

Fethullah Gülen

- In Framework of Discourse on Dialogue in Contemporary World

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European legacy of modern assumptions for possibilities of establishing dialogue

*You must live through your love or you
will finish by uttering mere words*

M. J. Rumi

Summary

The problematics of understanding contemporary world and a possibility of dialogue within this scattered world among functional individuals is dealt with in a short survey of the state of mind in the age of science. M Heidegger and HG Gadamer are contemporary thinkers who dealt with this problem. Their analyses of the sources and results of the civilisation progress marked by scientific achievements, although the notion of science is comprehensive entailing all specialties today that the said thinkers did not witness, their interpretations are contemporary and es-

sential with regard to issues of knowledge, understanding and dialogue in contemporary world. Their works have a strength to serve as a Judgment Day for humanity.

Gülen writes about education as an act of man's existence. Education, understanding, interpretation, dialogue are expressed in the work of this thinker in terms of 'hizmet'. The realities of this world and the world beyond are interconnected in man's existence. Man's 'hizmet' is an act of unification. The prospect of a civilisation where progress is achieved at the expense of alienation from either world is problematic. Our understanding of the world and the position of each individual within this fundamental division and alienation is almost impossible because what is at stake is the abrogation of responsibility regarding the gift of 'hizmet'. Gülen's thinking is a never-ending journey towards a possibility of understanding this world and the world beyond as an all-encompassing reality.

Key words: Understanding, dialogue, education as an act of existence, lack of trust in dialogue framed within institutions, understanding of thinking as a new thinking – duty of mankind, freedom, democracy, humanism, word and action.

IF WE INTEND to define the 21st century world it would not be inadequate to resort to the “information technology vocabulary” and state that the contemporary world is a sort of interconnected institutional network of violence, blanket destruction, and “bloody” exclusion of the different. Numerous institutions are based on unprecedented progress in terms of science, technology and informatics. To this network also belong the institutions devoted to the ideals of compassion, development and understanding of dialogue. The technical civilisation of euphoric progress (ideal and idol of the new, but in respect of the latter H G Gadamer writes that nothing is as old as the new), which incomprehends the overall contemporaneity, has pushed the mankind towards daily war destruction, but also to forms of peaceful destruction inconceivable to the mind.

Since Rene Descartes' postulate 'Cogito ergo sum', embraced by Hegel as a starting point to understand and cognize the world wherein reality as a whole is founded on man's ability to think, while acknowledging at the same time R Descartes as the first modern age thinker, mankind has undoubtedly been inundated by an avalanche of various

trends. At present, this unique faith in – cogito ergo sum – after having metamorphosed into technical reason and pragmatic wisdom, has been confronted with the following question: what are the possibilities of the mind's journey and destruction of “dogmatic” metaphysics in view of the coming tasks that are to be posed for the future of mankind.

The dawn of science occurred with Kant's critical questioning of what man can know, but also with the justification of knowledge based on the power of consciousness to construct the subject matter of that very knowledge. Modern science has become the science of experience. In other words, this implies that the science of experience has promoted itself into absolute knowledge. Hegel's kingdom of the absolute mind has been constrained within the boundaries of the science of experience. Notorious is this philosopher's comment on a remark that what he expounds is incongruent with facts. His terse comment was ‘the worse for the facts’. At present we co-participate in building the world of disastrous “facticity” that we both agree with and admire. Understandably, it must be emphasized that the modern epoch's consciousness “has fallen” into passivity. In simple terms, it has become deprived of critical faculties as opposed to the past critical rationality which featured as its inspiration. The world has been built devoid of people with an education in metaphysics. M. Heidegger writes about the world of science of experience as an investigation with the world featuring as a subject matter of the binding concept introduced and implemented beforehand.

Modern man-researcher-scientist is not the “contemplator” of beings. He is their representor by forcing- inducing them to himself, transforming them into a picture. Ideal and idol of the “new” is essential to the modern world; “Being new is inherent to the world that has become a picture” (Heidegger in ‘The Age of the World Picture’).

‘Cogito ergo sum’ implies today that anthropology has substituted philosophy. Philosophical issues have been suppressed since, on the one hand, the world has become an object, increasingly “more objective” the more it has been “conquered”, while on the other hand, man has been elevated into the subject so that scholarly study about the world has “turned” into a study of man (“anthropology”). Anthropology provides an explanation about man from man and towards man, contemplat-

ing in this manner beings as a whole. Man has become an attitude to the world. Most certainly, Hegel's comparison of an educated nation without metaphysics to a temple without its shrine has its full meaning. Neglecting the issues of science and the wisdom attained through science the world- a temple without its sacred things, has been formed. The independence of "science from sacred things" is not to be understood as the negation of science. If we were to do so, we would repeat a vulgar accusation levied against Hegel who believed that thinking takes place in poetry rather than science. This philosopher was accused of being against science and progress. What is at stake really? In the world shaped by science, it has been made clear that science is neither able nor willing to provide explanations about itself. Nevertheless, science as an investigation is assigned to "utter" what is essential, i.e. what its place within the wholeness of all beings is.

Science, being rooted in a particular theory like any other form of knowledge, is rife with self-explanations, which implies that it wants to "step out of itself". Science has renounced some questions such as the 19th century Kant's "euphoric" critical thinking of the starting point of knowledge. Although avalanches have been thrust at any metaphysics, there have remained the questions about the natural experience of nature and society which had preceded the scientific methodology and its concepts. In this context I accentuate Heidegger's historic effort when he pointed out that in modern times science itself was forced to become dogmatised. H G Gadamer writes about Heidegger's ontological foresight in *Being-in-the-world* and *being-with*, which confirms the importance of science. Science, in other words, is not being disputed:

"In fact the point of ontological foresight, mediated by Heidegger's thinking, is that science itself derives from understanding Being which, in turn, forces it to pretend to any place from its own standpoint, thus leaving no place unconquered from its own scope. In turn, this implies that today it is not metaphysics which is being abused but science as such." (H. G. Gadamer, 'Reason in the Age of Science')

We will continue briefly with Gadamer's understanding of the reason in the age of science. His acceptance of Heidegger's thinking that in the new age science pretends to encompass everything and to conquer the overall reality, follows from a clear distinction between the

application of science and praxis. A thinker poses a question whether any praxis is an application of science. It is true, thinks Gadamer, that application of science enters into any praxis. Nevertheless, he believes that the application of science and praxis are not identical. We can read two pivotal sentences:

. . . Praxis does not mean making anything that can be made. It is always a choice and decision-making between possibilities, and that is already related to man's "Being". (Gadamer).

The distinction between the application of science (science of experience) and praxis takes into consideration the historic difference in respect of overall knowledge (knowledge of Being) from the ancient philosophical legacy, denoting a different modern relation or, in other words, different and changed concepts of theory and praxis as marked in modern civilisation.

By science ancient thinkers implied overall knowledge, both philosophy of nature, medicine, mathematics and music. The Greek man rejoiced in science for the sake of knowledge. It refers to the original interest in the world as such.

The idea of science in the 17th century established quite distinctly the modern-age relation between theory and praxis. Science is no longer knowledge – a set of knowledge about the world and man. Science ceased to be general knowledge. Gadamer writes that the underlying foundation of science has become experience. Experience implies methodologically assured certainty of knowledge. Not only does it imply an assured certainty, but also a possibility of it being controlled. Experience must be susceptible to control. R. Descartes started with 'Discourse on the Method of Rightly Conducting the Reason' to reach the formulation of the ideal of certainty as a benchmark of any knowledge in his work 'Rules for the Direction of the Mind'.

The development of science determines its particular and completely new feature. Modern science is the natural science, a skill (praxis), (albeit permeated by theory it is no longer a science). H. G Gadamer writes that modern science produces knowledge directed towards the "skill of production" and overcoming nature on the basis of knowledge, technology. Technology cannot be identified with praxis. The reason is that technology creates its own special relation to praxis. This new

relation is knowledge as a construct and application on praxis. Praxis within the meaning of technology and its link to modern natural science is a conquest of the world and its abstraction in the domain isolated from common causal relations.

We will deal a bit more with Heidegger's text 'The Question Concerning Technology'. What this thinker wrote about this question was fundamentally determined, and this is also a case at the present moment, by the strength of his thinking in the midst of meaning that the modern-age science has been acknowledged by our contemporary age both in respect of its social and political primacy, but at the same time it has assigned mankind the task to gain awareness about its fall into a myth of oneself. In essence M. Heidegger thinks about technology on the basis of differentiation between technology and technical:

"Tehnology is not the same as the essence of technology. If we search for the essence of tree, we must notice that what permeates any tree as a tree, the tree itself is not a tree to be found among other trees."

Likewise the essence of technology has nothing to do with technical. Therefore we never test our relation to the essence of technology as long as we imagine only that which is technical and deal with it, being satisfied with it or trying to avoid it. All around us we are in the bondage of technology, no matter whether we are its passionate advocates or negators. The worst case of our exposure to technology is when we observe it as something neutral; that image which we are particularly inclined to adopt nowadays, makes us completely blind towards the essence of technology.

It is difficult to find a text in literature at the level of the previously quoted one. When we read it in the post-modern world where the notions found in Heidegger's work (technology, freedom, art, man etc.) have changed their meaning thanks to the information technology reshaping of our life, with communication itself evolving into the culture of visual, Heidegger's thinking is widely and powerfully open in view of its meaning. In this thinker's work we can find the lasting validity of thinking which is confirmed today by the gravity of his word 'understanding'. In the world of the 'same route' devoid of a need to look beyond, since all questions are focused on a 'useful means', and what is practical for ourselves, sight is only sight about us to whom all the

existing and “non-existing” things should serve. Therefore the question whether technology is going to bring a “new progress” which will put all the existing things as instruments at the disposal of man-ruler is familiar to us. In other words, every relation is a relation to means. Means has chased away for ever the word ‘being’ since the effort to attain the genuine has been substituted by the practice of acquiring.

In contemplating the difference between technology and technical M. Heidegger expressed everything about the world of today wherein knowledge neither clarifies nor unconceals. The following text supports the above said :

“Technology, thus, is not a mere means. Technology is a form of unconcealment (disclosure). If we focus on this, another, an entirely different area of the essence of technology is disclosed to us. It is the area of unconcealment, ie. Truth.”

In our quest of paths to establish dialogue in contemporary world and approach the contemplative humanistic discourse of F Gülen, the question is posed whether as scholars we are obliged to return to reading the works of M Heidegger and H G Gadamer. In fact, M Heidegger himself poses the following question: So “where have we blundered ?” Like Heidegger we ask questions about technology, and immerse ourselves into Gulen’s fascinating work which is concerned with the questions related to life within the world of differences between the exact sciences and God’s tenets in regard of interpreting and understanding life. We have set out towards the meaning of dialogue, without taking this word for granted in its mundane “edition”, and in order not to “leave” concealed what this word really means. We have set out to the infinite life space in ‘Word and Work’ heeding M.J. Rumi’s message: “you must live through your love or you will end by uttering mere words”.

Heidegger’s key word ‘unconcealment’ (disclosure) – carries the meaning of man’s Being as a path to knowledge and production. Technology (tehne) – production and knowledge (episteme) in ancient philosophical thought imply that knowledge about something refers to finding one’s bearings in something, and consequently, to the essence of man’s Being which is understanding – clarifying.

We attempt, by bringing into the light one aspect of understanding the world, manifested as its unconcealment, and the contemporary world

of knowledge and its unimaginable application-instrumentalisation referred to as a modern aspect of understanding the world and overall existence, to free ourselves from the “bondage” of instrumentalisation of knowledge. In other words, to look nowadays beyond the appearance of the question of “dialogue” and start building the experience of dialogue from the innermost. Hence, the task of awakening the interest for the innermost is the very first step in seeking the World of meaning. In respect of Word – referred to as a traveller on a pilgrimage, Rumi states:

“How can one reach a pearl by simply observing the sea? A diver is needed to find the pearl”. (Rumi)

It seems as if a “request” for dialogue in the contemporary world of infinite communication possibilities had become a sort of “cry” for rescue from the “mist of words” (Rumi).

In M. Heidegger’s thinking we pointed to the key word – “unconcealment”. Unconcealment is a state of being rather than a “mere doing of man”. (M Heidegger):

“We need not search far away. Wherever man opens his eyes and ears and reveals his heart, freely indulging in thinking and dreaming, shaping and acting, in his pleas and acknowledgements, everywhere he is situated in the unconcealed.....Thus, if man in his search and observation follows a trace (nachstellt) of nature as an environment of his picture making, he is called by a manner of unconcealment which in/duces him to approach nature as the subject matter of quest until the subject matter itself disappears into a matter-less mood....”
(M. Heidegger)

In this complex text of Heidegger we encounter the word ‘mood’ man has been placed into. He believes that in contemporary world, after falling into captivity of “bodily eyes”, we have distanced ourselves from that which Plato believed to exist in everything - Idea (eidos). Idea- eidos in Plato connotes “ that which is impossible to discern by bodily eyes”. Not only that, but to whatever which is available, be it aural, sensory or particular Idea “reveals its essence”, writes M Heidegger. Distancing means that in modern science and technology disclosure as a “present-at-hand” and a “mood”, a way of presentation, a way of rule,

or in other words, everything related to Being is kept hidden. This is preceded by “that which comes earliest”, but here is Heidegger’s verdict:

“That which is earliest is revealed to man in the end. Hence, in the domain of thinking, an attempt to think through the original thinking in a more authentic way is not a futile will to renew what is past but a sober readiness to wonder in the face of present-at-hand.”

By “mood” and “present at-hand” M. Heidegger means a path. The reign of such unconcealment (disclosure) in the modern age of science and technology is a danger. In a “mood” man takes himself to be that which he is. This poses a danger and fear from the cliff man has found himself over, although he believes to be the master of the Earth. The semblance that omnipresent is his work and that he encounters himself elsewhere conceals the truth that nothing is eternal in man’s encounter with his essence. And therein lies man’s jeopardy. This jeopardy signifies that man is denied new possibilities of disclosing truth except the truth that he sees as power and control of Being-in-the-world.

M. Heidegger’s words are read today as a “cry” for hopeful deliverance. This thinker returned dignity to man’s thinking by posing an assignment to return to understanding “that which is earliest” once we have found ourselves in the world which is the greatest imaginable danger created. In Holderlin’s poetry we can read the following lines,

“Wherever there is a danger,
there increases also deliverance”

with a special significance of the word ‘deliverance’. To deliver does not mean to pull away that which has been brought into danger from ruin and keep it in the existing state. On the contrary, ‘to deliver’ implies the highest possible historic task of acting in order to gain insight into the essence of danger in order for the latter to be disclosed and enlightened by speech. Maybe we are still unaware that our usage of the word ‘Dialogue’ as something “capable of delivering” is furthest from what we truly imply by the word ‘dialogue’ today. The meaning of this word has become enslaved in “the mist of words” of institutions.

The danger we are in H. G. Gadamer also contemplated from the world of unprecedented knowledge and its instrumentalisation. In his book ‘European Legacy’ his interpretation of the world in the age of science is a sort of remembering Socrates’ deliberation about knowledge

and its application. Undoubtedly, in our age we have to rethink Socrates' philosophical deliberations. It seems that in Socrates' interpretation the problems pertaining to the modern world of science are clearly dealt with. The difference is in the progress of modern science and its technological/informatics application which only increases our responsibility due to the inconceivable scope of science as such:

“What is at stake now is the overall survival of man in nature and, consequently, our task to control our power over the forces in nature in order not to devastate it, but rather preserve it on the planet Earth along with our very existence. Nature can no longer be viewed as an object of exploitation; we must experience it as a partner in all its manifest forms which means that we must understand it as the other we are living with “.

Among the seminal issues of contemporary European philosophy are those related to modern science and its significance in contemporary world wherein science pretends the world to be its own creation, while Truth is what science discovers as its knowledge about the world, along with the modern philosophical interpretation of the meaning of such shaping of the world. This goes together with science's legitimacy deemed to be valid for all and the particular in regard of original differentness within Being-in-the- world. This is especially true in view of the historic experience of danger-catastrophies that had wreaked havoc when the mind-thinking was uniformly directed to a straight line, thus becoming the captive of “correct thinking” (Rumi). This valuable formulation of Rumi in respect of danger of requesting one way of “behaviour” offers a fertile contemplative space for thinking and interpreting knowledge and its application differently. Rumi has certainly reached out to us who are struggling with how and why to think about the other and different. Since the dignity of man has reached its nadir our priority task is to admit this, and from the semblance of us being both masters and slaves of the modern scientific experience, we should engage into a different experience. The latter will differ from the present dominant experience of science which treats the world as its own dominion. Dialogue as our rescue will remain a “mere word” unless we admit that nowadays we do not possess this word, regardless of our belief that the word ‘dialogue’ is in our possession but needs only to be put in practice. On the contrary, we need to start learning anew

what has been forgotten.

There is a good reason why mankind has arrived at this stage. H G Gadamer writes about the hermeneutic experience we have all been “struck by”, knowing what it means, and yet not knowing what this word means. Nobody is excluded. In the text which follows H G Gadamer discloses what he means by hermeneutic experience and hermeneutic behaviour:

“.....This hermeneutic behaviour obviously has a key feature in respect of encountering the other primarily as the other. That other is not my dominion nor is it under my authority when it comes to explaining some natural phenomena in the area of the natural sciences..... When we feel good, is nature the other in this experience? Isn't nature inseparable from us, isn't it the other of ourselves as we have been taught by the ancient languages wherein it is not said one and the other, but the other and the other? Finally 'ki' is not entirely the other, the divine as suggested by Rudolf Otto regardless of emphasis on the complete otherness, but it is the other of ourselves reaching out to the nearest other, to You and everything that is Yours? Can there be the other at all unless the other of ourselves. In any case there can be no other if it relates to somebody who is also a man.“

Along with Gadamer we want to take part in the unconcealment of the world of being as an experience which will keep us open, not allowing us to neglect or conceal things around us. Gadamer believes this task to be too difficult:

“..... We must learn to respect the other and the otherness. This implies we must learn not to be always in the right. We must learn to lose in a game – this starts in early childhood, at the age of two or even earlier. Whoever has not learned it at an early age will never be able to accomplish more pressing tasks later on in life...I might not exaggerate if I draw a political conclusion based on my previous thinking that we stand a chance to survive as a humanity if we learn a simple thing, ie. not to exploit the means of our power and our ability to act, but rather to stop in the face of the other as the other, but also in the face of nature and other advanced cultures of peoples and nations so that we experience the otherness and the other as part of ourselves in order to have a part in each other.“

We have presented a short overview of seminal thinkers whose works have been singled out as representing the thinking about the mind in modern world. Although our aim is not to write in detail (although it is our historic duty to do so) about Rumi's correspondence with our times, we have presented his unique approach to the problems pertaining to the mind which relate to modern times as well. Mind-rationality appeared in modern times as pluralism. We refer to the atomised mind which is certainly part and parcel of modern times, manifested as a state of radical pluralism. W Welsch discarded into the past any notion of monism within the domain of mind. The abandoning of this unity has instigated a fear of losing the mainstay – a starting point of mutual understanding in general, together with destruction of social interconnectedness. Another thing which interconnects thinkers dealing with the domain of the mind is the phenomenon of mutual understanding.

The notion of understanding and mutual understanding or dialogue is not thought through from the standpoint of reality beyond that of the modern world. The starting point of thinkers is not a difference between the “theoretical” and “practical” or esthetic. Understandably, thinkers do not come up with “requests” to establish the rigid unity of mind in the dynamic midst of modern times. Their interpretations of the mind and its possibilities in the modern world of science's experience are not separated from the experience itself. Thinkers are looking for new and different possibilities of the mind within the modern world's reality. As a result, it is pivotal in any thinking about the modern world devoid of the “unity” of mind wherein the principle of rationality was instituted implying radical pluralism, to acknowledge that any “return” to the unity of the mind is simply impossible other than as an “implantation”. It is left to us nowadays to talk about the mind only in relation to the multitude of the forms of rationality. The pluralism of rationality, with pluralism as a cognitive model, was “inaugurated” by science (Albert's “theoretical pluralism”). Nevertheless, the outcome was entirely opposite to that which signifies pluralism in science; science has legitimized scientific knowledge as a “type” of any knowledge and thinking in general.

M. Fethullah Gülen and his interpretation of language-speech-dialogue from their ontic foundation

There are two unequivocal features that belong to and determine the 21st century. One refers to the unprecedented general crisis, violence, death and unstoppable destruction. In midst of this we struggle endeavoring to establish dialogue and understanding. Contemporary civilisation is faced with too many dilemmas. In his interpretation of the world of science, from which the sacred “was banished”, F Gülen is a thinker who never closes the door of the “chamber” of care for philosophical thinking imposed by the humanity of a human being, and as such he never keeps Islam and the life in faith in Sufiesque silence. His human habitus is inspired by Rumi’s message that serves as the loudest clarion call for man today. Love must be lived through or we will end in uttering mere words. Rumi’s thought, in its inimitable expressive form and ever-lasting wisdom, the whole microcosmos situated in cosmos, has inspired the work of F Gülen whose thought “has not been completed” nor has the concept of truth and solutions to the dilemmas of our times. We are invited into a mission of understanding and mutual understanding by his work. That mission cannot be handed over to somebody else who could possibly accomplish it on our behalf. One must learn what this mission is about and how to carry it out. In our bedazzling world we must not allow to be made blind by its “glitter”. We should opt for something more onerous, worthy of man, and embrace ‘hizmet’ in view of daunting anxiety that has beset us.

In F. Gülen’s entire opus (thoughts and works) the underlying theme is the significance of an existential need for understanding and inter-faith dialogue. In order to build and belong to the world different from that presented as the power of destruction and hypocritical humanity, it must be clear to us that what is called a dialogue and inter-religious communication today is not founded on its essence. Therefore they appear as masks, or, as a matter of fact, they appear to mask the residual “whiff” of authentic life. In order not to understand dialogue as an entertainment, albeit sometimes intellectual, we must first ask the question what understanding, mutual understanding and dialogue are indeed. Gülen leads us to education within the framework of meaning of the above values. The thinker is engaged in a quest for the roots of their meaning.

Since, most certainly, we are in the final stage of shaping the world based on the principle that man is a measure of things and as “this measure” undoubtedly loses itself as a bearer of measure (mass destruction and self-annihilation of men by new sophisticated weapons as well as the realisation of aims through a cosmetic make-over of dangers hidden inside those same needs), it is logical to raise a question whether we can engage meaningfully in dialogue, understanding and mutual understanding. Or, in other words, the following question should come as no surprise: don't we engage in dialogue and communication, believing that the fact of globalisation and global interconnectedness of various communities proves that we are in it together and that we establish “relations”?

F. Gülen is in the midst of reality of contemporary civilisation shaped on the tenets of Western Enlightenment. This philosopher is not isolated from those that advocate the philosophy of power of the human mind. He engages in dialogue with I. Kant, Mill, Plato, but also with Sartre and Confucius. His belief is that it is an imperative in today's world of different interpretations of man's power as a being along with different interpretations of humanism, to spread contemplative efforts in the widest possible manner along with disclosing a possible deliverance (rescue) in view of destruction of the human in humans and the natural in nature. By his work, F. Gülen invites us all to a historic judgement of responsibility of modern thought for the exile of the sacred from the mundane along with man's exile from God's grace into the world of mere things upon which soul-less man rules. The truth is that from the semblance of his power man has remained only a trunk.

In these dangerous times F. Gülen's thought figures as a genuine quest into the depths of this danger, and consequently, it assumes a responsibility to be a word and act in all causal-consequential dimensions of the broken values of man's Being-in-the-world nowadays. In Gülen's discourse on dialogue there is not a single phenomenon of expanding violence or interpretation in the history of philosophy, science or cognizance in general, that is closed to new investigations of an elementary need for dialogue. This thinker is a promoter of dialogue and understanding between the Western spiritual legacy and the Muslim world. The thinker is also a promoter of authentic Islamic values, fully aware of serious and dangerous changes in understanding Islam in the Muslim world, as well as rigid interpretations of Islam, especially after 11

September in the USA. An avalanche with unforeseeable consequences has set off. On the one hand, we witness a disruption of discourse on inter-religious dialogue while the most poisonous samplings of all sorts of attacks against Islam have been planted. Islam as a faith has become identified with the term terrorism. The crisis of the world has just been reduced to the danger posed by Islam.

We are still living unenlightened that dialogue as such must be resumed and that inter-religious dialogue is not only one “territory and a need for dialogue”. Dialogue is a basic need in each of us. F. Gülen is a promoter of struggle to realise this basic need. Discourse on dialogue is nowadays connected to an imperative for dialogue if we truly care to survive this century. The importance of Gülen’s position is his emphasis that dialogue must be understood from its institutional definition, and in addition, its significance must be disclosed from the most responsible thinking about the innate “is-ness” of human being. Naturally, this means that such discourse on dialogue is the most responsible one. The question of man’s innate “is-ness” extends beyond the reductionist answer provided from the Enlightenment’s aspect. Gülen’s thought is alert to the very foundation of the question we raise. However, the thinker himself believes that dialogue and understanding have become an imperative today. His thinking is pregnant due to his bravery in acknowledging that for centuries we have forgotten to ask questions about ourselves. Instead, we have replaced them with the question related to our power and its most profitable expansion. Profit has become the benchmark by which we judge modern man and everything else.

Gülen’s thought on dialogue treads to the very centre of universe:

“Men, the greatest reflection of the name, attribute and God’s works are a glittering mirror, a majestic fruit of life and the source of universe itself, the sea which appears as a tiny drop, the sun shaped as a humble seed, a great melody, despite their insignificant physical positions, but, yet, a source of existence contained inside a tiny body. Men, in all their richness of character which can be developed to perfection.”

We could almost ascertain that in this text F. Gülen has expounded the cosmic premises from which follow the paths of understanding ourselves, each of us individually, but also the paths to nature of everything that exists and needs to be understood. In Gülen knowledge implies something which is grasped, something that we understand. This is the foundation of dialogue. In Gülen dialogue exists within the cosmic source of existence of everything, while a man, endowed with this gift, carries it as a form of interpreting and reading the book of universe.

Mankind has been awarded this honour which is a voice and speech while mankind itself is the "... voice which expresses the nature of things, the nature of events, and, understandably, the nature of the Almighty, that which is behind everything which must be understood as the heart which encompasses the entire universe." In human cognizance all universe speaks. Silent contemplation, speech, wisdom, all interpretations of things, all that is love. Hence, human being is called to defend this gift of honour. In Gülen's discourse dialogue is this gift. Defence is in fact the very existence of men, and their substance which does not come from outside, and, as a result, all men are equal. Dialogue is not an imperative coming from outside. Dialogue is in the very experience of oneself and the experience of other beings. Maintaining dialogue-substance, equals the preservation of man's nature and the nature of any other being:

"A human being, be it man or woman, young or old, white or black, is respected, protected and inviolable, his property cannot be taken away nor his honour tarnished, he cannot be expelled from his native land nor his independence denied; he mustn't be denied the right to live in harmony with his principles, and moreover, this being is forbidden to commit such atrocities on other human beings. Men are not entitled to inflict harm on these gifts (of mankind) awarded by God because they possess these gifts only temporarily while God is the true owner of everything... Men have been brought here to defend and protect these gifts. This is sacred and inviolable to them, they will not injure them nor will they allow them to be injured. If need be, they will fight and die for this."

Within this scope is dialogue that F. Gülen has in mind rather than the dialogue of "corrections", nor are humanism and democracy the

ideas of political parties only. Nor is mundane realisation of these ideas the essence of dialogue. Humanism, democracy, along with ideas and attempts to find solutions and protect man's survival as seen in the work of various associations and projects today have not given results. Why don't we have trust in that which characterizes the "rescue" models of the world from catastrophe? Maybe, this trust is lacking primarily because the origin of ideas is not in the source from which everything can flow. For long we have not thought about the transcendent values of human beings that F. Gülen has been talking about.

His thought and interpretation of today's civilisation is to find its starting point in Islam. His thought is permeated by eternal crucial questions of man's existence. Freedom, preservation of human values, a need to create conditions for man's progress permeated by his soul, sensibility and sensations, his particularity, building of personality as opposed to the ruling tyranny which paralyses freedom of thinking and living, are but some tenets of Gülen's thought and interpretation of today's world. His widespread activity is in the area of education as the only thing commensurate to man's capacity. Education as a lasting refreshment- reanimation of consciousness, and motivation for a different notion of spiritual development of man. Education is our assignment and progress is to be contemplated within the scope of education.'

'These new men will unify a profound spirituality, versatile knowledge, the voice of conscience, scientific temperament and wise activism. They will never be satisfied with what they know, they will keep increasing their knowledge about themselves, nature and God.'

Translated into English by Nazifa Savčić

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