EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Fethullen Gülen (1941–) is perhaps the most significant Muslim theologian and activist in contemporary Turkey to build upon the theological and educational ideas of modern Ottoman/Turkish theologian Bediüzzaman Said Nursi (1877–1960). Although Gülen's debt to Nursi's ideas is clear, he is also an avid reader of Eastern and Western literatures. Besides his passionate interest in Islamic theology and Arabic and Turkish literature, Gülen is also deeply interested in poetry, philosophy, sociology, and the classics in general.

As a religious intellectual, Gülen's main focus has been the position of Islam in the contemporary world, the need to create bridges between the Muslim world and the West, and the necessity of synthesizing global scientific and technological advances and contemporary Muslim societies. Broadly speaking, Gülen believes in the renaissance of the contemporary Muslim world with Turkey at the forefront. He believes that since Turkey played an important religious and cultural role under the Ottomans for centuries, it is now well equipped to present Islam's authentic face to the world with an emphasis on tolerance, dialogue, and respect.

Gülen's understanding of Islam is not different from that of most classical and contemporary Muslim theologians and jurists. He believes that there is only one authentic Islam based on clear sources: the Qur'ān and the traditions of the Prophet of Islam. However, he recognizes the different historical, cultural, and social manifestations of Islam in the modern world. Thus, one may speak of Islam in Turkey or in the Arab world or in Iran or Pakistan and be referring to quite different historical and cultural experiences.

Because Islam has manifested differently in the face of various social and cultural conditions, it behooves the Muslim theologian to use the best of his or her sources to express and reflect on "authentic Islam" in the midst of changing historical and social situations. Gülen defends a "progressive" notion of Islam in which Muslims are able to totally engage the world without any fear or prejudice. He feels that it

has never been Islam's intention or mandate that Muslims not fully engage in the world around them. On the contrary, the Islamic worldview, to Gülen's understanding, has always been dynamic and has since the advent of Islam interacted with distinct historical and cultural processes and conditions. He believes Muslims lagged behind when they failed to pay attention to the connection between theory and practice.

Gülen believes that the contemporary Muslim world faces a number of serious challenges, one of which is the absence of a true scientific mentality as evidenced in many Muslim countries, and the second of which is the absence of true dialogue between the Muslim world and the West. Gülen wishes to activate such a dialogue without, however, underestimating the impact of history on the relationship between the Western world and the Muslim world. Gülen understands that the Western world has practiced hegemony over much of the Muslim world in modern history; however, he does not want the Muslim world to be stuck in that hegemonic legacy. In spite of the pain this hegemony inflicted on the modern Muslim world, Gülen believes it is time for this world to rise to the challenge and show the world the positive dimensions of Islam.

Gülen believes that no renaissance can take place if Islam remains isolated or in the grip of one community or country. Renaissance is global in nature, and thus Gülen has pioneered the foundation of a social, educational, and religious movement that promotes its version of globalization in a world dominated by American, European, and Japanese forms of globalization. Scholars often refer to this movement as "the Gülen movement."

Gülen believes that globalization, which has been a de facto phenomenon in the world in the past several decades, cannot be healthy unless it is led by a highly educated and responsible generation of human beings. He has directed his disciples and followers to think not just locally or nationally but internationally. It therefore becomes the duty of all members of the Gülen community to learn several languages, travel widely and study the social sciences and humanities in different educational and scientific settings, and, above all, to actively engage in universal and interfaith dialogue.

Gülen believes that society cannot regenerate itself without the individual first doing so. Although he has been described by many as conservative, Gülen believes in total individual freedom and responsibility. He believes that the individual is endowed with natural emotional and rational capacities that enable him or her to face the chal-

lenges of a highly volatile life. However, he believes that the individual in Turkey, as well as in the rest of the Muslim world, faces a doubly vexing challenge, that of advancing his or her cause as well as Islam's. The Islamic cause is the more sensitive today in the context of the New World Order, the rise of extremism in certain parts of the Muslim world, and the United State's adoption of the war on terror approach, both nationally and internationally.

In his theory of the individual, Gülen's ideas are consistent with those of the modern reformers of Islam, such as Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī, Muḥammad 'Abduh, Muḥammad Iqbāl, as well as many others. These distinguished thinkers focused on the critical importance of renaissance in the Muslim world and called on the individual Muslim to uplift him- or herself as a necessary predicate of such a renaissance.

In addition to focusing on the responsibilities of the individual, Gülen believes strongly in reviving Islamic sciences in the contemporary period. Although no official religious courses are offered in his model of education, he has great faith in the viability of traditional Islamic sciences, if understood and practiced correctly, in the contemporary period. This is why Gülen has been so intent on studying Islam's main sources, the Arabic language, and traditional Islamic sciences as they have been transmitted from the classical Islamic era, especially from the formative phase of Islam extending from the first through the fifth Islamic centuries.

Furthermore, Gülen has shown a strong interest in the Ottoman legacy of contemporary Turkey. He does not speak about reviving the caliphate; however, he sees a distinct religious, cultural, and historical continuity between contemporary Turkey and the Ottoman caliphate. It is of note in this connection that Gülen is an avid reader of modern Ottoman poetry and literature, which he considers to be one of the strong cultural foundations of the contemporary Turkish identity.

What fascinates Gülen about the Ottoman Legacy, besides its high culture, is the following: 1) the spirit of dialogue that existed there; 2) the fact that the Ottoman state was a multilingual, multiethnic, and multireligious society; 3) the role of women and their place in Ottoman culture, generally speaking; and 4) the great intellectual and cultural rapprochement between Ottoman society and the West begun by a variety of Ottoman intellectuals in the nineteenth century.

While it is not possible nor necessarily desirable to return to this Ottoman past, Gülen advocates applying the Ottoman model to the contemporary Turkish situation. He encourages present-day Turks and

Muslims in general to fully engage themselves in cultural and religious dialogue, learn as many world languages as possible, be open to an expanded role for women in society, and focus on building bridges between the Muslim world and the West.

Gülen therefore is for the modernization of contemporary Muslim societies and believes that Turkey, due to its unique economic and scientific position, can play a significant role in this modernization. He ultimately believes in economic and scientific integration not just between the West and Turkey, but also between Turkey and the rest of the Muslim world.

Gülen does not consider modernization to be Westernization, but rather a unique product of modern scientific achievement that far surpasses national claims of ownership. Modernization is a unique world product made possible by all sorts of factors, one of which is the role of men and women scientists from across the world.

Although advocating a global mission in terms of education and scientific and interfaith engagement, Gülen wants to bring the unique and authentic characteristics of Islamic and Ottoman history to contemporary Turkish people. In this he differs from Kemalist Westernizers who fail to see the positive and useful in the Islamic or Ottoman legacy. Gülen is against embracing Westernization uncritically. Although Westernization has by and large since the age of the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century freed the individual from the yoke of religion in Europe, it has had some negative effects as well. To marginalize the role of religion in guiding society or in disseminating religious ethics is against Gülen's philosophy.

Gülen believes that religion can and should play a significant societal role on the ethical, educational, and intellectual levels. Although he differs from Islamists in Turkey and the rest of the Muslim world in the desire to establish an Islamic political system, he believes that religion must not be confined to a private relationship between God and man. Muslims have to reactivate the ethical and social practices of Islam, even if Islam as a religion does not rule.

The preceding marks the difference between Gülen and the Islamists. If Gülen is not an Islamist, is he a Sufi? Is he just a theologian who does not care about the interaction between power and religion in contemporary Muslim societies?

Gülen eschews some of the presuppositions of modern and contemporary Islamism in the Muslim world. He argues, for example, that one can practice authentic Islam without needing to live in an Islamic

political system. Does this mean that he is against the concept of the *ummah*, as preached by such Islamists as Hassan Banna, Sayyid Qutb, and Allama Mawdudi?

Gülen understands the concept of the *ummah* differently than did the aforementioned thinkers. Like his mentor Said Nursi, Gülen cares about the Muslim *ummah* in his own way. He understands the problems and challenges facing Muslims in the present time, and wants to renew the *ummah*. However, he does not believe that politics is the most effective way to do so in the twenty-first century.

In a sense, Gülen advocates a total separation between the religious and political in contemporary Muslim societies. He thinks that the domination of the state over religious affairs has greatly harmed the cause of Islam in the present time and thus advocates the freedom of the religious realm from political authority. His position is that the usurpation of religion by politicians has done a great deal of harm to Islam, and so to achieve a healthy type of Islam, religion must be set free from the shackles of the state.

Modernity poses a curious set of problems for the modern and contemporary Muslim world. It is extremely difficult to capture the essence of the term "modernity" in a few sentences; however, it is sufficient at this juncture to mention that a great number of intellectual forces, institutions, and ideas emerged within modernity during its long maturation, and that the type of modernity we are speaking of is European in nature. Modernity has given birth to such modern phenomena as secularism, nationalism, capitalism, socialism, imperialism, colonization, and modern criticism.

In nineteenth-century Ottoman history it is possible to discern four distinct Ottoman positions on the relationship between political power and Islam. The first can be summarized as an approach that supported the political status of empire while preserving the central position of Islam in this empire and pushing toward modernization. The second drifted from the first in the sense it is supported by all the previous formulations except the role of Islam in the state. The third supported a more Turkish approach to the empire while dismissing the role of religion, and the fourth was a Sufi-based approach that supported the dissemination of Islamic texts and the application of the ethical side of Sharī'ah in civil society.

Gülen, who is well versed in modern Ottoman history, believes it is not possible to revive the Ottoman caliphate, as mentioned earlier. However, he believes we *can* apply the ethical dimensions of Islam to

contemporary civil society. Gülen's position is akin to that of the fourth approach enumerated in the preceding paragraph, although he is wary of advocating Sharī'ah implementation in the social and political spheres of contemporary Turkish life.

Gülen differs from Islamists who advocate the revival of Sharī'ah as a political and social institution; he sees Sharī'ah as a tool of ethical Islam. Gülen's understanding of Sharī'ah is thus narrower than that of the Islamists, and he believes that the principles of religion cannot necessarily be abrogated in society if Sharī'ah is not implemented.

That is to say that Gülen is against the Iranian model of applying Islam in society and most probably does not believe in the power of the clergy to rule society. He expresses his position on Islam and power in Iran in chapter 8 of this book. However, this does not mean that Gülen is happy with the way the *ulama* have been treated by the modern Kemalist state. As a person who was imprisoned for several years in the early 1970s, he advocates a total freedom of the religious class from the control of the state.

In several of his writings, Gülen speaks about the Golden Generation. There is no doubt that what Gülen shares with Islamists is the idea that Islam must train of a new cadre of responsible leaders to bring about Islamic renaissance in the contemporary period. However, Gülen, unlike the Islamists, believes it is possible to bring about this renaissance without necessarily establishing an Islamic state, as stated previously.

Gülen is first and foremost a Muslim theologian trained in the classical Islamic texts. Naturally, he has read the works of many Muslim theologians and philosophers and often refers to them in his own writings and speeches. Nursi has perhaps been the most significant influence in Gülen's theological and intellectual writings. Like Nursi, he believes in a spiritual approach to Islam and dialogue, especially with the Abrahamic world. Gülen was most influenced by Nursi's magnum opus *Risale-I Nur* and the basic theological formulations therein.

In spite of the many similarities between Nursi and Gülen, we must not gloss over the differences. One such difference is their respective historical epochs. Nursi was born in the late Ottoman phase and experienced modern Republican Turkey from its inception until his death in 1960. Deep down, Nursi never accepted the Ottoman Empire's dismemberment or its loss of political hegemony. He labored very hard in the process of the transition of Turkey from a caliphate to a secular, modern Turkish nation-state. He reflected the transition in a

number of his writings. Nursi never let go of the Ottoman notion and practice of the *ummah*. Although he considered the Turkish nation to be the defender of the *ummah*, Nursi was primarily concerned about the fate of the *ummah* at large.

Gülen was born in the Republican period, which enabled him to accept the secular premises of the Kemalist state. It is true that Gülen is interested in revitalizing the Muslim world and thus the *ummah* at large. But he comes to this through his interest in the Turkish nation and Turkish renaissance. At bottom, Nursi was ummatic first and Turkish second, whereas Gülen is Turkish first and ummatic second. Gülen's position is different because he did not face the same challenges that Nursi did. That is to say, Gülen did not personally experience the loss of the Ottoman Empire but rather experienced a certain measure of the rise of pan-Turkish nationalism with the collapse of communism in Central Asia and the revival of Turkish spirit in that region.

The collapse of communism has not just opened the door for Turkish economic, political, and educational influences in Central Asia but has also made it possible for Turkey to experience a new form of national renaissance. Gülen supports this pan-Turkish renaissance. He considers Turkey to be one of the main beneficiaries of the collapse of communism and the opening of Central Asia to Turkish influences. He believes cultural regeneration in Central Asia to be guided by Turkey and Turkish culture. He also believes in economic integration between the whole region and Turkey.

Gülen is somewhat critical of both the Arab world and Iran. He believes that both have practiced a rigid form of "Islam" that is neither compatible with the conditions of modernity nor is open to interfaith and universal dialogue. In fact, what he is concerned about is his perception that the contemporary Arab and Iranian religious elite have failed to lead the Muslim world to the shores of salvation. He believes that these leaders lack the depth and ability to actualize an Islamic renaissance in the twenty-first century.

Regardless of whether or not one agrees with Gülen's central formulations, there is no doubt that this book succeeds in expressing in simple language the main ideas of a very complex religious thinker in contemporary Turkey. English works on contemporary religious intelligentsia in the Muslim world are somewhat rare. This book sheds important light on the interaction between society and the state in Turkey almost nine decades after the creation of modern secular

Turkey. The author has admirably succeeded in offering a fair intellectual portrait of Mr. Gülen. For this she must be congratulated.

The present English translation of Nevval Sevidi's interviews with Gülen were serialized in the Turkish daily *Yeni Yüzyıl* in 1998, when Gülen was treated for health problems in a New York hospital. After the tragic attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001, the author reinterviewed Mr. Gülen, who by then had chosen to live in the United States, and revisited some issues with him such as Islam and violence, the United States and the Muslim world, terrorism and the new international order.

The present translation is an expanded version of the author's interviews with Gülen before and after 9/11, which also includes a chapter containing Turkish readers' responses to these interviews.

I wish to express my thanks to the author of this book, Ms. Nevval Sevindi, for providing me with an opportunity to work with her on editing and rewriting certain passages in this book in order to make it more readable for an English audience. I would also like to thank Mr. Cemal Uşşak, executive director of the Turkish Journalists' and Writers' Association, for suggesting that this book be translated into English. Also, I would like to thank Ms. Valerie Vick of the Macdonald Center at Hartford Seminary for copyediting this text. Lastly, I would like to thank Abdullah T. Antepli of Hartford Seminary for his accurate translation of the text.

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PREFACE

Everyone has their own ideas as to why I suddenly flew to New York in the middle of summer 1997 to speak with Fethullah Gülen (henceforth referred to as Gülen). I wish to make it clear for those who are interested in my reason that it did not come out of the blue. I had met with community schools in Central Asia in the framework of the Camel Trail Silk Road project.[1] I breathed the air of Central Asia. As soon as I returned, I expressed my feelings to Gülen in a letter and said I wished to meet him. The period that followed was spent in getting to know him and his community.

His closeness to my cultural, political, and social theses excited me enormously. One always thinks that one is completely on one's own. Yet I was certainly not. In addition, bearing in mind that in Turkey there is a social caste system in which satisfaction and creation are impossible by talking on an intellectual basis, it is clear that there is a very large number of people who imagine themselves to be alone. As a person striving to overcome this I knew that I would encounter someone who, like me, had not despaired. The maturation of this "finding out" phase in fact took place with Gülen, as many of his close disciples refer to him. When I called him in New York to wish him a speedy recovery, he told me, "I have mentally prepared myself to talk with you." I purchased my tickets the very next day, without even seeking his approval. I just had to go.

The world of ideas and spirituality that evolved and fell into my hands during those two days of conversation in New York stimulated my mind. From time to time, I even forgot to think like a journalist. My mind was very engaged. And this was only the first encounter! I had only been able to grab a single handful of this ocean that Gülen presented me. I wanted to share this with everyone, with great excitement and effort. At a time when Turkey is in such conflict and the political arena is at its bloodiest, the only weapon I had was to reveal the deficiency of uncreativity. I wanted to give people a chance to pause for rest when seeking a drop of water in this bone-dry desert, in which

nobody seeks to become acquainted with or has any interest in anyone else. My hope was to cast a grappling iron and reach the worlds of thought and ideas. It is no coincidence that during and after the publication of these conversations in the daily *Yeni Yüzyıl*, constituting the source of this book in its present English translation, an enormous interest in them should rain down upon us. It has been especially impossible to find anything that was satisfactory among the weak traditions of poor, speculative thinking. The dryness of those found were in any case a dirge for their own deaths.

This mental encounter regarding the origin and the dynamic present of Turkish culture that I had studied, written about, and thought about for years is for me of great importance. New information illuminates me as I look toward Central Asia and toward the Turkish Islamic philosophy; and I search for a model, for an identity. These are most important for Turkey and for me.

So long as Turkey refuses to accept the existence of an intellectual mentality that is able to think without bearing a label, it will always remain provincial. The fact is, however, that Turkey has to take its place and rise up in the world. We need to put an end to seeking models in foreign countries as a solution, to consider our own dynamics, and to engage in anthropological and other social studies. Studies at the anthropological and historical levels that will enable us to truly understand Turkey's present are not being carried out. As has been seen, it is not possible to survive merely with "academic titles," unaware of the past and the present. A Turkey unable to obtain information, whose channels of information are blocked, is wasting its time. It is impossible for us to produce an ideology for Turkey so long as we fail to write, speak, and think out of a fear that certain circles will misunderstand us.

We have to attain the same "quality control" in our mental world that we seek to attain in industry. Unfettered intellectual creativity can create an atmosphere capable of overcoming lack of quality. I got a good sense of the public's "common sense" throughout this series. It impressed me. I once again embraced the idea that "they are those who read without books."

In his book *Ilk Felsefe Uzerine* (On First Philosophy), the philosopher al-Kindi,[2] who was Islamic society's first philosopher, complains of being unable to express his thoughts openly out of concern of being misunderstood in certain social circles. He uses strong language to criticize his detractors:

> I shall introduce and describe the deficiencies in the briefest and most accessible manner to those journeying on that path, to the best of my ability and in consideration of the structure of the language and the understanding of the times. In doing so, since I fear misinterpretation by those far from the truth, despite their position of "the thinker of our times," I have had to cut short complex points that should really be explained at greater length. Even though they unworthily represent the people, they are unable to appreciate the essence of these due to their contrary mindsets. Their science is not at such a level as to appreciate lofty thinkers and ensure that everyone benefits from them. The jealousy in their animal earthly desires and the darkness that surrounds their horizons prevent them from seeing the true light. These, an aggressive and despotic foe, belittle those, from whom they are far removed, who have people's welfare at heart and which they are unable to rise to, for the sake of maintaining their posts that they occupy unjustly. Their aim is dominion and the commercialization of religion. Yet they are devoid of religion themselves.

While in the present day, religion and the relationship between religion and daily life are constantly kept to the fore, there exists a deeply conservative, totalitarian mentality that refuses to comprehend religion as a dynamic force in social and cultural life. This is the mentality that underlies the conflict between political Islam and its opponents in many contemporary Muslim societies.

The unconditional acceptance of "absolute rationalism" by Western society today is the nonsense of a conception alienated from its own values. Gülen analyzes this from the intellectual's perspective:

> It is difficult to understand aspects of our intelligentsia that we for centuries made a standard out of, for which we abandoned all our values, a patched up flag. In a community in which falsehood was portrayed as truth and truth as falsehood, it regarded every truth as a dream and elevated itself, looking on all values that make a nation as outdated elements. That being the case, what needs to be done with a generation so far distanced from its essence and worn out in its intellectual world is to reinvigorate it with life and allow it to attain its greatness of spirit."

Someone who thinks of society as a lost bird, knowing not where to lay its head at this time, Gülen states personally why he weeps:

"Now, you! Those who have forgotten to weep all through history! The heedless, the free of problems, those who laugh at things that should be wept over. Let us concentrate on this dilemma and put an end to these centuries of heedlessness by weeping together. Let us weep over our ignorance. Let us weep over our lack of awareness of what we have lost." Intolerance and excess seek to silence Gülen, who weeps over insentient hearts by lamenting the settlement of that insentience. For this reason, he believes in the individual. He thinks that the health of a society depends on the vitality of its individual members.

Gülen notes, "Every thing of beauty, and every value present in individuals is multiplied and reflected in society. In contrast, everything that is inappropriate, every insufficiency, is a scandal, and as a scandal blocks society's path and inflicts deep wounds upon it."

What we are experiencing is in any case proving the truth of this. Gülen believes in education in order to elevate mankind. He has complete faith in science and research. At the same time, he believes in religious creeds and in devotion to God. He supports the unity of heart and mind and never abandons one in favor of the other. He constantly stresses the importance of learning: "It is pointless to look for an exceptional character in an individual who has not passed through the crucible of learning and teaching, since human virtues and elevating elements have not developed within them." In the same way that individualization depends on education, so socialization can only be ensured by education. In modern social sciences, too, the importance of education in human mental capacities and their use is stressed and is the subject of research. The twenty-first century will be one of human-centered thought systems. It has been realized that the great capacity known as man lies at the center of everything. Views to the effect that one can get anywhere by relinquishing what is human and belittling our culture have been soundly buried in the twentieth century. "Loving and respecting man because he is human is an expression of respect for the Creator. Otherwise, loving and respecting those who think like oneself is not a sincere human love and respect at all, but egotism and mankind setting itself up as an idol to be worshiped. In particular, being on the same path in fundamental thought and conception and disparaging those who do not think like us is terrible egotism and selfishness," says Gülen, who approaches the concept of the human as a whole. This is because in his view a human being "is the main subject of every philosophical and intellectual viewpoint. It is impossible to engage in philosophy or to move to science without

including human beings in the calculation. . . . Books concern them, are full of them, and spread light around them." This philosophy, which elevates human beings, is of course closely concerned with man's use of his mental abilities. Man is a boundless force whose extraordinary mental creativity can best be made use of through education. Gülen expresses this in words: "In the same way that there can be no past without science, also no such future can be conceived. Everything ultimately depends on science, and there is nothing that a world without it can give to mankind."

Gülen's references to a great number of Western sources is a matter of fascination coming from a religious leader educated in the religious idiom. He frequently cites examples from and gives the names of Western thinkers and artists. For him there is no distinction in science between the East and the West. He tries to explain to those around him that they need to be as attached to Western sources as to Eastern culture.

Those who have opposed science and knowledge in our Islamic history were always the fanatical religious types mentioned by al-Kindi. The mentality that seeks to maintain the status quo, that benefits from such and is only able to breathe while it exists, is frightened by new ideas. It is afraid of science, or anyone who thinks about science. But one day the appointed hour comes and the seeds burst forth. There is no holding science back. Here, hope is the grower of everything. Gülen says, "The individual comes into existence through hope," seeing revitalization will give society hope. He encourages hope. In his view, an individual who has lost hope cannot be regarded as existing, meaning that a society without hope is crippled, because "hope consists of man discovering his own soul and feeling the dominion in it."

He points to the need to "restore the soul" to this society, this nation. He has seen that knowledge with no soul is useless. His search is that of the thinking man. Gülen remarks, "like false players who appear before the public, benefiting from gaps on the stage, a great number of players have appeared before our people and had fun with them at different times. But they have never earned a permanent place in the hearts' of the people."

Gülen dreams of "intellectual workers who will build and elevate the future," and describes the importance of raising a "golden generation" that will accomplish this through education. "Expecting anything from the ignorant is a bigger burden than the Kaf Mountain . . ."[3]

He connects the importance he attaches to young people with education. "O community of the deceased, if this is not the morning of the day of judgment you are awaiting wake up and run to the assistance of the youth struck by Satan's fire, as Hercules ran to the assistance of Prometheus!" he tells those around him. That is because in his view, "The nuclei of goodness and beauty are always within man. There are no nuclei of evil and ugliness." What makes man an independent being is his intellect, will, and internal wealth, which bind him to the 'absolute, free, and autonomous' assets." It is the intellect that makes mankind human, but immediately after intellect, Gülen lists freedom. He tells us that one cannot explain anything to those who "regard man as a machine and deny his mind." In the same way that the victory of positive thought destroyed man's importance, so all totalitarian ideologies have been overcome by a thirst for "order" despite man. To those who say "civilization and culture are universal and cannot be local," he replies, "No matter how much worldly freedom civilization and culture may gain; they must still represent the soul of the nation raised in their bosom. Therefore, rather than looking at freedom as a ready-to-wear suit, we should regard freedom as cloth ready for tailoring, cloth that every nation will cut according to its own nature and will fit to its own body."

On the other hand, Gülen also refers to the dangers of turning one's back on science and technology. "The impossibility today of living with a bunch of outdated ideas is plain for all to see." If there is an error here, he sees the responsibility for this resting with "true men of science seeking to avoid their responsibility."

He underlines the fact that the cultural organization of a country lies in its reconstruction of the direction of its own thoughts and beliefs, absorbing water from its own roots and being rebuilt according to the needs of the day. He tells us that a nation can move to an order and organization in the framework of its own intellectual foundations and spiritual tendencies according to the requirements of the day, but that if it is forced otherwise, it will slowly become crippled and die, "like a fish out of water." He describes how every nation has its own different ways of thinking. He says there is no doubt that we need developed countries but that we have to be ready for this. He calls on people not to be afraid to renew themselves. He dreams of this resurrection as a "Renaissance." For this reason, he redefines many concepts and human virtues. Happiness is internal enlightenment, for example. Hardship is something necessary to achieve one's destina-

tion. He describes the contents and existence of loyalty, friendship, well-being, compassion, sin, patience, and more. There are clues to the world he wants here. He offers very realistic approaches in this ideal world. You find him eschewing utopias and offering practical solutions to the most important problems of the day. With his broad dreams and ideals, he is able to walk on dry sand without sinking. He can remain fixed as much as he flies, and since he has achieved a synthesis, realism can live within him without conflicting with the tolerance and idealism he weaves. Where he finds his soul is perhaps in his own renewal. Every human being, every piece of information, and every event excites him. Gülen notes, "Self renewal is the prime condition and essential basis for continued existence. Those who are unable to renew themselves when the time comes are condemned to be extinguished and disappear, no matter how powerful they are. Everything remains alive and maintains its existence by renewing itself." I think that the dynamism inside social activity is the product of that renewal. For hundreds of years, Turks have kept up with the changing times by responding to the conditions of the day through mystical sects. Sects are not dogmatic, though they reveal a path and an order. Sects have responded to the variety within mankind by showing us a variety of paths and have also shaped the man in the street. In other words, even if by very little, they adapted to change. Maybe as Gülen puts it, "true renewal is causing the intellect to put in effort by filtering all opinions through the prism of the soul." That is why the will is so important in his human design. The will emerges as a person's power to comprehend and perceive himself. The opposite of this is the impairment of the individual. He will be indecisive and uncertain, helpless on the path to true authenticity.

Another thing he finds as disturbing as ignorance is the use of time. "One cannot say that in comparison to advanced countries we have any deficiencies in terms of physical power or spiritual values. Yet for some reason it is also a fact that in terms of making use of time, connecting with it and making full use of every part of it like a diamond, we lag behind, and actually very far behind." In Gülen's view, time is not an empty hollow, but actually the most important principal capital in the world market. He describes the relationship between time and the production of plans and projects aimed toward the future. He regards those who complain about time being short as heedless and mad. He cites examples of great men who made use of time: "People like Mawlāna Jalāl al-Dīn al-Rūmī[4] were transported through the

delighting breaths of time and enfolded all parts of the world like a great clamor; people like Newton evaluated the minutest phenomena, such as an apple falling to the ground, discovered the 'law of gravity' in the bosom of the book of the universe and revealed that time was sufficient for all things. These superior individuals who became one with time evaluated the legacy of the past in the best possible way and again and again reordered the times they lived in . . ."

It is on the subject of the "golden generation" that Gülen has been subjected to the greatest criticism. It was assumed that the Gülen community would come to power by training its own cadres. Respect for the individual and socialization here were ignored. He was expected to enter politics at any moment, and his meetings with political leaders hit the headlines and led to various misinterpretations. Of course, Gülen, who made it a rule to remain distanced from politics in a Turkey where everything was politicized, has views on the political climate in which he lives. He states this very openly:

> Those unfortunate groups who trudge through poverty! Everything happened to them. The way that some selfish and egotistical guides, who were blind and deaf to boot, promised them progress and ease every day, who deceived them with the light of a new lie every day, caused all the misery suffered by those unfortunates. Yes, those guides one day dragged them under the shade of Western trees, on another day to the coast of America, and on another to the streams of Iran. The masses failed to understand what was going on; they tired of intellectual begging from door to door, running from pulpit to pulpit and changing the direction they pray in all the time.

In my view it is noteworthy that Gülen criticizes civil society here as much as political leaders. That is why he gives this description of the new man: "The new human being is one who thinks, enquires, and believes, who is open to matters of the spirit and is full of spiritual pleasures. He is establishing his own world, and in addition to making use of the opportunities offered by the age to the fullest extent he will arrive at a different destination by taking on board his own national and spiritual values."

The new human being is multifaceted, closely bound up in all matters. He burns with an insatiable love of science. He has a universal perspective and is full of love. The new human being possesses a "constructive spirit" rather than a stereotyped one. He always walks in the forefront of the age in which he lives. He is a completely balanced per-

son. "The new man is a conqueror and discoverer." This definition, which encourages the exploration of these new worlds in particular, brings with it a new opening for Turks. The Turks came to the West by constantly migrating through the ages and are adventurers who are now to be found everywhere. It seems insufficient to me to ascribe this solely to Turks searching for their "daily bread." You can find Turks in Africa, Alaska, Argentina, and many other places. If this urge to explore is encouraged in our people, then we will acquire experience that broadens our horizons. Maybe that is why Gülen says: "The world has once again entered a new orbit. Renewal is being discussed, dreamed of, and talked about everywhere, and epics are being written about a spell-binding renewal." He underlines how renewal has produced striking results in the mental arena. Turkish intellectuals had ruled with the ideas of the past: "Let our 'sleep-walking' intellectuals, who for years maintained their dominion over the domains of science, remain fixated on the stale things of half a century ago, the world is in a web of radical change and pregnant with reconstruction," he said not too long ago. While many Western scientists debate whether science and technology can solve everything and the West questions the taboos of the modern age, Gülen several times underlines that we are still asleep. He thinks that the separation of the *madrasah* (Islamic school) and the dervish lodges has damaged our spirit, and makes his criticism crystal clear: "At times when they were divided from one another, one would turn to fanaticism and extremism, while the other fell into the paralyzing web of mysticism."

Gülen constantly thinks of how the future will bring a greater Turkey, what things will be required in the world of the future, and what needs to be kept and what jettisoned. His reply to the question "On what basis should this new world be built?" is that no hasty answer should be given before the matter has been thoroughly examined, because, "At heart, man is the child of waiting."

Saying "I am dreaming of the Turkey to which I have turned a blind eye," he is perhaps recalling his own life, full of such long waiting. "As a nation we have been unable to decide what we should be, and the more one thinks about how we have oscillated between the right and the left for two hundred years, we tremble with fear and are riddled with doubts."

His summary of the West is as follows:

> The West has embarked on a medieval, one-dimensional road, constructed everything on the superiority of technological viewpoints,

> and become caught up in the idea that this can resolve worldly and other-worldly mysteries. For hundreds and hundreds of years it floated around in the dark, sailing forever like a one-oared boat and never made the slightest bit of progress. In later ages it did the exact opposite, as if it had perceived an urgent need: it constructed everything on a materialistic and naturalistic view. In other words, it set about the discovery of existence with an oared boat. The path was not long enough, and it turned in a circle, ending up back where it started, its vision blurred, at which time it rocked and overturned. Toward the end of the last century the positive sciences became so puffed up with their own importance, so arrogant, that people such as Paul Feyerabend and René Guénon, regarded as the mouthpieces and interpreters of modern science, felt the need to deflate them. If only we could have been so balanced, rational, and respectful of reason as them!

Yet in his criticism of the West, he does not ignore its constructive elements. He says that the values that made the West what it is failed to reach us as we threw our own past into the waste bin. "Westerners are rather appreciative on their own account, and appear to feel a respect for present-day civilization and the origin of their culture that puts us to shame."

When asked "What should Turkey do?" Gülen emphasizes that we need to embark on our own path, paying as much attention to current social dynamics as to historical ones.

> Sitting back and expecting things to happen of their own accord will just be wishful thinking without our casting light on our own situation as a nation, determining our place among the nations of the world, constructing our own system of thought, translating our own conception of life into reality, and finding our own style. The systemization of our intellectual life is still at the labor stage; in a web of religious conception formulaes . . . a distortion stemming from a misinterpretation of both Islam and the West keeps propelling us toward the comings and goings of various uncertainties. None of the meanings we attach to religion, science, reason, civilization, existence, things, the soul, nature, or man are compatible with Islam or Western philosophy . . .
>
> And apart from a couple of imitators that just make their practitioners look ridiculous, no serious idea of Western origin has been reflected in our art or literature. And what has been reflected is outdated."

A serious accusation is being made here against those who imagine it is a good thing to think of using the methodology of the 1970s. Turkey can open the road ahead of it by overcoming mental sterility, by relearning mental curiosity. We can answer the question "Who are we dealing with?" not by citing ourselves, but by listening to who they say they are from their own lips, and thus identifying our surroundings. We must all be a little curious.

The intellectual spirit of change is insistently ringing at the door, breathing with a unique identity, viewpoint, and synthesis. Are you not curious?

Turkey, which is facing a number of challenges in this changing world, can only assume its place in the world through its own transformation. As Gülen notes:

> Before tearing things down, it must be decided what one wishes to put up in their place, and then those old, outdated, invalid things must be demolished. One must always act with the philosophy of "tearing down in order to rebuild." Before any tearing down takes place, a model of what is to be put up must absolutely be erected. In every task to be undertaken, decision and action must be nourished with science, understanding, and precaution. Determination and persistence must be supported with research and comprehension. Construction must follow demolition.

Gülen offers a wide range of ideas and possibilities that need to be discussed and debated. If we are curious, we can learn what those are.

When I, as an author, went to Europe and America, the first reaction I received after answering the question "Where are you from?" by saying "Turkey" was, "That is impossible . . . a blonde person who looks so totally Western, such as you, cannot possibly be a Turk." The common perception at the time was that Turkish women are covered up, backward, ignorant, and ugly. I saw this bias communicated in many Western publications.

When I told them that my father had been born in Rhodes, that my mother was a migrant from the Balkans, and that my grandparents had left their homes in Midilli and Crete and come to Izmir, they said, "You see, you aren't a Turk!" They had forgotten that all these lands were parts of the Ottoman Empire. My family, who left their homes, lands, wealth, and friends in the twenty-two million square kilometers of the Ottoman territory and came to Anatolia, was an Ottoman Turkish family. My grandfather and uncles from Rhodes who came to support the

War of Independence died fighting in the mountains. My grandmother, who also fought, would frequently narrate her memories to me. Growing up listening to these memories woven like fairy tales, I was never imbued with feelings of enmity toward any nation. Later, I was surprised to see that many of the Greeks I met in Europe and the United States were hostile toward Turks. The question of why my family and I did not feel any such enmity led me to a great deal of self-reflection. I was born in Izmir, received a Western education, and was the daughter of a modern family. When I saw Anatolia, I discovered the first clues that would lead me to the answers I sought; there was a deeply pervading tolerance at the root of our culture.

I was able to comprehend the Turkish Islamic conception and culture after having lived for a time in Iran and learning Persian. After having witnessed the Iranian Islamic revolution in 1979 and living in Iran for four years, I clearly understood that there was more than one kind of Islam. There were various conceptions of Islam in places as diverse as North Africa, Afghanistan, the Middle East, and Central Asia. They existed by synthesizing the culture and history of the country into the religious culture. We had one book and one Prophet, but our practices and beliefs were totally different.

The situation was much like the way a Roman Catholic is different from a South American Catholic. If the names Jesus and Mary are not mentioned, one would have a hard time believing that the religion in Brazil or Mexico is the same Catholic Christianity one finds in Rome just from looking at its practices. With its population of nearly a billion and a half, the fourteen-century-old religion of Islam is the second largest religion in the world after Christianity.

I, a Muslim Turkish woman, am a person who has given my soul to the land and culture in which I live. I have always tried to understand. The interviews published in this book are a product of the duration of my understanding. The significance of the interviews for me is that we in the Muslim world grew in scope after the tragic attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001. My awareness and insistence on the matter of Turkish Islamic understanding meshes nicely with Gülen's ideas and actions in many ways. The United States and many American scholars maintain that Turkey is different from other Muslim countries. Not without reason do they regard this interesting country, which has succeeded in modernizing through its own internal dynamics, as a role model for the Middle East. Turkey's history, culture, and dynamics of social change indeed make it a "role model" country.

Before my interviews with Gülen, I wanted to clarify some basic and much discussed terms in today's world, such as the concepts of Islam, terror, Middle Eastern culture, Arab Islam, Turkish Islam, and women and democracy in Islam. I had therefore drawn up a framework of my own thoughts about these terms regarding frequently asked questions in the world public and U.S. media. I believe that my conversations with Gülen will be better understood in light of this framework and the meanings attached to the terms in question. What follows are some basic issues being discussed in today's world, especially in the United States, and my answers on the questions raised.

It is now taken for granted that since the September 11 attacks the world has entered a new dawn. This is the beginning of a new age, in which the United States has declared war on terrorism worldwide. We still are at the beginning of this age, and it is not yet clear how this New World is going to be established. However, there are some indisputable facts. Radical Islam is one of the main targets of the U.S. war on terrorism. The Western world, keen to improvise and improve its relations with the Islamic world, is approaching the Islamic world with a certain hesitancy and prejudice. While the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is becoming ever more violent and bloody, reactions toward the West and the United States are becoming intensified in Middle Eastern Arabic and Islamic countries. Turkey's neighbors, Iraq and Iran, two of the three countries that U.S. President George Bush announced are ruled by religious law, are both countries at the center of the world stage in the name of Islam. As we know, the United States invaded Iraq in March 2003 with the pretext of fighting the war on terror.

Gülen was in the United States during the September 11 attacks and during the start of the war on terror, which began immediately afterward. The *New York Conversation*, which I originally conducted in the late 1990s, attracted the Turkish public's attention when it was first published in *Yeni Yüzyıl* newspaper.

I am happy that this book, which covers other interviews of mine with Gülen after 9/11, is being published in English. I think it is important for the English reader to know the views of one of the most significant Islamic theologians and thinkers in contemporary Turkey. English is said to be the lingua franca of the world, and hence I believe in the importance of publishing this book in the English language. I would like to thank the editor of this book for making this publication possible.