

# Gülen's Dialogic Sufism: A Constructional and Constructive Factor of Dialogue

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## ABSTRACT

This presentation surveys Fethullah Gülen's concept of Sufism with respect to his distinctive effort of dialogue. In Gülen's thought, as has been well researched, dialogue is a 'must' for today's world, yet as little focused, Sufism is a way to secure such a 'must.' I propose to call these two core concepts of dialogue and Sufism in combination 'dialogic Sufism,' which is derived from Gülen's methodological principle that "there is no weapon in the universe stronger than the weapon of love."

Proposing 'dialogic Sufism,' I intend to examine Gülen's method of a mutual and active understanding on the basis of the humanitarian Sufism. In examining, I argue: a) As a key concept of Gülen's Sufism, 'dialogic Sufism' is a reactivation of the inherited and accumulated tradition of the humanitarian Sufism through *shakshi manawi* (personal collective consciousness); b) Nevertheless, instead of a simple revival, Gülen *re*-interprets and *re*-presents the tradition as *the* alternative solution to human individual and collective problems of the contemporary world; c) In particular, for *the* solution, his 'dialogic Sufism' serves as *the* method to rediscover humanism in times of hatred and enmity, as he empathetically restores such figures of Jalal al-Din Rumi and Yunus Emre as a representative model for dialogue that needs to be practiced in this contemporary world for peaceful coexistence of people of difference races, cultures and religions; and d)

More than theological and theoretical concern, this 'dialogic Sufism' appears as 'pragmatic and practicing Sufism,' which has been over twenty years put into work with the dialogue activities of Gülen and the Gülen Movement.

My analysis of 'dialogic Sufism' would contribute toward:  
a) a better understanding of Gülen's concept and practice of dialogue as an alternative approach to contemporary problems  
and b) the collection of sufficient information for contemporary manifestations of dynamic Sufism.

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Fethullah Gülen, as respected by the honorific title *Hocaefendi* (respected teacher), is one of the most influential Muslim intellectuals in contemporary Turkey. Over the past forty years, Gülen's name has gained prominence in the daily language of Turkey over the role of Islam in state and society. More recently, his fame has been spread world-widely in accompanying with his leadership of 'the Gülen Movement,' which has shown its fast expansion to global proportions within less than twenty years.

A good number of academic studies about Gülen and his movement follow this fact, presenting Gülen as one of the major figures in defining the contemporary global Islamic experience.<sup>1</sup> A close analysis of the studies makes salient Sufism and dialogue as the two of the most frequently discussed topics. In fact, a glimpse of Gülen's writings enables one to readily note the two topics as the most dominant elements in his thought and intellectual framework. As such, there is no wonder that Gülen is considered in the scholarship to be a Sufi generally and a contemporary Rumi more specifically;<sup>2</sup> while simultaneously being regarded as a promoter of inter-religious dialogue.<sup>3</sup> It is however interesting to note that the relationship between Sufism and dialogue - specifically as reciprocal-complementary concepts - in Gülen's thought and the activities of his movement has received little attention. In comparison with the

much received attention toward Sufism and dialogue as a distributive concept, the relationship between the two remains unexamined save for some rough implications and suggestions. This may be primarily because the politicalized discourse within the secularist Turkish context has presented Sufism (more properly *tariqa* as a divisionary sectarian movement) and dialogue to be incompatible concepts with each other. As a result, this trend has prevented access to the intrinsic dimension of Gülen's advocacy of dialogue, causing the issue to remain its extrinsic phenomena as well as pejorative.

In this currency, this paper attempts to survey the relationship of Sufism and dialogue in Gülen's thought and the activities in his movement. I will first demonstrate that at the heart of Gülen's concept of dialogue lies his conviction of Sufism as a constructional and constructive factor of dialogue. I propose to call these two compatible concepts of dialogue and Sufism in combination 'dialogic Sufism.' In detail, I will proceed arguing: a) As a key concept of Gülen's Sufism, 'dialogic Sufism' is a reactivation of the inherited and accumulated tradition of the humanitarian Sufism through *shakhsi manawi* (personified collective consciousness): b) Nevertheless, instead of a simple revival, Gülen instrumentalizes the tradition for *hizmet* (service) for humanity, *re*-interpreting and *re*-representing it as *the* alternative solution to human individual and collective problems of the contemporary world: c) More than theological and theoretical concern, this dialogic Sufism appears as 'practicizing Sufism' in the activities of the Gülen movement.

For this examination, along with textual analysis of Gülen's works and studies of him, I distinctively employ Sufism itself as a methodological lens. I hold that Sufism is not just an object of study but can be an analytical tool, which allows one to see Sufism-related phenomena as they are, without necessarily reducing them to any pre-confined 'other' framework - such as broad structuralist generalizations or culturalist reductionism.<sup>4</sup> This stance is particularly significant for a proper placement of Gülen's thought in his own real

context, not in that politically-confined consultancy and ends. A success of this attempt would provide a better understanding of Gülen's idea of dialogue, as it delineates Sufism as the intrinsic motivational force of Gülen's dialogue and as it figures out the inner dynamics involved in the success of the activities of the Gülen movement.

## I. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF GÜLEN'S DIALOGIC SUFISM

### *Dialogic Sufism*

Gülen regards dialogue as an activity of forming a bond between two or more parties. By the parties, he does not mean any specific subjects, instead includes all objects involved in humanity. Accordingly, to form a bond between parties means to him to have human beings at the axis of dialogue. Thus, Gülen's concept of dialogue, rather than a generic term, specifies the humanitarian approach to dialogue, which manifests itself with tolerance and various tolerant-based concepts such as love, compassion, forgiveness and humility. In this sense, tolerance and dialogue in his writings appear as a pair concept for humanity, as he considers them as the two roses of the emerald hills of humanity (Gülen 2004: 50-53). Remarkably, this description is elaborated in his article on Sufism "The Two Roses of the Emerald Hills: Tolerance and Dialogue," which indicates Gülen's approach to dialogue in the purview of Sufism.

In this broader context, Gülen conceptualizes tolerance in the sphere of Sufism. In the introduction to *The Emerald Hills of the Heart*,<sup>5</sup> he outlines a list of eleven principles of Sufism, and signifies the tolerant nature of Sufism with three principles: "overflowing with Divine Love and getting along with all other beings in the realization (originating from Divine Love) that the universe is a cradle of brotherhood," "giving preference or precedence to the well-being and happiness of others," and "being open to love, spiritual yearning, delight, and ecstasy" (Gülen 1998: xv-xvi). As these principles imply, Gülen considers tolerance as a prerequisite

quality in following the Sufi way. He deepens this underlined quality with respect to Sufic love, notably, in describing the Sufi knowledge of God (*marifā*):

Knowledge of God does not consist of abstract knowledge; in its true form, it is transformed into love. We cannot remain indifferent to someone in whom we believed and then grew to know well. After belief and knowledge comes love. Love is the crown of belief in God and knowledge of Him. Love is open to everyone according to his or her level. Love, which seeks to deepen itself, always travels on the horizon of “increase,” asking: “Isn’t there more?” On the one hand, sacred knowledge increases, giving rise to increasing in love, which causes knowledge to increase still further (Gülen, “The Culture of the Heart,” in en.fgulen.com).

To Gülen, love is the way of the Prophets, which leads one to the most direct way of going to the hearts of people, the way of attaining the ultimate goal, God’s pleasure (Gülen 2004: 1-23). In this sense, he considers an *arif* or a gnostic, who acquires spiritual knowledge of God through mystical inspiration and intuition (*irfan*), as one who “always tastes peace and talks about peace in a downpour of ‘light’” (Gülen 1998: 148). In Gülen’s rationale, only by love can humanism be realized. Since humanity is endowed with the potentiality to reflect the nature of Divine Existence that comprises all of the Divine Names and to attain perfection in all fields, “in truth and in God’s sight, humanity is greater than the universe” (Gülen 2004b: 292). A true transformation of the potentiality into reality relies on one’s love for the Almighty Creator and consequently for all humanity as His most polished mirrors and objects of the Creator’s own love (Gülen 2006a). On this basis, Gülen defines humanism as a doctrine of love and humanity.

As the best Sufi way to realize love, Gülen further proposes a way of absolute poverty. According to him, having awareness of poverty and nothingness before God leads one to be humble among people. In the detailed process of this journey, a Sufi first initiates learning the Qur’an, then, builds relations with all existence, living

or non-living. In this relationship, he/she “is to be loving and tolerant toward everyone, to see the universe as a cradle of brotherhood/sisterhood” (Gülen 2004b: 264). The Sufis in this stage “love and embrace everything, repel hostilities with love, and evil with good,” “thinking that the road that they are to follow is the road of not showing resentment, but rather that of patience and tolerance” (Gülen 2004b: 264). In the final stage, Sufis become persons of peace and spiritual vision, to whom there is no difference “whether good comes from friends or evil from enemies” (Gülen 2004b: 264-265). This process representatively shows Gülen’s conviction that love and tolerance are essential qualities to be ‘a true Sufi.’ By these virtues, a Sufi can reach the rank of the universal man (*al-insan al-kamil*), who is a man of perfect compassion embracing every one in need of attention, support and maintenance in locating himself in the body of society (Gülen 2004b: 292).

This understanding of love in the purview of Sufism shapes Gülen’s tolerance-based humanitarian worldview. To him, dialogue in a true sense is sublimation and pragmatic extension of humanism, which, as Sufism teaches, can be only accomplished by mutual respect with love and tolerance. This defines dialogic Sufism, which, as the humanitarian Sufism, markedly differs from dialectical vision (representatively Hegelian methodology) that is essentially a divisional approach to describe opposing factors. Specifically, Gülen’s dialogic Sufism excludes the method of tariqas, which, as Gülen himself evaluates, has historically shown divisions in society.<sup>6</sup> By the same token, dialogic Sufism is not political. It is not a method *reacting* to problems, but a method *acting* harmoniously with any given context. As such a method, dialogic Sufism acts as a humanistic bridge between the past and the present, the East and the West, rationalism/materialism and spiritualism, and between different civilizations, religions and cultures, obliterating difference and distinction between ‘us and others.’

With this definition, dialogic Sufism is intrinsically linked to *shakhsi manawi* (personified collective spirituality) and *hizmet* (ser-

vice for humanity), the two overarching concepts of Gülen's thought, to the extent that they play a role as the two constituent pillars of dialogic Sufism.

*Shakhsi manawi (Personified collective spirituality)*<sup>7</sup>

Truly, inclusivism is considered a characteristic of Sufism represented by such renowned Sufis as Jalal al-Din Rumi (d. 1273) and Ibn Arabi (d. 1240), and especially compared to the legalistic and fundamentalist tendency of Islam. Gülen's idea of tolerance reflects the inclusive feature of Sufism, as he himself has openly confessed. In particular, Gülen has never hesitated to express his appreciation for the Turkish Sufi tradition. Most remarkably, such appreciation is preserved in his pioneering idea of *shakhsi manawi*.

As one of the most distinctive terms of Gülen's thought, '*shakhsi manawi*' (literally 'personal spirituality') refers to 'personified collective spirituality.' This concept clarifies how personal spirituality evolves and transforms into collective personality. Gülen addresses:

In our religion, it is important for one to unite with society and live communally. Here, I must clarify that I use the concept of community, not as an organization in a sociological sense, but in terms of *shakhsi manawi*, which, as a fully religious term, comes into existence by the people who become one or together by sharing the feeling, thought, delight and sadness expressed in the Qur'anic verses and hadiths and greatly signified in our religion (Gülen 2003: 201).

Gülen characterizes these united people as a group whose Islamic spirituality leads them to be happy 'for and with' the happiness of others – like those who, facing others' deprivations, says 'I would have rather it happened to me instead of them' (Gülen 2003: 201). He further explains:

Cohesion to *shakhsi manawi* means the unity of an individual with community by melting down him/herself in it... As for community, it is a congregation that occurs by individuals who become together in the same thought and ideal. To be com-

munity is gained with the attainment of collective consciousness. Collective consciousness melts an individual down in its structure and brings him/her into one dimension of its numerous dimensions, thus there remains no absolute individual but community. Individual becomes [a part of] community and community becomes, so to speak, one single individual (Gülen 1995: 171-172).

This passage puts forward Gülen's identification of *shakhsi manawi* with collective consciousness, which acts as the bridge between 'personal spirituality' and 'collective personal spirituality.' As an embedded cultural, ideological and behavioral inheritance, collective consciousness prepares individuals naturally to stick together by sharing the same feelings. A community appears as a result of this bond, putting the involved personal spiritualities together for a greater and collective *shakhsi manawi*.

Gülen further animates a community as a collective person, strikingly stressing 'non-individualities in it any longer.' This may well induce one to find a sense of 'a strong anti-individualistic tendency.' However, Gülen distinguishes *shakhsi manawi* from such anti-individualism. He clarifies 'non-individualities' in the sense that "I prefer His [God's] preferences about me... As the master [Said Nursi] said 'no Said,' in this path that we speak of Divine pleasure, there is no language of selfishness, personal desire and greed save only truth" (Gülen 2003: 206-7). To Gülen, the individual selfishness, the greatest obstacle to a community's solidarity, must be thus trained. In fact, this is the primary aim of his writings of the *Emerald Hills of the Heart*: that is, to present Sufism as the Islamic discipline that centers on the spiritual training of carnal self. In Gülen's Sufism, the central concepts of *zuhd* (asceticism), *muraqaba* (self-reflection) and *muhāsaba* (self-evaluation) are for such training. 'Non-selfishness' rather than 'anti-individualism' in a community is further linked to the interdependent relationship of individual spiritualities and collective *shakhsi manawi*. A community, insofar as it is a collective person, can be best alive by the team spirit of qualified non-selfish individuals who already internalize such practices as *zuhd*, *muraqaba* and *muhāsaba*.

*saba*. Moreover, a community of *shakhsi manawi* is an essential ground for the enhancement and enrichment of its individuals' spiritual experience. It shapes and deepens individual spiritualities, for instance, protecting them from individual mistakes in their connection to the outer secular world, and providing them the religious productivity through collective works and sharing deeper the concerned *shakhsi manawi*.

Having identified this representation of *shakhsi manawi*, Gülen considers the Turkish humanitarian Sufi tradition as an inherited consciousness proceeded by 'the collective act of saints,' which, as a cultural reality, has long been cumulated and embedded through an internalizing and vitalizing process of a spirit of tolerant and humanitarian love. Gülen affirms that "Sufism has spread among the Turks in both Central Asia and Turkey. This is why Turkish Islam always has been broader, deeper, more tolerant and inclusive, and based on love" (Turgut 1997).

Sufism for Gülen is a grounding element of Turkish Islam, whose core characteristics of tolerance and love were established with Turks' embrace of Sufism. Further, his distinction of the wide-spread influence of Sufism in Turkish context assumes a Turkish form of Sufism. In consonance with "Turkish Muslimness" (*Türk Müslümanlığı*), Gülen indeed presupposes not *the* homogenous Sufism but *a* dynamic Sufism. Just as Turkish Islam exists, there is also a Turkish-characterized Sufism with its specific history and characteristics, which appeared from the deep incorporation of Sufism into the fabric of Turkish Islam from the very beginning. Like that of Turkish Islam, Turkish Sufism has a Central Asian root, as Gülen describes that the early Turkish Sufis in central Asia accepted the way of *tasawwuf* (Sufism), the spiritual life of Islam, and brought it to Anatolia ("Türkiye Müslümanlığı" 1997). Once introduced by those wandering Sufis, Sufism soon spread and greatly advanced in Anatolia by a number of great Anatolian Sufis. Gülen asserts:

The teaching of *tasawwuf* remains to certain extent in every corner of our society. Everyone took a benefit from it. The influence

of tasawwuf on Turkish society is stronger and deeper than any other Islamic country. A custom such as to see oneself as lower than others; to see others higher than oneself and to give priority to others over oneself was impregnated to this nation from its very beginning by Sufi authorities such as Ahmad Yasawi, Yunus Emre, Mevlana Celaleddin-i Rumi and Hacı Bektash Veli... That soft and inclusive worldview and attitude gain important place and value toward Allah, and become a unifying element of social life... This understanding exists in almost all individuals in the Turkish nation (Pope, 1998).<sup>8</sup>

As such, Gülen appreciates the soft, humble and inclusive Sufism initiated by Yasawi, Rumi, Emre and Bektash, and affirms its continuant existence as a cultural heritage of Turks, that is, *shakhsi manawi*. For Gülen, Turks are the heirs of this humanitarian Sufism, the most extensive, expanding and universal culture of love and tolerance (Gülen 1998: 159). To a certain degree, this specific assignment of Sufism to Turkish *shakhsi manawi* reflects the Durkheimian concept of ‘collective consciousness,’ which means ‘the supra-individual sphere of transcendent values that is ultimately rooted in a society and gives meaning to its inhabitants’ existential predicaments by tying them to society’ (Durkheim 1984). A close reading of *shakhsi manawi*, however, reveals that Gülen places the humanitarian Sufism in a layer deeper than such a socially inherited collective consciousness. It appears as ‘a national spirit of Turkish Muslimness,’ which does not exactly coincide with the Durkheimian ‘collective consciousness’ that gives priority to social collectivity over individuality. Rather, the assignment of Sufism as a *shakhsi manawi* indicates Gülen’s concern on the interconnectedness of collectivity and individuality via Sufi heritage of humanism and spirituality. It is, for Gülen, the humanitarian Sufism as transmitted perpetually by genius individual Sufis that has long shaped a collective *shakhsi manawi*, to which individuals of today culturally and subconsciously bind themselves, and on the basis of which individuals can maximize their individual and collective values of humanity. In this sense, the humanitarian Sufism serves as the

dialogic bridge between individual spirits and collective consciousness, and this informs dialogic Sufism. On the other hand, Gülen has endeavored to awaken the humanitarian Sufism of *shakhsi manevi* in Turkish mind and spread in the world in facing of and as a solution of contemporary problems. In other words, he tries to establish a dialogic bridge between the past and the present through the humanitarian Sufism, which reflects in his advocacy of dialogic Sufism. Specifically, Gülen directs dialogic Sufism toward the service for humanity, in his distinctive term, *hizmet*.

### *Hizmet (Service for humanity)*

The humanitarian Sufism as a *shakhsi manawi* naturally constitutes Gülen's spiritual subconscious personality, determining his idea of Sufism. However, Gülen does not simply adopt and repeat the ideas of great Turkish Sufis, but further tries to reactivate and awake such a *shakhsi manawi* in the contemporary world. As Ergene points out, starting from the foundation laid by the Turkish Sufis, Gülen has rebuilt that inherited humanism and understanding of Turko-Islamic Sufism in a way fitting to serve contemporary society and meet its needs (Ergene, in en.fgulen.com). Herein lies the distinctiveness of Gülen's dialogic Sufism, which directs *shakhsi manawi* toward *hizmet*, the core value of Gülen's thought.

In Gülen's schema, *hizmet* denotes 'service for humanity,' an ultimate ideal to be pursued individually and communally. In this sense, Gülen elaborates *hizmet* as the foundational ideology of his movement, as he states "for this movement, religious dimension is important. This religiosity directs not inwardly, [but] more than that, outwardly. [Thus] the concept of *hizmet* is significant" (Gülen 2003). Accordingly, for Gülen, *hizmet* means the outward reflection of inner personal spirituality, and as such, it is in concert with Sufism. As a remarkable case, he explains Suffering (*Chila*) of Sufis:

Suffering in this sense becomes, beyond our own spiritual progress, the dedication of our lives to the happiness of others in both worlds and living for others. In other words, we should

seek our spiritual progress in the happiness of others. This is the most advisable and the best approved kind of suffering: that is, we die and are revived a few times a day for the guidance and happiness of others, we feel any fire raging in another heart also in our own heart, and we feel the suffering of all people in our spirits (Gülen 2004b: 235).

As this passage represents, the real path of Sufis for Gülen is to seek their spiritual progress in the happiness of others, which refers directly to *hizmet* and crystallizes his own perception and preference of Sufism.

Gülen's specified account of Sufism for *hizmet* characterizes dialogic Sufism as social, sober and activist Sufism. In detail, he holds Sufism as the spiritual dimension and life of Islam; thus, Sufism can by no means be confined into the domain of tariqas, whose innumerable ways and/or focus on master-disciple relationship, intoxication (*sukr*) and 'theopathic locutions' (*shathiyat*) have led many Sufis either to deviate from the true path or been left stranded halfway.<sup>9</sup> To Gülen, Sufism must not remain a way of personal inner purification, but should be reflected in society.<sup>10</sup> Individuals, who once taste spiritual pleasure in their journey 'toward, in and with God,' come back 'from God' to value and perpetuate the experience or the attained spirituality through constant 'God-consciousness' in society (Gülen 2004b: 244-262). It is social spheres that make this process happen; the individuals set firmly up, deepen and enrich their 'God-consciousness' in daily life through doing service for others in a way reflecting their newly-acquired spiritual experiences. Throughout this process, personal and emotional experiences of Sufis are rationalized with self-disciplined life and work in this world and further instrumentalized for the collective good. In this context, Gülen pictures 'genuine Sufis' as those who neither separate themselves from society nor passively return/remain in society, but actively and voluntarily participate in this-worldly matters by self-supervision (*muraqaba*) and self-criticism (*mulasaba*) of their lives.<sup>11</sup> Accordingly, Gülen's Sufism is

‘activist Sufism.’ In other words, it is, as Elisabeth Özdalga argues from the angle of Weberian theory, ‘pictistic activism,’ in which ‘man of action’ (*aksiyon insani*) “is inclined to work his or her best until this world is turned into a paradise” (Özdalga 2000: 88-89.) In fact, Gülen sees his ideal of Sufi ascetics with respect to his distinctive concept of “man of action and thought” (*aksiyon ve düşünce insani*).<sup>12</sup> For him, any spiritual experience in the Sufi path is vitalized by action, and action is in turn vitalized by the constant ‘God-consciousness.’<sup>13</sup>

This social, sober and activist Sufism illustrates Gülen’s own conceptualization of Sufism, converging into his dialogic Sufism for *hizmet*. Having recasted in this way, rather than for certain limited areas, people or cultures that Sufis of the past interacted with, Gülen presents dialogic Sufism as *the* solution to human individual and collective problems of the world. He teaches:

If we can spread globally the Islamic understanding of such heroes of love as Niyazi Misri, Yunus Emre, and Mawlana Rumi, and if we can extend their messages of love, dialogue, and tolerance to people who are thirsty for this message, everyone will run toward the embrace of love, peace, and tolerance that we represent (Gülen 2004a: 60-61).

In Gülen’s diagnosis, the essential problem that contemporary human beings face is the loss of true humanism, which causes and appears with widespread hatred and enmity. Hatred and enmity have generated many “beasts who have lost their humanity” by closing the road of tolerance, and these beasts have in turn accelerated the loss of humanism (Gülen 2000a). As a course of the loss of true humanism, Gülen points out the rise of excessive materialism. To him, “there are any material shortages in the world,” but inequitable distribution, which originates from the self-egoism of the material-centric mind (Gülen 2004b: v). Following this diagnosis, Gülen is convinced that the only way to disentangle the real and critical danger to human beings is to revitalize humanism of love and tolerance. He finds the Sufi tradition of humanism as one of

the best examples of such humanism and necessitates its reactivation. In this sense lies the significance of dialogic Sufism as a way of recovering of humanism with spirituality in the material-centric context. In Gülen's schema, it is not a way of rejecting this world, but a way of protecting and empowering one's spirituality against his/her egoistic carnal-self (*nafs*), which gives rise to constant conflict with others. This way leads one to recognize others as equal beings not as anti-beings, to acknowledge the mutual existence and the necessity of tolerance/dialogue, and accordingly to (re) find his/her 'true identity.'

## II. PRACTICING SUFISM TOWARD DIALOGUE

### *The Gülen movement's dialogue activities*

Gülen defines the movement as 'the movement of education, dialogue and tolerance' (Pope 1998). And researchers like Agai confirm that "all facilities set up by Gülen's followers are independent units and promote themselves as such. Yet they are joined in an 'educational network of virtue'" (Agai 2005). Besides this educational network, as Ünal and Williams present, Gülen signifies inter-faith dialogue activities in Turkey and all over the world by making salient cultural and legal plurality of societies (Ünal and Williams 2000). Following Gülen's teaching, the movement has focused more and more on dialogue-related activities. These activities in the framework of *hizmet* aim to facilitate personal spiritual growth and communal well-being. This is what Gülen's dialogic Sufism implies. Just as the concept of *hizmet* is built upon Sufism, the activities are directed toward, in Ergene's expression, "the individual's personal virtue and maturation, and the maturation of social relations" with "the Sufi, moral and spiritual depths that requires each believer to be modest and patient in his/her familial and social relationships" (Ergene en.fgulen.com).

Following Gülen's teaching and his exemplary practice of dialogue with different religious leaders,<sup>14</sup> the Gülen movement has

expended its dialogue activities from Turkey over the world. It established a number of institutions as advance bases for dialogue activities such as dialogue institutes and cultural exchange centers. These institutions, albeit different titles, all focus on interfaith and intercultural activities. To figure out the common characteristics of dialogue activities, it may suffice to note two examples, 'Turkey Interfaith Trip' and Rumi-related activities.

One of the most well-known activities is 'Turkey Interfaith Trip.' With their own sponsorships, many institutions of the movement invite local people of different religious background for trips to Turkey. The primary purpose of this trip is to introduce Turkey as a living example of the harmony of different faiths to the participants. Thus, the trip includes the visit to several cities like Istanbul, Konya, Antalya, Izmir, Gaziantep and Urfa, all of which maintain traditions that make up Turkey's cultural diversity from their respective civilizations.

The descriptions of impressions written by the participants and posted in the website of The Institute of Interfaith Dialog for World Peace ([www.interfaithdialog.org](http://www.interfaithdialog.org)) well display the fruits of this activity. A Police Chief remarks how the 10-days trip changed his old perception of the elusive goal of achieving peace and harmony in different cultures and religions to his new appreciation for the quest for peace. A professor in religious studies notes the hospitality of a local community of the movement, in a way reflecting Gülen's concept of dialogic Sufism. He writes that "[B]eneath all of the passion for life embedded in this country, there runs a river of authentic hospitality that cannot be ignored. A people who are so kind and generous gifted us with their lifestyle reveals gracious hospitality and devoted service to humanity. I was changed by this experience because I believe for the first time in my life I saw in action what I have always been taught: devotion to God, service to humanity" (cited from [www.interfaithdialog.org](http://www.interfaithdialog.org)). This hospitality also impresses a reverend so profoundly as he expresses:

As I recall that trip, my heart overflows with gratitude to Allah for having led me to encounter the members of a movement which is having such an impact on Turkey and other countries. Never have I been so flooded with love and hospitality as I was on this trip... The sponsors of the trip and of the schools we visited, together with the students we met, radiate the intellectual acumen and the light and love that are and will be the only means of healing this troubled, broken and violent world. And even though the schools we visited are held to the secularist educational standards of the state, the community of believers who sponsor them and constitute their faculties bring an overwhelming witness to the truth that the One God is great, all compassionate and merciful. The intellectual pursuit is at the service of God (cited from [www.interfaithdialog.org](http://www.interfaithdialog.org)).

To the reverend, the hospitality of the local supporters of the movement as the fruits of love and light echoes Jesus' teaching "by their fruits you will know them." Eventually, he confesses that "the visit to these places captured for me the essential dispositions of heart necessary for us to have true interreligious dialogue" (cited from [www.interfaithdialog.org](http://www.interfaithdialog.org)).

These descriptions amplify the dialogue activities of the movement, underlying their voluntary and altruistic nature and demonstrating the embedded and embodied vision of Gülen's dialogue and *hizmet*. To the extent that Gülen's conviction of dialogue is based upon his idea of dialogic Sufism, the altruistic and self-sacrificing dialogue activities of local communities of the movement are closely related to their perception of the inherited humanitarian Sufism.

Another notably dialogue activity especially in the West is Rumi-related activities like conferences on Rumi and his *sama* performances that many institutions of the movement have hosted. A specialized institution for this is the Rumi Forum. Founded in Washington DC in 1999 with the honorary presidentialship of Gülen, it seeks "to foster interfaith and intercultural dialogue, stimulate thinking and exchange of opinions on supporting and fostering democracy and peace all over the world and to provide a common platform for education and information exchange" (cited

from [www.rumiforum.org](http://www.rumiforum.org)). For this mission, the forum uses the name of Rumi as its official title. Presenting Rumi as a symbol for love, tolerance and dialogue, and following the way of Rumi who embraced all humanity as personified by his message “Come, whoever you are, come,” the forum endeavors to invite “everyone who has a desire to explore ‘the other’ in the spirit of mutual respect and tolerance” (cited from [www.rumiforum.org](http://www.rumiforum.org)). Along with this specialized institution, many other institutions like the Institute of Interfaith Dialog and Turkish Cultural Center in New York have organized *sama* for public access to Rumi’s humanitarian worldview. The ‘Turkey Trips’ that almost all local communities arrange never exclude the visit to Konya, the resting place of Rumi, which has turned out to be quite impressive to the Western participants.<sup>15</sup> As a contribution of these activities to reactivate Rumi’s thought and practice, the Zaman daily news paper reports a conference “Mevlana and Civilizations Dialogue,” which the Journalists and Writers’ Foundation co-organized and people from more than 30 countries participated in. This conference highlights a statement that against the current recurrence of the threats of the absolute annihilation of humankind and the collapse of civilizations and violence that marked the age of Rumi, Rumi’s inspiration of tolerance and compassion is “once more needed in our turbulent global village, which is full of students of the ‘clash of civilizations’ and neo-assassin terrorists” (Ihsan Yilmaz 2007).<sup>16</sup>

*Dialogic Sufism in the lives of the  
individual supporters of the movement*

Almost all of the institutional activities of the movement are hosted by the local *hizmet* communities from planning, financial supporting, organizing to opening. As a matter of fact, one of the first formal activities after the new establishment of a local community is dialogue. Since then, dialogue activity becomes a major activity, which not only bridges between different religious people but also binds among the supporters of a local community. That is, dialogue

activity is communal activity that involves local supporters whose voluntary labor, time and donations are essential to actualize plans. The above descriptions of the participants of Turkish trip testify this aspect, and the findings of several field works make it noticeable the engaging dialogic Sufism in the supporters' lives, which secure their continual contributions to and activities for *hizmet*.

Özdalga's empirical study depicts how deeply Gülen's humanitarian worldview involves in the individuals' lives of the movement. For instance, it quotes an interviewee's statement that "when they [her friends] go to places like Russia, for example, the circumstances may be such that it is not even appropriate for them to carry out with their own prayers. They even have to sacrifice this part of their own lives when they go to such places. This is also the desire of *hocaefendi*, that we should spread the message of love to other people" (Özdalga 2003a: 94). Based upon this and other testimonies, Özdalga concludes that "regarding love, pietism, humility, self-criticism, professional (not political) activism, they [the interviewees] all have studied their Gülen catechism very thoroughly. But at the same time, this urge to follow in Gülen's footsteps answers a voice within themselves that genuinely is their own and that has not been forced on them through communal pressure" (Özdalga 2003a: 114). Ergene concurs with Özdalga's conclusion, considering core virtues of Gülen's ideas as the primary subjects of the supporters' intellectual reflection. He particularly enumerates such virtues as "modesty, self-sacrifice, altruism, a spirit of devotion, being with the Lord although among people, living for the good of others, being of service without expectations, and depth of the spirit and heart with no anticipation for reward for any intention or deed" (Ergene, en.fgulen.com). In a way of confirming the internalized dialogic Sufism, Ergene underlines that all of these virtues are in Sufi culture and are the main constituents of the intellectual and active dynamics of the Gülen movement.

Likewise, a close look at the existing studies reveals that the movement provides various activities for the realization of Gülen's

theology of ‘internalization with externalization’ of faith. As the foremost representative, *dershane* activities deserve to be noted.

*Dershanes* (literally, places of study), denote private dormitory-like residency for student participants in the movement. A *dershane* typifies a flat or a house, in which three to six college and/or pre-college students live together by paying the rent by themselves. Each *dershane* has an ‘elder brother,’ under whose guidance the students perform multiple activities of education, sport, *sobbet* (*subba* in Arabic means companionship-in-conversation) and participation in the local projects. In Gülen’s schema and for his movement, *dershanes* are the cornerstone of the educational activities built on a ground of the tripod system, *madrasa* (Islamic school), *tekke* (Sufi lodge) and military academy, which embodies Gülen’s ideology that “it is only when the intellect, spirit, and body are harmonized, and man is motivated toward activity in the illuminated way of the Divine message, that he can become a complete being and attain true humanity” (Gülen 2000b: 106). Consequently, *dershanes* function as preparatory and primary spaces for an inhabitant’s spiritual depth, intellectual enlargement and social relationships.

Coinciding with this function, a typical *dershane* life is led with three primary activities. The first activity is, as Özdalga’s study depicts (Özdalga 2005), an inhabitant’s spiritual training of his/her carnal-self through internalizing Gülen’s proposed Sufi methods while living with other students. By personal and communal studying of Gülen’s works and other books like Said Nursi’s *Risalei Nur*, one does not only gain religious knowledge but also, as the works are filled with spiritual Sufi concepts, acquire necessary knowledge for his/her spiritual development. Reciting *jawshan*<sup>17</sup> and *tasbehat* plays a significant role for one’s spiritual experience. Recommended by Gülen’s teachings and represented by his exemplary life (*temsil*), *jawshan* and *tasbehat* are recited collectively and vocally (loudly) after prayers. It is not rare that the recitation stimulates some participants to experience spiritual altered states of consciousness. It might be, as Gülen describes, that “one enters a mysterious lift

ascending to the realm where spirits fly,” which “Sufis call this ‘peace of heart’ or ‘witnessing’” (Gülen 1998: 131).

Along with self-training and study of religious texts, *dershanes* encourage residents to enlarge and deepen secular knowledge. Secular knowledge refers to one’s major in colleges and information necessary for the benefit of one’s social relationships. In fact, Gülen stresses the integration between scientific knowledge and spiritual values, and warns not to overlook one for the other. In a passage, he urges that “in order to comprehend existence completely, we have to accept a dual method of Sufi thinking and scientific research” (Gülen 2005a: 42). This exhortation appears in *dershane* activities, which prompt one to pursue scientific knowledge in such a way that spiritual training of the self in the study of religious texts motivates one to work hard in his/her study of secular knowledge. Thus, as Özdalga’s interview data illustrates (Özdalga 2003b: 68), it is no coincidence that many students in *dershanes* perceive ‘the seeking of scientific knowledge’ to be equivalent to worship.

A similar projection of religious faith into profane activity is also observed in an inhabitant’s development of social relationships in *dershanes*. To Gülen, a *dershane* must be a communal place where its inhabitants must get along with each other and train themselves by internalizing and exercising values of tolerance, self-sacrifice and altruism. As a grounding place of social relationships, *dershanes* provide many communal activities. While doing together such activities as reading circles, recitations and sports, the students also engage in various local *hizmet* activities. More correctly, they are indispensable human resources of almost all local activities, which necessitate their labor and time. The activities of *dershane* residents include preparations and serving for communal gatherings like *sobbet* and *himmet* (fund-raising) meetings and dialogue conferences, teaching Turkish in local cultural centers, and helping visitors to their local communities. In doing these volunteer activities, the residents are not paid materially, but compensated through the consequent growth in their own spirituality and social relation-

ships, as the activities actually aim. In other words, these social activities are meant to be the external projection of one's piety and faith, which in turn strengthen his/her internalization of faith. Along with personal spiritual benefit, one may feel belonging and satisfaction, which encourages further individuals' altruistic and self-sacrificial mind and behaviors.

Put simply, *dershanes* are the space for enriching knowledge and training spirituality. By combining these two, *dershanes* provide "religious socialization," in Yavuz's term. In order for that religious socialization to happen, the Sufi model of self-training through asceticism, pietism and self-criticism is prerequisite and maximized. Through this model, Gülen's teachings of tolerance, patience, dignity, self-esteem and self-sacrifice are further internalized by the residents (Yavuz, 2003b: 34), who become prone to be active participants for the ideal goal of *hizmet*. Due to this function, *dershanes* are considered 'embodied networks' of the tripod educational system of *madrassa-tekke*-military academy. As Hermansen notes, "the fact that *dershanes* are functionally associated by Gülen with *madrasas* and Sufi lodges, demonstrates how they symbolically bridge the spheres of modern and traditional, Islamic and secular education" (Hermansen 2005).

All of this detailed account indicates the engaging and practicing dialogic Sufism in the individuals' life in *dershanes*, as Sufism enables and secures the dynamic interconnectedness between them and the movement, between them and society, and between their inner spirituality of *shakhsi manawi* and external activities for *hizmet*. This aspect of the embodied dialogic Sufism must not be confined into *dershane* life only; rather, it exemplifies and represents the general life of the participants in the movement, as reading religious texts, reciting *jawshan/tasbehat* and participating in social activities are common to all participants.

Among many possible effects of the practicing dialogic Sufism depending on personal circumstances, the most commonly and remarkably observed one is regarding identity.

Özdalga takes a note on an interviewee's expression of "becoming a part" (Özdalga 2003a: 95). For an interviewee, "becoming a part" does not mean to become a mechanical part of the movement, instead to be an organic participant of *bizmet*. Özdalga interprets that "becoming part of the Gülen community, therefore, does not mean that individuals are turned into passive tools in the hands of an authoritarian leadership. The 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 any means totalitarian" (Özdalga 2003a: 114). Becoming a part reflects Gülen's identification of his movement as a collective person of *shakhsi manawi*, which consists of individuals who strive for being 'non-selfish' and 'melt-down' in and by it. The 'non-selfishness' is attained by constant and conscious training of one's carnal ego through such Sufi-oriented practices of *zuhd*, *muraqaba* and *muhasaba*, and the movement facilitates this individual spiritual growth, as it awakens one in *shakhsi manawi* and enables him/her to annihilate in *shakhsi manawi*.

In the process of and for annihilation in *shakhsi manawi*, the participants in the movement eventually learn, begin to use and get familiar with common terminology of the movement. For instance, a participant underlines that "first of all, you become a slave [*kul*], that is, you start to criticize yourself... of course: reserve, humility, getting away from being egocentric" (Özdalga 2003a: 95). This saying directly refers to the self-reflection, that is, *muhasaba* and *muraqaba* in Gülen's Sufism, as the interviewee further clarifies that "this [selfishness through self-criticism] is at the very foundation of religion, and Hocaefendi represents a very good example for us in this respect" (Özdalga 2003a: 95). The interviewee is also observed to have frequently used the concept of 'love,' in Özdalga's description, "following in the footsteps of Fethullah Gülen" (Özdalga 2003a). As readily notable in various interview materials, 'love' and 'tolerance' in the participants' vocabulary refer specifically to the two core concepts of Gülen's humanitarianism, rather than in common or broad sense. This shared vocabulary activates Bourdieu's

“symbolic power” (Bourdieu 1991). In a similar way that Bourdieu sees language as an evoking factor of habitus, Gülen instrumentalizes his language. From this similarity, Selcuk Uygur utilizes Hennis’s theory of habitus as “the non-discursive aspects of culture that bind individuals to larger groups” (Uygur 2007), while Etga Ugur notes Smidt’s contention that “religion also provides a symbolic language enmeshed in the grammar of the society by speaking the language of the masses and utilizing the ‘cultural capital’” (Ugur 2007). Gülen’s language, which evokes the audiences ‘habitus,’ is dynamically reproduced in the participants’ testimonies. Empathetically, this symbolic language of habitus denotes *shakhsi manawi*, which refers essentially to the accumulated cultural collectivity of the Turkish Sufi tradition to which Gülen’s humanitarian dialogic Sufism is intrinsically bound.

The practicing dialogue provides the participants a shared-communal space of belonging, encouraging collective solidarity at the given social margins – both in Turkey where the activities of Gülen and his movement have continually been scrutinized by secularists and Islamists, and in the world of the Muslim minority. Relevantly, by providing the participants spaces for the feeling of belonging, the dialogue activities of *bizmet* based upon dialogic Sufism direct them to (re) find an identity. Çetin observes such as identity in his interviews with the participants:

The Gülen Movement endows individuals progressively with a capacity for action. Identity is constructed by each individual in her or his capacity as a social actor. Altruistic services always relate to human sociability and to social relationships. Relationship is formed at the level of the single individual, awakening the enthusiasm and capacity of the individual for action. Through such sociability people rediscover the self and the meaning of life. Herein lies all the distinction of the Gülen Movement (Çetin 2007).

As discussed so far, beneath this collective social identity that Çetin underlines lies national and cultural identity, that is, *shakhsi*

*manawi*, or more precisely, humanitarian Anatolian cultural heritage of dialogic Sufism. This cultural identity is rediscovered and regained through one's altruistic service for *bizmet*, which in turn prevents and saves him/her from an identity crisis against the contexts that one continuously oscillates between one's ethnic enclaves and a 'melting pot' of a multitude of ethnicities, attitudes, political agendas and religions. A good instance is activities that present Rumi as a humanitarian and dialogic symbol to westerners, and which simultaneously awaken the participants' *shakhsi manawi* of Rumi as a cultural icon for 'Turkishness.'

In this regard, Gülen warns that "a community that has broken with its essential cultural values inevitably loses its identity" (Gülen 2005b). To him, this community is likened to "a barren tree," which some day eventually will be cut down and used as wood. Thus, Gülen teaches:

We should know how to be ourselves and then remain ourselves. That does not mean isolation from others. It means preservation of our essential identity among others, following our way among other ways. While self-identity is necessary, we should also find the ways to a universal integration. Isolation from the world will eventually result in annihilation (Gülen 1996: 86).

The self-identity refers by no means to annihilation in 'other cultures' or conflict with them, but to an autonomous identity, which makes cooperation and coexistence possible and further realized. In Gülen's schema, identity is an integrated manifestation of cultural roots with respect to a given social 'other' object. Therefore, it becomes a subject of cooperation in universal integration. In this sense - not in terms of 'national-centricity,' Gülen presents his distinctive idea of "Turkish Muslimness." To him, Turkish Islam is the identity of Turkishness, which, with its humanitarian religious/cultural spirituality, cooperates with 'others,' in particular, the West. On this basis, Gülen teaches the participants of his movement to integrate into the Western societies fully by obeying the

local laws and by supporting the liberal Democratic, market-economies without sacrificing their religious/cultural root. This integration with one's 'self' means a dynamic relationship with others, acknowledging others and exchanging each other's cultural productions; for this dynamic relationship, dialogue is indispensable; and dialogic Sufism provides the most effective way for dialogue.

### CONCLUSION

The survey of this paper demonstrates the indispensable relationship between dialogue and Sufism, the two core subjects of Gülen's thought. The relationship is put forward by the proposing concept of dialogic Sufism. It is depicted that Gülen's advocacy of dialogue is an externalized and pragmatized manifestation of his dialogic Sufism, which reactivates the inherited and accumulated tradition of the humanitarian Sufism through *shakhsi manawi* in the contemporary world for *hizmet*. In other words, Gülen presents dialogue as *the* solution to human individual and collective problems of the world, and for *the* solution, his dialogic Sufism serves as *the* method to rediscover humanism in times of hatred and enmity. As he restores Jalal al-Din Rumi as a representative model for dialogue that needs to be practiced in this contemporary world, Gülen is convinced that only by dialogue based upon the humanitarian Sufism, people in difference can reach together toward peace and coexistence.

Gülen's theological and theoretical concern of dialogic Sufism is embedded and embodied in the dialogue activities of the Gülen movement. As the examined activities represent, dialogic Sufism serves as the interconnectivity of the inner dynamics of the movement's activities, that is, 'internalization with externalization of faith.' It plays a constituent role of the interconnectedness between the participants in the movement and the movement, between them and society, and between their inner spirituality of *shakhsi manawi* and external activities for *hizmet*. This embedded and prac-

ticing dialogic Sufism in turn prepares the participants for and appears as their commitments to *hizmet* in general and the dialogue activities in particular, both of which, in Gülen's teaching, can by no means be attained without the altruistic-based humanism. To this extent, dialogic Sufism can be rightly considered to be a reason, if not the reason, of the appeal of the dialogue activities of the Gülen movement to many people over the globe.

Gülen's dialogic Sufism provides a number of implications for the broader academic discourses on Sufism and dialogue in particular and religion in general.

Above all, dialogic Sufism is a clear evidence for the continuity of Sufism in Muslim life against the modern scholarly prediction of 'Sufism moribund' in the process of modernization and secularization.<sup>18</sup> It does not only prove the vitality of Sufism, which enables Sufism to cope with a rapidly changing world, but also represents a global manifestation of Sufism, appealing to the contemporary context where excessive materialism makes people more thirsty for spirituality and 'the clash of civilizations' constantly evokes humanism of Rumi, Emre and others alike.

As a global Sufi manifestation, Gülen's dialogic Sufism provides the source of 'glocal'<sup>19</sup> identity, with which the movement integrates into the world. This aspect raises a question of how the 'local and global' entities are reconciled to consist of one glocal identity. As examined, ideologically and ideally, the tension between these two seemingly conflicting concepts is resolved by Gülen's dialogic Sufism and its instrumentalization of *shakhsi manawi* for *hizmet*. Practically, according to the interview materials that this paper referred to, the participants of the movement seem to successfully employ this ideological resolution in easing the strained relation of the two entities and concepts through actively participating in the dialogic activities of the movement. Nevertheless, there is a certain lack of empirical studies on the participants' lives, which makes it premature to estimate the validity of this aspect. Further field examinations on this issue are needed especially to assess the

extent of the movement as a global movement, of Sufism in the global context, and of academic discourse on dialogue for identity construction.

Last but not least, Gülen's dialogic Sufism suggests that religion as a source of human, social and cultural capital directs towards the collective well-being of humanity. In particular, Gülen's vision of interfaith/civilizational dialogue on the basis of humanitarian Sufism provides vision of religion as a solution to human problems in sharp contrast to the image of religion represented by religious fundamentalists and theoretically legitimated by some scholars as a primary source of conflict and clash. The dialogue activities of the Gülen movement, which have attempted to put Gülen's dialogic vision into work over the world, proves the potential role of religion as a means of a dialogic bridge between people of different religious and cultural background. This aspect revisits Durkheimian concept of civil religion in its penetrating characteristics. Emile Durkheim stresses civil religion on the basis of his dualist notion of nationalism and internationalism (Wallace 1997: 287-288). Seeing nationalism as a necessary stepping-stone to internationalism, he insists that "civilized nations must go beyond the tribal and national level: and they must have as a 'primary object the realization of humanity' which places human interests over national interests" (Wallace 1997: 288). In this sense, Durkheim advocates a universal civil religion, calling it "cult of man" or the "religion of humanity," whose spirit "springs not from egoism but from sympathy for all that is human, a broader pity for all sufferings, for all human miseries, a more ardent need to combat them and mitigate them, a greater thirst for justice" (Durkheim 1973: 49). This "religion of humanity" is very necessary against 'excessive egoism' and its consequent 'social pathology' (Wallace 1997: 288-289). As it is apparent from what this paper puts forward, Gülen's dialogic Sufism for *hizmet* and its embodied *hizmet* activities of the movement evoke the "Religion of Humanity," suggesting further comparative studies especially in relation to the future of religion.

## NOTES

- 1 As a representative study, a work edited by Hakan Yavuz and John Esposito (2003) presents Gülen as one of the major figures in defining the contemporary global Islamic experience, and the Gülen movement as one of the most significant religious movements emergent in Turkey in the past fifty years.
- 2 While Sarıtoprak initiated a contention that “Gülen can be called a Sufi, albeit a Sufi in his own way” (Sarıtoprak 2005), Ergene goes further to consider Gülen as a contemporary Rumi, opening to a scholarly discourse on Gülen with respect to the Turkish Sufi tradition (Ergene, 2005).
- 3 For instance, Ünal and Williams asserts that “Gülen is an adamant supporter and promoter of inter-faith dialogue” (Ünal and Williams 2000). See also, Jill Carol’s *A Dialogue of Civilisation: Gülen’s Humanistic Ideals and Humanistic Discourse* (2007).
- 4 Relevantly, I use ‘Sufism’ in a descriptive sense, indicating a wide range of varieties and developments rather than a rigidly labeled doctrine or movement. This consideration precludes my examination on Gülen’s Sufism from the possible danger of arbitrarily confining it to one particular view or narrow definition. Instead, it allows me to encompass diverse manifestations of and different approaches to Sufism. This broad approach is of paramount importance to depict Gülen’s Sufism, as it is often equated with ‘quasi-Sufism’ or ‘neo-Sufism.’
- 5 *The Emerald Hills of the Heart* is a series of Gülen’s works on Sufism originally entitled *Kalbin Zümriit Tepeleri* and published in English with the title *The Emerald Hills of The Heart: Key Concepts in the Practice of Sufism*. This series is compiled from Gülen’s articles, dealing with various Sufi terms, which he has been contributing to the monthly magazine *Sizinti* since 1990. It has been issued up to now with four volumes in Turkish and two volumes of translation in English. As Gülen’s comprehensive work on Sufism, it constitutes the quintessence of his approach to the subject.
- 6 To Gülen, Sufism is not something to be represented by the later institutionalized Sufi orders; in essence, it is far beyond the domain of the orders. In his thought, for instance, Sufism is “Islamic spiritual aspect, which constitutes the essence of religion, fosters its belief and leads one to being a perfect human being” (Pope 1998), while tariqas “are almost beyond number” (Gülen 1995: 154), which, regardless of their positive contributions in Ottoman Turkey (Yavuz 1997), plays a divisional function in society (see, Gülen 2004: 243).
- 7 The term of *shakhsi manawi* itself does not appear in *The Emerald Hills of the Heart*. This fact may detract my relational thesis of *shakhsi manawi* to Sufism. However, as this paper will demonstrate and my doctoral dissertation comprehensively presents, two important aspects make my thesis reasonable. First, the place of *The Emerald Hills of the Heart* in Gülen’s other works should be considered, as Sufi terminology in this study facilitates the correct understanding of his other works and concepts. In this regard, one can read Gülen clarification that “I first explain concepts, and then with the concepts, I will converse” (Ergene, 2003), which was stated prior to his writing of *The Emerald Hills of the Heart*. His core concepts of *shakhsi manawi* in his other works, which is intrinsically related to such Sufi terms as asceticism, love,

piety and self-supervision, inevitably refer one to relevant terms in *The Emerald Hills of the Heart*. Second, *shakhsi manawi* together with *bizmet* is a key concept for a proper understanding of *The Emerald Hills of the Heart*, as it informs Gülen's own perception of the cultural context of his approach to Sufism and so makes his Sufism distinctive in the Sufi tradition.

- 8 Along with Yasawi, Rumi, Emre and Hajji Bektash Veli, Niyazi Misri (d. 1694), Ibrahim Haqqi of Erzurum (d. 1780) and Muhammad Lutfi Efendi (d. 1956) are constantly appropriated as Gülen's primary references to Islam in general and Turkish Islam in particular. To Gülen, they all maintain a common teaching of tolerance, love and humanism. His reading of the Sufis as saints and heroes of love and tolerance leads Gülen to define Islam as "a religion of forgiveness, pardon, and tolerance" (Gülen 2204: 58).
- 9 See, as representative passages, Gülen, 2004b: 125 for his preference of sobriety over intoxication; *ibid*, 146-147, in which he recognizes the state of 'theopathic locutions' that such famous Sufis as Bayazid al-Bistami, al-Husayn b. Mansur al-Hallaj al-Mansur and Muhy al-Din ibn al-Arabi, while he warns against it to be followed as it opens a deviation from the true path; *ibid*, 257 for his criticism against master-disciple relationship over the guides of the Qur'an and Sunnah.
- 10 Among numerous passages, Gülen's evaluation of "Privacy and Seclusion" (*Halwat and Uzlat*) is the most relevant discussion for this aspect (Gülen 1998: 16-19).
- 11 For instance, in explaining the term "Self-Criticism," Gülen asserts that "everyone who has planned his or her life to reach the horizon of a perfect, universal human being is conscious of this life and spends every moment of it struggling with himself or herself" (Gülen 1998: 9).
- 12 For Gülen's extensive conceptualization of the marriage of 'action and thought,' see, Gülen, 2005.
- 13 In a similar sense, Gulay describes that "Gülen directs the Sufi concentration on inner spirituality toward the worldly realm. The taming of the corporeal body by means of spiritual transcendence, a fundamental notion in Sufi practice, is exploited to achieve mastery of the world through social activity. After achieving transcendence and constant 'God-consciousness,' disciples are enjoined to perpetuate this knowledge of God in daily life, performing acts of service that reflect their intense subjective spiritual experience" (Gulay 2007: 55).
- 14 For a brief account of Gülen's meeting with diverse religious leaders and its implications, see, Sarıtoprak and Sidney 2005.
- 15 For instance, a participant wrote in his impression of the trip as that "visiting the tomb of the mystic Muslim poet Rumi on the anniversary of his death and attending the celebration of the Whirling Dervishes of Rumi were unforgettable experiences" (cited from [www.interfaithdialog.org](http://www.interfaithdialog.org)).
- 16 Along with these two representative activities, one may note the activities such as dialogue conferences and workshops throughout the year, an annual Ramadan inter-faith dinner, which bring together people from diverse religious and educational backgrounds, and the distribution and share of 'Noah's Pudding' as an emphasis on a common practice among Muslims and Christians in the Mediterranean.

- 17 *Jawshan* is a collection of dua. Specifically, Gülen recommends to recite *Jawshan*, as its every single sentence and word drop by drop leads one to a sincere and pious invocation (Gülen 2007). He further affirms that “*Jawshan* initially came to the Prophet through inspiration or revelation, and then reaches us by one of the people of faith who received it from the Prophet by means of *kashf* (revelation or uncovering)” (Gülen 2007). Entrusting *kashf* and *ilham* as a source of knowledge, Gülen points out the wide usage of *Jawshan* among such great saints as Imam al-Ghazali (d. 1111), Ziyaettin Gümtüshanevi (d. 1893) and Bediüzzaman Said Nursi (d. 1960).
- 18 See for this prediction, Arthur Arberry (1956), Clifford Geertz (1960), Ernest Gellner (1992), and Michael Gilsenan 1973).
- 19 By the term ‘glocal,’ I follow John Voll’s application of *glocalization* to his study of the Gülen movement. He examines the movement from a sociological perspective of ‘glocalization’ as coined by Roland Robertson for an indication of “an interactive process in which ‘global’ features take on distinctive ‘local’ forms and distinctive particularisms emerge that are comprehensible only as part of a global framework of interaction” (Voll 2003a, and Robertson 1995). On this basis, Voll demonstrates that Gülen is a successful representative of the glocal context of pluralistic experience as his local vision of Islam and inclusive view on dialogue interacts harmoniously with a given context of ‘glocalization’ (Voll 2003b).

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