

FETHULLAH GÜLEN'S CONCEPT OF KNOWLEDGE IN CONTEXT OF THE
CONTEMPORARY MUSLIM REFORMIST THOUGHT

BAYRAMDURDY GURBANVELIYEV

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*To my beloved parents,
who have endured the most out of sacrifice during the completion of this study...*

ABSTRACT

In the face of primordial and contemporary challenges related to the meaning and methodology of knowledge, this study aims to examine the response devised by the contemporary Muslim progressive thought in the specific case of Turkish Islamic scholar Fethullah Gülen's (1938-present) conception of knowledge. It focuses on his conception to reveal its various features with the aim of obtaining a sound and accurate related understanding of his thought and drawing subsequent conclusions. Employing a methodology comprising extensive library and historical research for the collection of necessary information, the study deliberately and heavily relies on the primary sources while also referring to the relevant secondary sources in order to accurately reflect the original facts and ideas as much as possible. As an important part of the study, such qualitative methods as textual and comparative analysis, classification, and translation have been utilized during the subsequent analysis of the collected information. Based on the findings of the study, the conception of knowledge of Gülen builds on the essential, timeless and profound 'dynamics' of knowledge inherent in the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*. Overall, it constitutes a promising prospect for universally valid knowledge basis and framework for individuals and societies alike to cope with various sorts of related challenges and problems. Through its sound, comprehensive, balanced, and yet delicate and lively approach, the conception aims to facilitate the perfection and eternal happiness of people, and forms a considerable alternative basis for true originality in thought and life.

ABSTRAK

Dalam menghadapi cabaran asasi dan semasa berkaitan dengan makna ilmu dan kaedah ilmiah, kajian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis jawapan yang dikemukakan oleh pemikiran progresif semasa menerusi sudut pandang seorang tokoh ilmuan Islam berbangsa Turki, Fethullah Gülen (1938-kini) dalam memahami ilmu. Kajian ini menumpukan perhatian kepada aspek pembentukan faham ilmu dalam pemikiran Gülen, bagi menzahirkan sifat-sifatnya yang pelbagai demi mendapatkan kefahaman yang betul dan tepat serta berupaya untuk menerbitkan natijah dan kesimpulan lanjut. Dengan cara memanfaatkan kaedah kajian persejarahan dan perpustakaan untuk mendapatkan maklumat yang penting, kajian ini menitik beratkan penggunaan sumber asli dalam pada masa yang sama merujuk kepada sumber sekunder untuk memastikan ketepatan fakta dan idea yang asli. Sebagai salah satu bahagian penting kajian, metod kualitatif seperti kajian teks dan analisis perbandingan, pengkelasan, dan penterjemahan telah digunakan ke atas maklumat yang diperolehi. Berdasarkan hasil kajian, faham ilmu menurut Gülen terbina atas suatu ‘dinamika’ ilmu yang didapati dalam al-Qur’an dan Sunnah yang bersifat kekal. Secara umum, ia membuka lembaran baru ke arah suatu asasi ilmu yang sah serta suatu kerangka yang utuh untuk individu dan masyarakat dalam mendepani pelbagai cabaran. Melalui cara dan metodologi yang seimbang, komprehensif lagi mapan, kajian faham ini bertujuan untuk membantu setepat mungkin dalam menyempurnakan kebahagiaan abadi insan dan membentuk alternatif munasabah agar bertepatan dengan kehidupan dan pemikiran yang asal.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AH	-	After Hijrah
<i>(al-)Ikhwān</i>	-	<i>Ikhwān al-Muslimīn</i> (Muslim Brotherhood)
Anon.	-	Anonymous
b.	-	<i>Ibn/bin</i>
Brotherhood	-	Muslim Brotherhood
CASIS	-	Centre for Advanced Studies on Islam, Science and Civilization
CE	-	Common era
d.	-	Date of death
etc.	-	Etcetera
FNL	-	<i>Front de Libération Nationale</i> (National Liberation Front of Algeria)
h.	-	<i>Hijriyyah</i>
IIT	-	International Institute of Islamic Thought
IIUM	-	International Islamic University Malaysia
ISTAC	-	International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization
MB	-	Muslim Brotherhood (Organization)
MPhil.	-	Master of Philosophy
n.d.	-	No date
n.p.	-	No place
p.b.u.h.	-	Peace be upon him (Prophet Muhammad)
St.	-	Saint
US	-	The United States
USA	-	The United States of America

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Knowledge is one of the key phenomena that underpins and pervades our life at every stage and instance. It remains to be a contemporary matter while also being a primordial subject of enquiry for philosophy and other sciences. Moreover, knowledge is one of the vital building blocks of every civilization that transforms society starting from each individual's inner world, "since 'real' life is possible only through knowledge."¹

As such, knowledge constitutes a significant factor in the modern intellectual formation in general and in the devolution of the Muslim intellectual tradition in the past few centuries in particular. In fact, knowledge is considered one of the foremost and fundamental dynamics of the Islamic civilization after *tawhīd* (Islamic monotheism) and *al-'amal al-ṣāliḥ* (good deeds).² So any solution offered for the improvement or revival of the Muslim intellectual tradition should similarly include a profound and yet novel, relevant and dynamic approach to knowledge that can become a driving force for every individual's true enlightenment and happiness. This in turn brings along a significant responsibility for the contemporary scholars, intellectuals and researchers.

The present study is an endeavor undertaken towards this end in order to investigate and portray the ideas of Fethullah Gülen (1938-present) on knowledge, who is one of the contemporary Islamic scholars from Turkey. As such, the study

¹ M. Fethullah Gülen, *Pearls of Wisdom* (New Jersey: The Light, 2005), 50.

² Alparslan Açıkgöç, "Dynamics of Islamic Civilization," Lecture delivered at Center for Advanced Studies on Islam, Science and Civilization (CASIS), Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM), 24 June 2013, Kuala Lumpur.

aims to obtain relevant knowledge pertaining to the subject matter and reach subsequent conclusions for the intellectual world.

1.1.1 General Background

The human has been inquiring its surrounding world as well as, in a paradoxical manner, its own being for thousands of years along its journey on earth. While trying to explain the external phenomena, it was also striving to locate itself in that massive environment, or in other words to identify its true self. Who am I? Where am I coming from? Where am I going? What is the reality of the life? What is awaiting me after death? These are some of the vital questions that every heedful person would seek answers for. Actually, the explanation for the external phenomena shall be directly related to the self-identification of the human being as an integral part of the whole system of existence.

History is a rich museum of philosophic doctrines and religious beliefs that appeared in regard to this quest. So far, the human has found answers to his inquiries in different modes: from mystical explanations such as Greek mythologies or Zoroastrianism to more rational explanations as atomism and skepticism. Things are not any different in essence when it comes to present times. There are materialistic explanations in the name of being rational and scientific in one end, while on the other end are the ones consoled in mystic beliefs in the name of being spiritual.³

Each of the philosophies and religious beliefs throughout the history have offered a 'solution' for the essential human quest on their own account and merit. However, putting their truth-value aside for the moment, it can be deduced from the above that beyond indicating various inclinations in human nature, they also point to several capabilities and faculties of human being, upon which those doctrines have relied. The question however is how much reliance each faculty deserves with respect to the proportional significance in the overall human functioning, so that everything is rightly perceived and acted upon and thus all physical, mental and

³ For some of the contemporary spiritualist trends, see: Ali İhsan Yitik, "Doğu Kökenli Bazı Dini Düşünceler ve Uygulamalar (Some Religious Thoughts and Practices of Oriental Origins)," *Yeni Ümit*, no. 87 (January-March 2010): 43-47.

spiritual human faculties are satisfied. This is obviously a problematic situation that will lead to another question on whether or not the human beings through these very faculties are able to determine what is the most appropriate for themselves, and thus, for those very faculties? Such sequence of questions can be extended further on the philosophic line and the answers could vary from a view to another when it comes to individual judgments up to the extent of contradicting one another.

However, monotheistic religions, major ones being namely Judaism, Christianity and Islam, have made an impressive accomplishment concerning the vital quests of people similar to the above by addressing their individual and social contentment in the worldly life, as well as, promising eternal happiness in the hereafter in return for righteous living in this world. As for the truth-value, in contrast to all other philosophical doctrines and religions, they are identified to be of the divine origin, that is, their message is revealed from the Creator as an ultimate guidance to the people conveyed via specially equipped group of people called messengers or prophets.⁴ The divine religions have put forth the unity of Creator with such attributes as the ultimate power and sovereignty over everything else that is created. As such:

The cornerstone of the Prophetic mission was to preach Divine Unity. All Prophets concentrated on this basic principle: O my people, serve God: You have no god other than He (*Sūrat al-Mā'idah*, 11:84).

God has sent at least one Prophet to every people. The fact that all of them, regardless of time or place, agree on one basic principle shows that they did not speak or act on their own; rather, they did no more than teach the Message received from God. Philosophers and thinkers, no matter how great they may be, disagree among themselves because they depend on their own intellect and findings. Frequently, the same philosophical or sociological school contains different opinions.⁵

Being the latest of these divinely revealed religions, Islam has affirmed the previous divine revelations (*Sūrat al-An'ām*, 6:92) and the prophets with the

⁴ For more about the mission and attributes of prophets, see: M. Fethullah Gülen, *Muhammad: The Messenger of God* (New Jersey: The Light, 2005).

⁵ Ibid, 40.

assertion that they all were essentially the same in message and source but differed in peripheral details with respect to the nature of circumstances of the particular time and the recipient society.⁶ It has complemented the previous religions as the final message comprising the ultimate dynamics and values to guide the humanity towards the zenith of its material and spiritual progress on earth before the dooms day.⁷

Islam as a monotheistic faith is naturally centralized around the concept of its origin, i.e. *tawhīd* or oneness of God/Allah, whereas its message and the messenger, i.e. the Qur'an as the translation of the divine speech and Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him (p.b.u.h.)) as the perfect living example, form its kernel. Moreover, there are two other important components to it, which are the addressee and the medium in which the addressee is located; namely the human being and the universe respectively. These are the fundamental elements of the Islamic Weltanschauung, which explains the whole system of existence, and thus, addresses the human quest for external phenomena as well as internal self-identification. In other words, as elaborated by Wan Daud, it articulates a totality of world-view at epistemological and ethical levels.⁸ Therefore, it is fundamentally important to understand each of them in a proper ontological hierarchy and significance thereof to be able to grasp the message Islam has brought.⁹

Indeed, an attempt to for a general understanding starting from our very selves would reveal that human being is really a magnificent piece of existence that calls for even more understanding as yet 'the unknown'¹⁰ despite all that we have come to know about him up to now. It is certainly a complex being with different aspects and faculties accommodating diverse and delicate capabilities. Particularly, in the Islamic context, the man has been placed in a peculiar position of being the addressee of the divine speech and the rightful vicegerent of the Creator on earth (*Sūrat al-An'ām*, 6:165). The Qur'an states that "the man has been created in best

⁶ Ali Ünal, *Islam Addresses Contemporary Issues* (New Jersey: The Light, 2006), 17-33.

⁷ Ibid, 17-33.

⁸ Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud, *The Concept of Knowledge in Islam and Its Implications for Education in a Developing Country* (London: Mansell, 1989), 9.

⁹ For more on the Islamic Weltanschauung, see the related chapter in Wan Daud, *The Concept of Knowledge in Islam and Its Implications for Education in a Developing Country*, 9-31.

¹⁰ Referring to Alexis Carrel, *Man, The Unknown* (n.p.:Harper and Brothers, 1939). Accessed 5 July 2014. <https://archive.org/details/TheManTheUnknownByNobelPrizeWinnerDr.AlexisCarrel>.

stature in a perfect pattern of creation” (*Sūrat al-Tīn*, 95:4).¹¹ In a way, despite its apparent insignificance within an enormous cosmos, it is equivalent to the whole universe (macrocosm) as the microcosm, on whom all of the Beautiful Divine Names are displayed.¹² In fact, Said Nursi, a 20th century Islamic scholar and thinker, asserts the human as “*the fruit of the Tree of Creation.*”¹³ Above all, having such a vast potential, the main purpose of human being’s existence in this worldly life, as stated in many other verses of the Qur’an, is to believe and worship the Creator:

I have not created the jinn and humankind but to (know and) worship Me (exclusively) (*Sūrat al-Dhāriyāt*, 51:56).

Regarding the matter of the Qur’anic verse above, Ali Ünal quotes Said Nursi from the 20th Letter in his translation of the Qur’an:

Belief in God is creation’s highest aim and most sublime result, and humanity’s most exalted rank is knowledge of Him. The most radiant happiness and sweetest bounty for jinn and humanity is love of God contained within knowledge of God. The human spirit’s purest joy and the human heart’s sheerest delight is spiritual ecstasy contained within love of God. All true happiness, pure joy, sweet bounties, and unclouded pleasures are contained within knowledge and love of God. Those who truly know and love God can receive endless happiness, bounties, enlightenment, and mysteries. Those who do not are afflicted with endless spiritual and material misery, pain, and fear. If any person were allowed to rule this world, despite his or her being powerless, miserable, and unprotected amid other purposeless people in this world, what would its true worth be?

People who do not recognize their Owner and discover their Master are miserable and bewildered. But those who do, and then take refuge in His Mercy and rely on His Power, see this desolate world

¹¹ English translations are based on Ali Ünal, *The Qur’an with Annotated Interpretation in Modern English* (New Jersey: The Light, 2007).

¹² Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islam: An Exposition of the Fundamental Elements of the Worldview of Islam* (Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC), 1995), 58; Bediüzzaman Said Nursi, *The Words* (New Jersey: The Light, 2005), 140.

¹³ Nursi, *The Words*, 9.

transformed into a place of rest and felicity, a place of exchange for the Hereafter.¹⁴

From both the above Qur'anic verse and the quote alone, it is very clear that the meaning and overall happiness of life for a person is directed to the knowledge and obedience of the Creator. What is more, as for our subject matter, the ultimate purpose of life is closely associated with knowledge, i.e. the knowledge of God (*m'arifatullāh*) based on a firm faith.

And so our purpose here is to seek perfection through knowledge and prayer. Everything is, by its nature, essentially dependent on knowledge. And the basis, source, light, and spirit of all true knowledge is knowledge of God, of which belief is the very foundation.¹⁵

In addition to numerous verses in Qur'an, Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h) as the last messenger has also, through words and practice, made clear emphasis on the significance of knowledge for a Muslim, and thus for the Muslim society. He has declared that learning knowledge is compulsory upon every Muslim man and woman, and encouraged to seek knowledge even if the latter is in China,¹⁶ China here signifying a furthest place.

It is a strong indication of the utmost importance given to true knowledge for a sincere believer once the guidance (to the faith) is attained, however, knowledge is actually crucial for reaching that guidance in the first place, as indicated in the verse:

While those who have been granted knowledge (of the truth) know (with a greater certainty) that whatever God reveals is the truth itself, and they believe in it and their hearts submit to Him in utmost humility. God most certainly guides to a straight path those who believe with sincerity (*Sūrat al-Ḥajj*, 22:54).

¹⁴ Bediüzzaman Said Nursi, *The Letters* (New Jersey: The Light, 2007), 239-240, quoted in Ünal, *The Qur'an with Annotated Interpretation in Modern English*, 1214-15.

¹⁵ Nursi, *The Words*, 332.

¹⁶ Ahmad Shalaby, *History of Muslim Education* (Beirut: *Dār al-Kashshāf*, 1954), cited in Wan Daud, *The Concept of Knowledge in Islam and Its Implications for Education in a Developing Country*, 36.

Truly, one of the key characteristics of the human beings with respect to other living things, be it earthly or heavenly, also an important factor for his attainment of the above-mentioned distinguished position over the rest of the creation, is its inherent capacity to learn and know.¹⁷ We, as human beings, are able to consciously seek, acquire, process and use different types of knowledge. In contrast to animals, for example, human comes to this world factually knowing nothing and is in need to learn everything from the scratch throughout the whole life.¹⁸ Furthermore, today we can disseminate knowledge in plentiful different forms in addition to traditional methods of knowledge sharing, thanks to related technological advancements that are also another apparent result of human knowledge endeavor. Actually, this very essential human characteristic of knowledge forms the subject of an essential philosophical concern – epistemology.¹⁹

1.1.2 Knowledge and The Islamic Intellectual Tradition

Different knowledge systems have developed throughout the historical experience of humans on different parts of the world. Yet, with the guidance of the divine revelation and the prophetic example in practice, from the time of the early Muslims a new system of knowledge was actually on its way to develop based on a whole set of fundamental metaphysical elements, values and principles. By following these guiding principles, the early Muslims in the first five (Islamic) centuries have developed methods to meticulously and extensively study their religion as well as other sciences pertaining to the external phenomena or the universe.²⁰ The middle ages that are regarded ‘Dark ages’ in Europe were without a doubt the thriving period of the Muslim world,²¹ reaching the most advanced level of civilization, sciences and technology of the time thanks to true interpretation of *‘ilm* or knowledge according to their religion.

¹⁷ For more elaboration on knowledge granted to human as a part of his divine mission on earth, see: (Sūrat al-Baqarah, 2:31) in Ünal, *The Qur'an with Annotated Interpretation in Modern English*, 75-76.

¹⁸ Nursi, *The Words*, 331-32.

¹⁹ Matthias Steup, “Epistemology,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Edward N. Zalta, ed., Spring 2014 edition. Accessed 6 July 2014. <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/epistemology/>.

²⁰ Ünal, *Islam Addresses Contemporary Issues*, 23.

²¹ B. Mumtaz Aydin, “For Whom Is the Medieval Era Dark?,” *The Fountain*, no. 42 (April-June 2003). Accessed 23 October 2014. <http://www.fountainmagazine.com/Issue/detail/For-Whom-Is-the-Medieval-Era-Dark>.

Indeed, greatest scholars such as (Abū Rayḥān) al-Bīrūnī (d. 1048), Ibn Sīnā (also known as Avicenna in the West) (d. 1037), Ibn Baṭūṭah (d. 1368/9), al-Kindī (d. 873), al-Khwārizmī (d. 850), al-Ghazālī (d. 1111), Ibn Hayyan (d. 1075), Ibn al-Nafīs (d. 1288), al-Fārābī (d. 950/1), that have specialized in various areas of sciences alongside giant Islamic religious scholars from Imam al-Bukhārī (d. 870) to Imam al-Shāfi‘ī (d. 820) were all fostered during those times. They had obtained and extended the previous accumulation of knowledge so passionately and profoundly to the extent that later on, when categorizing scientific developments into fifty-year periods by naming each period after the most prominent scientist of the time, Belgian-born American scholar George Sarton (d. 1956) has named seven consecutive periods after the names of Muslim scholars between the eighth and eleventh centuries.²² Furthermore, these overall intellectual developments have later made their way to Europe to inspire the forthcoming Renaissance in almost every branch of science once reaching the peak of their splendor in the Muslim world.²³ This is a fact that has started to gain acknowledgement in the West as well, though after many centuries. For example, prominent historian Robert Briffault (d. 1948) makes one of many acknowledgements from the Western lines in his *The Making of Humanity*:

It is highly probable that but for the Arabs, modern European civilization would have never assumed that character which has enabled it to transcend all previous phases of evolution. For although there is not a single aspect of human growth in which a decisive influence of Islamic culture is not traceable, nowhere is it so clear and momentous as in the genesis of that power which constitutes the paramount distinctive force of the modern world and the supreme course of its victory – natural sciences and the scientific spirit... What we call sciences arose in Europe as a result of a new spirit of inquiry; of new methods of investigation, of the method of experiment, observation, measurement, of the development of mathematics in a

²² Ali Ünal, “*Kainat Kitabı - Bediüzzaman Hazretleri Kainat’ı nasıl okudu?*” *Mehtap Tv*, 30 May 2014. Accessed 8 July 2014. <http://www.kure.tv/izle/kainat-kitabi-bediuzzaman-hazretleri-kainat-i-nasil-okudu>; Ali Ünal and Alphonse Williams, comp., *Advocate of Dialogue: Fethullah Gülen* (Fairfax: The Fountain, 2000), 5.

²³ Mohamad Abdalla, “Modern Science’s Debt to Islamic Civilization,” *The Fountain*, no. 42 (April-June 2003). Accessed 8 July 2014. <http://www.fountainmagazine.com/Issue/detail/Modern-Sciences-Debt-to-Islamic-Civilization>.

form unknown to the Greeks. That spirit and those methods were introduced into the European world by the Arabs.²⁴

Despite the fact that early Muslims have established a true civilization vibrant with scientific and intellectual advancement based on firm faith, for the past few centuries, Muslims have ignored the underlying universal values and principles encompassed in Islam.²⁵ This negligence has led Muslims towards an overall decline, perhaps to hit the bottom by the end of the First World War and the subsequent fall of the Ottoman State in 1922. Although the stagnation and relative backwardness of the Muslim societies in scientific and technical terms have long been realized, total political and military domination of the Western imperialist powers over the Muslim lands obviously had a shocking effect for all the Muslims.

In response to the dire situation aggravated over the past few centuries, the following decades would witness numerous responses from the Muslim world on various grounds, sometimes going even up to a conflicting manner.²⁶ Terms such as Revivalism, Modernism, Resurgence and Fundamentalism have been used to identify these responses under the common 'Islamic' label. Nevertheless, regardless of the variety in their approaches, reasoning and knowledge would rather naturally constitute a core component of these renewal movements considering the heavy, and sometimes even excessive, reliance of modern philosophies and sciences on these two.

1.1.3 An Overview of The Contemporary Islamic Intellectual Background

In the intellectual domain, Muslim 'modernists' have aimed to overcome a perceived deadlock in the Muslim societies while acknowledging the technological, scientific and legal achievements of the West with certain criticism and emulation. 'Islamic revivalists,' on the other hand, totally objected to Western colonial exploitation of the Muslim countries and the imposition of the Western secular

²⁴ Richard Briffault, *The Making of Humanity* (London: G. Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1919), 190.

²⁵ Ünal, *Islam Addresses Contemporary Issues*, 23.

²⁶ Ahmad Bazli bin Shafie, "A Modernist Approach to the Qur'an: A Critical Study of The Hermeneutics of Fazlur Rahman" (Ph.D. diss., International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC), International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), 2005), 1.

values, with the aim of reasserting the original Islamic values.²⁷ According to ‘Islamic revivalism’ or *iḥyāʾ*, the solution for the ills of Muslim societies and modern society as a whole is perceived through a return to Islam in its purest initial form.²⁸ Moreover, particularly from the 20th century ‘Political Islam’ or Islamism have emerged in the field to achieve the ‘Islamic goals’ through gaining the political power of the state and subsequent top-down implementation or imposition of the Islamic injunctions upon people.²⁹ Like the earlier revivalists, so-called Islamists, sometimes referred as ‘neo-revivalists,’³⁰ also believed that contemporary Muslim society should be reformed from within by vying the early Muslim community at the time of the Prophet.³¹ That is, “they envisioned a social order based not on a modernist acculturation but on a self-sufficient Islamic alternative.”³² Their emphasis on politicizing Islam by deriving a broad political ideology from Islamic principles can be a characteristic setting them apart from the other two groups.³³

Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī (d. 1897), known as one of the earliest representatives of the modernist Muslim intellectual lines, emphasized the need for acquiring modern science to combat the West against its colonial aggression and domination of the Muslim lands.³⁴ He firmly asserted:

Those who forbid science and knowledge in the belief that they are safeguarding religion are really the enemies of that religion. The Islamic religion is the closest of religions to science and knowledge and there is no incompatibility between science and knowledge and the foundation of the Islamic religion.³⁵

²⁷ Ninian Smart, Frederick Denny, eds., “Islamic Modernism and Islamic Revival,” in *Oxford Islamic Studies Online: Atlas of the World’s Religions*, Second Edition (n.d.). Accessed 10 August 2014. <http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t253/e9>.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Asma Asfaruddin, “Revivalism and Reform,” *Notre Dame OpenCourseWare*. 5 September 2006. Accessed 9 August 2014. <http://ocw.nd.edu/arabic-and-middle-east-studies/islamic-societies-of-the-middle-east-and-north-africa-religion-history-and-culture/lectures/lecture-9>.

³⁰ Gisela Webb, review of *Islam: The Straight Path*, by John L. Esposito, in *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 61, no. 2 (1993): 359-361.

³¹ Asfaruddin, Revivalism and Reform.

³² Webb, review of *Islam: The Straight Path*, 359.

³³ Asfaruddin, Revivalism and Reform.

³⁴ Smart and Denny, eds., Islamic Modernism and Islamic Revival.

³⁵ Nikki R. Keddie, *An Islamic Response to Imperialism: Political and Religious Writings of Sayyid Jamāl Ad-Dīn "al-Afghānī"* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 107, quoted in Ali Ünal, *Islamic Perspectives on Science: Knowledge and Responsibility* (New Jersey: Tughra Books, 2012), 2.

Similarly, scholars such as al-Ṭaḥṭāwī (d. 1873) and Muḥammad ‘Abduh (d. 1905) have affirmed, based on their interpretation of the Islamic theology, that revealed knowledge and individually-sought rational knowledge are compatible, and thus endorsed the study of modern ‘Western’ sciences by Muslims.³⁶ ‘Abduh in particular emphasized the compatibility of religion and reason, and called for sweeping social and legal reforms by employing reason through the tool of *ijtihād*. Yet he made it clear that the core five pillars of Islam and the sphere of worships were not subject to any reforms as they are unchangeable.³⁷ While opposing the Western political domination and colonialism, he did not see the Western civilization in itself as a threat to Islam. Therefore, he considered the modern science and technology should be adopted to the extent that they improved the quality of life and supported social advancement, just as Muslims had once embraced the learning of the ancient Greeks, Persians, Indians, and so forth.³⁸ In this regard, Sayyid Ahmad Khan (d. 1898) from India was also of an akin opinion,³⁹ that “the Work of God and Word of God can never be antagonistic to each other,”⁴⁰ apparently referring to the universe and the Qur’an.

As the time comes towards the 20th century, more organized Islamic socio-political movements were observable in the Western occupied Muslim world. As a young schoolteacher brought up in traditional Islamic education groomed by a religiously intellectual father, Ḥasan al-Bannā’ (d.1949) founded Muslim Brotherhood (MB) or *Jamā’at al-Ikhwān al-Muslimīn* (*Ikhwān al-Muslimīn*) as a religio-political organization in 1928 at Ismailia, Egypt.⁴¹ He was at the outset devoted to a renewal of the religious life, to the combat against laxity, skepticism and unbelief that have affected Muslims as a result of the European influence.⁴² With *al-Ikhwān*, al-Bannā’ aimed at implementing his thesis of curing the illnesses of the Muslim society by the sole feasible way of returning to the regenerative springs of

³⁶ Smart and Denny, eds., *Islamic Modernism and Islamic Revival*.

³⁷ Asfaruddin, *Revivalism and Reform*.

³⁸ *Ibid*.

³⁹ Smart and Denny, eds., *Islamic Modernism and Islamic Revival*.

⁴⁰ T. D. Barry, *Sources of Indian Tradition* (New York: Columbia Press, 1958), 743, quoted in Ünal, *Islamic Perspectives on Science: Knowledge and Responsibility*, 2.

⁴¹ “Muslim Brotherhood,” in *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*. Accessed 11 August 2014. <http://global.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/399387/Muslim-Brotherhood>.

⁴² B. Lewis et al, eds., “*al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn*,” in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new edition (Leiden: E. J. Brill, London: Luzac & Co., 1986), III: 1068-1071.

the Qur'an, hadith and *sīrah* or the Prophetic example.⁴³ Initially centered around religious and socio-educational activities, the Brotherhood soon outgrew the borders of Egypt to the neighboring Sudan, Syria, Palestine, Lebanon, and the rest of North Africa. However, the movement began to gain a political outlook from the late 1930s,⁴⁴ yet, despite going through multiple turbulent times throughout the 20th century it has managed to extend its widespread influence over the Muslim world, particularly in the Middle East, up to the present. Although members of the Brotherhood (MB) may embrace a variety of opinions, many of the current members in Egypt are moderates who seek to create an Islamic state by democratic means.⁴⁵ At least, it was so up until the ousting of MB member Muhammad Mursi in a coup d'état in July 2013 after ruling just over a year as the first democratically elected President of Egypt.

Similar to al- Bannā', Abū 'Alā Mawdūdī (d. 1979), a widely influential Muslim scholar from the Indian subcontinent, was also personally pious, highly educated both in the traditional Islamic sciences and in modern-Western learning. Both of them have strongly reacted against British imperialism that they have personally experienced in earlier parts of their lives.⁴⁶ Both al- Bannā' and Mawdūdī were highly effective at the grass-roots level organization through religious, social and political activities committed to fight political corruption, religious laxity⁴⁷ as well as socio-economic deficiencies. Mawdūdī believed that Muslim thinkers must adopt a code of life, culture, and political and economic system unique to Islam, getting rid of the influence that Western civilization held over them.⁴⁸ He envisioned an 'Islamic State' based on the tenets of Shari'a. In addition to elections, what Mawdūdī called 'theo-democracy' was a basic pillar of his proposed state, where a democracy would operate by means of power sharing through *shūrā*, the Qur'anic concept for consultation.⁴⁹ To this end he founded the grass-roots religious political

⁴³ H. A. Gibb et al, eds., "*al-Bannā', Hasan*," in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new edition (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1986), I: 1018-1019.

⁴⁴ "Muslim Brotherhood," in *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online*. Accessed 11 August 2014. <http://global.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/399387/Muslim-Brotherhood>.

⁴⁵ Asfaruddin, *Revivalism and Reform*.

⁴⁶ John L. Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path* (Oxford University Press, 1991), cited in Asfaruddin, *Revivalism and Reform*.

⁴⁷ Asfaruddin, *Revivalism and Reform*.

⁴⁸ "*Mawdūdī, Abū 'l-A' lā*," in *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online*. Accessed 11 August 2014. <http://global.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/370311/Mawdudi-Abul-Ala>.

⁴⁹ Asfaruddin, *Revivalism and Reform*.

party *Jama'at-i Islami* in 1941,⁵⁰ which, like the Muslim Brotherhood, has remained an influential Islamic movement in the Indian subcontinent both before and after its partition up to the present. Nonetheless, it should be mentioned that the emergence of Mawdūdī's influence actually proceeds the powerful excitement that Muhammad Iqbal (d. 1938) has aroused over the Muslims as a highly influential Muslim poet and thinker.

Moreover, Mawdūdī's Islamic literature such as his Qur'anic commentary entitled *Tafhīm al-Qur'ān* (Understanding the Qur'an) has gained a widespread popularity not only in the subcontinent thanks to his plain and lucid Urdu, but also in other parts of the Muslim world through translations into several languages.⁵¹

Sayyid Quṭb (d. 1966) is another outstanding Muslim thinker and literary scholar from Egypt that has emerged in the second quarter of the 20th century. In fact, he is accepted as one of the few foremost representatives of contemporary Arabic literature in addition to being an Islamic scholar.⁵² Similar to that of al-Bannā' and Mawdūdī, spiritual and traditional family environment of nobility that he experienced during his childhood has been of great influence in his subsequent life. Sayyid memorized the entire Qur'an in three years starting at the age of eight and has displayed a particular interest towards literature from his childhood. Later he has graduated from teachers college in Cairo and qualified to enroll into the *Dār al-'ulūm*, from which he has obtained bachelor's degree in Arabic Language and Literature.⁵³

Following his two years of government-sponsored expert studies in the United States of America (USA) between 1948 and 1950, he became convinced of the 'corruption' of Western secularism.⁵⁴ Despite being part of the Egyptian secular

⁵⁰ SherAli Tareen, "Sayyid Abu'l-A'la Mawdudi," in *Oxford Bibliographies Online: Islamic Studies* (25 May 2011). Accessed 13 August 2014. www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780195390155/obo-9780195390155-0129.xml.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Mesut Erdal, "Seyyid Kutub," *Yeni Ümit*, no. 92 (April-June 2011). Accessed 13 August 2014. <http://www.yeniunit.com.tr/konular/detay/seyyid-kutub>.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ "Sayyid Quṭb," in *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*. Accessed 11 August 2014. <http://global.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/487747/Sayyid-Quṭb>.

literary movement in the first half of his life⁵⁵ and his active participation in the public service under the Education Ministry and Cultural Department for years, he has then turned into a severe critic of Western civilization and Western admiration to the bitter surprise of the government.⁵⁶

Ṣalah ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ al-Khālīdī, an expert with more than twenty works on Quṭb, has studied Quṭb’s personal and intellectual life in the following five major phases: (i.) upbringing in an Islamic atmosphere, (ii.) alienation to the Islamic culture after going to Cairo, (iii.) interregnum period spent with doubts in the religious truths, (iv.) turning towards the Qur’an and its investigation for literary purposes, and (v.) ascension to perfection in faith due to Qur’an’s influence over him.⁵⁷

The interregnum period of 1925-40 is enigmatic phase of Quṭb’s life that he has spent reading the Western materialist philosophy upon which he would later say:

The writer of these lines is someone who has roamed in foreign valleys in his forty years of life, and then has returned to the real dynamics of his world of thought. I am not regretful for spending forty years of my life there; because during that period I have got to know the ignorance/paganism with all its aspects.⁵⁸

Quṭb, was unjustly accused of being pro-socialist due to impressions he has given in his works as *al-Adālat al-Ijtimāiyyah fī al-Islām* (Social Justice in Islam), *Ma‘rakah al-Islām wa al-Ra’simāliyyah* (Conflict of Islam and Capitalism) and *al-Salām al-Ālamī wa al-Islām* (World Peace and Islam). However, his brother Prof. Moḥammad Quṭb has denounced the allegations and stated that, given the communist threats of the time over Egypt, his brother has aimed to show the reality of communist promises and Islam comprised those principles in more excellent forms. There has also been allegations about Quṭb of being a ‘reformer,’ against which he has personally responded as:

⁵⁵ William Shepard, “Sayyid Qutb,” in *Oxford Bibliographies Online: Islamic Studies*. Accessed 14 August 2014. <http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780195390155/obo-9780195390155-0072.xml>.

⁵⁶ Erdal, Seyyid Kutub.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

We do not believe that Islam needs a reform as some Muslims think. Because first of all Islam is complete and perfect in itself. What we need to do is to correct our behaviour and position against the religion by finding a solution to our deficient understanding, inadvertence and indolence. We do not need imported principles for a new Islamic life. We actually need to own and embrace our deserted values.⁵⁹

Although Sayyid Quṭb has made bitterly critical remarks with some political aspects and reflecting the harsh conditions of the time, both Erdal and Shepard agree that they should be understood within the context of harsh circumstances of his time and certain pressures exerted over him especially by the regime.⁶⁰ As Erdal observes at the same study, it is indeed unfortunate that the brightness of his intellectual and literary aspect has been left under the shadow of his political remarks,⁶¹ widely labelled as an ‘Islamist ideologue’ in the West as it is the case with Shepard (2010).⁶² Whereas, Sayyid Quṭb has authored over twenty literary and religious works including his famous Qur’anic exegesis *Fī Zilālī al-Qur’ān* (In the Shade of the Qur’an).⁶³

In the third quarter of the century ‘Ali Shari‘ati (d. 1977) has appeared as an influential advocate of ‘Islamic revivalism’ from the Iranian Shia lines and has ideologically masterminded the posthumous Iranian Islamic revolution of 1979 lead by Shia cleric Ayatollāh Ruhullāh Khomeinī (d. 1989).⁶⁴ Interestingly similar to the earlier so-called neo-revivalist figures mentioned so far, Shari‘ati was also part of a traditional conservative family milieu and graduated from teachers college and then from University of Mashhad with a degree in Arabic and French. He has then stayed in France for five years to conduct his doctoral study in sociology in Sorbonne,

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid., and Shepard, Sayyid Quṭb.

⁶¹ Erdal, Seyyid Kutub.

⁶² See Shepard, Sayyid Quṭb.

⁶³ Erdal, Seyyid Kutub.

⁶⁴ Junaid Ahmad, “Ali Shari'ati,” in *Oxford Bibliographies Online: Islamic Studies*. Accessed 14 August 2014. <http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780195390155/obo-9780195390155-0141.xml>.

where he has formed ties with Algerian National Liberation Front (FNL)⁶⁵ and met thinkers and sociologists such as Jean-Paul Sartre (d. 1980).⁶⁶

John L. Esposito argues that under the influence of Marxian thought, Shari‘ati has advocated for adaptation of the scripture to changing historical circumstances and transformation of religion from a purely personal set of ethical injunctions into a revolutionary program to generate social justice and freedom for the downtrodden.⁶⁷ In other words, through his avid conventional and unconventional teaching, books, and other activities he has called for a re-reading of the Islamic scripture that will lead to reconstruction of Islam's concepts into a contemporary, progressive ideology of mass mobilization through ‘emancipation’ and ‘empowerment.’ This way, he has actually reacted to the radical traditionalist clergy whom he blamed to separate the religion from the society and to oppose intellectual movements arising from the society.⁶⁸ Moreover, as a progressive thinker he has also opposed the imitative intellectual protectionists who seek refuge to the established scholasticism.

This outstanding intellectual courage, however, has lead him to repeated imprisonments and eventually to exile by the Iranian Shah regime, where he has puzzlingly died at the age of 44.⁶⁹ Yet he is known to prepare the ground for the forthcoming Iranian revolution through his extensive ideological influence, particularly among the youth of the time.

As for the more contemporary Islamic intellectual discourse, the late Professor Fazlur Rahman Malik (d. 1988) from Pakistan can be mentioned more notably for his modernist approach to the Qur’an and the prophecy. Professor Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas (1931-present) from Malaysia is more remarkably known for proposition of the idea of ‘de-westernization’ and ‘Islamisation’ of knowledge as well as founding the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.⁷⁰ Al-Attas has also authored

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ “Shari‘ati, ‘Ali,” in *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*. Accessed 14 August 2014. <http://global.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/1700400/Shariati-Ali>.

⁶⁷ John L. Esposito, ed., “Shariati, Ali,” in *Oxford Islamic Studies Online: The Oxford Dictionary of Islam*. Accessed 14 August 2014. <http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t125/e2171>.

⁶⁸ Ahmad, Ali Shari‘ati.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ For more on Al-Attas’ idea of Islamization of knowledge, see: Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud, *The Educational Philosophy and Practice of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas: An Exposition of the*

seminal works on Metaphysics and Philosophy of Science in the context of Islam, and, Malay literature.⁷¹ The late Professor Ismail R. Al-Faruqi (d. 1986) of International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) was another zealous advocate of Islamization of knowledge,⁷² while Professor Seyyed Hossein Nasr (1933 - present) from Iran has been a notable name in areas such as metaphysics, Sufism and Islamic science and philosophy.⁷³

Moreover, apart from the aforementioned Muslim intellectual and social movements that have been popularly recognized both in social and academic spheres, there are some other approaches and movements such as the one established by Ottoman-Turkish Islamic scholar Bediuzzaman Said Nursi (d. 1960) that have not caught as much attention, and yet showed to be influential in the long run among the Muslim communities.

Said Nursi was an influential Islamic scholar, thinker and spiritual leader of late Ottoman and early Republican times in Turkey. Distinguished with excellence in both traditional Islamic learning and the phenomenal natural and social sciences, as well as his personality, Nursi has been active in social life in the earlier part of his life for which he has referred as ‘Old Said.’ During the harsh period of transition period from the ruins the Ottoman State to the Republic where the society has experienced multiple crises in social, economic, political and spiritual spheres, he has later decided to dedicate his life the elucidation of the Qur’anic truths for the people as ‘New Said,’ abandoning political sphere due to its divisive and harsh nature. For the rest of his life Nursi has spent struggling to explain the Islamic truths through his writings called *Risale-i Nur* or *Epistles of Light* that are aimed to save the faith of the people against spreading of anti-religious thoughts and trends of the time among the Muslim societies.⁷⁴ While coming from a uniquely traditional Islamic background as it will be shown in the following chapter, Fethullah Gülen can also be evaluated in

Original Concept of Islamization (Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC), 1998).

⁷¹ Adi Setia, “Al-Attas' Philosophy of Science: An Extended Outline,” *Islam and Science* 1, no. 2 (December 2003): 165-214. Accessed 15 August 2014. <http://www.cis-ca.org/jol/vol1-no2/Adi-ff.pdf>.

⁷² See Isma‘il Raji al Fārūqī, *Islāmization of Knowledge: General Principles and Workplan*, (n.p.: International Institute of Islāmic Thought, 1402/1982).

⁷³ See Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis in Modern Man*, (Chicago: Kazi Publications, 2007).

⁷⁴ Said Nursi, *The Letters*, xiii-xxiv.

the same line with Said Nursi⁷⁵ as he has been greatly influenced by and benefitted from Nursi and his works.⁷⁶ Indeed, Gülen's understanding and interpretation of Islam has been regarded closer to 'religious-spiritual' approaches and movements in contrast to 'ideological-political' ones.⁷⁷

Overall, these intellectual-spiritual movements initiated at different corners of Muslim world from North Africa to South-East Asia, from the Middle East to Eastern Europe have been a matter of widespread intellectual investigation themselves, particularly in terms of their approach to knowledge and reasoning and their influence over the Muslim societies. Nonetheless, it is certain that the domination of materialist philosophies and ideologies from the West under the label of scientific and intellectual progress and civilization has significantly influenced the present-day intellectuals in the Muslim world, and consequently, has re-shaped the concept and perspectives of knowledge and sciences.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

While seeking to properly reinterpret the religion based on the true principal sources of Islam with respect to the realities of the present times, putting appropriate perspectives on knowledge and sciences should be an important part of the duty for today's Muslims.

Particularly during the current times referred as 'Knowledge Era,' the relative importance of 'knowledge' has increased for the modern people, where it has technically become a preeminent economic resource that is easily and abundantly available for an immediate access.⁷⁸ Nonetheless, lack of meaning and subsequent

⁷⁵ M. Hakan Yavuz, "The Gülen Movement: The Turkish Puritans," in *Turkish Islam and The Secular State: The Gülen Movement*, John L. Esposito and M. Hakan Yavuz, eds., (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2003): 19-47; See also Maimul Ahsan Khan, *The Vision and Impact of Fethullah Gülen: A New Paradigm for Social Activism* (New York: Blue Dome Press, 2011); Doğu Ergil, *Fethullah Gülen & The Gülen Movement in 100 Questions* (New York: Blue Dome Press, 2012).

⁷⁶ Mehmet Gündem, *Fethullah Gülen'le 11 Gün: Sorularla Bir Hareketin Analizi* (Istanbul: Alfa Yayınları, 2005), 73. See also Ergil, *Fethullah Gülen & The Gülen Movement in 100 Questions*, 13-15.

⁷⁷ Ali Ünal, *Geçmişten Geleceğe Köprü: Fethullah Gülen (Bir Portre Denemesi Özet)* (Istanbul: Işık Yayınları, 2006), 28. For an overall evaluation of Fethullah Gülen's understanding of Islam, see ibid, 23-73.

⁷⁸ For contemporary aspects and trends of knowledge, see Thomas A. Steward, *Intellectual Capital: The New Wealth of Organizations* (New York: Double Day, 1998).

wisdom to be derived from the knowledge has ironically turned into an epidemic of the time due to a chaotic knowledge environment,⁷⁹ resulting a massive confusion and skepticism in people's minds.⁸⁰

Hence, a proper and wholesome conception of knowledge is ever essential for today's circumstances to address these vital and pressing challenges. Indeed, there have been a number of contemporary initiatives from the Islamic perspective in response to the situation. While each of them have contributed to the matter of knowledge on their own account, there is still more job that remains to be done.

Therefore, studying major contemporary Muslim scholars aiming for a revival such as Fethullah Gülen in terms of their viewpoints on the conception of knowledge shall be a useful and revealing academic endeavor. Especially when the knowledge gap in the thematic study of Fethullah Gülen's thought is considered, this shall be a desirable attempt to fill the gaps by clearly depicting his understanding of knowledge.

1.3 Objective of the Study

In face of the afore-considered challenges, this study aims to examine modern Muslim revivalist thoughts through the particular case of contemporary Turkish-Islamic scholar M. Fethullah Gülen's ideas and practice in terms of his concept of knowledge.

The study shall reveal different aspects of Gülen's views regarding the significance of knowledge with a particular reference to the principal Islamic sources. It shall elaborately focus on the conception of knowledge at hand for a detailed analysis, seeking to obtain a comprehensive and accurate understanding of the respective knowledge conception to pave way for subsequent relevant conclusions.

⁷⁹ J. P. Crutchfield, "Knowledge and Meaning ... Chaos and Complexity," in *Proceedings of the Third Woodward Conference on Modeling Complex Phenomena*, L. Lam and V. Naroditsky, eds., (1992): 66-101.

⁸⁰ Al-Attas, *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islam: An Exposition of the Fundamental Elements of the Worldview of Islam*, 68-89.

1.4 Research Questions

Among others, the main concerns of the study can be gathered around the following research questions:

1. What are the essential characteristics of Fethullah Gülen's conception of knowledge?
2. How does it relate to the fundamental Islamic sources such as the Qur'an and *Sunnah*?
3. How is it similar to or different from other viewpoints in contemporary Muslim scholarship?
4. How is it related to the actual needs of the contemporary man/Muslim?

1.5 Literature Review

Although Fethullah Gülen has been active in public life for years as an influential preacher extensively travelling in different parts of Anatolia as well as a writer sharing his thought and opinions on different platforms, he had remained a rather enigmatic, low-profile figure for the general Turkish public until the late 1980's. Since he had appeared in the public scene due to the course of events that has also historically coincided with emergence of the movement he has inspired and groomed since the late 1960s, there has been an increased interest in the Turkish public to know the reality of his personality and the movement. As a result, literature about his personality as well as the related movement mainly addressed to the Turkish public has begun to grow starting from the early 1990's. During this period, leading Turkish newspapers and television channels have conducted a number of interviews with Fethullah Gülen in order to address this concern to get more acquainted with his personality and opinions on different matters.

In line with the emergence and the subsequent effect of educational, cultural and business institutions that Gülen has inspired, the movement that is associated with his name (as the 'Gülen Movement') has gained more visibility in different parts of the world where these institutions had been ventured since the early 1990's. Consequently, there has appeared a need to address growing interest of the

international public, particularly the academic community, about the movement and its underlying dynamics and philosophy. Therefore, since the 2000s, literature related to Fethullah Gülen and the affiliated movement has appeared in the international press. Interestingly enough, this also corresponds to a period of growing interest in Islam's engagement with the West and modernity on a broader scale.⁸¹ Moreover, since the mid-2000s a number of national and international conferences that significantly add to the academic awareness and the related literature have been organized in different corners of the world such as the United States of America (USA), Europe, Asia and Australia.⁸²

In this regard, in addition to the time gap of nearly a decade between the emergence of the local and international literature, quite naturally there is also a considerable gap in the level of awareness and discourse between the local Turkish and the international communities. Both primary and secondary sources available in Turkish and other languages is a reflection of this particular gap, which is in fact mainly related to the peculiar overall circumstance of each particular audience. Moreover, while only a relatively small number of Gülen's works are translated into English, the related secondary literature produced thus far is largely introductory in nature, aimed at presenting and familiarizing Gülen's thought and the movement's undertakings to the international public while also clearing any accumulated prejudice or misinformation. That being said, it should be also noted that more of in-depth scholarly literature regarding both Fethullah Gülen's thought and the related movement, particularly various themes and concepts pertaining to Fethullah Gülen's decades long endeavor in 'progressive Islamic thought'⁸³ and practice is expectedly yet to come as the related awareness and research in the international community is still at a considerably nascent stage.

⁸¹ Ramazan Kılınç, review of *Turkish Islam and the Secular State: The Gülen Movement*, edited by M. Hakan Yavuz and John L. Esposito, in *European Journal of Turkish Studies*. Accessed 23 September 2014. <http://www.ejts.org/document469.html> (<http://ejts.revues.org/469>).

⁸² For an un-exhaustive list of conferences and symposia organized about Fethullah Gülen and the Movement (also known as *Hizmet* Movement, or just *Hizmet* as it is more preferably called within the community itself, which literally means service in Turkish language), see the related page on Fethullah Gülen's official website: <http://www.fgulen.com/tr/fethullah-gulen-kimdir/gulen-hakkinda/hakkinda-yapilan-sempozyum-ve-konferanslar>. Accessed 15 Jan 2015.

⁸³ Greg Barton, "Progressive Islamic Thought, Civil Society and The Gülen Movement in The National Context: Parallels with Indonesia," Paper presented at the Conference on *Islam in the Contemporary World: The Fethullah Gülen Movement in Thought and Practice*, Rice University, Houston, 12-13 November 2005, 43.

Among many of the related works written about Fethullah Gülen for the last two decades, Erdoğan's (1995) autobiographical interview provides a first hand and vivid account of the earlier part of Gülen's life explained in his own words as memoirs and impressions.⁸⁴ Mercan (2008) has later complemented this work with a complete biography that includes critical milestones and events in Fethullah Gülen's life that are significant not only for Gülen himself, but also for the Turkish public in general.⁸⁵

Ünal has made an extensive, in-depth analysis of Fethullah Gülen's personality, thought and practice where he attempts to posit and understand the formation of Fethullah Gülen's personality and thought within a larger socio-historical setting by providing a far-reaching related background in addition to depicting his immediate family milieu and educational background.⁸⁶ Drawing on his long-time acquaintance with Fethullah Gülen in person and his views and practice as a part of Gülen's circle of immediate disciples, Ünal further analyses Fethullah Gülen's understanding of Islam locating it among 'ilmî (knowledge based)-spiritual' approaches in contrast to 'ideological-political' approaches to Islam. Within this particular approach of Gülen, Ünal emphasizes the primacy of *īmān* or Islamic faith, and, among other things, the necessity of integrating the segregated spheres of *maktab*, *madrassa* and *tekye* that respectively signify and were meant to foster phenomenal sciences, religious sciences and spiritual devotion (as in the late-Ottoman education system). He also examines the praxis of Fethullah Gülen in terms of its goals, principles and fundamental dynamics, and within that context portrays aspects of his roles as an educator, mental developer and spiritual trainer. Later (2006) published as a summary⁸⁷ due to its extensive volume that could be potentially distractive for the reader, this work also includes an examination of Fethullah Gülen's views on a selection of important contemporary issues and phenomenon such as knowledge, science, and freedom. Overall, it serves as a valuable source comprehensively and meticulously depicting Fethullah Gülen's overall thought and praxis from a competent and intimate witness-observer's perspective.

⁸⁴ See Latif Erdoğan, *Fethullah Gülen Hocaefendi: "Küçük Dünyam"* (Istanbul: Milliyet Yayınları, 1995; repr., Istanbul: AD Yayıncılık, 1997), (page references are to reprint edition).

⁸⁵ See Faruk Mercan, *Fethullah Gülen* (Istanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2008).

⁸⁶ See Ali Ünal, *M. Fethullah Gülen: Bir Portre Denemesi* (Istanbul: Nil Yayınları, 2002).

⁸⁷ Referring to Ünal, *Geçmişten Geleceğe Köprü: Fethullah Gülen (Bir Portre Denemesi Özet)*.

Khan⁸⁸ and Yavuz⁸⁹ illustrate distinct vision of Gülen in regards to political and religious discourse while Ergil⁹⁰ provides wide-ranging, encyclopedic and yet analytical information about Fethullah Gülen and the affiliated movement in the national and global socio-political context, covering wide range of commonly inquired aspects in 100 questions and answers. Actually, an earlier attempt to present Fethullah Gülen and his vision from a limited legal perspective had come from Adil Sönmez at a period of time when the Gülen-related discourse had largely remained confined to the national-Turkish context and level.⁹¹ Yavuz presents an analysis of Gülen's personal background and contextual theology, and explores the movement he has inspired in terms of its organizational and financial structure, educational proposition and goals, as well as its contributions. He also examines Gülen's outlook on secularism, science and interfaith dialogue, and furthermore, draws a particular attention to the confrontations that have arisen from his views regarding politics, i.e. his apolitical or supra-political stance. Actually, in a way this work reflectively extends Yavuz's earlier views (2003)⁹² where he had identified Gülen as a 'social innovator' who "has taken Said Nursi's faith-based movement one step further to transmit religious consciousness of the individuals to the larger social institutions and has made Islam a significant contributor to public discussions"⁹³ in modern Turkey. On the other hand, Khan demonstrates how Gülen and the movement inspired by him have presented a balanced blend of 'a new kind of social activism' and 'a deeper sense of spirituality and altruism' that the author deems missing from many contemporary civic movements. He asserts that, seeking new ways of reflecting and approaching Sufism, religious practice and spirituality, Gülen "has successfully conveyed a comprehensive vision that can easily encompass many complex and controversial issues in both 'political' and 'spiritual' Islam" without provoking any established system.⁹⁴ Khan particularly indicates that Fethullah Gülen and his supporters through social and educational activities with an intellectual and spiritual

⁸⁸ See Khan, *The Vision and Impact of Fethullah Gülen: A New Paradigm for Social Activism*.

⁸⁹ See M. Hakan Yavuz, *Toward an Islamic Enlightenment: The Gülen Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

⁹⁰ Referring to Ergil, *Fethullah Gülen & The Gülen Movement in 100 Questions*.

⁹¹ See İ. Adil Sönmez, *Fethullah Gülen ve Vizyonu* (Izmir: Kaynak Kitaplığı, 1998).

⁹² See Yavuz, *The Gülen Movement: The Turkish Puritans*.

⁹³ Etga Ugur, review of *Turkish Islam and The Secular State: The Gülen Movement*, by M. Hakan Yavuz and John L. Esposito, eds., *The Fountain*, no. 46 (April-June 2004).

⁹⁴ Khan, *The Vision and Impact of Fethullah Gülen: A New Paradigm for Social Activism*, xvii.

grounding address the problem of hollowness in religious faith and practice, as well as the problem of modernity.

Both Khan and Yavuz agree that in line with Said Nursi's strategy of social reformation, Gülen has "expanded on Nursi's ideas in many ways and added more visible dimensions with new heights to that religio-cultural movement."⁹⁵ Khan further believes that Gülen has resonated Rumi and Nursi in own way to inspire more people worldwide to support his peaceful altruistic cause. However, while acknowledging Said Nursi's great impact on Fethullah Gülen and the related movement at "spiritual and inspirational dimensions,"⁹⁶ Ergil contends that the praxis of the Gülen Movement is rather sui generis that is developed through the circumstances and conditions of its era.

Ergil's frequent reference to primary sources in addition to his meticulous scholarship as a competent social scientist makes his work a worthwhile reference at an encompassing yet largely informatory level. While enjoying a similar scholarly authority in demonstrating the overall vision and impact of Fethullah Gülen, works of Khan and Yavuz generally remain appreciated in their broader religio-political scope.

As a journalist of sociology and anthropology background, Sevindi provides insightful commentary from the socio-cultural perspective upon an extensive personal interview that she has conducted with Fethullah Gülen about various contemporary issues pertaining to within and around Turkey, in addition to immediate questions about Gülen himself and the movement.⁹⁷ In this work, she demands to understand the role of religion as a dynamics in cultural and social life, and therefore serves as one of the earliest sources enlightening the socio-cultural aspects of Fethullah Gülen's thought and action.

For Sevindi the *Tasawwuf* based philosophy of tolerance that Fethullah Gülen has brought about into our times from the lines of sages like Khwaja Ahmad Yassawī

⁹⁵ Ibid, xvii-xviii.

⁹⁶ Ergil, *Fethullah Gülen & The Gülen Movement in 100 Questions*, 15. For an elaboration of Said Nursi's influence on Fethullah Gülen, see ibid, 13-15.

⁹⁷ See Nevval Sevindi, *Fethullah Gülen ile Global Hoşgörü ve New York Sohbeti* (Istanbul: Sabah Kitapları, 1997; repr., Istanbul: Timaş Yayınları, 2002), (page references are to reprint edition).

(d. 1166),⁹⁸ Haji Bektāsh Walī (d. 1271),⁹⁹ Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (d. 1273)¹⁰⁰ and Yunus Emre (d. 1321)¹⁰¹ within the ancient tradition of ‘Anatolian (interpretation of) Islam’ is of a ‘revolutionary’ worth for the whole Muslim world. Gülen nurtures this Islamic tradition for the contemporary person with respect to the conditions of the present times using his religious knowledge and insights. In fact, according to Sevindi, Fethullah Gülen’s lively understanding of life sits on the tripod of religion [of Islam], economy and education, and covers economic, cultural and spiritual dimensions of life. For Gülen, cultural remobilization of a country means its restructuring according to the demands of the day, feeding from its own roots of thought and belief. Sevindi further determines that Gülen believes in importance of education in exalting the human being and supports science and research while trying to acquire knowledge without discriminating the sources from the East or West. In line with this, he advocates the unity of the heart and the mind without compromising one for the sake of the other. In this regard, ‘the new person’ that Gülen envisages is someone who thinks and investigates, who is at the same time firm in belief and open to spirituality, full of spiritual pleasures.¹⁰²

As such, although the scope and depth of discourse is chiefly intended for the public in general, Sevindi’s work is also important in the contemporary Turkish context as she was one of the earliest examples of a modern intellectual trying to sincerely understand and reflect the thought of a scholar such as Gülen that comes from a strong Islamic background.

⁹⁸ Khwaja (or Khoja) Aḥmed Yassawī (d. 1166) was a Sufi master and poet from Central Asia who has been an influential figure in development of Sufi orders throughout the Turkic-speaking world.

⁹⁹ Ḥajī Baktāsh Walī (d. 1271) was a mystic Islamic figure believed to have lived and taught in the 13th century Anatolia, which is in present day Turkey.

¹⁰⁰ Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Balkhī or Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (or just Rumi in English) (d. 1273) was an Islamic scholar, Sufi thinker and poet who has gained a widespread renown both in the East and the West. For more on Rumi, see Şefik Can, *Fundamentals of Rumi's Thought: A Mevlevi Sufi Perspective*, with a foreword by M. Fethullah Gülen (New Jersey: Tughra Books, 2012).

¹⁰¹ Yunus Emre (d. 1321) was a Turkish Sufi saint and poet who has expressed his views in an apparently simple language while maintaining profundity in meaning, and thus has gained a widespread renown and influence all over the Turkic-speaking world up to the present. For more on Yunus Emre, see Zekeriya Baskal, *Yunus Emre: The Sufi Poet in Love* (New York: Blue Dome Press, 2010).

¹⁰² For more on the characteristics of ‘the new man,’ see: M. Fethullah Gülen, “The New Man,” *The Fountain*, no. 11 (July-September 1995).

Later on, Ergene (2005, trans. 2008),¹⁰³ Bulaç (2008),¹⁰⁴ Ebaugh (2010)¹⁰⁵ and Çetin (2010)¹⁰⁶ have made sociological analysis of the movement on a more dedicated, scholarly level where they have initially pointed to the profile of Fethullah Gülen as an intellectual-*âlim* who is competent in both Islamic sciences as well as the principles of the modern social and natural sciences. Besides investigating the movement's goals, initiatives and incentives, they have also spotlighted the role of the movement in building national and Islamic identity in contemporary Turkish society. Bulaç's theses are developed around the role of Islamic religious groups in the nation state context through the particular example of the Gülen Movement, and their function in responding to the socialization needs of people amidst the mass urbanization of Turkish population since 1950's as a result of national industrialization attempts. Bulaç follows the evolution of the movement through its 'local, national and global' stages and marks the schools initiated by the movement at different corners of the world as the 'the only response of Turkey' given to globalization. Ebaugh and Çetin approach the movement through the social movement theory from an outsider and insider's perspective respectively in trying to portray its mobilization strategy as well its organizational and financial structure. However, Ergene's work takes the analysis to a larger scope by examining the movement also from the cultural and religious perspectives. He provides a blueprint of the Islamic origins and basic dynamics of the movement in detail and explores the failure experienced by many other Islamic movements that have attempted to combine traditional values with the modern world. Overall, while Ergene's analysis is more profound and comprehensive in its scope, the other works are insightful, original sources of reference as far as their sphere of analysis is concerned.

Another corpus of studies is dedicated to investigate the scholarship of Fethullah Gülen in core Islamic sciences such as the Qur'anic exegesis (*tafsîr*),¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ See M. Enes Ergene, *Gülen Hareketinin Analizi: Geleneğin Modern Çağa Tanıklığı* (Istanbul: Yeni Akademi Yayınları, 2005), {trans., M. Enes Ergene, *Tradition Witnessing The Modern Age: An Analysis of The Gülen Movement* (New Jersey: Tughra Books, 2008)}.

¹⁰⁴ See Ali Bulaç, *Din, Kent ve Cemaat: Fethullah Gülen Örneği* (Istanbul: Ufuk Kitap, 2008).

¹⁰⁵ See Helen Rose Ebaugh, *The Gülen Movement: A Sociological Analysis of a Civic Movement Rooted in Moderate Islam* (New York: Springer, 2010).

¹⁰⁶ See Muhammed Çetin, *The Gülen Movement: Civic Service Without Borders* (New York: Blue Dome Press, 2010).

¹⁰⁷ Major expert studies written on Fethullah Gülen's understanding of the Qur'anic exegesis are: İsmail Albayrak, *Fethullah Gülen Hocaefendi'nin Tefsir Anlayışı* (Istanbul: Işık Yayınları, 2010); İsmail Albayrak, "Fethullah Gülen's Approach to Quranic Exegesis," in *Mastering Knowledge in*

Prophetic Tradition (*Sunnah* and *Hadīth*),¹⁰⁸ Islamic Jurisprudence (*fiqh*)¹⁰⁹ and Sufism (*Tasawwuf*),¹¹⁰ as well as in other branches of knowledge including literature¹¹¹ and *Risale-i Nur*.¹¹² Each of them aims to posit Fethullah Gülen's scholarly profile with respect to that particular area of science or scholarship, and are instrumental in their own capacity in understanding his stance as a scholar in terms of his thought and praxis.

Apart from these, there is obviously need for more elaborate investigation of a scholar's thought such as Fethullah Gülen in order to more vividly grasp his proposition within the contemporary Muslim scholarship. Nevertheless, as mentioned earlier, the literature produced so far on Fethullah Gülen's ideas generally falls short from the level of in-depth conceptual and thematic analysis of his thought except for the case of some general themes as education, Sufism, tolerance and dialogue. As nearest to our subject matter, i.e. knowledge, science is one such rare theme that has been analyzed on its own in Fethullah Gülen's thought, as the phenomenon has been a matter of widespread intellectual concern for Muslims of the last two centuries.

In a notable piece of such studies on the particular matter of science, Bakar (2005) has investigated Fethullah Gülen's standpoint on science from a theological perspective.¹¹³ He analyzes proposition of Gülen's thought in terms of (1) the relationship between scientific and religious truths, (2) the Islamic view of modern

Modern Times: Fethullah Gülen as an Islamic Scholar, İsmail Albayrak, ed., (New York: Blue Dome Press, 2011): 1-37; Suat Yıldırım, *Fethullah Gülen'in Kur'an-ı Hakim'e Yaklaşımı* (Istanbul: Nil Yayınları, 2010).

¹⁰⁸ See İbrahim Canan, *Fethullah Gülen'in Sünnet Anlayışı* (Istanbul: Ufuk Kitap, 2007); Halim Çalış, "Fethullah Gülen's Thought on Hadith," in *Mastering Knowledge in Modern Times: Fethullah Gülen as an Islamic Scholar*, İsmail Albayrak, ed., (New York: Blue Dome Press, 2011): 39-64.

¹⁰⁹ See Faruk Beşer, *Fethullah Gülen Hocaefendi'nin Fıkhını Anlamak* (Istanbul: Ufuk Kitap, 2006); İsmail Acar, "A Classical Scholar with a Modern Outlook: Fethullah Gülen and His Legal Thought," in *Mastering Knowledge in Modern Times: Fethullah Gülen as an Islamic Scholar*, İsmail Albayrak, ed., (New York: Blue Dome Press, 2011): 65-84.

¹¹⁰ See Mehmet Yavuz Şeker, "Fethullah Gülen and Sufism," in *Mastering Knowledge in Modern Times: Fethullah Gülen as an Islamic Scholar*, İsmail Albayrak, ed., (New York: Blue Dome Press, 2011): 97-126. For earlier investigations on Fethullah Gülen and Sufism see: Mustafa Gokcek, "Gülen and Sufism," Paper presented at the Conference on *Islam in the Contemporary World: The Fethullah Gülen Movement in Thought and Practice*, Rice University, Houston, 12-13 November 2005; and, Thomas Michel, "Sufism and Modernity in the Thought of Fethullah Gülen," *The Muslim World* 95, no. 3 (July 2005): 341-358.

¹¹¹ See Ali Osman Dönmez, *Bir Medeniyet Tasavvuru Çerçevesinde Fethullah Gülen ve Edebiyat* (Istanbul: Nil Yayınları, 2013).

¹¹² See İsmail Mutlu, *Fethullah Gülen ve Risale-i Nur* (Istanbul: Mutlu Yayıncılık, 2008).

¹¹³ Osman Bakar, "Gülen on Religion and Science: A Theological Perspective," *The Muslim World* 95, no. 3 (July 2005): 359-372.

scientific approach to nature, and (3) the approach of the Qur'an to science. For Gülen, relative truths that are changing and transient in nature must be subservient to absolute truths that are unchanging and permanent, to which scientific and religious [Islamic] truths respectively belong to. Since the very status of relative truths finds its epistemological legitimacy in light of its affirmation by absolute truths, science is incapable of knowing the domain of absolute truths pertaining to the essence of existence by virtue of its methodological limitations. Bakar finds this delimitation of domains important to preserve the validity and harmony in the relationship between religion and science and to enable the establishment of 'true science' that Gülen envisions. Furthermore, as Gülen sees the Qur'an and the universe two different faces of the same reality and the Qur'an contains everything in principle, science needs to be pursued in the light of epistemological and ethical principles and values that the Qur'an provides, with the aim of knowing the Creator through His creation. Based on these Bakar rightfully concludes that, beyond being merely personal, Gülen's views on religion and science represent a major (traditional) interpretation in the Muslim world and have a universal significance beyond that world. Nevertheless, the study does not intend to address Fethullah Gülen's conception of knowledge directly, although it is also a significant contribution to understand some background of that conception indirectly.

As for the concept of knowledge per se, a number of works have identified and outlined very significant related characteristics in Fethullah Gülen's thought and praxis. The drawback of these generally brief identifications is, however, that they are done at the sidelines of a more general discourse and thus do not provide a complete, elaborate sketch of the conception. In this regard, Albayrak underlines Gülen's nuance between *'ilm* or true knowledge/science per se and *bilim*, a word that is used to refer to systematic phenomenal science with more positivistic notion in the contemporary Turkish language,¹¹⁴ which is significant in correctly identifying each of the terms and understanding any related discourse. Sevindi draws a particular attention to the fact that without being stuck in any ready-made frame, Gülen has managed to make syntheses from what is available to him as knowledge, since he does not see knowledge 'as a pile of rocks' but rather regards it as building blocks

¹¹⁴ Albayrak, Fethullah Gülen's Approach to Quranic Exegesis, 31-32.

for mental activity, and, as a process.¹¹⁵ As a small part of his neo-orientalist style thesis pervaded with discrepancies in accuracy of information and judgment, Gulay briefly remarks on the hierarchy of knowledge in Fethullah Gülen's works from general knowledge or *'ilm* to spiritual knowledge or *ma'rifah* within a larger analysis of the latter's synthesis of natural science and Islamic metaphysics.¹¹⁶ Yet it falls far from accurately and adequately depicting the particular concept of knowledge.

Ünal has discussed Fethullah Gülen's views on knowledge more extensively in light of the latter's related writings in various contexts authored throughout a few decades.¹¹⁷ Starting from the definition of knowledge, Ünal expounds important features in Gülen's conception of knowledge such as preconditions of (acquiring true) knowledge, its purpose and sources. As for the relation of human beings and knowledge in Gülen's thought, the very attribute that distinguishes human beings from other creatures and elevates them above angels is knowledge, and in fact, unlike animals, they were sent to this world to actually develop through learning, worship and prayer. Moreover, knowledge can perform its true function, or in other words, information can be transformed into knowledge useful for people, primarily if (human) personality and character that are regarded as the spirit and essence of philosophy/understanding of knowledge/science (*ilim düşüncesi*) rely on 'love of truth.'¹¹⁸ It is also dependent on freeing oneself from greatest obstructions such as bigotry, fanaticism and ideological conditioning. Furthermore, humans need to consciously and apprehensively join the overall movement of the whole existence towards development and perfection in order to constantly renew in knowledge, thought and reflection and to acquire a spirit of revolution.

Ünal identifies three sources of knowledge in Fethullah Gülen's thought that also coincide with general view in traditional Islamic thought, which are namely: (1) '*havâss-ı selîme*' or sound senses, (2) '*selim akıl*' or sound intellect, and (3) '*mütevâtir haber*' or *al-khabar al-mutawâtir* which includes revelation. As such,

¹¹⁵ Sevindi, *Fethullah Gülen ile Global Hoşgörü ve New York Sohbeti*, 121-128.

¹¹⁶ Erol Nazim Gulay, "The Theological Thought of Fethullah Gülen: Reconciling Science and Islam" (M.Phil thesis, St. Antony's College, Oxford University, 2007), 90-93.

¹¹⁷ See Ünal, *M. Fethullah Gülen: Bir Portre Denemesi*, 397-426; Ünal, *Geçmişten Geleceğe Köprü: Fethullah Gülen*, 233-250.

¹¹⁸ M. Fethullah Gülen, "İlim Düşüncesi," *Sızıntı*, no. 207 (April 1996). Accessed 28 October 2014. <http://www.sizinti.com.tr/konular/ayrinti/ilim-dusuncesi.html>, cited in Ünal, *Geçmişten Geleceğe Köprü: Fethullah Gülen*, 235.

divine revelation or *wahy* is the most important and the most reliable source that is in position of guiding the other categories of knowledge. Further, Ünal investigates the knowledge-religion relationship covering the very definitions, its historical journey within the Islamic and other contexts and the reality of the relationship with respect to Islam. Since Gülen looks at religion, knowledge, human, things and occurrences in a comprehensive manner, Ünal highlights that Gülen has sensitively emphasized the alliance of knowledge and religion as much as he emphasizes the marriage of heart and the mind, raising a complete human, and the unity of *maktab-madrasa-tekye*. As such, besides other sources related to the subject matter, Ünal's particular work could provide an extensive basis to work on Fethullah Gülen's conception of knowledge.

However, although some of the works such as the ones cited above mention about Fethullah Gülen's perspectives on knowledge mostly as a part of another discussion, so far there has not appeared any dedicated study on the conceptual analysis of knowledge in his thought and praxis. Thus, this study shall serve to fill a significant gap in the related literature by virtue of being a dedicated investigation aiming to thoroughly portray the particular concept of knowledge as envisioned and implemented by Fethullah Gülen.

1.6 Research Methodology

This study is designed to analytically investigate the thought and practice of Fethullah Gülen from the viewpoint of his conception of knowledge. Particularly, for the collection of relevant data, the study shall predominately rely on library research as well as historical research, extensively employing primary and secondary resources related to Fethullah Gülen's personality, thought, and praxis. Moreover, some other conventional methods may also be employed if and where necessary in order to gather the required appropriate information for the study. For the subsequent analysis of the collected information, conventional analytical methods such as textual analysis, comparative analysis, classification and translation shall be utilized in order to reach relevant findings and conclusions.

Furthermore, our initial examination of the conception of knowledge in the original Islamic context and its relevance for the Muslims in general, the present day Muslims in particular, shall serve as a background for the study.

Such an extensive and in-depth qualitative analysis shall enable us to establish a thorough portrait of Fethullah Gülen's perspectives on knowledge highlighting its important features, such as: (1) purpose of knowledge, (2) its functions, (3) its main sources, (4) degrees of knowledge and knowing, (5) norms regarding the authenticity of knowledge, (6) its types or categories, (7) its hierarchy, and (8) prioritization of knowledge and learning, etc..

1.7 Significance of the Study

While Muslims have been striving to revive their traditional spiritual-intellectual legacy with a cautious enthusiasm already for more than a century, this study shall be an addition to the preceding studies about the contemporary Muslim revival or renewal attempts on the intellectual grounds, with a particular interest in the conception of knowledge in the contemporary Islamic context.

An analysis of thought and practice of M. Fethullah Gülen, a contemporary Islamic scholar from Turkey, emphasizing his perspectives on knowledge especially in contrast to the original conception of knowledge based on, and, according to the main Islamic sources is to constitute key insights of the study.

In face of a pressing necessity for an original and profound conception of knowledge for modern humanity in general, and for Muslims in particular, the present study with its extensive and in depth analysis of Fethullah Gülen's ideas vis-à-vis knowledge as a contemporary Islamic scholar-intellectual,¹¹⁹ shall enable us to draw significant, relevant conclusions for today's intellectuals regarding the challenges and opportunities posed by the phenomenon of knowledge.

¹¹⁹ Ünal, *Geçmişten Geleceğe Köprü: Fethullah Gülen*, 153. In fact, Ali Ünal identifies the profile of Fethullah Gülen as the intersection point of 'ālim-'arīf-intellectual due to the overall competence of the latter pertaining to all three spheres.

In the following chapter, we will look into Fethullah Gülen's educational and intellectual background as well as his intellectual works. This will pave the way to the investigation of the scholar's conception of knowledge in the subsequent chapters.

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