him; we thought that the axle, the authority of the century was coming”⁸⁸

The reason why these compliments are made should also be pointed out. The community members attribute to Fethullah Gülen such characteristics because they consider him as their guide or sheikh, which means *Mürşit*. Consequently, they identify themselves as his apostles. Ms. Y says:

Since I have accepted a person as a guide or sheikh and have accepted to follow him as my ultimate aim, we respect him and accept that he is a genius as all he says is realized. For that reason, whatever he thinks about a subject, I also think in the same way.⁸⁹

Finally, Mr. R indicates that a person who has read the *risales* written by *Üstad*, meaning “grand master”, that is to say Said Nursi, can be considered as a savant or as a man of letters:

For the fact that the *risales* are crucial works, our grand master claims that the ones who read these works and understand them would become savants in our time. They reach such a level. I really think in the same way because you become so different than the others. It offers you a different point of view, a different perspective when compared to the others.⁹⁰

At this point, it is possible to argue that although Gülen calls this movement a civic organization that is formed by voluntary people, the Gülen movement shows the

⁸⁷ Interview by author with Mr. A, tape recording, Istanbul, February 2006. “*Bugün Said Nursi’yi tanımamak, Fethullah Gülen’i tanımamak demek, dünyada güneş doğuyar ama sen bunu görmüyorsun, gözlerini kapatmışsın demek anlamına geliyor bence.*”

⁸⁸ Interview by author with Ms. Y, tape recording, Istanbul, January 2007. “*Hoca efendinin Erzurum’daki vaazlarına gittiğini babam hep söyledi. ‘Daha yirmi yaşında biz onu dinledik. Asrın kutbu geliyor dedik’ diyorlardı.*”

⁸⁹ Interview by author with Ms. Y, tape recording, Istanbul, January 2007. “*Yani ben şimdi mademki bir insanı kendime mürşit etmişim, Hoca efendinin arkasından gitmeyi gaye edinmişim, ona saygımız sevgimiz var ve kabul ediyoruz onun bir deha olduğunu, söylediklerinin gerçekten hepsinin gerçekleştiğini. Onun için o her konuda ne düşünüyorsa onu düşünüyorum.*”

⁹⁰ Interview by author with Mr. R, tape recording, Sakarya, November 2006. “*Eserler ciddi bir eser olduğu için hatta Üstad Hazretleri zamanımızda bu eserleri okuyup anlayan insanlar ciddi âlim olurlar diyorlar yani. Âlim olma seviyesine geliyorlar. Hakikaten de öyle olduğunu zannediyorum. Çünkü diğer insanlardan çok farklı oluyorsunuz. Diğer insanlardan farklı bir bakış, görüş açısı size sunuyor.*”

characteristics of a religious sect. Manoechehr Dorraj describes sects as communities that are trying to maintain their moral purity while separating themselves from the mainstream culture in the respective communities in which they live. The participants of a sect feel morally superior to others and they have a desire to change the world and to recreate it according to their own belief and faith as they also claim a unique access to truth and salvation and consciously or unconsciously they think of themselves as elite groups.⁹¹ Here it is clear that Mr. R differentiates the participants of the movement from the others since they have knowledge on *risales* written by Said Nursi. More precisely, he claims that they are morally superior.

Other than these characteristics that are peculiar to sects, it is also evident that in all sects there is a necessity for a high commitment from their members and the existence of a strong sense of identity, an identity that is based on precluding and subordinating all other loyalties to the ultimate loyalty, to the professed goals of the organization.⁹² The participants of the Gülen community, like in any sect, subordinate their loyalty to the ultimate loyalty, which is the duty of disseminating Islam, which means *tebliğ vazifesi*, and to the authoritarian religious leader Fethullah Gülen. At this point their ideological inspiration becomes their charismatic leader Gülen and the reinterpretation of sacred writings by Said Nursi.

Citing how the Gülen community perceives Fethullah Gülen and Said Nursi helps to reveal to what extent the community members unite strongly within each other for a common purpose. Not only the perceptions of the community members but also their living quarters and their daily lives are shaped by the impact of Gülen's doctrine. In this context, the movement can be described as a corporatist movement.

⁹¹ Manoechehr Dorraj, "The Political Sociology of Sect and Sectarianism in Iranian Politics," *Journal of Third World Studies*, Americas, (Fall 2006), 95-118.

⁹² *Ibid.*, op.cit.

One of the most comprehensive definitions of corporatism can be cited as the one offered by Philippe Schmitter. Schmitter describes corporatism as follows:

Corporatism can be defined as a system of interest intermediation in which the constituent units are organized into a limited number of singular, compulsory, non-competitive, hierarchically ordered, and functionally differentiated categories, recognized or licensed by the state and granted a deliberate representational monopoly within the respective categories in exchange for observing certain controls on their selection of leaders and articulation of demands and supports.⁹³

From this perspective, corporatism can be summarized as an ideology that emphasizes the importance of solidarity between different groups in a society for the common interest and it opposes any conflict or polarization between different segments of society and it is possible to define the Gülen community members' opinions as corporatist since corporatism is contrasted with pluralism. Indeed, nationalistic ideologies always refer to corporatism in some manner. In some periods, these ideologies are coexisting with authoritarian or totalitarian regimes.⁹⁴ What has been said by Ms. Y above clearly illustrates this authoritarian character that has gained supremacy within the movement.

However, it cannot be said that all members of the community think in the same manner. There are those who do not agree with Fethullah Gülen in some issues such as the presidential system for example. Ms. Y, one of the interviewees with whom I have talked, does not think that the presidential system is suitable for Turkey and in that point he opposes Gülen. Hence it is not possible to claim that all members of the community are affected in the same way by Gülen's doctrine. It can be said that the craftsmen people, men or women, seem to be mostly out of the area of impact. Indeed it can be concluded that in general, Fethullah Gülen is considered by the members of the community, especially by the teachers, as a great leader, a sheikh

⁹³ Kenneth D. McRae, "Comment: Federation, Consociation, Corporatism: An Addendum to Arend Lijphart," *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, (1979), 517.

⁹⁴ Murat Belge, "Korporatizm," *Radikal Newspaper*, 17.10.1998.

or as a savior for the Muslim world as well as the unique spokesman of the Muslim world.

Education

The education is the leading and the most crucial domain to which the Gülen movement gives importance, and in which the community is extremely active with hundreds of private schools, student houses, dormitories, preparatory schools for the university entrance exams and universities opened all over the world. In these institutions, there are lots of teachers disciplined according to Gülen's doctrine and they have a common intention. Although some of these teachers are very successful in the university entrance exam, they choose to be teachers either in *dersanes* or in schools in any part of the world. It is clear that these teachers make a choice, even at the beginning of their careers. Obviously there must be a common incentive that directs these people to become teachers. So what could this incentive be? The answer is clear. These people consider the profession of teaching as a prophet's profession. For instance, Mr. L explains how he perceives the profession of being a teacher as follows: "Since I am from a pious family, I think that the profession of teaching is a prophet's profession and I chose to be a teacher."⁹⁵

Besides asking why these people have chosen to be teachers, I also asked them some questions regarding education. These questions were as follows:

- The educational system in Turkey, is it successful in promoting a religious education for youth?
- The educational system, should it be controlled by the private sector or by the state?
- Could you answer the same question regarding the social security system and the health system?
- What should an ideal educational system be?

⁹⁵ Interview by author with Mr. L, tape recording, Istanbul, October 2006. "*Ben mütedeyyin bir aileden olduğum için öğretmenliğin aynı zamanda bir peygamber mesleği olduğunu düşündüğümden dolayı böyle bir seçimim oldu.*"

-Do you think the ban on the headscarves in the public sphere prevents people from living their religion freely? Could you share your ideas about the headscarf issue in Turkey?

-What do you know about the creation and the evolution of the human being? In what basis should the youth be educated and do you think that the Turkish educational system is satisfactory in this issue?

One important point that emerges almost in all the interviews is the fact that the community is not satisfied with the education given in Turkey. They all claim that what is given to the students in schools is only schooling and not civility or discipline. They all emphasize the importance of the educational system in disciplining children and they claim that religious education should be more effective. At this point, Mr A says:

I guess if the religious education was sufficient, a student would not stab his or her friend in any classroom. I mean if he had some faith of if he had been given some faith through experience, it was very important, I insist on living the religion, not only by showing the students the cultural aspect of Islam but also by showing them a model that is living Islam, these acts would be more limited.⁹⁶

Here, Mr. A points out a common desire of the community members. That is to say they want the religious education to be given to the students more effectively in schools and in addition to this; they want the educational system to be a model of “living Islam” for the students. They consider themselves as the missionaries of Islam and although they do not express themselves through direct action, they become creators of social life through their production and contestation of social practices, norms and institutions as Ebru Altınoğlu indicates.⁹⁷ As they have a clearly defined goal such as the dissemination of Islam, and they have a shared belief in the

⁹⁶ Interview by author with Mr. A, tape recording, Istanbul, February 2006. “*Ya zannedersem, eğer yeterli olsaydı, bir çocuk kalkıp da okul sıralarında kendi arkadaşına bıçak çekiyorsa, kalkıp da böyle şeyler oluyorsa, bence bu yani birazcık inanç olsaydı, bu inanç kendisine verilmiyor değil yani, verilseydi ya da yaşanarak verilseydi bu çok önemli yani, ben diyorum ya sürekli yaşama üzerinde duruyorum, kültür Müslümanlığı değil, yaşayan Müslüman olarak çocuk kendine bir model görseydi, böyle şeyler daha az olurdu. Dinin burada önemli bir faktörü var.*”

⁹⁷ Altınoğlu, “Fethullah Gülen’s Perception of State and Society,” 55.

Islamic faith and morality, are united in protecting and disseminating this collective identity, in the pursuit of this goal of *tebliğ*, the field of education becomes the most attractive field in which the Gülen movement carries out its activities.

In addition to this, the community members want the state per se rather than any other institution to be active in giving this religious education. For instance, Mr. K says:

My thought in this subject is that religious education should be given by the educational system of the state. Whereas the people should be free to choose whether to take these courses or not according to their beliefs, the ones who take these courses should be offered Quran and Arabic courses in the schools. Consequently no one would have the opportunity to misuse it. If something is not given legally, people search for other ways. So if there is something wrong that may bother the state echelon, this will be averted at the beginning as the ones who want this education will have the chance to receive it.⁹⁸

These phrases show that the ultimate desire of the community is the realization of religious education while giving people enough space to live according to it. Hence, the fact that one of the missions of the schools opened by the community is to offer this religious education while being a model of religious life is not surprising. For instance Mr. S claims:

I am glad to meet these people because thanks to this education given by the community, I learned the value of being a human, a Muslim... Again thanks to this education I learned the difference between being disciplined and being educated.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ Interview by author with Mr. K, tape recording, Istanbul, September 2006. “*Bu konuda aslında benim eskiden beri düşüncem şu, kesin düşüncem, dini bilgileri aslında devlet müfredatı içerisinde yani eğitim müfredatı içerisinde olmalı, tamamen mesela gayrimüslimler olsun, kendini farklı inanç sisteminde kabul edenler olsun, bunlar o dersi alıp almamakta serbest olmakla birlikte alanların da yani normal müfredat içerisinde bir Kuran eğitimi, bir Arapça eğitiminin bence verilmesi lazım ki, dışarıdan isteğe bağlı olarak dışarıdan insanlar bunu suiistimal edecek kanallara gitmesinler. Yani bir şey kanuni olarak yoksa doğal olarak insanlar başka taraflara gidiyorlar. Bu seferde yani hem devlet kademesindekilerin rahatsız olacağı yanlış işleri yapanlar da çıkıyorsa eğer, çıkıldığı iddia ediliyor, onların önüne geçilmiş olur. Hem de eğitim almak isteyen insanlar eğitimini alır.*”

⁹⁹ Interview by author with Mr. S, tape recording, Sakarya, December 2006. “*Oradaki insanlarla olmaktan da mutluyum ve tanıştığım için de mutluyum. Çünkü bütün insan olmanın değerini Müslüman olmanın değerini ve Müslümanlığın çok değerli bir vasıf diyelim, olduğunu buradaki öğretim hayatında öğrenmiş bulunmaktayım... Ve yine oradaki öğretmenlerimizin sayesinde eğitim ve öğretimin farkını öğrendik.*”

In addition to this Mr. S clearly indicates what should be the mission of an effective education should be with these words:

You asked whether I am satisfied with the educational system or not. Of course you see I am not... There are lots of issues that we have to find out such as the identity issue. When you go abroad, they ask you not whether you are Turkish, Kurdish or German but whether you are a Christian, Muslim or Jew.¹⁰⁰

As it is clear, education for the community is a field through which individuals have to find their own identities. How can this identity construction be made? In the light of the words that I cited above, it can be said that the community's answer is clear. Education should offer the students a Muslim identity and this identity should be given by the state. As I quoted above from Mr. S, education is seen as the ultimate factor that would allow individuals to gain their own identities. However, what is mentioned by Mr. S and the other interviewees is only Muslim identity and their answers remain unclear when the other religious groups' education is concerned. Therefore I argue that the educational system proposed by the community offers a division of the society into segments shaped by religion. That is to say, religion becomes a factor that segregates individuals into some groups. At this point, how the community perceives the other is important. Although the Gülen movement members seem to consider people as they are without taking into consideration their sentiments and opinions due to the fact that they perceive all of them as human beings, does not mean that they consider the believer and unbeliever as equals. Again as Mr. S indicates in the above quotations, it is seen that the basic criterion of evaluating people is whether they are Muslims or not. He emphasizes that he learnt

¹⁰⁰ Interview by author with Mr. S, tape recording, Sakarya, December 2006. "...eđitim sistemi yeterli midir, öğretim sistemi yeterli midir diye sordunuz. Tabi ki görüyorsunuz ki yeterli deđil ta baştan sonuna kadar yeterli deđil... Kendimizin bulması gereken çok yönümüz var bunlar içersinde demin bahsettiđimin üzerinde duruyorum ki, kimlik noktası çünkü yurtdışına çıktığımızda sen Türk müsün, Kürt müsün Alman mısın diye sormuyorlar sen Hıristiyan mısın, Müslüman mısın, Yahudi misin nesin sen?"

the value of being a human being- a Muslim through education within the community. Hence it is clear that there is an equation of these two concepts. Humanity is equated with being Muslim.

Other than these issues, when the debate between evolution and creation is considered, there is a consensus among the community members. First of all, almost all of them defend the idea that the educational system should offer an education based on evolutionary theory and they claim that the two theories should be explained to the students and the students would obviously choose the one which is most plausible, which means “evolution”. For instance one of the interviewees considers the theory of evolution as a theory that belongs to unbelievers. Mr. M says:

Indeed it is a theory, it has never been proved and can never be proved. It has come to this point due to the support of some infidels for Darwin’s theory, which is not scientific and contains lots of mistakes. Of course, we know that it is defended mostly by the infidels. They always supported it. Even the Christians in America or in Europe do not want the theory of evolution. They do not accept it.¹⁰¹

In addition to this, according to the community members the falsity of the theory of evolution is also demonstrated. Mr. L claims:

Within the works of Bediüzzaman and Fethullah Gülen we have enough and clear information with respect to evolution. Accordingly, I will definitely be on the creation side.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ Interview by author with Mr. M, tape recording, Istanbul, October 2006. “*Neticede bu bir teori sonuçta. Yani hiçbir zaman kanıtlanmamış, kanıtlanamayacak olan bir teori. Yani Darwin’in zamanında yapmış olduğu bilim dışı bilimsel olmayan çok yanlış düşüncelerin birileri tarafından savunulması, ateistler tarafından savunulması neticesinde bu seviyeye gelmiş. Tabi bu konuda inancı zayıf olan insanların her zaman arkasında olduğunu gördük. İnancı zayıf olan insanlar her zaman bunu körüklediler. Avrupa’da, Amerika da dahi koyu Hristiyanlar, yani inanç sahibi olan insanlar zaten istemiyorlar. O teoriyi zaten kabul etmiyorlar.*”

¹⁰² Interview by author with Mr. L, tape recording, Istanbul, October 2006. “*Çünkü ben okuduğum eserlerde gerek Bediüzzaman eserlerinde gerekse Fethullah Gülen Hocaefendinin eserlerinde çok net bir biçimde ikna edici biz bilgilere sahibiz. Dolayısıyla evrim konusunda ben kesinlikle yaratılış safında yer alacağım.*”

Here what should be taken into consideration is that the community members think of the books of Said Nursi and Fethullah Gülen as the ultimate reference point to falsify a theory. Rather than positivist science, they mostly refer to their leaders.

Secondly when the coeducation is considered, the community members prefer an educational system in which boys and girls are educated separately from each other. Under the pretext of the problems of teens emerging in adolescence due to coeducation, they claim that the separate education of the two sexes would be more successful. They try to strengthen this position by giving examples from history such as some old schools like *Istanbul Erkek* or Notre Dame de Sion high schools. They claim that the success of these ancient schools stemmed from the fact that there was no coeducation there. For instance Mr. K claims:

When there was no coeducation in schools like Kabataş or Istanbul or Cambridge and Oxford maybe, I am not sure, or in schools like Notre Dame, we see that they were brand marks. When we look at them now, they do not have that success. I think that there was a separate education in the name of educational success and when education became mixed, I think that the success level has fallen to some degree.¹⁰³

The most criticized subjects by the community members seem to be the coeducation issue and the headscarf problem. They are claiming that the headscarf should not be banned in schools and they are in general against coeducation, claiming that it is a factor that reduces the quality of the education. More important than that, almost all members of the community think that religion, more precisely religious education, should be effectively used by the state in order to maintain the order within society.

¹⁰³ Interview by author with Mr. K, tape recording, September 2006. “*Karma eğitim olmadığı zaman ayrı eğitim olduğu zaman Kabataş Erkek Lisesi, İstanbul Erkek Lisesi birçok eğitim kurumu örneği verilebilir. Cambridge Üniversitesi, Oxford da mı öyleydi tam hatırlamıyorum şimdi. Birçok üniversite... ya da Harbiye’deki Notre Dame gibi bunlardaki eğitim ve sonuçlarına bakarsak o dönemki bu okullar bir markaydı ama şimdi İstanbul Lisesi şimdi Kabataş Lisesi şimdi Notre Dame’a baktığımız zaman çok bir şey olmadığını görüyoruz. O bakımdan ben tamamen daha önceden eğitim bazlı düşünülerek ayrı yapıldıklarını görüyorum ve birleştirildiği zaman da bunun yani belli bir yüzdesi vardır ama başarı oranı düştüğü kanaatindeyim.*”

However, these members do not specify which religious education should be given to students and this point seems to be the weakest part of their argumentation.

To conclude, it can be said that the Gülen community does not seem to be satisfied with the modern educational system in Turkey. Indeed according to Thomas Michel, Fethullah Gülen regards the development of education in Turkey throughout the twentieth century as an unhealthy competition among mutually exclusive systems that have produced graduates who lack an integrated perspective about the future and perpetuate the existing divisions in society.¹⁰⁴ Hence Gülen's ultimate aim in education can be summarized as the integration of young people with their past and their preparation for the future. Within this context, the Gülen community sees teachers as the guides and movers of society and in an educational system that is offered by the community, the long religion- science conflict can come to an end. Therefore Ahmet Kuru claims that it can be argued that the Gülen movement searches for a middle way between modernity and Muslim traditions.¹⁰⁵ According to Nilüfer Göle, Gülen shakes the dichotomist perception of modernity and Islam and he tries to end the western monopoly on modernity and aims to add an Islamic set of meanings to it.¹⁰⁶ Obviously the most effective tool that the movement holds in its hand is this educational system offered by the community to educate the golden generation.

The Role of Islam as the Cement of Society and Islam in Nation- Building During Ottoman and Turkish Republican history, Islam and religious institutions have always played an important role in socio-cultural life. However with the Kemalist reforms, there has been a drastic change in the functions and role of Islam.

¹⁰⁴ Thomas Michel, "Fethullah Gülen as Educator." In Hakan Yavuz and John Esposito, eds., *Turkish Islam and The Secular State: The Gülen Movement* (New York: Syracuse University Pres, 2003), 73.

¹⁰⁵ Kuru, "Search For a Middle Way," 117.

¹⁰⁶ Nilüfer Göle, "Muhafazakârlığın Manalandırıldığı Modernlik." In Eyüp Can, ed., *Fethullah Gülen Hocaefendi ile Ufuk Turu* (İstanbul: A.D. Yayıncılık, 1996), 205.

It is known that Kemalism attacked Islam and this stemmed from an understanding that religion had played a conservative role in the socio-political structure of the Ottoman Empire because conservatism was defined by Kemalism as anti-westernization. Indeed as westernization was the ideology of the Kemalist revolution, the secularization program of the Kemalist regime received at the beginning, the help of the religious officers, that is to say clerics, during the War of Independence to mobilize the masses around nationalist goals. Thus, at the beginning of the nation-building program, religion, more precisely Islam was used by the nationalists for practical purposes and this can be considered as a short term tactic. Once the Kemalist regime gained power, Kemalist reforms have put religion under government control. From then on, since 1926, the Turkish state has used the educational system and the media to create and disseminate a national identity. This state-based nationalism has not only excluded Islamic institutions from political and social life but has also controlled the dissemination of Islamic knowledge by strictly monitoring and controlling Islamic teaching through the Directorate of Religious Affairs.¹⁰⁷ Kemalist reformers who were trying to modernize Turkey perceived science as the key concept for the liberalization of Turkish society from the shackles of tradition, history and superstition and Atatürk claimed that this agenda was shaped by the laws of nature rather than the laws of God. He gave a lot of importance to science and he emphasized the authority of science over that of religion as he tried to establish a new social order in which citizens would be centered around rational-positivism and nationalism. At this point the perceptions of the Gülen movement members about the role of religion or more precisely religious institutions such as the Directorate of Religious Affairs become important.

¹⁰⁷ Hakan Yavuz, *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 72.

When the religious affairs directorate issue is considered I asked the community members whether they were satisfied with the activities of this institution and what they thought about it. My ultimate aim in asking these questions was to have an idea on how the community members perceive the functions of religion and Islam within a society. The answers were a little surprising because the community members who see Fethullah Gülen as the leader of the whole Muslim world and as caliph were insisting on the idea of strengthening the role and the working areas of the institution as well as its authority. The community members consider it as an agent that may diffuse Islam through its authority to make religious announcements and hence the authority of that institution should be increased. The community members think in this way because that they perceive religion as one of the most important unifying factors for individuals within a country. According to them, religion is the cement of a society. For instance Mr. B says:

Of course there is a function of the Religious Affairs Directorate in Turkey. I think its existence is necessary but it is not considered as an authority. It does not have the respect it merits. Maybe it is respected by the devout Muslims but in the eyes of the state it does not have this esteem. Rather than reforming it, it has to be accorded more authority with more rights I think but some people in Turkey would oppose this. These people always claim that Kemalism is under attack or religion is passing into somebody else's hand and I think this is false. In Turkey there is a confirmed and stable formation and it is difficult to overcome it. Their perception of Islam and Muslim people is very negative. They are really distant. It is hard to overcome their prejudices. Therefore the religious affairs directorate does not have any prestige.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ Interview by atuhor with Mr. B, tape recording, Istanbul, February 2006. “*Diyanet işleri başkanlığı tabii ki Türkiye’de belli bir fonksiyonu gören bir kurum. Yani gerekli olduğuna inanıyorum ama Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı Türkiye’de otorite olarak görülüyor yani. Bunu da söyleyeyim. Yeteri kadar saygınlığı yok. Belki samimi Müslümanlar tarafından Diyanet İşleri’nin vermiş olduğu fetvalar dikkate alınıyor ama yani devlet olarak baktığımız zaman Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı’nın çok öyle bir saygınlığı yok yani. Reforme edilmeliden ziyade hakları genişletilmeli bence ama Türkiye’de buna bazı çevreler sıcak bakmazlar yani. Bakmıyorlar. Yani adamlar hemen bir şey olduğunda Atatürkçülük elden gidiyor işte din elden gidiyor tarzı yaklaşımlarda bulunuyorlar bu da yanlış bir şey yani. Türkiye’de bir kemikleşmiş bir oluşum var. Bu oluşumu aşmak zor. Bu insanların İslam’a bakış açısı, Müslümanlara bakış açısı çok soğuk. Çok mesafeli bakıyorlar yani. Bu insanların önyargularını kırmak çok zor. Yani o yüzden Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı Türkiye’de saygınlığı olan bir kurum değil.”*

Mr. S claims:

In a society there are two functions. One is the state and the other is the one with the advisory role in relation to the state that forms the skeleton of it, that is to say religious affairs. Is the religious affairs directorate is active? No, I do not think so. I wish it performed its functions better while using a leadership attribute. Hence it can help to propagate Islam once again to all over the world. You know when the Pope is considered, he has billions of people behind him. He talks as an advisor. For that reason, we also need a responsible advisor and then various groups would follow.¹⁰⁹

It is clear that the community members in general support the strengthening of this institution and they want it to be more effective regarding religious education. That is to say, they think that this institution should have more responsibilities when the issue of religious education is considered. Mr. K's response to this issue is explicative. He says:

If the state is going to be more effective with respect to religious education, it can do it by reforming the religious affairs directorate. I think this institution's existence is required but it should be revised. It is the state who can afford it because what makes it passive in my opinion now is the state itself and the role given to it by the state. Of course we consider it as passive. Indeed the education is so limited, especially religious education. This should not be restricted to some places and it should be realized by the state in order to reach the whole public. I think that in our country, religious education is exercised thanks to individual efforts or the help of parents in some places such as Quran courses.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ Interview by author with Mr. S, tape recording, Sakarya, December 2006. "Bir toplumda iki tane işlev vardır birisi devlet ve devletin hemen yanında danışman gibi işte o dediğimiz çatıyı oluşturan kısım, danışman diye düşündüğümüz diyanet işleridir... Diyanet işleri etkin midir, hayır değildir keşke diyanet işleri kendi görevini çok daha iyi ifa edebilse eğer edebilse içimizde bulunan ta berilerden gelen bizdeki liderlik, yani Türklereki liderlik bu toplumdaki liderlik vasfını kullanarak keşke bütün dünyaya bir de bir sefer daha İslamiyet'i, Müslümanlık'ı anlatabilmenin yollarını açabilsek. Keşke iyi yerine getirse de Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı görevini ki bugün biliyorsunuz bir Papa yürü dediğinde arkasında milyarlarca insan var. Çünkü niye, onun altında almadığı Rus'u bilmemesi yok. Orada bir çatı konuşuyor. Dolayısıyla burada da bizde de bir çatı konuşup arkasından toplumların, değişik çeşitli toplumların da yürümesi gerekiyor."

¹¹⁰ Interview by author with Mr. K, tape recording, Istanbul, September 2006. "Eğer devletimiz bizim din eğitiminde etkin rol oynayacaksa bunu mevcut kurumu olan Diyanet İşleri'yle yapabilir reforme ederek daha böyle aktif hale getirerek klişelerin dışına çıkarak onu daha aktif bir hale getirerek bunu yapabilir. Bence olmalı, kaldırılmamalı ama daha iyi bir konuma getirilmeli bunu da yapacak olan devlettir zaten çünkü onu şu anda pasif kılan bence devletin ona biçtiği rol... Tabi pasif görüyoruz yani netice itibarıyla din eğitimi adına fazla bir şey yapılmıyor yani, çok kısıtlı eğitim var özellikle din eğitiminin de sadece belli yerlerde yapılmaması gerektiğini, özellikle bunun bizzat devlet kontrolünde okullarda yapılması lazım yani tüm insanlarımıza ulaşması lazım bir şekilde. Bizim ülkemizdeki din

Another group member, Mr. M, responded as follows when I asked him about his thoughts on the religious affairs directorate:

I do not know if I have heard about it from the head of the religious affairs directorate or if I have read a notice in a mosque but I think that it was on the news; the imams or prayer leaders would not only be charged with making the assembly perform the *namaz* in the mosques, but they will also be more active with the people in the streets as they will explain to them the faith and adherence to Islam. It pleased me much. It is a positive gesture. Indeed our religion is not only practiced within the mosque. In every moment, in every part of our lives, there is religion. Although our imams have done their duties up until now, I think they have more to do. Indeed our society is ill informed on this issue or they do not know many things that they have to know. In my opinion, the fact that the imams are charged with this duty is very good. Other than this, there are the announcements of the Religious Affairs Directorate for peace within society and reconciliation. Sometimes, it makes announcements against the commentaries that speak ill of the religion. Consequently, it is better compared to the past. Indeed there are activities of the Religious Affairs Directorate but is it required? Not necessarily. I mean it is not obligatory. In fact, this shows that religion is in the hands of politics. Religion should not be in the hands of politics. We say a laic education a laic government thus religion should be free of the impact of politics. Religion should not be in the shadow of politics.¹¹¹

eğitiminin ben büyük çoğunlukla Kuran kursları vesaire gibi yerlerde tam anlamıyla insanların kendi çabalarıyla elde ettiklerini düşünüyorum devletimizin bizzat o hizmeti sunması değil de, insanlarımızın kendi çabalarıyla din eğitimini tamamlamaya veya ailelerinin bir takım katkılarıyla tamamlamaya çalıştıklarını düşünüyorum.”

¹¹¹ Interview by author with Mr. M, tape recording, Istanbul, October 2006. “*Mesela ben en sonda Diyanet İşleri Başkanından mı duydum yoksa camide asılı bir şeyden mi okudum bilmiyorum heralde haberlerden dinledim onu, yani imamların, hocaların artık sadece beş vakit namazı kaldırıp ondan sonra yan gelip yatmaları değil de bunun haricinde artık sokağa çıkacakları artık insanlara dini, imanı anlatacakları yani bu meselede daha fazla üzerine düşen vazifeleri yapmaları gerektiğini yani bundan sonra daha değişik açılımlarda bulunacaklarını duymuştum. Çok hoşuma gitmişti. Olumlu bir hareket. Neticesinde yani bizim dinimiz sadece camide yaşanan bir din değil. Hayatın her anında her yerinde olan bir din. Dolayısıyla şimdiye kadar da hocalarımız olsun, imamlarımız olsun tamam yapmaları gerekenleri yapmışlardır ama bence daha fazla yapacakları şeyler var. Daha fazla şeyler yapmaları gerekiyor. Neticede toplumumuz bu konuda çok yanlış şeyler biliyor ya da bilmeleri gereken çoğu şeyi bilmiyorlar, eksik biliyorlar. Orda da dolayısıyla imamların bu şekilde ayrı bir vazifeyi üstlenmeleri bu vazifeyi kendilerinin üzerine almaları bence güzel bir şey. Tabi onun haricinde toplumsal barış, toplumsal mutabakat adına yapılmış olan Diyanet İşleri Başkanı açıklamaları falan var. Yani gerektiği zaman dini kötülemek adına yapılmış olan açıklamalara karşı yapılmış bazı açıklamalar yapıyor. Dolayısıyla bu eskisine nazaran daha güzel. Yani Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığının yaptığı şeyler var ama Türkiye’de bu kurumun olması gerekiyor mu? Aslında çok da fazla gerekli değil. Yani olması çok da fazla şart değil. Yani neticesinde bu birazcık daha böyle dinin siyasetin elinde olduğunu gösteriyor. Neticesinde din siyasetin elinde olmamalı. Laik bir eğitim diyoruz. Laik bir hükümet diyoruz. Yani neticesinde din siyasetin baskısından kurtulması lazım. Yani din siyasetin gölgesinde olmaması lazım.”*

The important point here is that Mr. M does not emphasize the fact that politics should be free of religion. On the contrary he emphasizes that religion should be free of politics. In addition to this, Mr. M points out the importance of maintaining society's communal structures with Islam. Hence I argue that the community wants the religion to engage in public matters rather than being confined to private belief. The privatization of Islam is not an option for the group members and the point at stake is the deprivatization of religion. That is to say, the entrance of Islam into the public sphere is strongly emphasized by the community members.

When the comments of these two interviewees are considered, it is seen that the community feels as the "other". In another words, it can be argued that they are describing the people that may oppose the increasing authority of the religious affairs under the pretense of Kemalism or republicanism.

In addition to this, they are in general pleased with the increasing role of that institution during the period of the last government formed by the Justice and Improvement Party (AKP). For instance Mr. M argues:

I may explain it as the following. I claim that the old chief of the religious affairs directorate and the old officers of that institution could not perform their duties fully for a long time. I mean they could not perform, they did not. With the coming of this new government, the chief of the religious affairs directorate has been changed. Some changes have been realized. I mean better events have been realized when compared to the old period.¹¹²

At this point, it is known that Mustafa Kemal was not opposed to religion or Islam per se. His aim was to use Islam in the service of nation-building and the economic development of Turkey. The ultimate aim in establishing the Directorate of Religious Affairs was this motive. The goal was to create good citizens rather than to create

¹¹² Interview by author with Mr. M, tape recording, Istanbul, October 2006. "*Şimdi şöyle söyleyim. Bir önceki Diyanet İşleri Başkanı ve Diyanet işlerindeki görevli olan insanlar ben uzun bir süre görevlerini tam manasıyla yapamadıklarını kesinlikle söylüyorum. Yani yapamadılar. Yapmadılar. Tabi bu hükümetin gelmesinden sonra Diyanet İşleri Başkanı değiştirildi. Güzellikler oldu. Yenilikler oldu. Yani eskisine nazaran daha güzel olaylar oluyor.*"

good Muslims or to raise Muslim consciousness. However, when the quotations from the interviewees that I cited above are read, it is clearly seen that the community members do not attach to this institution such a role as Mustafa Kemal did.

Kemalism's aim was the creation of a civic responsibility towards the state and in addition to this it promoted patriotism, the sacredness of the military and civil service, respect for law and order and hard work for the development of Turkey. The Gülen movement members however claim that the Directorate of Religious Affairs has to gain a missionary role rather than the disseminating a nation-based identity and citizenry. More precisely, as opposed to the Kemalist ideal, the movement members want the religious affairs directorate to create good Muslims while raising Muslim consciousness. In such a context, it is impossible to talk about the contribution of this institution to the secularization and westernization projects of the Kemalist regime.

Other than these issues, I think that the Gülen movement is trying to fill a gap in the state's mission. What is this gap? They are claiming that the community does what the state cannot realize. According to the community members, Islam should be explained and propagated to all societies and at this point they think that the religious affairs directorate could not perform this necessary function due to the fact that it has no authority as it had during the Ottoman period. Thus they are claiming that their aim is to propagate and declare Islam through the religious affairs directorate. Mr. S explains it as follows:

As I said before, if the state cannot do what is needed, the society finds itself the one that will perform this duty, a leader by God's grace. For instance, as the education campaign could not be achieved by the state, the private sector realized it. Similarly, as the religious affairs directorate cannot perform its duties very well, what is done by Fethullah Gülen may show his broad vision. By talking with the Pope rather than talking with any leader such as the German

Chancellor or the Austrian Prime Minister he shows that we are as Muslim people with the Christians and we do not want to fight.¹¹³

To conclude, the answers regarding the role of the Religious Affairs Directorate in Turkey were not as I was expecting. That is to say, due to the fact that the community members consider Fethullah Gülen as the unique representative of the Muslim world, I was expecting that they would be against the existence of such an institution but on the contrary I saw that the community members strongly defended the idea of strengthening this institution and expanding its zone of influence.

Living Islam in All Grounds

When the interviews are read, it can be seen that the daily lives as well as the religious lives of the members have been deeply affected by the doctrine of the movement. For instance, Ms. Y whose husband was working within the military started to wear a headscarf after her husband retired. The retirement decision was also taken after meeting the Gülen community thanks to their children who were going to the *Sur Dersanes* in *Diyarbakır*. Their children brought home some books such as *İnancın Gölgesinde* meaning “under the shadow of faith” written by Fethullah Gülen and the meetings of the family with the community took place thanks to the teachers’ visits to their children in their home. More important than the change in physical appearances and in perceptions, the doctrine of the Gülen movement has changed members’ lives in a way that they started to live their religion in their daily lives. The members claim that they started to live their religion consciously and they describe the period after meeting the movement as the period

¹¹³ Interview by author with Mr. S, tape recording, Sakarya, December 2006. “*Demin dediğim gibi yani bir devlet eğer gereğini yapamıyor ise belli şeylerin bu toplum gereğini yapamı içinden çıkarır Allah'ın izniyle ve oraya bir lider bulur götürür. İşte burada da yine devletin belirleyemediği yapamadığı eğitim seferberliği özel sektörün yapmış olduğu gibi Diyanet İşlerinin de kendi görevini çok iyi yapamadığından dolayı işte burada Fethullah Gülen Hoca efendinin yapmış olduğu bu hareket vizyonunun ne kadar geniş olduğunu gösterir ki o da biliyor ki bugün bir Almanya'nın başbakanı veya cumhurbaşkanıyla görüşmek, Avusturya'nın görüşmek işte onun bunun görüşmekten ziyade çıkıp sadece bir Papa'yla, çatıyı oluşturan o ruhani diyelim liderle görüşüp biz kavgadan yana değiliz biz İslamiyet olarak Müslüman olarak Hıristiyanlarla beraber yanındayız.*”

where Islam and Islamic principles have been put into practice consciously. It should not be forgotten that these community members do not come from families that do not respect religious principles or requirements but the interviewees claim that the works written by Said Nursi and Fethullah Gülen offered them a *tahkiki iman* which means a recensed or verified faith against an artificial one. Mr. L says:

I think that before, our religious lives could be described as a traditional life that is shaped within the family. After having met with Gülen's works, it is more conscious. That is to say, we are conscious of what we are doing and I think that these works have contributed to me much... In Bediüzzaman's term, the transformation of the artificial faith to a verified and conscious faith. When it is said artificial faith, I mean what you have learned from your family, your environment. You have lots of things related to your region, even religious beliefs.¹¹⁴

Mr. M also points out the same issue:

We were trying to perform our *namaz* but this was something that we have learned from our family. After reading Gülen and Said Nursi's works, it has been settled down in a rationale framework. The fact that religion becomes a mode of life has been realized thanks to these works and books... Now it becomes as our structure, our style of living.¹¹⁵

It is clear that what they emphasize is the realization of Islam more accurately in the daily life and they consider the fact that living their religion consciously with respect to the Fethullah Gülen and Said Nursi's doctrine as the ultimate contribution of the movement to their own identities. Consequently they are complaining about the fact

¹¹⁴ Interview by author with Mr. L, tape recording, Istanbul, October 2006. "...önceki yaşantımızdaki dini hayatımızın daha çok böyle aileden gelen geleneksel bir yaşantı olduğunu düşünüyorum ama tanıştıktan sonraki yaşantımızın daha böyle uygulamalı yani neyi neden yaptığımızın bilincinde olarak yaptığımızı düşünüyorum o yönden çok fark var kesinlikle bana çok şey kattığını düşünüyorum... Bediüzzaman'ın tabiriyle taklidi iman denilen şeyin tahkiki imana dönüşmesi... Taklidi iman dediğimiz zaman işte nedir ailenizden öğrenirsiniz, çevrenizden öğrenirsiniz, yaşadığımız bölgeyle ilgili şeyleriniz vardır, dini inançlar bile bunda etkilidir."

¹¹⁵ Interview by author with Mr. M, tape recording, Istanbul, October 2006. "Namazlarımızı kılmaya çalışırdık ama tabi bu birazcık böyle anadan görme, babadan görme o tür bir şeydi yani. Aileden gelme bir şey vardı. Ama tabi tanıdıktan sonra, tanıştıktan sonra o artık daha bir mantık planında yerleşti. Artık bir hayat felsefesi olması ve hayatımızı ona göre yönlendirmemiz tabi bu konuda bu eserlerin, bu kitapların bizlerde uyandırdığı şeyler doğrultusunda oldu... Artık bizim bir bünyemiz gibi, bir yaşam tarzımız gibi oldu yani."

that Islam and its requirements cannot be fully exercised in all domains like political, social or economic.

Up To Date Politics

Under the pretext of promoting the stability of the country, the community members argue that there must be a single party and that coalition has never brought Turkey any prosperity. For this purpose, the community members in general agree that the national threshold system has to be maintained. In addition to this, they also support the idea of a presidential system. For instance Mr. C points out to the necessity of the presidential system:

Indeed the presidential system is a system that we exercised before to a certain degree when we look at the Sultanate system of the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman Empire implemented such a system composed by federation and that is used now in the USA. In fact, it is a necessary system. I mean I think that.¹¹⁶

Mr. R who is a craftsman expresses similar views:

Our Enver Pasha has talked about the federation system; this can be customized appropriately to our culture without damaging the unity of the state as it has been realized in the USA. Within the territories of the provinces, there may be some autonomy up to a certain degree but it would be under the control of the central authority. But this has to be clearly understood.¹¹⁷

It is obvious that the community members aspire for a system that is similar to the one realized by the Ottoman Empire. They strongly agree on the idea that the presidential system is more appropriate for Turkish culture. However, it can be argued that the presidential system is a system towards which Turkey should direct itself conscientiously and attentively. As Alfred Stepan points out there is always a

¹¹⁶ Interview by author with Mr. C, tape recording, Istanbul, April 2006. “*Şimdi başkanlık sistemi aslında bizim uyguladığımız bir sistem. Tarihe bakarsak bir noktada padişahlık sistemi ile Osmanlı'nın uyguladığı bir sistemdir. Eyalet yönetiminden tutun şu anda Amerika'nın uyguladığı sisteme yakın bir sistemi Osmanlı geçmişte uygulamış. Başkanlık sistemi zaten gerekli bir sistem. Yani öyle olduğunu düşünüyorum.*”

¹¹⁷ Interview by author with Mr. R, tape recording, Sakarya, November 2006. “*Ne kadar bizim Enver paşamız eyalet sistemini söylese de o aslında güzel bir şekilde şey yapılıp, uyarlanıp, Türkiye'nin üniter yapısını bozmayacak şekilde o kendi içinde Amerika'nın yapmış olduğu gibi şey yapılabilir, kendi içinde yarı özerk gibi ama genelde bağlı ama kendini büyüten. Ama bunu iyi anlamak lazım.*”

risk for some presidential democracies, with their tendency toward populist plebiscitarian, delegative characteristics together with a fixed term of office and a “no-reelection” rule that excludes accountability before the electorate, to encourage nonconstitutional or anticonstitutional behavior that may threaten also the rule of law.¹¹⁸ At this point, as the rule of law is one of the key elements in any democratic regime, it can be argued that what is suggested by the community does not fit our conception of democracy that I have described with respect to Dahl, Alfred Stepan and J. Linz. Indeed Stepan and Linz claim that in a democratic regime in which a single leader enjoys, or thinks he or she enjoys a “democratic” legitimacy, may ignore, dismiss or alter other institutions, the legislature, the courts, the constitutional limits of power and that would mean the abuse or transgression of the principle of rule of law. Besides this, they suggest that the early elections are a legal vehicle available in parliamentarism but unavailable in the presidential system to help solve crises generated by such abusive leadership.¹¹⁹

Other than these issues it can be argued that there is a support within the community for the present government led by the Justice and Improvement Party (AKP). Especially when talking about the latest activities of the religious affairs directorate, the politics for the outside world which means the present foreign affairs and the leaps implemented in economics by the government with respect to the increase of imports and outside investment, the community members seem to be satisfied with the current politics. For instance when I ask his perceptions about the government politics in foreign affairs, Mr. L says:

I think it is not bad although it is not fully satisfying. They are trying to do their best and obviously it is not possible to satisfy all the

¹¹⁸ Alfred Stepan and J. Juan Linz, “Towards Consolidated Democracies.” In Alfred Stepan, ed., *Arguing Comparative Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 301.

¹¹⁹ Ibid. op. cit.

people since every one has different opinion but I think the government goes well, it is not bad.¹²⁰

Besides this, it is clear that there is a great respect within the community members for the late President of the Republic, Turgut Özal just as there are some complaints about the current president Sezer. Mr. K explains it as follows:

I think that the government policies with respect to the Turkish Republics in Asia are not as effective as in foreign affairs that I am finding successful. Özal has oriented towards these states not in his Prime Ministry period, but when he was President. Our President now, I do not find him satisfactory. If our new President is a man from politics with a broad vision, I think that really different events may happen.¹²¹

Ms. Y says:

When Turgut Özal was the prime minister, every thing was very good. After he became the President of the Republic, the Prime Ministry again has come to a standstill.¹²²

I think that the support of the community members for the Özal presidency, and the government led by AKP, stems from their position towards religion. The community members express that the religiously devout people were freer in their practices and their rights were more respected during these governments. For instance Mr. R even thinks that during the Özal period, the headscarf problem was not as big as in our time:

In the late Özal period, at least due to the fact that he was the President, he did not allow the emergence of such problems. I think that the ones who want to be educated have right to get it. I think

¹²⁰ Interview by author with Mr. L, tape recording, Istanbul, October 2006. “*Bence fena değil yani çok tatmin edici değil ama performansları da şu anki hükümetin fena sayılmaz. Olabildiğince ellerinden geldiğince bir şeyler yapmaya çalışıyorlar tabi ki herkesi memnun etmek mümkün değil herkesin farklı yönde fikirleri var bence çok da fena sayılmaz iyi gidiyorlar.*”

¹²¹ Interview by author with Mr. K, tape recording, Istanbul, September 2006. “*...Dış siyaset konusunda olumlu gördüğüm hükümetin, Türk Cumhuriyetleri ile ilgili konularda bu kadar da aktif olduğunu düşünmüyorum ama bunun sebebi biraz bence dikkat edersen Özal başbakanlığı döneminde değil cumhurbaşkanlığı döneminde daha çok buralara yönelmişti, cumhurbaşkanı, yani şu anki cumhurbaşkanını kesinlikle ben yeterli biri olarak görmüyorum, o kesin. Siyasetten gelmiş ve ufku olan birisi olursa yeni cumhurbaşkanımız, kim olursa artık çok farklı şeyler olabileceğini düşünüyorum.*”

¹²² Interview by author with Ms. Y, tape recording, Istanbul, January 2007. “*Turgut Özal başbakanken çok güzel gidiyordu her şey. Cumhurbaşkanlığına çıkınca başbakanlık gene geri sarmaya başladı yani onun gibi.*”

that it is false to prevent their education only because of their headscarves and it is not democratic.¹²³

To conclude, it can be argued that the Gülen community advocates a puissant state. For this purpose the presidential system is seen by the members of the community as the most suitable system for Turkey although there exists some opposition among them. In addition to this, as none of the members explicitly indicated which political party they support, it would not be possible to argue which political party gains the support of the community as a whole. However thanks to my observations, I may indicate that the political party which brings the religion to the foreground, or in other words the political party that gives more importance to religious discourse is favored by the community members. At this point, the respect of the community members for some political leaders such as Turgut Özal and the appreciation of the politics of the current government in some issues such as the role attributed to the Religious Affairs Directorate in recent years and so on give some clues about the general perceptions of the community members with respect to the political parties in Turkey.

Gender Issue

The gender issue or gender relations are the points for which Gülen and his movement are criticized a lot. According to Hakan Yavuz, when the gender equality is concerned, there is a gap between what Gülen teaches and how quickly the community adopts his leadership. As I have already stated, Yavuz believes that Gülen advocates in his speeches the integration of women into the workplace but does not clearly articulate equality. In addition to this Yavuz points out that Gülen

¹²³ Interview by author with Mr. R, tape recording, Sakarya, November 2006. “*Rahmetli Özal zamanında, Özal pek ona izin vermedi yani işi doğrusu. En azından Cumhurbaşkanı olması hasebiyle öyle bir problem yaşatmadı. Okumak isteyen insanları bence engellemek lazım. Sırf başları örtülü diye eğer engelleniyorsa çok orada bir yanlışlık olduğunu düşünüyorum ve demokratik olmadığını düşünüyorum.*”

himself is more practical and progressive than his community as he is trying to introduce his religiously conservative community to a level of modern society.¹²⁴ However, I think that Gülen seems not to be uncomfortable with the fact that men are at the forefront of his movement because he attributes to women a different position than men and this position can be defined as being ‘merciful heroines of the movement’. Women are persuaded to take on this role and this position does not bother them. Moreover, women are very happy with their role within the movement, and which is the education of the future generations. Ms. Z explains it as the following:

...Let me give an example from myself. As a housewife, it is finding your own essence and identity. God gives you something but maybe in my life, I could not find it before but now I can see that I found my essence. You are active and you are making strenuous efforts... First of all, it should not be thought that women are in the background and that they are not in the window. They are really in the forefront. I think that only in this movement the education of women is an important issue. For example what Hocaefendi says on this issue impressed me much: ‘The women who will cultivate our next generations should be educated’ Look! The one that will cultivate the next generation... That is to say, the woman should be educated and then the next generation will become educated. In every school in every part of the world there are girls and women. Why is it considered as in the back drop? I do not think so. The women are given the right to be in the forefront and they are active and making great efforts as well as men.¹²⁵

The Gülen movement’s women members think that they are as active as well as the men According to Gülen, it is impossible to make a distinction between man and

¹²⁴ Yavuz, “The Gülen Movement.” 29.

¹²⁵ Interview by author with Ms. Z, tape recording, Istanbul, January 2007. “...Ben kendimden örnek vereyim. Bir ev hanımı olarak insanın kendi özünü, kişiliğini bulmasıdır. Allah size bir şeyler veriyor ama daha evvelki hayatımda arayıp bulamamıştım belki onu. Fakat şimdi özüme döndüğümü görüyorum. Aktifsiniz. Gayret içindediniz... Bir kere hanımlar kesinlikle vitrinde değiller diye düşünülmesin. Hanımlar çok ön plandalar. Eee bir tek ben burada hanımların eğitimine özellikle önem verildiğini görüyorum. Mesela Hoca Efendinin bir sözü çok etkiler beni: “Geleceğin neslini yetiştirecek olan kadınlarımız eğitilmeli!”. Bakın: “Geleceğin neslini yetiştirecek olan...” Demek ki eğitilmeli ki hanımlar gelecek olan nesil de eğitilmiş olsun. Dünyanın her yerinde okullar açılıyor. Dünyanın her yerindeki okullarda kızlarımız da var, bayanlar da var. Neden hanımlar arka planda olsun ki? Bence hiç öyle değil. Hanımlara da özellikle ön planda olma hakkı tanınıyor ve hanımlar da en az beyler kadar bir gayret ve koşturma içindeler.”

woman while taking into consideration the principles of Islam but he points out that one cannot talk about the equality or sameness of two human beings, two men or two women regarding their characteristic, nature, value and dimensions due to the fact that every human being, every individual has its own particularity and hence there could not exist such an absolute equality between people.¹²⁶ For instance he says:

Although women have a different nature than men regarding physiology and psychology because they have different characteristics, this does not mean that the men are superior to women or any woman is inferior to a man... Woman and man are not different from each other with respect to their genesis and their mission in the world and they are as two sides of a single body that depend on each other.¹²⁷

It is clear that while being physiologically and psychologically different from one another, women have a different role and position within the public. Thus, it is not surprising that as I have already stated in the first chapter, Gülen believes the reason why the women have some duties in the society is related to their physical structure and he says that this should be seen as a task distribution between men and women.¹²⁸

Most of the male teachers have also indicated that women and men are equal but rather than considering these two as equals they have drawn attention to the act of justice between the two sexes. For instance, when I asked whether it is possible to make a classification of religions regarding gender equality Mr. E responded as the following:

...There is no gender equality. I think that there is an act of justice between the woman and the man. That is to say, there is no physical equality you could not talk about any equality. There is no such a thing but there is a justice and at this point, the rights are equal

¹²⁶ Ünal, *M. Fethullah Gülen Bir Portre Denemesi*, 438.

¹²⁷ Ibid., op. cit. “Gerçi kadın, fizyoloji ve psikoloji açısından farklı bir tabiata sahip ve ayrı özellikleri haizdir; ama bu, erkeğin kadından üstün ya da kadının erkekten aşağı olması manâsına gelmez... Kadın erkek yaratılış ve dünyadaki misyonları açısından birbirlerinden farksızdır ve bir vahidin birbirine muhtaç iki ayrı yüzü gibidirler.”

¹²⁸ Gündem, *Fethullah Gülen’le 11 Gün*, 174.

before justice. I think that there is a difference between man and woman. Besides, there are some points where women are superior to men in my opinion. The women should be educated certainly. It has priority. Secondly rather than equality, there is justice between men and women. There should be justice. You should not expect equality.¹²⁹

Hakan Yavuz indicates that the movement and the community practices rigid segregation of the sexes and does not permit women to work in its vast networks or media empire.¹³⁰ When I talked with the women interviewees I also noticed this rigid segregation. But women within the movement do not seem to be uncomfortable about the fact that they could not engage in high positions within the movement. For instance Ms. Y says when I ask why men seem to stand in the forefront of the movement compared to women:

Yes, but Hocaefendi has already said it to us. He said: “The movement’s services rely on the protection of the clement heroines”. He is aware of everything. Due to the fact that men stand on the forefront of the activities of the movement such as in the Olympics of Turkish language or when the issue of dialogue is concerned and so on. As women, we are satisfied with keeping in the background. What is in their back drop, the kitchen is too important. This kitchen prepares. It is not the women but men who are obviously on TV such as on *Mehtap* or *STV*. They could be the visible part but indeed they are born thanks to a woman, a mother. For this reason, it is impossible to think without any woman.¹³¹

It is clear that “There is a gender hierarchy of the community, as men at top and women in the lower echelon but that is not to say that becoming part of Gülen

¹²⁹ Interview by author with Mr. E, tape recording, Istanbul, June 2006. “...*Kadın erkek eşitliği yok. Kadın ve erkek arasında adalet olduğunu düşünüyorum. Yani şimdi fiziksel olarak bir eşitlik yoksa bir eşitlikten bahsedemezsiniz. Yok yani böyle bir şey ama bir adalet var yani ve kesinlikle bu adalet konusunda adalette haklar eşit. Öyle söyleyeyim yani. Kadınla erkek arasında bir fark, hatta kadının üstün olduğu yerler de var yani benim inancımın kaynaklanan düşüncem o. Kadın kesinlikle eğitilmiş olmalı. Bu bir. İkincisi kadınla erkek arasında eşitlik değil adalet var. Adalet olması lazım. eşitlik bekleyemezsiniz yani.*”

¹³⁰ Yavuz, “The Gülen Movement,” 29.

¹³¹ Interview by author with Mr. Y, tape recording, Istanbul, January 2007. “*Evet, ama Hoca Efendi onu bize söyledi. “Şefkat kahramanlarının sırtında gidiyor” dedi. O her şeyin farkında. Görüntü tabii ki bu işte diyalog konusu olsun, büyük önemli olaylar, Türkçe olimpiyatı olsun, şu bu, bunların hepsini tabii ki erkekler yaptığı için göz önünde olan kısmı. Biz arka planda olmaya razıyız. Onların arka planında olan mutfak çok önemli bence. Yani o mutfak hazırlıyor. Onlar da tabii ki televizyonda, biz çıkıp da program yapacak değiliz. Bir Mehtap’ta işte STV’ de. Onlar görünen kısmı olsun ama biz onları, sonuçta onları da bir anne, bir bayan dünyaya getirdi. Onun için bayansız mümkün değil.*”

community means that individuals are turned into passive tools in the hands of an authoritarian leadership. Gülen ideology is strongly conservative, it is true, but that is not the same as saying that the principles of its organization are authoritarian or by no means totalitarian.”¹³² This statement made by Elisabeth Özdalga is a plausible statement since I have also witnessed the fact that for women, there exists room for self-reflexivity as well as for individual initiative and autonomy. For instance, although the women and men are separated from one another when they unite for a meeting and they do not shake hands with each other; they put me up as their guest in their home very kindly. I think that these two women interviewee must have informed their higher ranking chiefs or elder sisters but they did not hesitate to talk about their meetings and the contents of these meetings. This shows that they could take their own initiative as autonomous individuals. Otherwise, I think that they would not talk about the contents of their meetings or they would not be able to explain how they scramble up the money for the activities of the community.

Here, Elisabeth Özdalga refers to a strong hierarchical relationship within the community among men and among women. It means that there is a hierarchy within women and within men separately from one another. More precisely it seems like there are two completely distinct bodies within the community independent from each other, the male group on the one hand and the female group on the other. When one looks at the interviews, he or she can easily see this clear distinction. The activities of men and women are entirely separated. Although I have already cited the quotation below in the previous pages, I cite it again but this time I want to draw attention to how men and women’s activities are separated from each other. Ms. Y says: “We sometimes met in the evenings as a family. We take a seat in different

¹³² Elisabeth Özdalga, “Following in the Footsteps of Fethullah Gülen.” In Hakan Yavuz and John Esposito, eds., *Turkish Islam and The Secular State: The Gülen Movement* (New York. Syracuse University Press, 2003),114

rooms as men and women...”¹³³ It shows that men and women have entirely different worlds within the community. This circumstance can be noticed when looking at the views of the community’s members regarding the coeducation. There is a strong coherence and agreement on this issue among the teachers and the other members such as the craftsman people or the women. Every individual within the community emphasizes that the co-education has some disadvantages, and for a better education the boys and girls should be separated. For instance Ms Y indicates:

Whether I met with this community or not, I would like my girl to be educated with only girl students. That is to say, not standing side by side with a boy. I do not think that something may happen but I do not want this notion of shame to be frustrated. We have seen this from our family. Now I turn to nowadays and just one week ago, a newspaper circulated a report. This is the observation of American people as you will also know, it is concluded that the education of boys and girls separately from one another would be more successful. Who states this is Americans. If a Turkish Muslim guy says it, in fact one already said it; no one will listen to him. Even, they prevented it, they annulled it. Now a foreigner has said it. I hope it would be useful because if it happens, children will be more at ease, they will form better friendships and they will study better as they will not be interested in other things. Very difficult circumstances may occur when the education is mixed because every child has obviously a different nature.¹³⁴

I have to indicate that the male teachers think in a similar way. But it should be said that they all agree that the co-education will not bother them. However, they do not only think that the education of girls and boys should be separated but also that the

¹³³ Interview by author with Ms. Y, tape recording, Istanbul, January 2007. “*Geceleri oluyor ailece görüştüğümüz insanlarla. Erkeklerle kadınlar ayrı odalarda yapıyoruz.*”

¹³⁴ Interview by author with Ms. Y, tape recording, Istanbul, January 2007. “*Şimdi ben bu hizmeti tanımadan önceki halimle bile bir kız annesi olarak isterdim ki kızım sadece kızlarla beraber okusun. Yani bir erkekle yan yana oturmasın. Bir şey olacağından değil ama o ar perdesi yırtılmasın. Biz aileden böyle görmüştük. Şimdi bugüne dönüyorum daha geçen hafta gazetede yazdı. Amerikalıların tespiti siz de biliyorsunuzdur ki yalnız kızların, sadece kız veya sadece erkek eğitiminin çok daha başarılı olacağını bazı incelemeler sonucu karar verilmiş. Yani hem bunu onlar ortaya çıkardı. Bunu bir Türk- Müslüman söylese zaten söyledi, dinleyen çıkmadı. Hatta bozdular, önüne geçildi. Şimdi bir yabancı söyledi. İnşallah bir faydası olur. Keşke öyle olsa. Çünkü çocuklar daha rahat hareket edecek, daha güzel arkadaşlık kuracak, daha güzel ders çalışacaklar inanıyorum ki başka şeylere kafalarını yormayacaklar. Çok farklı durumlar çıkıyor çünkü birlikte olunca. Her çocuğun fitratı bir değil tabii ki.*”

working milieus of the male and female teachers should be separated. In this way, they argue that they will be more comfortable. Mr. E says:

...But in places where the overall level of students is higher and the higher the quality of these students, that is to say when the students are well qualified there would not be such a problem due to coeducation... But, we, as male teachers, are more comfortable in the teachers' room. We can behave easier. I can talk easier. Maybe if there was a female teacher in that room, there would be some phrases that I could not use. At least, I am less troubled about the rules of courtesy.¹³⁵

One of the most important problems that women refer to when asked whether they feel restrained regarding the freedom of faith and conscience in Turkey is the headscarf issue. Gülen's opinions about the headscarf issue are as the following:

The ones who say "Lets dress women without the headscarf and allow them to live in the way their hearts desire" put this precious essence in front of the robbers; those who claim to be apostles of freedom and rights for women are stabbing their souls by enthusing them with materiel and corporal pleasures.¹³⁶

Fethullah Gülen is a leader that follows the Sunni Islam doctrine and he always refers to the "Golden Age", known as *Asr-ı Saadet*. His community follows the principles shaped by Islamic leaders such as Buhari or Tirmizi who have transmitted the Sunna. However, when one looks at the writings of Buhari, one can find that it is argued that a community that chooses a woman as a leader can never progress and that women should not be taught literacy. It must be sewing and *Nur* from the Quran that has to be taught to women. However, thirty second verse of the "Women" part (*Nisa Suresi*) in the Quran states:

¹³⁵ Interview by author with Mr. E, tape recording, Istanbul, June 2006. " ...Ama çocuğum, öğrenci kalitesinin yüksek olduğu yani nitelikli çocukların olduğu yerde eğitimin karma olması bir problem teşkil etmez... Ama biz daha rahatız yani öğretmenler odasında. Rahatız. Rahat hareket edebiliyorum. Rahatça konuşabiliyorum belki bir bayan hocamız olsa kullanamayacağım cümleler olabilir. En azından nezaket kurallarına birazcık daha az dikkat ediyorum. Bu kolaylık benim açımdan..."

¹³⁶ Ünal, M. *Fethullah Gülen Bir Portre Denemesi*, 440. " 'Kadını açıp-saçalım ve ona gönlünce yaşama imkanı verelim' diyenler, böyle yapmakla o kıymetli cevheri, hürsüzlerin, uğursuzların ellerinin yetişeceği yere koymuş olmakta; kadınlık âlemi için, hak ve hürriyet havariliği yapanların çoğu da, onu cismani zevkleriyle coşturup ruhunu hançerlemekten başka bir şey yapmamaktadırlar."

And do not covet that by which Allah has made some of you excel others; men shall have the benefit of what they earn and women shall have the benefit of what they earn; and ask Allah of His grace; surely Allah knows all things.¹³⁷

It seems like Gülen and his community try to present themselves as moderate vis-a-vis other Islamic groups within Turkey and for this purpose they are open to change. Indeed Fethullah Gülen stresses that our piety is the one that has to be changed rather than the religion. Gülen refers to a hadith: “The one whose two days are equal gets the shaft.”¹³⁸

In this way he tries to make his argument more plausible. Although the Gülen movement seems to be open to change, it can be argued that they could not change the image of women within the movement. The women are still standing at the backyard of the movement and consequently, this situation constitutes the hardest problem that the community faces since this is the weakest part of that organization.

Turkish-Islamic Society

Whether the Gülen community proposes a society that is based on Turkish-Islamic principles and if it does, whether this situation leads to the undermining of the multiplicity of the public spheres is a crucial question. The movement emphasizes plurality and freedom for all the different voices within the public. For example Mr. C claims:

...It is not a synthesis based on Turkish-Islamic principles. Before that, it is based on the human being. Consequently I think that a synthesis which supports fully all the different belief systems while not intervening in the liberty and rights of others and a synthesis that does not damage others while letting people live their lives freely would be more successful. Of course the education should be oriented for this purpose.”¹³⁹

¹³⁷ Nur Suresi-Verse 32. *Quran*.

¹³⁸ Gündem, *Fethullah Gülen’le 11 Gün*, 180. “İki günü müsavi olan aldanmıştır.”

¹³⁹ Interview by author with Mr. C, tape recording, Istanbul, April 2006. “... *Türk- İslam sentezi değil. Öncelikle insan endeksli, dolayısıyla inançlara tam destek veren, başkalarının özgürlüklerini kısıtlamayan, kendi özgürlüklerini yaşarken başkalarına zarar vermeyen bir sentez daha başarılı olacak diye düşünüyorum. Eğitimi de tabi bu şekilde yönlendirmek lazım.*”

Although the community members claim that they aim for plurality and for the freedom for all the different voices in the public, as I have discussed above while analyzing the Gülen community's perceptions with respect to the criteria that are needed in order to define a system as a "democratic" one, it should not be forgotten that the women and their views are undermined.

Besides this, Hakan Yavuz indicates that the tolerance and the acceptance of diversity by conservative Turkish society is clearly limited and, Gülen and his followers offer little criticism of oppressive state policies against many independent-minded journalists and human rights workers who are jailed routinely for expressing critical views. For this reason, he emphasizes that Gülen's project could not be considered liberal, or democratic, although he claims that unlike the elitist intellectuals of Turkey, the openness of the movement to dialogue with all group promotes civility in Turkey.¹⁴⁰ Hakan Yavuz points out that the Gülen movement's main goal is not to reorient the state in terms of Islamic precepts, but rather to promote a state ideology that does not contradict Islamic ethics. They also want religious argument in the public sphere to be treated as a rejection of the autonomy of the political sphere.¹⁴¹ However when Nancy Fraser's point that the single public which is excluding some segments of the public would not respond to the problems of the democratic political foundation and it would not provide the essential requirements for participatory parity is considered, as Hakan Yavuz also claims, it can be argued that the Gülen movement has reconciled itself with democracy and secularism without yet becoming democratic or fully secular.¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ Yavuz, "The Gülen Movement," 30.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 28.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 30.

CHAPTER IV

STATE, DEMOCRACY, SECULARISM AND THE PUBLIC SPHERE

In this research, the main subject is the ideas of the Gülen movement on democracy and secularization which I have to reveal by looking at a small community formed by teachers who also call themselves movement members.

Absolutist State and the Emphasize on Conservatism

Before criticizing their perceptions in the light of a democratic and secular theory, it should be useful to look at how they perceive the state since secularism can be defined as separation between state and religion.

When I asked their views about the state concept, almost all of the interviewees share a similar idea. For instance, one of the interviewee Mr.C says:

...whatever the nature of the state, it is my state. We can criticize within ourselves but no one outside our state can criticize it. No one from outside can make our state view as unable or weak. From this perspective I may say that I am statist. I would never want my state to be perceived by foreigners as weak or unable. We should not behave in such a manner. We have a society with different cultures. If we do not break our ties with history we would better understand it. At the beginning of the 1900s, we had a glorious state and if our state is weak nowadays, we have to question this. However, I still believe that we will gain our ancient power, which is glorious, as a society.¹⁴³

When I ask the interviewees what they think should be done if the government uses repressive methods, their responses are on the obedient side because Fethullah Gülen stresses that even if the state is governed either efficiently or not we should respect authority, otherwise there may emerge a chaotic situation. As I have already stated,

¹⁴³ Interview by author with Mr. C, tape recording, Istanbul, April 2006. "... Devlet ne olursa olsun benim devletimdir. Bir eleştiri yaparsak biz kendi içimizde yapabiliriz ama dışarıdan birisi bizim devletimizin eleştirisini yapamaz. Dışarıdan birisi benim devletimi aciz gösteremez. Yani bu yönüyle sağlam devletçiyimdir diyebilirim yani. Hiçbir zaman devletimi dışa karşı aciz göstermek istemem. İçte de bir mesele varsa bunu kendimiz çözmemiz lazım. Yani bunu sıkıntıya götürmeden. Yani devleti zayıf gösterecek şekilde davranmamalıyız. Biz mozaiği fazla olan bir toplumuz. Yani böyle yeni bir toplum değiliz. Geçmişle bağımızı kesmediğimiz sürece bunu daha iyi anlayacağız. 1900'lerin başında dünyanın en gözde devletiyken şimdi biraz daha zayıf devlet durumuna düştüysek yani bunun sorgulanması lazım ama yine de ben eski ihtişamımıza, eski gücümüze toplum olarak geleceğimize inanıyorum yani."

Fethullah Gülen's ideas rely on conservatism and the community members' opinions are also shaped in the same direction. In order to prevent any chaotic situation, the movement members claim that individuals have to respect state authority whether the ruler shows a bad government or not. As it is well known, during the *Tanzimat* period, in the Ottoman Empire, there were three dominant ideologies that were conflicting. These were Ottomanism, Islamism and Turkism. According to Muhammet Bilici, it was Turkism that was the dominant ideology and with the triumph of nationalism as a modernizing ideology Ottomanism has disappeared but Islamism has persisted, though it is subordinate to Turkism. In this context, conservatism was the regulatory framework according to which Islamism and Turkish nationalism merged and Bilici argues that conservatism is primarily a strategy for generating legitimacy before the Turkish state. That means that conservatism functions as a corridor between nationalism and Islamism.¹⁴⁴ Bilici argues:

Conservatism is pervasive in Turkey and it shapes state-society relations. The primacy of state over society in the Turkish case is not a consequence of "mere superiority" but a necessity of a mission waged by the state. I shall argue that this mission, the content of which varies from case (the Empire) to case (the Republic), is *hizmet* (rendering service); a term around which there is a sacred aura in Turkish culture. *Hizmet* is a form of legitimation that consists of a variety of activities. The mission of the state has changed over time. Modernization replaced the Ottoman ideal of *I'la-yi Kelimetullah* (that is, upholding God's name and conquering new territories for the sake of Islam) as the form of *hizmet*.¹⁴⁵

Within the Gülen community, this notion of *hizmet* which means "service" occupies an important place and this forms the basis for the community's conservative thought. For Islamic identity, religious and economic service is the only available form of *hizmet* and this concept of service emerged as a point of interpretation

¹⁴⁴ Bilici, "The Fethullah Gülen Movement and Its Politics of Representation."

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., op. cit.

between Islam and Turkish nationalism. Therefore it can be argued that the Gülen movement constructs its identity at the point of intersection between the state discourse of Turkish national identity and the Islamic discourse of Turkish national identity.¹⁴⁶ According to Ahmet İnel, the most important point of Gülen's nationalism is the fact that it gives primacy to the "state" before "Islam". As Islam can only survive with this state, the state is considered as the ultimate element. For this reason, statism is a component of this nationalism.¹⁴⁷ Hence, to see that level of obedience to the state in the speeches of the interviewees should not be considered as astonishing. For instance, one of the interviewees, Mr. A says:

Before Gülen, when we look at Said Nursi, during the Kurdish revolts that have been emerged in the eastern part of Anatolia; they said to him 'Come and fight against the Ottoman Empire for the Kurdish people's rights!' he answered to the sheikhs in the east 'No! We cannot fight against the Ottoman Empire that has represented Islam in the world for many years'. He adopted a definite position on this issue siding with the state. When we look at Gülen, he says "The worst state is better than statelessness." In any state where there is no authority, there will raise a chaotic situation and anarchy will emerge. This is one of the best saying of Fethullah Gülen. A terrorist cannot be a Muslim and a Muslim cannot be a terrorist. A man who claims this: 'Even in the worst situation, maintain your state!' he is already against statelessness and anarchy.¹⁴⁸

It is clearly seen that this participant of the Gülen movement emphasizes the importance of a strong state authority and as Fethullah Gülen always stresses, he prefers the state to be authoritative. That is to say, he prefers an authoritative state to a stateless society. The Gülen movement members' perceptions as I cited one of

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ahmet İnel, *Yeni Şafak Newspaper*, 27.04.1997.

¹⁴⁸ Interview by author with Mr. A, tape recording, Istanbul, February 2006. "...Gülenden önce Said Nursiye bakarsak doğuda kürt isyanları çıktığı zaman, Said Nursiye diyorlar ki gel şu Osmanlıya karşı beraber savaşalım dedikleri zaman, Kürtlerin hakkı gidiyor, hayır diyor o dönemdeki doğu şeyhlerine yıllarca islamiyetin bayraktarlığını yapmış osmanlıya kılıç çekilmez diyor. Burada devletten yana bir tavır koyuyor. Fethullah Gülene baktığımız zaman o da en kötü devlet bile devletsizlikten çok çok iyidir diyor. Bir devlette yönetim olmadığı zaman, anarşi çıkar ve başıbozuk olur, şu dünyada söylenmiş en güzel sözlerden biridir Gülen'e ait, terörist müslüman olamaz, müslüman da terörist olamaz. Böyle diyen bir insan zaten devletsizliğe ve başsızlığa karşı çıkan bir insandır, en kötü şartlarda bile kendi devletinize sahip çıkın."

them above, displays a Hobbesian perception of state as Ebru Altinoğlu also argues.¹⁴⁹

Hobbes was for the absolutist state as he claimed that we are living in a state of nature in which all activities are motivated by individual egoism and everyone is in war against everyone. In such a situation, the absolutist state of Hobbes was the only ideal solution and therefore the state should maintain the absolute power in its hands.¹⁵⁰

Here it is clear that this attitude which opposes any protest activity or movement against the state and any act favouring the absolutist state model of Hobbes would lead to the attenuation of the civil society as this would be an obstacle to the strength of the civil society. Indeed, civil society is the domain of free exercise and the protective shelter of any kind of social movement. Therefore I argue that Gülen and the followers of the movement he leads have an implicit purpose of seizing the political authority of the state while establishing religious rule in order to change society by proscriptive legislation that would mean the end of the secularity of the state. From this perspective, I argue that the Gülen community members' perception of the state and government policies is tilted toward conservatism and abstention from revolutionary action and more precisely toward authoritarianism. Indeed it should be remembered that the political language of Islam contains no precept to rebel against a bad government. Instead Islam teaches the duty to resist an impious ruler and this is to what the Gülen community members give importance. For the Gülen movement participants, the emphasis is to find and install the right leader who will take into consideration the religious precepts and requirements and the most suitable act therefore is to disseminate Islam and Islamic faith through a

¹⁴⁹ Altinoğlu, "Fethullah Gülen's Perception of State and Society," 92.

¹⁵⁰ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, (London: Penguin, 1985), 183-188.

strategic propaganda that is based on tolerance and dialogue.

Democracy and Civil Society

The meaning of democracy may change from one individual to another but for practical reasons I have to set the basic criteria that are needed for a regime to be considered democratic. Robert Dahl who is an eminent political theorist, and one of the leading academics of democratic theory, and practice, provides in his book called *On Democracy* great issues in democratic thought while he also clarifies what it is, why it is valuable, how it works and what challenges it confronts in the future. Although Dahl's definition of democracy and the criteria he supposed are at the state level, my primary aim while referring to his definition of democracy was an analysis of the Gülen community members' perceptions. I tried to look at how they perceive democracy and to find out whether the model of democracy they are offering provides the consolidation of democracy or not.

Democracy is the idea that provides an environment that combines equal benefit and opportunity in the political, social and economic areas for the welfare of the majority of citizens. As Robert Dahl indicates in his book *On Democracy*, to achieve an environment like this, first of all several hundreds of people who share similar aims have to agree to form an association which will further on need a constitution, a constitution that gives the authority to make all the important decisions to the ablest and best informed among the members of the association, and this arrangement will spare the rest of the association a lot of time and effort and consequently wiser decisions will be made. Robert Dahl emphasizes that no one among the association is so much wiser than the rest that his or her views should automatically prevail. Within the group, there has to be a mission for allowing everyone to discuss his or her ideas because of the fact that everyone is equally

qualified to participate in discussing the issues and then in deciding on the policies to be followed. This rule is valid even if some members may know more about an issue because of the obvious reality of everyone's capability of learning what they need to know about any given subject at any time.¹⁵¹

Robert Dahl believes that it is possible to identify some criteria that a process for governing an association would have to meet in order to satisfy the requirement that all the members are equally entitled to participate in the association's decisions about its policies and there are at least five such standards.¹⁵² Although these criteria suggested by Robert Dahl in order to define a democracy are made at the state level, I will refer to them in analyzing Gülen movement members' perceptions about democracy and I will try to figure out what the ideal model of democracy described by these participants is.

The first criteria indicates that there has to be *effective participation* among the members of the group before any decision is made because cooperation is possible only if equal opportunity of offering a suggestion or opposing an idea is given to everyone. The second criteria, *voting equality* talks about the importance of the equal and effective opportunity to vote that every member should have before reaching any final decision and also nobody's vote should be counted as more valuable as everyone's vote should be perceived equally. According to the third criteria, *enlightened understanding*, everyone has to have equal opportunity to learn about the relevant alternative policies. Also the members must have the exclusive opportunity to decide how, and if they choose what matters are to be placed on the agenda and this is the fourth criteria; *control of the agenda*. Finally the last criterion is the *inclusion of adults* and it indicates that adult permanent residents should have

¹⁵¹ Robert Dahl, *On Democracy* (New Haven: London: Yale University Press, 1998), 35-43.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 37.

the full rights of citizens that are implied by the first four criteria. These criteria should be taken seriously and all of them should be implemented and protected because they are crucial for the permanence and the stability of the democracy. These criteria are relevant and useful and they provide standards against which to measure the performance of actual associations that claim to be democratic.

In addition to these five criteria, in his book called *Polyarchy*, Dahl argues that there are eight institutional guarantees that are required for a democracy to be consolidated in the light of all these criteria that I have already mentioned above. These eight conditions are the following: Freedom to form and join organizations, freedom of expression, the right to vote, eligibility for public office, the right of political leaders to compete for support and votes, alternative sources of information, free and fair elections and institutions for making government policies depend on votes and other expressions of preference.¹⁵³ However, J. Linz and Alfred Stepan do not seem to be satisfied with these eight institutional requirements and they added two extra requirements to the ones listed by Dahl. They argue as follows:

Not sufficient, because no matter how free and fair the elections, and no matter how large the majority of the government, the political society produced by such an election must write a constitution that itself is democratic in that it respects fundamental liberties which include, among other things, considerable protections for minority rights. Furthermore, the democratically elected government must rule within the boundaries of the constitution, and be bound by the law and a complex set of vertical and horizontal institutions which help to ensure accountability.¹⁵⁴

I asked the interviewees questions related to the characteristics of any democratic regime. I tried to formulate my questionnaire while taking into consideration the basic criteria that have been drawn by Robert Dahl and Alfred Stepan as well as J.

¹⁵³ Robert Dahl, *Polyarchy; Participation and Opposition* (New Haven: London: Yale University Press, 1971), 1-3.

¹⁵⁴ Alfred Stepan, "The World's Religious Systems and Democracy: Crafting the 'Twin Tolerations,'" In Alfred Stepan, ed., *Arguing Comparative Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 216.

Linz. Rather than directly asking the interviewees their own opinion about democracy, I tried to figure out to what extent their understanding and interpretation of democracy provides a milieu that would favour the consolidation of democracy. Besides this, I looked at whether the community respects these criteria that are required in order to describe a system as democratic. Indeed I argue that if the principles and criteria used in order to describe a system or a state as democratic are not embraced by the community, it would not be possible to claim that the Gülen movement has adopted democratic values. Some of these questions that I have asked the interviewees for this purpose are as follows:

- To what extent do you feel that the Gülen movement is democratic within itself?
- Do you effectively participate on the decision making process of the community?
- Are there some circumstances in which you and the other community members may disagree regarding some issues such as the vision of the community or the future projects that will be realized?
- Who decides on which matters when you plan to do something?
- Who decides on the agenda of your meetings?
- Do the women have equal opportunity of saying within the movement?
- Do the women participate in the decision making process of the movement?

By asking these questions I wanted to see how they perceive these five criteria that have been listed by Robert Dahl. That is to say I tried to look at the inside of the community by meeting with the fourteen members of the movement and I analyzed whether this association gives enough opportunity to its members for them to be all equally entitled to participate in the associations decisions about its policies and whether the society model that is suggested by the community would enhance a system in which democratic consolidation has been achieved.

The community members meet several times a week and they discuss, or they inform each other about many issues. The meetings' content may differ. They may

be for personal education, or for discussing any funding issue, or any project. Mr. R, a craftsman, explains this situation:

Now, as I said, there are two kinds of meetings. In one of these meetings, something is read or listened to. For instance, a teacher or an intellectual friend reads something like *Risales*, a book of Hocaefendi or something different. This meeting is more spiritual and we may consider it as an information meeting. Secondly, there is another meeting with respect to the things that have to be done, the projects that have to be realized. This may be done by the active members of the community or the craftsmen people. We can say that these meetings are democratic. Exactly democratic. For instance there is a big brother leading. This brother may say: ‘We have some problems like this and that. How can we solve them?’ One craftsman friend says ‘Brother lets do it in this way’ while the other says ‘No, lets do it in that way’ and so on. Consequently, a session of brainstorming emerges. There is no harmony of thought yet. Then a consensus is realized and our brother asks: ‘If you all agree, can we do it in this way?’ If other brothers accept it too as the most suitable decision, every one behaves as if he embraced this decision. For instance, in a meeting in which I participated during the Ramadan, it is said that we may do something for our students. Because they are our children, we have to do something for them. ‘What can we do for them?’ one brother said: ‘I will supply to all student houses their need for sugar. How many houses, we have in this region? One hundred. All the sugar needed by these one hundred houses will be supplied by me. One sugar bag for each house. Another craftsman brother said ‘God bless you!’ Another craftsman said ‘I supply 25 kg. oil for each house while another said ‘I will supply their need for the tea and the other said ‘I will deal with their need for cheese and olives. With this solidarity, as the need of these students during the Ramadan is provided, the problems get solved. It depends only on the personal desire of the individuals and nobody forces you. Nobody says ‘you will give this’ but asks ‘What can you do?’. If he cannot do something, he says it or he says that he can do it later and we say ‘Okay’¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁵ Interview by author with Mr. R, tape recording, Sakarya, November 2006. “*Şimdi orada şöyle dediğim gibi iki türlü sohbet olabiliyor. Birinci sohbetler bir şeyler okunup dinleniyor sadece. Bir hocanın, bir bilgili arkadaşımız bir şeyler okuyor. Risale, Hocaefendi kitabı veya muhtelif eserler. Bir toplantımız biraz manevi ağırlıklı zaten bunu bilgilendirme toplantısı diye de düşünebiliriz. İkinci olarak da yapılabilecek olan işlerle alakalı, mesela o da kendi arasında değişebilir. Aktif hizmette bulunan arkadaşların bir de esnafların toplantıları olur. Bunlar da demokratik olduğunu söyleyebiliriz. Tamamen demokratik diyebiliriz. Şöyle, başımızda bir ağabey olur. Bu ağabey der ki: ‘Bizim şöyle şöyle sıkıntılarımız var, bunu nasıl halledebiliriz?’ Bir esnaf da çıkar der ki: ‘Ağabey biz şunu şöyle şöyle yapalım.’ Öteki de der ki: ‘Hayır böyle böyle yapalım.’ Derken üç beş kişi burada bir fikir jimnastiği yapılır. Fikir birliği olmaz o anda. Fikir birliği yapılır. Ondan sonra da o ağabey de der ki: ‘Uygun görüyorsanız böyle yapsak nasıl olur?’ der. Oradaki çıkan en güzel fikir olarak diğer ağabeyler de bunu kabul ederse herkes oradaki çıkan kararı benimsemiş gibi hareket edip ona göre iş yapar. Mesela en son benim katıldığım bir toplantı vardı bu ramazan ayı münasebetiyle. Dediler ki: ‘Bizim talebelerimiz var burada epey bir şey. Ne yapalım? Bunlara yardımda bulunalım. Çünkü bunlar bizim çocuklarımız bizim bunlara yardımda bulunmamız lazım.’ Bir ağabey de dedi ki:*

However, in any association, the opportunity of offering a suggestion or opposing an idea is crucial, as I have already indicated above. When I asked the interviewees if they participate in the decision making process of the community with respect to the projects that they tend to realize or whether they could easily express their disagreement and discontent about any decision or not, the answers were in general similar. At this point it can be said that problems arise. For instance, from the interviews it can be concluded that within the movement, there is a strict hierarchical organization and it would not be possible to say that all the members can easily participate in the decision making process. The hierarchy is evident not only between the two sexes but also within men and women. That is to say the men within the community also have difficulties in participating in the decision making process. For instance Mr. M indicates:

Do I think the Gülen movement is democratic? Within the movement, the men and women work in separate places. We do not intervene in each other's affairs. For instance I do not have much knowledge about the activities. As a teacher we may have knowledge but we cannot know what they do personally. In fact, within the institution there are no women working. The male and female teachers in our community work separately. There may be women employees but when the teachers are concerned only men are working. In another *dersane*, there are only women...I do not think that there is democracy within the movement. When I say that there is no democracy, I do not mean it by looking at the percentage of the female students or teachers in *dersanes*. In fact, there is an absolute discipline and obedience. Consequently, when our administrators say something, we consider it as a command. At least, I consider it as a command. So it may sometimes prevent me from expressing my self regarding what I think, what I feel.¹⁵⁶

'Bütün evlerin şekeri benden.' Bir ağabey de dedi ki: 'Bütün dedi. Kaç tane evimiz var? 100 küsur tane evimiz var o bölgede. 100 evin bütün şekerleri benden. Birer çuval şeker veriyorum.' Allah razı olsun. Öbür esnaf ağabeyimiz "Her birinin yirmişer kiloluk yağlarını veriyorum" dedi. Ötekisi ' Ben çayını alacağım' dedi. Ötekisi 'Peynir ve zeytini ben hallediyorum' dedi. Böylece yardımlaşmayla o öğrencilerin o ramazan ayı erzak ihtiyacı giderilmiş oldu gibi böyle problemler hallediliyor. Böyle tamamen kişilerin isteği ile olan bir şey. Kimse sizi zorlamıyor. Sen şunu vereceksin demiyor. 'Ne yapabilirsin?' diyor. Sana onu soruyor. Yapamayacaksa mesela durumu iyi değilse yapamıyorum ben diyor zaten şu anda. Daha sonra yaparız ağabey. Tamam diyoruz yani.'

¹⁵⁶ Interview by author with Mr. M, tape recording, İstanbul, October 2006. "Gülen hareketinin demokratik olduğunu düşünüyor muyum? Kendi içlerimizde bizde bayan erkek ayrı mecralarda çalışır.

On the other hand Ms. Y says:

Hocaefendi tells us “Obedience is the principal cause. This job may develop only with *uhuvvet* that means ‘brotherhood’.” We are aware of this and we know that there may be errors, but there is tolerance. That means even if we are sad sometimes, good things happen and solve the problems. We are people of different natures coming from different worlds but we do not share the same thing. Of course there may be discrepancies but to the extent that we are well equipped, to the extent that we know and understand well our Hocaefendi, there are good works.¹⁵⁷

From what Mr. M and Ms Y said, it is seen that there is no effective participation of the members of the group before any decision is made and every member does not have equal opportunity to learn about the relevant policies of the community.

Therefore I argue that in a society that is constructed on the basis of the Gülen doctrine, the citizens would not find enough opportunity to participate effectively in the decision making process and the citizens would not have equal opportunity to learn about the relevant policies of the community. In addition to this, it can be said that the members of the group do not have enough say in the control of the agenda.

In the light of these things it can be concluded that the society which is proposed by the community would have difficulties in meeting the criteria defined by Dahl.

Çok fazla birbirimize müdahale etmeyiz. Faaliyetlerden de aslında, ben öğretmen olarak söyleyeyim, faaliyetler hakkında da çok fazla bir bilgim yoktur. Öğretmen olarak vardır ama birebir hangi işleri yapıyorlar bilmeyiz. Çalışma arkadaşlarımız arasında kurumda zaten bayan yok. Kadın erkek öğretmenler bizim kurumlarımızda ayrıdır. Personel olarak çalışanlarımız vardır. Ama öğretmen olarak düşündüğümüz zaman bizim şubemizde sadece erkek öğretmenler vardır. Başka bir şubede sadece bayan öğretmenler vardır... çok demokratik bulmuyorum. Şöyle. Kendi içindeki demokratik midir sorusuna çok demokratik bulmuyorum derken ben eğitimdeki sınıfların dağılımlarına, kız erkek dağılımlarına bakarak söylememiştim bunu. Çünkü bizde mutlak itaat vardır. Onu söylemiştim. Dolayısıyla yöneticilerimizin söylediği şeyler bizim için aslında emir olmasa bile biz onları emir telakki ederiz veya ben emir telakki ederim. Dolayısıyla benim bazen duygu ve düşüncelerimi söylememe engel olabilir.”

¹⁵⁷ Interview by author with Ms. Y, tape recording, Istanbul, January 2007. “...Hocaefendi bize diyor ki “İtaat esastır. Bu iş kardeşlikle, uhuvvetle yürür”. Biz bunların farkında olduğumuz için diyoruz ki hatalar olur, hoşgörü var. Yani güzellikler bir şekilde çözüm bulunuyor. Üzülsek de sıkılsak da. Değişik fıtrattan insanları düşünün yani her birimiz başka bir dünyadan gelmişiz, aynı şeyi yapıp paylaşıyoruz. Yani muhakkak ki ayrılıklar olacak ama dolduğumuz ölçüde. Hoca efendiyi anladığımız ve tanıdığımız ölçüde güzel işler yaparız.”

The fifth criterion described by Robert Dahl, which is the inclusion of all adults, is one criterion about which the community faces more problems. It is clear that the female members of the group have no equal opportunities in participating in the decision making process and in the control of the agenda when compared to men. As I have already stated in the previous chapter, in the model that is suggested by the movement, men and women have two entirely different worlds. That is to say, the working areas of these two sexes are completely separate.

When the institutional criteria, the eight conditions required for a democracy to be consolidated are considered, it can be said that the Gülen community seems to embrace them. No one among the interviewees was uncomfortable about these criteria. For instance when the first criterion, the freedom to form and join an organization is considered, they all agree that it should be allowed to form a civic organization. Some of them claim that it should be legal to the extent that the state permits and some of them emphasize on the fact that the formation of an organization and the participation in it should be free. When I ask what they think about the liberties and rights of the civic organizations, the responses are in general similar and the interviewees emphasize the fact that there must always be a state control although the formation and the participation should be free. The reason why the state control of these organizations is important for these community members is that these people think that the civic organizations in Turkey serve their own interests rather than the consolidation of democracy. However I argue that in such a milieu where the civic organizations are strictly controlled by the government and state authority, it is impossible to talk about the existence of a pluralistic society. Therefore the system which is suggested by the Gülen movement members neglects

the importance of the existence of a civil society in consolidating democracy. For instance, Mr. B says:

As I have said, it is okay if they do not behave ideologically. There must be a mechanism that controls these organizations. I am careful about what I say in order to express myself correctly. But this must not be like this. The state should not act like the gendarmerie. It comes again to the issue of a democratic culture. That is to say an institutionalized and consolidated democracy.¹⁵⁸

The other criteria, such as the freedom of expression, the right to vote, eligibility for public office, the right of political leaders to compete for support and votes, alternative sources of information, free and fair elections and institutions for making government policies depend on votes and other expression of preference are also adopted by these community members. At this point, their views about the elections should be pointed out. Within these criteria, the one which emphasizes the importance of the free and fair elections is open to debate. Obviously the meaning of “fair elections” may vary from one individual to another but with respect to the current election system, the community members seem to consider it as fair although there is a ten percent of national threshold in the general elections and some fragments within the society could not represent themselves within the parliament. The community members are supporting in general the preservation of the national threshold system since it promotes stability. There are some members like Mr. R whom oppose it because they think that some fragments within the country cannot find feasible ground to be represented in the parliament. Indeed most of the community members highlight the importance of a powerful state authority and they

¹⁵⁸ Interview by author with Mr. B, tape recording, Istanbul, February 2006. “*Ya Türkiye’de işte dediğim gibi yani, ideolojik davranmalar tamam. Tabi bunları bir şey yapan böyle kontrol eden, denetim altında tutan bir mekanizma olmalı. Ama söylediğim şey yerine otursun diye seçmeye çalışıyorum. Fakat bu şey olmamalı yani, sivil toplum kuruluşunun başında devlet bir jandarma gibi durmamalı. İşte bu yine senin sorduğun şeye geliyor, demokrasi kültürünün yerleşmesine geliyor. Yani kurunlaşmış, yerleşmiş bir demokrasi.*”

oppose any coalition as it is claimed that this would bring only inconsistency to the country. Mr. R says:

I do not think it is fair. To be more precise, I think that it does not reflect justice. What is justice? That is to say, everything should be equal. A man gains some votes but he could not enter the parliament. However, I want to see the existence of a strong government as well as a powerful state. Whatever government it is...¹⁵⁹

The analysis of the Gülen community's perception about the last two institutional conditions should also be taken into consideration. These last two conditions are the ones added by J. Linz and Alfred Stepan to the criteria of Robert Dahl. They highlight the importance of considerable protection for minority rights among the respect for fundamental liberties and of a democratically elected government ruling within the boundaries of the constitution and bound by the law with a complex set of vertical and horizontal institutions which help to ensure the accountability.

The community members with whom I conducted interviews always mention that all citizens should be free regarding their expression of ideas or the practice of their religion. That is to say, they seem to give lots of importance to free will. As Fethullah Gülen, their leader, refers to one of the important principles of Islam stating that there is no coercion in Islam, these members also point out the same issue. They believe that the doctrine of the movement, the readings of Said Nursi and Fethullah Gülen led them to believe more and more in the necessity of the coexistence of different nations and in living peacefully with others. In addition to this, they claim that in Turkey there is no population that is repressed by the state. They claim that the emphasis on tolerance and on dialogue made them more sensitive towards the other nations that can be considered as minorities. However, just

¹⁵⁹ Interview by author with Mr. R, tape recording, Sakarya, November 2006. "*Adil bulmuyorum. Şöyle adil bulmuyorum. Çünkü adaleti yansıtmıyor. Yani adalet ne demektir? Eşit olması lazım her şeyin. Adam belli bir oy alıyor ama hiç giremiyor. Fakat şu da var. Güçlü bir hükümet ve devleti görmek istiyorum ben şahsen. O bakımdan hangi hükümet olursa olsun...*"

claiming that there is no repressed population shows that the participants of the movement are not as sensitive as they seem towards minorities and their rights. Mr.

C says:

I come from a nationalist family as I have already said. There were also some racist tendencies but after reading his writings or listening to the cassettes, my opinion has been changed; we can live together with different nations as a world community and as it was also existent within Ottoman society. My ideas have changed in that way. At the beginning, I did not even read Said Nursi's books for a long time due to the fact that he was Kurdish. This is a fact. Lets say with Fethullah Gülen, while at the beginning I was like this, my thoughts have been changed up to that point. However, broadly speaking, my ideals in high school have not changed much; on the contrary, I can say that they are strengthened...¹⁶⁰

Why do they believe in this? My response would be that they are dreaming of the society and culture of the Ottoman Empire. Almost every member of the Gülen community refers to the Ottoman Empire period when one asks them the ideal period of time of the ideal society that they would like to live in. I cite a phrase affirmed by Ms. Y which, I think, reflects this admiration clearly:

...two days ago, we talked with our friends about an issue like this: If faith is really taken into consideration as the basis, the essence of everything, if the people work for the *hizmet* for only six months as they work for the state, if all the people living within the boundaries of the Turkish Republic work for this *hizmet* for only six months voluntarily and without remuneration, the Ottoman Empire will regenerate.¹⁶¹

On the other hand, when the second criterion, the requirement of a democratically elected government ruling within the boundaries of the constitution and bound by the

¹⁶⁰ Interview by author with Mr. C, tape recording, Istanbul, April 2006. "...ben dediğim gibi milliyetçi bir aileden geliyorum. Birazda ırkçı yaklaşımlar vardı ama onun kaseti olsun ya da yazıları olsun daha sonraki bakışım bir dünya toplumu veya bir Osmanlı mantığında olduğu gibi çok değişik toplumlarla yaşayabileceğimizin ispatı olmuş oldu. Biraz o tarafa doğru kaymış oldum. Ben Said Nursi'nin kendisini dahi Kürt olduğu için uzun dönem kitaplarını okumadım. Böyle bir durum da var. Tabii işte Gülen'le beraber diyelim başlangıçta böyle düşünürken bu noktaya kadar değişti. Ama toplamda, lise iki lise üç yıllarından itibaren ideallerim çok değişti diyemem desteklendi diyebilirim yani..."

¹⁶¹ Interview by author with Ms. Y, tape recording, Istanbul, January 2007. "...gerçekten iman esas alınsa hani bir iki gün önce arkadaşlarla burada şöyle bir şey konuştuk. Eğer bu devlet için şu hizmete çalışıldığı gibi altı ay tüm insanlar, Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde yaşayan tüm insanlar şu hizmete gönüllü ve karşılıksız, çıkarsız altı ay çalışsınlar Osmanlı İmparatorluğu geri gelir."

law is considered, the Gülen movement is sensitive. In other words, the community members strictly emphasize the importance of obeying the rules whatever their results might be. For example, when the headscarf issue is considered, it is clear that they never oppose the rules. They respect the law limiting the use of the headscarf; however this does not mean that they agree with the ban for headscarf. Indeed, they do not hesitate to say that they consider it as a restriction of the fundamental rights and liberties of the individual.

It is clear that the Gülen movement members are considering democracy as the only way to realize a milieu in which they can practice their faith and express themselves and have feasible grounds for persuading others to become Muslims or real believers because, in general it is seen that the participants of the Gülen movement describe democracy as a system of liberties. In such an atmosphere of liberty, Gülen movement members assume that other people such as non-believers will also choose Islam by their own will. Hence the usage of the term “democracy” by the community members is in a pragmatic sense. That is to say, the Gülen movement members see democracy as the most suitable tool in order to disseminate Islam and their definition of democracy at this point is pragmatic.

In addition to this, in the light of the interviews I conducted, I argue that the community members measure success by the citizens’ approval of persons and programs as quantified by votes. They claim that a system is successful if it brings stability and a secure atmosphere. Therefore their position with respect to democracy stands pragmatic. They perceive votes as having the same structure as the choices of participants in a market, in that their decisions license access to positions of power that political parties fight over like players in the market. From this perspective, the model of democracy they are supposing seems to be a liberal democracy as defined

by Habermas. According to this model, the state is conceived as an apparatus of the public administration and I argue that the Gülen community also considers the state in the same manner. The nature of the state according to the community members is not important. Therefore whether the state favours pluralism or not has not much significance for the community members in a society that is conceived as a system of market- structured interactions of private persons and their labor. However in a republican understanding of democracy, Habermas claims that politics is conceived as the reflexive form of the substantial ethical life as it constitutes the medium in which the members of communities become aware of their dependence on one another, as acting with full deliberation as citizens develop existing relations of reciprocal recognition into an association of free and equal consociates under law.¹⁶² More precisely in a republican conception of democracy, the political public sphere and civil society acquire a more strategic significance¹⁶³ when compared to the liberal model of democracy which is suggested by the Gülen community members. Although the Gülen community members emphasize the role of dialogue, the model of democracy they are suggesting does not provide a public communication oriented to mutual understanding of communities but it is mostly based on the dissemination of faith and Islam by persuading others, the non-believers.

Civil Society

According to İlkay Sunar, civil society can be described as the intermediate domain between the state and the individual- a domain in which deliberation and association takes place without constraint and coercion.¹⁶⁴ Hence if the Gülen movement wants to represent itself as a civic organization, it is clear that the community has to show

¹⁶² Jürgen Habermas, “Three Normative Models of Democracy,” *Constellations*, Vol. I- Issue I, (December 1994),239-244.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, op. cit.

¹⁶⁴ İlkay Sunar, “Sivil Toplum ve İslamiyet,” In Elizabeth Özdalga and Sune Persson, eds., *Sivil Toplum, Demokrasi ve İslam Dünyası* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1998), 11.

that deliberation and association takes place without any constraint and coercion. As the first approximation, I argue that the Gülen movement does not show this deliberation and it is also arguable that there are constraints within the movement, especially when the women are concerned.

I asked the interviewees some questions that I cited below in order to have an idea about whether the Gülen community can be considered as a civic organization or not and I wondered how they would articulate their arguments while claiming that they form a civic organization.

-Is it possible to consider the Gülen Movement as a civil society organization?

-What do you think about the liberties and rights of these civil organizations? Do you think that these civil society organizations should be bound by the control of the state or should they be more liberal?

-Is it possible to say that the Gülen movement contributes to the democratization process in Turkey as a civil society organization?

Another reason why I asked the interviewees these questions is that in all democracies, the existence of democracy within the civic organization plays an important role. Otherwise civil society cannot fulfil its role in consolidation of any democracy. At this point, it should be pointed out that all the interviewees claimed that the Gülen movement that is composed of volunteers can be described as a civic organization that helps the democratization process in Turkey. For instance Mr. D said when I asked if the Gülen movement can be considered as a civic organization:

Certainly. Civic organizations have duties like serving society, helping the development of individuals' thoughts and making states more advanced in the progress of civilization. These associations are a necessity to regularize lives, promote peace, and create diversity and to open up new horizons for individuals. Any institution that is serving the society is also serving the state and the individual. If these institutions are making people live for the well being of others while making them give up their morality and their line of conduct, I think that they provide benefits more than costs.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁵ Interview by author with Mr. D, tape recording, Istanbul, May 2006. "*Kesinlikle görebiliriz. Sivil toplum örgütlerinin amacı topluma hizmet, bireyleri düşünce alanında geliştirmek ve devleti biraz*

Another interviewee, Mr. A, claims that the Gülen movement is just a civic organization by these words:

We should not say: “It can be considered as a civic organization.” It is a civic organization. It would be better if we call it a voluntary movement. In any civic organization, let’s look at the Gülen movement; I saw as an individual, the people should not be excluded due to their language or their religion. If they are weak, we should be always on their sides.¹⁶⁶

Here, the community members claim that an institution that leading people of helping them to live their morality and religion is one necessary condition for an institution to be conceived as a part of civil society. As opposed to this view, Ernest Gellner argues that civil society has three adversaries; Islam, Marxism and nationalism, whereas at the core of civil society lies the unconstrained and secular individual, unhampered by social or theological bonds, freely choosing his aims.¹⁶⁷ However, it is seen that within the Gülen community, individuals are not free from theological bonds. Even their definition of civil society is based on a religious discourse. As İlkay Sunar indicates, Gellner sees Islam as a competitor of civil society due to its resistance to secularization although civil society requires the privatization of faith and religious beliefs. Islam is seen as an authoritarian mode of modernization that favours industrialization whereas it opposes civil society.

The women and men do not have an equal position and role within the community as I have already shown in previous pages under the gender issue title. It

daha üst uygarlık seviyesine çıkarmak gibi bir amaçları var. Yani yaşantının düzenlenmesi, huzurun oluşması, daha böyle geniş düşünebilen, ufukları geniş insanların oluşturulabilmesi, renklilik gibi bir amaçları oldukları için bu gibi kurumlar ihtiyaçlardır ve topluma hizmet eden her türlü kurum aynı zamanda devlete de hizmet ediyordur, bireye de hizmet ediyordur. Bu gibi kurumlar eğer insanların ahlak yapısından tutun da yaşantılarından vazgeçerek başkaları için yaşama düşüncesi oluşturabilecek kadar bir etkisi oluşuyorsa bence bu örgütlerin zarardan çok faydası vardır.”

¹⁶⁶ Interview by author with Mr. A, tape recording, Istanbul, February 2006. “Bir sivil toplum hareketidir diyebiliriz değil, sivil toplum hareketinin ta kendisidir yani. Gönüllüler hareketi desek daha güzel olur. Sivil toplum hareketinde şu var, diyelim ki gülen hareketine baktığın zaman, şu var, bireysel olarak benim gördüğüm, bunlar yine beni bağlayan şeyler, insanlar dilinden, dininden dolayı dışlanmamalıdır yani, mazlumsa hep yanında olmamız gerekiyor.”

¹⁶⁷ Ernest Gellner, *Conditions of Liberty; Civil Society and Its Rivals* (London: Penguin, 1994), 9.

is implausible to argue that the community is a good example for an organization where plurality is developed. Indeed in Gellner's definition, there is a particular emphasis on pluralism. He defines civil society as the idea of institutional and ideological pluralism, which prevents the establishment of the monopoly of power and truth and counterbalances those central institutions which, though necessary, might otherwise acquire such monopoly.¹⁶⁸ However, even if there may sometimes be issues such as the presidential system in which the community members do not always endorse the same opinion or agree with their leader Fethullah Gülen, it can be said that in general the community does not promote plurality.

Secularism and the Public Sphere

According to many people in Turkey, Gülen is against the Republican regime as well as democracy and secularization. The republic is described as a form of government maintained by a state or country whose sovereignty is based on popular consent and whose governance is based on popular representation and control.¹⁶⁹ The citizens may use power to govern the state directly or indirectly, by choosing their own representatives. According to the 1982 constitution, the republic is accepted as the basic principle of the state according to the first code.¹⁷⁰ Gülen is mostly accused of trying to create a theocratic state. However, Gülen says that defending the creation of a theocratic regime on behalf of Islam which is formed by an institutionalized religious group would be completely inaccurate¹⁷¹ while claiming that the republic is

¹⁶⁸ Gellner, *Conditions of Liberty; Civil Society and Its Rivals*, 9.

¹⁶⁹ Montesquieu, translation by Fehmi Baldaş, *Kanunların Ruhu Üzerine*, (Ankara: Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1963).

¹⁷⁰ Retrieved from the website: <http://www.byegm.gov.tr/mevzuat/anayasa/anayasa-ing.htm> (February 2007).

¹⁷¹ Fethullah Gülen, *Fasıldan Fasıla* (İzmir: Nil Yayınları, 1997), 223.

a way of governing people that dignifies their souls with its own virtues and values.¹⁷²

The second article of the 1982 constitution specifies that laicism is one of the fundamental principles of the Turkish Republic.¹⁷³ However, it is also explained that does not mean atheism, and every citizen is free to choose his/her own belief and will not face any distinct treatment due to his/her belief since article 24, designates that everybody has freedom of faith, conscience and religious belief and that religion cannot be exploited for any purpose.¹⁷⁴ At this point Gülen describes laicism as the principle that the government does not intervene in religious life while on the other hand religion does not intervene in world affairs. It means that every citizen is free to choose his or her own belief or religion as no one can exert any pressure on any one on this issue. Gülen illustrates his argument by saying: “There is no pressure in religion because pressure is against the essence of religion...”¹⁷⁵ In addition to this, Gülen claims that religion should not be exploited and it should not be politicized. For instance he claims:

... The veracity of religion should be represented in such a way that it rises above all political considerations. However, if religion is politicized or if we claim that we are representing religion, the others will be excluded. I do not accuse here any one or any political establishment. We are figuring out that if religion becomes politicized this consequently gives birth to reactions against it. Although it is seen as protecting religion, I think that the ones who are politicizing the religion are causing damage because religion, as well as the ones who are politicizing it, will gain strong dislike.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷² Fethullah Gülen, *Ölçü veya Yoldaki Işıklar* (İstanbul: Nil Yayınları 2003).

¹⁷³ Retrieved from the website: <http://www.byegm.gov.tr/mevzuat/anayasa/anayasa-ing.htm> (February 2007).

¹⁷⁴ Retrieved from <http://www.byegm.gov.tr/mevzuat/anayasa/anayasa-ing.htm> November 2006.

¹⁷⁵ Fethullah Gülen, *Asrın Getirdiği Tereddütler (4)* (İzmir: T.Ö.V. 1997), 164.

¹⁷⁶ Osman Özsoy, *Fethullah Gülen ile Canlı Yayında Gündem* (İstanbul: Alfa Yayınları, 1998), 26. “Din hakikati öyle bir temsil edilmeli ki bütün siyasi mülahazaların üzerinde olsun. Hâlbuki din politize edildiği, onu biz temsil ediyoruz denildiği zaman başkalarını adeta işin dışında görmüş oluruz. Burada herhangi bir kimseyi, ya da siyasi bir yapıyı hedeflemiyorum. Dinin politize edilmesinin, din adına nasıl bir tepki oluşturabileceğine dikkat çekmekteyiz. Dine sahip çıkma gibi görülsün bile, fakat tavırlarımızla dine gölge ettiğimizden, onu kararttığımızdan ve bize karşı duyulan

It is clearly seen that Fethullah Gülen's primary objective is to protect religion under any circumstances, against all reactions. For him, one of the most important threats to religion is the politicization of Islam. Here he draws attention to those that are trying to politicize Islam. If their image is not good in the eyes of the people, religion may be affected negatively because the views and the perceptions about these people that are politicizing Islam would also shape the perceptions about religion, and Fethullah Gülen emphasizes that this situation is really dangerous for religion.

The second code of the 1982 constitution declares that the Turkish Republic is a democratic state with respect to human rights and is ruled by the rule of law. Gülen's ideas are discussed a lot in Turkey by many people and as I have already said Gülen was accused so many times of trying to destroy democracy in Turkey. In his speeches, it is obvious that Gülen does not attack democracy directly or he has not made any obvious attempts to replace it with the *Sharia*, which means Islamic law. When human rights and freedom is concerned, in an interview realized by Nevval Sevindi, he says that he is for free thinking and initiative while he supports liberalism up to a certain degree but he also indicates that he criticizes it when it goes to the extremes.¹⁷⁷

I have already stated Gülen's views with respect to democracy. When liberty and the individual's rights are considered, although he is uncomfortable about the restrictions on the public sphere that limits to some degree the religious practices of individuals such as the headscarf issue, Gülen's response to the question asked by Yasemin Çongar from *Milliyet* newspaper reveals his opinions:

In my opinion, the degree of Islamic rights and liberties as well as the freedom of thought and the liberal initiative we experience in

nefretten din de nasibini aldığından dolayı, zannediyorum dini politize edenler dine büyük kötülük yapmış olurlar."

¹⁷⁷ Nevval Sevindi, *Fethullah Gülen ile New York Sohbeti* (İstanbul: Sabah Yayınları, 1997), 33.

Turkey is rarely existent in another country in the world. Turkey is better than Iran at this issue. More comfortable. It is more liberal than Saudi Arabia regarding the practice of religious beliefs. More liberal than Iraq, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria. We should be conscious of the value of this liberty.¹⁷⁸

It is known that in most of the Muslim countries, there exists an Islamic utopia that sees democracy and secularism as an obstacle to the practice of religious requirements. Their critiques are mostly on the issue of religious life and they argue that they could not live their religion, more precisely they could not live their lives according to religious principles, and they could not bring up their children according to these principles as they meet problems, or obstacles, especially when the public sphere issue is considered. At this point, the following question becomes important: How can individuals and societies decide on their own future? Democracy and political Islam are two currents that could be the answer to that question. In many Muslim societies, political Islam is seen as the antithesis while democracy is considered as the thesis. Indeed, as it is well known, from the formation of the Turkish republic up until the present, the clear distinction between two sides, one side that strongly defends the Kemalist revolution and its ideas, the other one that is unable to and that has problems with identifying itself with these republican principles is evident. Hence the Kemalist and secular ideology could not be established in Turkey properly and a division within the society on this issue is very clear. According to Lahaouari Addi, this clear division between those who succeed in adapting themselves to the secularist and democratic principles and those who could not has led to the rise of political Islam; and this utopia identifying itself within the boundaries of the political Islam stands against not only democracy but also political

¹⁷⁸ Yasemin Çongar, *Milliyet Newspaper*, September 1, 1997. “Türkiye’de bana göre hür düşünce, hür teşebbüs dünyada çok ender yerlerde var olan düzeydedir. Türkiye İran’dan bu konuda çok müsaittir. Çok yumuşaktır, Suudi Arabistan’dan daha hürdür, dinsel duyguları açığa vurma, yaşama açısından. Irak’tan, Libya’dan, Fas’tan, Tunus’tan, Cezayir’den daha hürdür. Bu hürriyetin kadri bilinmelidir”

modernity. In addition to this, Addi claims that this Islamic utopia and the public aspect of Islam aim at maintaining society's communal structures.¹⁷⁹

José Casanova argues that there are three elements which are necessary and essential for the development of modernity.¹⁸⁰ These is an increasing structural differentiation of social spaces resulting in the separation of religion from politics, economy, science, and so forth, the privatization of religion within its own sphere, and the declining social significance of religious belief, commitment, and, institutions.¹⁸¹ These conditions may be considered also as the necessary conditions for secularism. However, Casanova adds that the new functionalist theory of secularization does not necessarily suggest an inevitable decline of religion in modern societies but argues that with the marginalization and privatization of religion within its own differentiated sphere, it loses its traditional societal and public functions.¹⁸²

According to Talal Asad, secularism does not simply insist that religious practice and belief be confined to a space where they cannot threaten political stability or the liberties of free thinking citizens. It builds on a particular conception of the world and the problems generated by that world. In the discourse of modernity the "secular" presents itself as the ground from which theological discourse was generated (as a form of false consciousness) and from which it gradually emancipated itself in its march to freedom. At this point, religion has the option either of confining itself to private belief or engaging in public matters.¹⁸³ Hence the eruption of religion into the public sphere within the political life of Turkey in the

¹⁷⁹ Lahaouri Addi, "Islamist Utopia and Democracy," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Volume. 524, Political Islam (Nov., 1992), 120-130.

¹⁸⁰ José Casanova, "Secularization, Enlightenment and Modern Religion." In *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 11-39.

¹⁸¹ Casanova, "Secularization, Enlightenment and Modern Religion," 11- 39.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, op. cit.

¹⁸³ Talal Asad, "Secularism, Nation-State, Religion." In *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 199.

1980s shows that differentiation and the loss of the societal functions of Islam do not necessarily mean “privatization”.

On the other hand, even though privatization is seen as a pre-eminent factor that would lead to the establishment of secular spheres, it can be argued that religion in Turkey has never been fully privatized within its own sphere. This argument can easily be proved when the last two decades of Turkish politics is analyzed. On the contrary, it is seen that religion became more and more politicized with the rise of political Islam. For instance, the call by Muslim movements to reform the social body through the authority of popular majorities in the national parliament in Turkey in 1997 was an attempt that showed political Islam was aiming to make religion more publicized. On the other hand, although beside the privatization thesis, the decline of religion is considered as another subthesis of the secularization thesis in Casanova’s article¹⁸⁴, it is obvious that Turkish politics has never faced a decline of religion during the republican era. On the contrary it has witnessed some periods, as I have already argued, within which religion and religious movements have grown stronger than before. Hence it can be argued that we are witnessing a “deprivatization” of religion in the modern world. By deprivatization, Casanova means that the religious traditions throughout the world refuse to accept the marginal role that is attributed to them and they refuse to be privatized although the secularization theories gave them such a role.¹⁸⁵ More precisely, “deprivatization” can be described as the repoliticization of the private religious and moral spheres as well as the renormativization of the public economic and political spheres. What is evident is the fact that social movements that appeared in the name of religion are challenging the legitimacy and autonomy of the primary secular spheres, especially

¹⁸⁴ Casanova, “Secularization, Enlightenment and Modern Religion,” 20.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 5.

the state and the market economy. In addition to this, the author argues that deprivatization does not simply mean the defense of the traditional by religion, but its entry into the public sphere and the arena of political contestation as well as its participation in the very struggles to define and set the modern boundaries between the private and the public spheres.¹⁸⁶ At this point, I will try to answer whether the Gülen movement is also challenging this legitimacy of the secular spheres or not.

The important question here is the following: Is it possible to see religious deprivatization as a threat to political modernity or to democracy? If it is so, could the Gülen movement be considered as a movement that undermines civil society or individuals' liberties? In such a case, politicized religion would be considered as a rebellion against modernity and the universal values of enlightenment as it is stressed in the article written by Asad.¹⁸⁷ The author indicates that the gravity of this possible threat depends on how religion becomes public, and he emphasizes that political religion can be considered as consistent with modernity and secularization, only if it favours the construction of civil society or promotes public debate around liberal values.

I have mentioned that the deprivatization of the religion also means the entry of it into the public sphere more effectively. Hence there is an aim to define and set the modern boundaries between the private sphere and the public spheres. At this point, the distinction of the two spheres, the public and private sphere debate needs to be taken into account.

What demarcates the public and the private sphere undoubtedly depends on a cultural set of complex cultural, political, and economic factors, and as a result of the interaction between such factors the line of demarcation inevitably has had to shift it. From among the cultural factors, religion stands out as one of the most decisive components in delimiting the two spheres. Religions

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., op. cit.

¹⁸⁷ Asad, "Secularism, Nation-State, Religion," 182.

distinctly recognize and sanction a sphere of private action for individuals.¹⁸⁸

As Mohsen Kadivar illustrates, religion is one important element to draw the boundaries between the public and private spheres. In her article entitled “Rethinking the Public Sphere”, Nancy Fraser criticizes Habermas’ bourgeois public sphere while claiming that his bourgeois public sphere conception is a beneficial source to study the limits of democracy in late capitalist societies.¹⁸⁹ Turkey that can be considered to some extent as a late capitalist society could not achieve full and successful institutionalization regarding the new principles and the values that have risen with the republic. Hence I argue that Gülen’s ideas and perceptions about the basic fundamental principles and the essential values of the republic, and his propositions to create moral norms in the public and private spheres coincide with the ones proposed by Habermas. For instance Habermas emphasizes that there must be a single public sphere and that the multiplicity of publics represents a departure from democracy. On the other hand, Fraser argues that in stratified societies, the subordinated groups would have no areas for deliberation among themselves about their needs, objectives and strategies and in multicultural societies like Turkey for example, a single public sphere will privilege the expressive norms of one cultural group over others, thus the multiple public spheres will achieve the ideal participatory parity better. Although Gülen insists on the fact that there must be a plurality and freedom for all the different voices within the public, whether the society that he is proposing is a society based on Turkish-Islamic identity or not would be found out. While doing this, it should be kept in mind that the non-bourgeois strata would have difficulties in the access to the single public sphere as

¹⁸⁸ Mohsen Kadivar, “An Introduction to the Public and Private Debate in Islam,” *Social Research*, Volume 70, No: 3 (Fall 2003), 659.

¹⁸⁹ Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere,” 109-142.

Nancy Fraser argues. It means that some groups may be excluded. Thus if Gülen's idealized public was founded on the basis of a single public, it would not respond to the problems of the democratic political foundation and it would not provide the essential requirements for participatory parity because as it is also indicated by Fraser the multiplicity of the public spheres is a precondition for participatory parity.¹⁹⁰

Religious Requirements Practiced in the Public Sphere

As I have already stated, Lahaouri Addi claims that the political Islam is an obstacle not only for democracy but also political modernity and secularization. The first thing I noticed when I read all the interviews, one by one, is that almost all the community members wish for a milieu in which the Muslim people live their religion more freely and the Islamic principles are respected more. It is obvious that the community members do not see democracy as an obstacle for their religion, and they do not want to replace it with a state which is ruled according to the Islamic principles. However it is also evident that the interviewees with whom I have talked are stressing the importance of a more active Islam. That is to say, the community members do not wish Islam to be privatized within its own sphere but on the contrary they want Islam to become more publicized.

One may argue the opposite as Fethullah Gülen stresses the importance of education and indicates that when a choice should be made between the headscarf and education, education has to be chosen:

I have already stated that the headscarf issue is not as important as the principles of faith and the five religious duties required of all Muslims. I have left the choice in this issue to individuals' conscience. At that time my own opinion was to choose the

¹⁹⁰ Ibid. 109-142.

education. This approach seemed to me as very important since it set lots of people's mind at ease from many segments of society.¹⁹¹

However, Fethullah Gülen and the community members emphasize that they would prefer the liberation of the use of headscarf in all public spheres. They also argue that religious practices in the public sphere, such as in the public offices, should not be restricted. Otherwise this would be an obstacle for a Muslim to live as he/she believes. Indeed, when the public and private sphere debate is considered, according to the interviews, it is possible to argue that the community members do not seem to be willing to consider religion as a private sphere issue. Among the interviewees, there is a common questioning of the restrictions that prevent them for practicing their religion in the public offices and they aspire for a system in which religion is not limited to the private sphere.

It is believed that religion and religious requirements such as *namaz* should not be exercised secretly because according to them, religion cannot be excluded from the society and the state administration. The headscarf issue is another topic about which there are many complaints. For instance while Mr. C says that he could not understand the restrictions and limitations within the public sphere, Mr. B expresses that religion should not be considered outside of the state authority and governmental body.

I think that people should have the right to wear headscarves in universities due to their beliefs. I cannot understand the public sphere. In places like universities where there is a broad vision and the freedoms are lived much, it is just a simple issue. We should not be in such circumstances.¹⁹²

¹⁹¹ Gündem, *Fethullah Gülen'le 11 Gün*, 178. "Başörtüsü meselesinin iman esasları ve İslam'ın beş şartı kadar ağır bir mesele olmadığını ifade etmiş ve başörtüsü veya okulu tercih konusunu insanların vicdanına havale etmiştim. O zaman benim vicdani kanaatim de okumaktan yanaydı. Böyle bir yaklaşım birçok kesimden kimseyi rahatlatma ve Türkiye'nin geleceği adına bana çok önemli gelmişti."

¹⁹² Interview by author with Mr. C, tape recording, Istanbul, April 2006. "İnsanlar inançları gereği başını örtebilmesi lazım diye düşünüyorum. Kamusal alanı anlayamıyorum. Üniversite gibi böyle ufku fazla olan yerlerde, bu özgürlüklerin en fazla yaşandığı yerler diyebileceğimiz yerlerde çok basit bir olay olarak görüyorum yani bunu. Biz böyle durumlara düşmememiz lazım."

...I think that religion should not be excluded from the state administration and social life. Otherwise, being a Muslim will depend on the situation. What you do now? You do not take into consideration seriously the religion in state administration and the social life but it is not adequate for Islam. However what has been done during four caliphs' period? The caliphs were chosen with elections. It is a good thing. In a sense it was like republic. What happened then? During Emevi period, caliphate became a system of sultanate and it was wrong the fact that the chief of state is ruled by a hereditary monarchy. However I do not agree that the religion is thrown outside the state administration and the society life.¹⁹³

There are even some members such as Mr. K who claims that the headscarf should be free even in high school level:

On the headscarf issue, when I was at university, there were also some problems regarding the clothes of the students such as the clothes of the leftist students or their hairstyles and so on but I think that rather looking at these elements, it would be better to look at their ideas and at what they have in their minds. Their physical appearances of them should not be the concern of the state administration. I mean it should not be an obstacle. In private schools, at high school level for example my perception is like this.¹⁹⁴

As Fethullah Gülen, it is clear that the community also insists on the idea that religious practices should be free even in public offices. They perceive this freedom as an individual right but although they harshly criticize the actual situation for limiting their rights, it should also be pointed out that this critique of the state has

¹⁹³ Interview by author with Mr. B, tape recording, Istanbul, February 2006. "...ben devlet idaresinden yani bunu açıkça söylüyorum yani, devlet idaresinden ve toplum yaşantısından dinin atılmaması gerektiğini, dinin yok sayılmaması gerektiğini düşünüyorum. Ya o zaman işine gelirse Müslüman, işine gelmeyince Müslüman olmama gibi bir durum ortaya çıkar. Yani sen şimdi ne yapıyorsun, toplum hayatında dini dikkate alıyorsun, devlet hayatında dini dikkate almıyorsun, o zaman bu İslam'a uygun bir şey değil ki, İslam'la bağdaşmayan bir şey yani. Ya mesela dört halife döneminde ne olmuş, halifeler seçimle iş başına gelmişler. Güzel bir şey olmuş, halifeler seçilmişler yani. Bir tür cumhuriyet gibi şimdiki anlamda. Sonra ne olmuş, Emeviler zamanında, halifelik saltanata dönüştürülmüş, babadan oğla geçen saltanata dönüştürülmüş, bu yanlış bir şey yani. Yani devlet başkanlığı'nın babadan oğla geçmesi yanlış bir şey. Yanlış buluyorum bunu. Ama devlet idaresinden ve toplum hayatından dinin sökülüp atılmasını da tasvip etmiyorum yani."

¹⁹⁴ Interview by author with Mr. K, tape recording, Istanbul, September 2006. "Başörtüsü konusunda daha önce bizim üniversitede okuduğumuz yıllardaki yaşanan işte diğer sol eğilimli insanların kıyafetleri, saç sakal yapıları konusunda da daha önceden sıkıntılar yaşıyordu ben bunların tamamen eğitimde öğrencinin kafa yapısından bakılmasını yani bilgisine bakılmasını onun dışındaki dış görünümle ilgili şeylerin tamamen idarenin dışında olmasını düşünüyorum. Yani hiç engel teşkil etmemesini düşünüyorum. Özel okulda mesela, lise çağında ben bundan yanayım."

never gained the form of an upheaval against the state. Indeed I argue that the displeasure of the community with respect to their religious practices which they claim they cannot perform in public sphere is a sign that shows that the Gülen community is still having difficulty in adjusting itself to the reforms of the Kemalist regime and their discontent shows that their requests are in fact to gain recognition.

Other than this issue, the community members enounce democracy with Islam altogether and they define a democratic regime while illustrating it with the examples of the *Sunna* of the prophet. For instance, Mr. A argues:

If democracy is a good form of living, it is already consistent with Islam. Not to hurt anybody else, to respect all opinion already exist in Islam. When an unbeliever came to our prophet, let's look at this tolerance, he first respects the one who came as he says to let his/her explain his/her belief and religion. Then, he explains our religion.¹⁹⁵

Mr. B points out similar thing:

If a genuine Muslim does everything with his/her heart, if he/she is honest and does not steal as Islam orders not to steal or not to kill. That is to say, this is a life of high quality without lying. These are the issues brought by Islam. Only if a Muslim obeys these rules, the democracy would be consolidated in Turkey.¹⁹⁶

The community members whom I interviewed define democracy as the equivalent of the religious rights within society and this is their criterion for comparing between democratic and non democratic regimes. Mr. K claims that if there is no freedom of faith there is no democracy and he gives the example of European countries:

I think due to the fact that there is a fear of Islam in European countries, there is no complete freedom of faith especially for the

¹⁹⁵ Interview by author with Mr. A, tape recording, Istanbul, February 2006. “*Onun için demokrasi güzel bir yaşama biçimiye o zaten İslamiyet’in içinde var yani, başkasına zarar vermemek, başkasının düşüncesine saygı göstermek, bu zaten İslamiyet’in içinde var yani. Peygamber efendimize bir müşrik geldiği zaman, önce efendimiz diyor ki, bak hoşgörüsüne bak, dininle ilgili ne kadar değerler varsa önce sen söyle diyor, önce onu dinliyor, ondan sonra kendi düşüncesini söylüyor, burada nedir önce muhatabına değer veriyor, sonra kendi düşüncesini söylüyor.*”

¹⁹⁶ Interview by author with Mr. B, tape recording, Istanbul, February 2006. “*Yani gerçekten samimi olan bir Müslüman her şeyinde samimi olursa, dürüst olursa, hırsızlık yapmazsa çünkü İslam’da da bu var yani. Hırsızlık yapmaması, adam öldürmemesi yani kaliteli yaşam, yalan söylememesi. Bunlar İslam’ın getirdiği önemli hususlar. Bir Müslüman bunlara uyduğu müddetçe Türkiye’de demokraside yerleşir yani.*”

Muslim people in these countries. On the contrary there are lots of countries that are less conservative when compared to us. The USA comes first within these countries.¹⁹⁷

The community does not want Islam to be privatized and therefore they claim that Islam and the state cannot be considered completely apart. This perception also shapes the boundaries of the general opinions about laicism for the Gülen community. Mr. K expresses his perceptions about laicism while he indicates that in Turkey the laicism is perceived as atteism and it is a principle that has emerged due to the history of the Christian world:

I think Islam is compatible with laicism to some extent but in our country, it is perceived in a way that it is reminiscent of the term 'impiety'. However, in my opinion there may be laicism within Islam. Indeed, we do not know exact meaning of it but if laicism means a complete separation of the state affairs with religion, I do not think there may be laicism in Islam. I also think that in countries where the populations are mostly composed of Christians, the laicism is not exactly consolidated. Laicism cannot exclude religion in in other countries; it must also be like this.¹⁹⁸

Mr. M explains:

Indeed as we all know laicism emerged due to the oppression of the people by Christian clergymen during the Medieval Age and to the separation of religious and state affairs with the French Revolution. When you look at Islamic history, you can never see such an oppression of the religious officers towards the people. On the contrary, it is seen that religion and state affairs went hand in hand when we look at the Abbasi and Ottoman periods. In all these societies, religion and state affairs have been realized together but

¹⁹⁷ Interview by author with Mr. K, tape recording, Istanbul, September 2006. "Avrupa ülkelerinde de İslam'a karşı bir şey var artık bir korku var dolayısıyla orada da tam anlamıyla en azından Müslüman olanların tam anlamıyla din vicdan özgürlüğüne tam anlamıyla sahip olabileceklerini pek zannetmiyorum ama tabi ki bize göre tutuculukları çok daha az olduğu için bizim ülkemizden daha iyi bir din, vicdan özgürlüğü olan çok ülke var. Başta Amerika gelir diye düşünüyorum."

¹⁹⁸ Interview by author with Mr. K, tape recording, Istanbul, September 2006. "Şimdi belki İslamiyet'in özünde de şey vardır tam anlamıyla olmasa laiklik vardır diye düşünüyorum ama tabi ki bizim ülkemizde uygulanan şeye baktığımız zaman bizim ülkemizdeki laiklik birazcık dinsizlik tanımını ya da kavramını kafaya yerleştirecek şekilde uygulandığı için böyle algılanabiliyor. Hal bu ki bence İslam'da da laiklik olabilir. Ama tam bir laiklik kavramı olur mu, laikliğin tanımını tam bilmiyoruz yani tamamen din işleri bir tarafta devlet işleri bir tarafta şeklindeyse bence tam anlamıyla olmaz İslam'da. Ben zaten şeyde de Hıristiyanlık'a bağlı olan ülkelerde de bunun tam anlamıyla uygulandığını zannetmiyorum. Laiklik tamamen dini dışlayan bir şey olamaz yani yabancı ülkelerde de bunun böyle olduğunu zannetmiyorum."

once the people distanced themselves from religion, problems
arose.¹⁹⁹

It is clear that the community members aspire for a system in which religion is not excluded from state authority. On the contrary, they want religion to be an adviser to or an orienting element for the state. As Ebru Altinoğlu argues, it is seen that the Gülen community puts to the forefront religious freedom as a characteristic of the secularity of the state as they emphasize that in a real secular system everybody should be able to freely express and live their religious sentiments and ideas.²⁰⁰

Altinoğlu adds that Gülen does not consider religion as fundamental to the organization and regulation of the state and due to the neutrality of the secular state, religion is expected to be freely performed within society. She also argues that Gülen does not reject the secular state provided that it remains neutral and guarantees the free exercise of religion. At this point, I do not agree with Altinoğlu's claim that religion is not considered by the Gülen community as fundamental to the organizations of the state because thanks to the quotations I have cited above from the interviews, it is seen that the Gülen movement members who are deeply influenced by Gülen's doctrine emphasize the fact that the separation of religion and the state is the ultimate cause for the problems in the state administration. That is to say, the Gülen community members do not separate religion from the state authority and they do not mention that religion should be performed only at social level as Altinoğlu argues.

¹⁹⁹ Interview by author with Mr. M, tape recording, Istanbul, October 2006. "*Laikliğin zaten çıkışı nedeni hepimizin de bildiği gibi neticesinde zamanında ortaçağ dediğimiz Hıristiyanlığın karanlık çağında Hıristiyan din adamlarının halka zulmetmelerinden kaynaklanan bir durumdur. Yani laikliğin ortaya çıkışı zaten Hıristiyan din adamlarının halka zulmetmelerinden dolayı. Yani Fransız ihtilalinden dolayı din ve devlet işlerinin ayrılmasından dolayı böyle bir şey oldu. İslamiyet'e baktığımız zaman hiçbir zaman din adamlarının halka ya da insanlara zulmetmediğini görüyoruz. Hatta bunun yanında din ve devlet işlerinin bir arada çok çok daha iyi gittiğini görüyoruz. Böyle Abbasi dönemine baktığımız zaman, Osmanlı dönemine bakıyoruz. Bunların hepsinde din ve devlet işleri bir arada gitmiştir ve ne zaman din ayrı bir şekilde olmuş, dinden uzaklaşmışlarsa o zaman problem olmuş.*"

²⁰⁰ Altinoğlu, "Fethullah Gülen's Perception of State and Society," 104.

To sum up, I argue that the western definition of laicism is not recognized or adopted by the community. In addition to this, I may argue that the members of the Gülen movement aspire to reshape the boundaries between the private and the public spheres according to religious principles and morality as well as the publicizing of Islam. Although the Gülen movement seems to be apolitical in all aspects, it can be argued that the movement itself is politicizing Islam because when I asked the interviewees their ideas about democracy and how they would define a consolidated democracy their responses generally included the notion of “Islam”. The Gülen community tries to keep away from up to date politics as the members do not become members of any political party or movement. However, they prefer to be in all the important chairs, especially within the state administration. Therefore Ahmet İnsel describes this movement not as an apolitical one but as a movement that performs the long-term and necessary conditions of a political project. Therefore, this apolitical appearance makes the Gülen movement look more sympathetic before the secular and statist people.²⁰¹

However, keeping in mind that a consideration of political Islam as a damaging element of modern and secular society depends on how it becomes public and that it is possible to see it as a threat only if it opposes the construction of civil society and if it neglects the promotion of a public debate, it can be argued that the movement forms a threat since the community wants the boundaries between the private and public spheres to be reshaped according to religious principles and morality. Therefore this would lead to the neglect of the principle of plurality of public spheres emphasized by Nancy Fraser. Besides this, the interviewees claim that a genuine democratic system had been established by the Ottoman Empire within

²⁰¹ Ahmet İnsel, *Yeni Şafak Newspaper*, 27.04.1997.

which different communities or nations whose belief systems were completely different lived peacefully. Mr. A for example defines laicism as follows:

Now, it is impossible to talk about laicism since the birth of Islam. But if the definition of laicism is like this: Not to intervene in the practices of religious duties or the requirements of others. The one who wants to go to the church, to the mosque or to the synagogue should go there freely. That is existent in Islam because in Islam there is no coercion. Mehmet the Conqueror had the right to destroy all the regions of Istanbul when he conquered the city according to the law of war but because of the tolerance of Islam he intervened neither in the churches nor in the synagogues. If it is laicism, it can be said that it can be found mostly within Islam.²⁰²

The point is that, sociologically speaking, they think of an Ottoman Empire model.

Besides this, the community members represent their movement as a civic organization that is similar to the ones which flourished during the Ottoman Empire period. For example Mr. C says:

...in the Ottoman Empire for instance, there was a craftsmen community and an educational community. There is a situation similar to that one. There are really well educated people within the movement and they do not have high salaries. That is to say, there is voluntarism.²⁰³

The community members always refer to the Ottoman Empire because the close association between the religious and the socio-political systems- both in functional and organizational terms- was a distinguishing characteristic of traditional Ottoman society as Binnaz Toprak argues. According to Toprak, the Ottoman Empire is an example of an empire in which religion and state has been united as the Sultan-

²⁰² Interview by author with Mr. A, tape recording, Istanbul, February 2006. “*Şimdi İslam’ın ilk doğuşundan itibaren laiklik diye bir şeyden söz etmek mümkün değil. Ama laikliğin kelime manası şu ise: Başkalarının ibadet hakkına karışmamak, isteyen kiliseye gitsin, isteyen camiye gitsin, isteyen havraya gitsin. Bu işte İslamiyet’te olan bir şeydir, çünkü İslamiyet’te başkasına şey yoktur. Fatih Sultan Mehmet İstanbul’u fethederken savaş hukukuna göre fethettiği her yerin bütün beldelerini yıkma hakkı vardı, ama İslamiyet’in hoşgörüsünden dolayı ne havraya karıştı, ne kiliseye karıştı, bu da İslamiyet’in hoşgörü ve güzelliğinden kaynaklanan bir şey, eğer laiklik buysa laiklik en fazla İslamiyet’e yakındır.*”

²⁰³ Interview by author with Mr. C, tape recording, İstanbul, April 2006. “*...Osmanlı zamanında da mesela bir esnaf topluluğu varmış, bir eğitim topluluğu varmış. Yani biraz ona benzer bir durum var; gerçekten arkadaşlar iyi eğitim almışlar ve yüksek paralarda çalışmıyorlar demek ki bir gönüllülük durumu var yani.*”

Caliph symbolized the Islamic ideal of the political community based on religious legitimacy. Hence it is clear that the Gülen community members are also trying to legitimize the political authority and social structure with religion, therefore they have a yearning for the Ottoman Empire.

To understand social and political structure of the Ottoman Empire is crucial because it helps us to understand also the common incentive of the members of the Gülen Community. Toprak argues that in Ottoman society, religion was performed both social and political functions and the aim was the segregation of each community from the others and this objective was achieved through a religious definition of communal identity and the organization of various non-Muslim groups on a confessional basis into semi-autonomous communities called *millet*s. In addition to this, Toprak argues:

...both the judicial and the educational processes were under the direction and control of the ulema during the classical period of the Ottoman Empire. Not only the interpretation of Islamic law but also the staffing and the administration of the court system were left under the jurisdiction of the religious hierarchy. Similarly, the ulema took responsibility for both the curriculum and the organization of legitimate overseer of political decisions. Through the institution of the fetva, the ulema either sanctioned or condemned the policy decisions of the Sultan and his government as well as, reform, change, and innovation within the Empire.²⁰⁴

In such a context as in Ottoman Empire where religion served as a mediating cultural and political bridge between state and society and the dominant group was Sunni Muslim people, it is evident that some strata of the society would be undermined and this would lead to the hegemony of one public- formed by Muslim men- over the others.

²⁰⁴ Binnaz Toprak, *Islam and Political Development in Turkey* (Netherland: E.J. Brill, 1981), 29.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

In the light of the interviews, it is possible to draw some conclusions. First of all, my argument that analyzing the Gülen movement requires a deeper research that is based on a qualitative method such as interviews has to be remembered with the following question: Why is it implausible to analyze the Gülen movement only through the speeches or writings of Said Nursi and Fethullah Gülen and the social activities of the movement?

Before answering this question methodologically, why the literature is divided into two parts has to be taken into consideration.

As I already stated, the literature with respect to the Gülen movement is either defensive or offensive. The former claims that the movement contributes to democratic consolidation whereas the latter argues that the Gülen movement forms a threat for the democratic regime. The reason behind these claims seems to be political. Rather than analyzing the Gülen community according to the criteria of democracy, a secularization and religion debate, these two approaches' arguments rely mostly on political factors rather than a theoretical explanation. Those who defend the Gülen community argue that the Gülen movement contributes to democracy because they consider this community as a civic organization, and they want the community to have a more important position in the political and social life of Turkey. Besides this, the tolerance emphasized by the community and the softness of Gülen's speeches and attitude make them think that the Gülen community does not form any threat for the regime. On the other hand, those who criticize Gülen and his community in general formulate their arguments on the fact that Gülen should not be taken into consideration without his close ties with Said Nursi and his strong

devotion to Nursi's doctrine. Consequently they consider Gülen as an enemy of the regime. Hence my argument becomes plausible since it points out that the Gülen movement should be analyzed through the perceptions of the community members while offering a theoretical understanding of the notions of democracy, secularism and the public sphere.

When the crucial points of the interviews are considered, first of all, the Gülen community cannot be seen as totally distant from politics. In other words, this community should not be considered as apolitical. Even the social activities of the community such as the meetings realized by the Journalists and Writers' Association are enough to show how the community has close ties with politicians. Other than these issues, when the interviews are considered it is seen that the community members are not distant from politics and they have their own opinions regarding the policies that have to be pursued by the government. However, it should be pointed out that the women's case is a little different from that of the men. That is to say, women within the movement seem to be apolitical when compared to men because when questions regarding politics or notions such as democracy and secularization are asked, they abstain from answering. Indeed, it should be kept in mind that the interviews may not be sufficient to highlight this issue since only two interviewees out of fourteen were women and these women were housewives.

Secondly, when the concept of state is concerned, I argue that the Gülen movement members seem to be absolutist as they emphasize the necessity for a strong state authority regardless of whether it exemplifies good or bad government. The community abstains from any reactionary attitude against the state authority and therefore their general position towards politics can be described as conservative and authoritarian. In order to prevent any chaotic situation and to preserve the status quo,

the community opposes any reactionary act. However I argue that this conservative and authoritarian inclination attenuates the strength of civil society.

When the notion of democracy is considered, it can be concluded that the Gülen community shows weaknesses. In other words, it is not adequate to describe the Gülen movement as an organization that offers a society model in which democratic values are adopted by citizens. When the criteria suggested by Robert Dahl to describe a regime as democratic are considered, it can be said that the Gülen movement does not adopt these principals and the society model that is dreamed of by the Gülen community does not offer a pluralistic atmosphere in which different social segments of society would coexist while promoting the consolidation of democracy. Besides this, I argue that the democracy described by the Gülen community members seems to be a liberal model of democracy. This model of democracy suggested by the community does not get along well with the republican understanding of democracy which was defined by Habermas. In such a society desired by the community, individuals would not be aware of the mutual recognition. Therefore I argue that the understanding of democracy in the Gülen community does not provide a pluralistic atmosphere. However, the analysis is based on interviews and the limitations of the interviews as a source of information should not be forgotten. Anyhow, the answers of interviewees suffice to make readers think in such a way sue to their narratives and discourse. The strong hierarchical structure of the community based contradicts the democratic character that may be attributed to the movement. Besides this, keeping in mind Gellner's definition of civil society and his claim that religion is one of the most important obstacles to civil society; the very effective role attached to religion by the community members either at state level or at a social level led me to think that the Gülen community does not enrich civic

culture or the values of civil society. However, it should also be stated that it is implausible to argue that the Gülen community members' ultimate aim is to destroy the democratic regime and to replace it with a regime based on the *Sharia*.

However, it is clear that the community wants religion to have more active role in the social, political and educational life of Turkey since they argue that the Religious Affairs Directorate should have a more important position and be more active. Indeed it can be said that the community members in general have a common desire for the establishment of a new social order in which religious values and principles are respected and protected by the state apparatus and religious identity gains recognition. This new social order in fact should not be described as totally 'new' since this social structure desired by the Gülen community seems to be similar to the one that functioned in the Ottoman Empire. The social structure of the Ottoman Empire is considered by the community members as the ideal order and this does not favour the multiplicity of public spheres. Hence it can be concluded that the Gülen movement wants to reshape the boundaries between the private and public spheres according to religious principles and morality while deprivatizing religion and disseminating Islam to the whole world. At this point, I argue that the Gülen community members have imperialistic purpose such as the dissemination of Islam and faith to others, more precisely to unbelievers. In this context, although the ultimate goal pursued by the community does not target the actual regime, that is to say the democratic and secular system, it is clear that the community tries to revitalize Islam as a world power. Therefore the community members aspire for a society that has an Islamic identity and in such a society that is composed of individuals sharing the same religious sentiments and beliefs, the state will be an instrument that indoctrinates an Islamic identity to all of its citizens. At this point,

they use the term democracy in a pragmatic way, as a tool that would provide suitable ground for the propagation of Islam with a strategy based on the concept of “free will”.

In addition to this, it is possible to argue that the community is composed of individuals who are coming in general from conservative circles where nationalism has an important place. However, the factor that holds a nation together according to the community members is religion. They even think that religion is the ultimate factor that formed the harmony of the European Union and for this purpose although the community members want Turkey to join the European Union, they think that the accession will not be realized due to this religious identity of Europe.

Finally, the community’s immense power with its financial capacities and great manpower should be taken into consideration. Although the entry to the community is realized without any force; it is obvious that there is a strong and effective impact of the community on the new adherents and on the possible candidates. As I have already stated, the community follows a strategic policy in recruiting new participants to the movement as they take into consideration the conjuncture of time and environment. Hence, it is arguable that they have a well-planned strategy to gain recognition. In pursuing the aim of gaining recognition, I argue that their behaviours are dependent on a dramaturgical action, that is to say on *Takiyye* as opposed to Ebru Altınoğlu’s claim because the community members’ actions and responses involve the purposeful and expressive disclosure of their feelings, desires and identity to others.

Which points differentiate this work from the others that have been written in order to reveal the Gülen movement’s ideas and worldview?

First of all, it is known that Fethulah Gülen, the well known leader of the Neo-Nur community, stresses that Islam and democracy are compatible and this thesis defended by Gülen constituted the motive for this research. Since the Gülen community that is made up of millions of voluntary people all over the world is a huge organization, its ideas and its worldview with respect to this debate as well as its views about the role of Islam within society have to be taken into consideration seriously and for this purpose I conducted this research in order to reveal the worldview of the community in such issues. Hence the analysis of the perceptions and ideas of Gülen and his community regarding issues such as democracy, laicism, Islam, state and civil society constituted the basis of this research. The main hypothesis was that the society formed by the followers of Gülen form a community that pursues a Muslim democracy that cannot identify itself with the values of secularism and the virtues of the republic while this society's main objective is to gain acceptance and recognition as well as to disseminate Islam all over the world through a tactic based on persuasion and tolerance. A definition of democracy, state and civil society as well as a discussion of secularization was crucial because I realized that all the researches or works regarding the Gülen movement either criticize or support Gülen and the activities of the community and lack these notions. Indeed, giving place to Gülen's speeches or writings in order to show either his contribution or opposition to democracy is meaningless without forming a theoretical basis on these concepts. I tried to reveal how Fethullah Gülen and his community position themselves in the debate on democracy and Islam and how they adapt themselves to republican values and to modernity without contradicting Islamic values.

Secondly as I have said before, this research has been realized neither to support nor to attack the Gülen community. The primary objective was to analyze the Gülen community's worldview with respect to democracy, secularization and the role of Islam in nation building.

In addition to this, as this research relies on the perceptions and the ideas of the Gülen community with respect to notions such as the state, democracy, secularization and the role of religion in nation building the methodology that has to be followed was also crucial. The works realized up until today deal with only Said Nursi and Fethullah Gülen's own words, and the activities of the associations or the educational institutions belonging to the movement. Methodologically speaking, these works did not look at the Gülen Movement from the heart of the movement. In another words, the heart of the movement, that is the participants and faithful adherents of the community, was precluded. Therefore, I focused on the perceptions of these community members while interviewing them. In addition to this, I also participated in some meetings arranged by these community members and visited the institutions of the community as I think that ethnographic survey constitutes an important part of this research. Hence I explained my observations and I quoted extensively from the interviews in which the community members explained their social or economic activities. Indeed it should not be forgotten that the interviews have their own limitations as a source of information, but the discourse and narrative per se reveal many issues.

Other than these issues, the contribution of this research to Turkish Politics has to be mentioned. As it is well known, Islam was the official religion of the Turkish state until 1928 and in the same year laicism was described for the first time. In 1931, this principle was accepted as one out of the six principles of the Republican

People's Party and finally in 1937 this principle of laicism became a part of the Turkish constitution. It was meaning the privatization of faith and was an ideal that the laic intelligentsia would realize sooner or later. However, this ideal could not have been attained and laicism, amended by the Republican People's Party, has been considered by most of citizens as an intervention of the government in the religious lives of individuals. Indeed, religion in Turkey is described as a social phenomenon and besides its religious functions peculiar to itself; it also served societal functions throughout history. For instance, religious prays also functioned as a determinant of personality and as a factor establishing social solidarity. However, the role attached to the church has been reduced in the western world by the emergence of a new production style because the church has lost its role of being a production medium to the new economic institutions. Whereas the role of the church has diminished with the formation of a new social and political philosophy, this role has passed to laic ideologies but it is known that the Turkish Republic was founded by the elites scholars it is claimed that the society has faced difficulties in terms of interiorizing reforms such as laicism, due to the lack of an existing capitalist society that was already present in the western world. As a result of a liberalization of religious policies started in 1940s, some religious groups which may be called sects emerged, among which the Gülen movement can be cited as the most powerful. Therefore, this research which reveals the ideas and the worldview of such a puissant organization and network helps us to understand the role and impact of religious groups on Turkey's social and political life.

Finally, it should be kept in mind that the Gülen community's activities have reached every corner of the world. Hence the movement whose first steps have taken in Kestanepazarı, a small village in Izmir, has grown to the extent that its size has

reached a global dimension. Thousands of participants or sympathizers of the movement are acting for the declaration of Islam that is to say for *tebliğ* (dissemination of Islam) in a number of countries in Africa, Asia, Europe and America. Therefore, I hope that this research, which analyzes the Gülen movement with a different methodology, will help to enrich the debate on democracy and Islam.

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APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE OF INTERVIEWS

Personal Questions

- 1) Could you inform us a little about your life story?
- 2) Could you explain why and how you became a teacher in dershanes as well as your motives in choosing this career?
- 3) In the period before and after you joined the Gülen movement what changed in your life? Could you explain a little?

Education

- 1) Gülen thinks that the state should create a society of good morals by using the educational system. What do you think about this subject?
- 2) The educational system in Turkey, is it successful in promoting a religious education to the youth?
- 3) The educational system, should it be possessed by the private sector or by the state?
- 4) Could you answer the same question regarding the social security system and the health system?
- 5) How should an ideal educational system be?
- 6) Do you think that the ban on the use of headscarves in the public sphere prevents people from practicing their religions freely? Could you share your ideas about the headscarf issue in Turkey?
- 7) What do you know about the creation and the evolution of human being? On what basis should the youth be educated and do you think that the Turkish educational system is satisfactory in this issue?
- 8) It is known that in the states that have been flourished in Asia after the fall of the USSR there were some suspicions about the Turkish colleges especially regarding

religious affairs. Do you think that the reason these colleges witnessed some problems may be the laicism issue?

Civil Society

- 1) Do you think that the civil society organizations executed their functions appropriately in the democratization process? What do you think about their role?
- 2) What do you think about the liberties and rights of these civil organizations? Do you think that these civil society organizations should be bound by the control of the state or should they be more liberal?
- 3) Among the academicians there is a common belief that the religious groups are civil society organizations. Do you agree with this statement?
- 4) Is it possible to consider the Gülen Movement as a civil society organization? Thus, can it be said that the Gülen movement contributes to the democratization process in Turkey as a civil society organization?
- 5) Gülen visited the Pope a few years ago. Do you think that this visit has significance for Turkish people or the Muslim world? If yes, would you like to explain why?

Gender Issue

- 1) It is known that in Islam there is no restriction regarding the rights and equality of women within society. In your opinion, what is the place of women within society and within the Gülen movement?
- 2) If one asks you to rank the religions according to the equality issue between the men and women, how would your ranking be?
- 3) In your opinion, what are the roles attributed to women regarding the education of children and the distribution of duties within the family?
- 4) It is known that the education in *dersanes* was not mixed which means that there were separate *dersanes* for boys and girls. What was the reason for this situation?

Freedom of Faith and Conscience

- 1) Tolarence and dialogue between the religions are the most commonly used and emphasized concepts by Gülen. What do you think about these concepts?
- 2) Do you think that the freedom of faith and conscience is respected in Turkey? Gülen states that in a situation where the religious affairs are bounded, it is not possible to talk about the freedom of faith and conscience. Dou you think that there is something to be done in Turkey about this issue?
- 3) Do you think that the religious affairs directorate functions well? More precisely, is there any need for such an institution in Turkey?
- 4) Do you think that there is a conflict between Alevi and Sünni populations in Turkey?

State and Democracy

- 1) Gülen emphasizes that even if the state is governed inefficiently or ineffectively we should respect the authority otherwise there might be chaos. What do you think about this?
- 2) Do you have any idea about what should be done if the government uses repressive methods?
- 3) Atatürk has stressed that in order to be modernized and to create democracy, it was necessary to establish a nation-state based on secular principles. According to you, does this concept of nation-state conflict with the democratization process in a country like Turkey that includes lots of nations? Is there any population in Turkey that can be considered as excluded or underestimated?
- 4) Do you think that there is a conflict in Turkey between the Alevi and Sunni populations or is there any discrimination policy?

- 5) What are the primary duties of the state? Gülen stresses that the state may create a morally advanced society while profiting from the religious education. Do you think that the state can do this job?
- 6) Would you like to make a list of the democratic countries in which democracy is consolidated more deeply? Why do you consider the listed countries more democratic than the rest of the world?
- 7) Regarding the laicism issue, is it possible to make a distinction between the laicism in Christianity and the laicism in Islam?
- 8) In democratic countries, in which issues and to what extent should the citizens have to agree with each other? If you were asked to list the individual, society and state, how would you rank these three concepts?
- 9) What makes democracies function better, institutions, leaders or culture?

Politics

- 1) Are you interested in politics? If yes, what do you think about Turkish foreign policy, especially regarding the European Union, USA, and the Middle East?
- 2) Do you participate in elections?
- 3) Do you think that the national threshold system is fair and that the distribution of the deputies in the parliament is fair?
- 4) Gülen claims that the presidential system is more suitable for Turkey. What do you think about the presidential system? Do you agree with Gülen in his statement?
- 5) Do you have any knowledge about the administrative system of the USA? If yes, what do you think about the system there?
- 6) The fact Gülen lives in the USA, does it show that he is sympathetic to this state?
- 7) How do you interpret the 28 February soft coup in Turkey? Do you think it has had a negative impact on the democratization process?

- 8) What do you think about the military power in politics? Do you think that the military has a say in politics in Turkey? According to you, to what extent should the military have a role in government?

Public Sphere

- 1) Gülen thinks that there must be no restrictions in the public sphere that prevent citizens from functioning their religion freely. What do you think on this subject?
- 2) Do you think that a society based on Turkish-Islamic identity may help democracy to be established in Turkey?