

Gülen's Rethinking of Islamic Patterns and its Socio-Political Effects

by Fabio Vicini

Over recent decades Islamic traditions have emerged in new forms in different parts of the Muslim world, interacting differently with secular and neo-liberal patterns of thought and action. In Turkey Fethullah Gülen's community has been a powerful player in the national debate about the place of Islam in individual and collective life. Through emphasis on the importance of 'secular education' and a commitment to the defence of both democratic principles and international human rights, Gülen has diffused a new and appealing version of how a 'good Muslim' should act in contemporary society. In particular he has defended the role of Islam in the formation of individuals as ethically-responsible moral subjects, a project that overlaps significantly with the 'secular' one of forming responsible citizens. Concomitantly, he has shifted the Sufi emphasis on self-discipline/self-denial towards an active, socially-oriented service of others – a form of religious effort that implies a strongly 'secular' faith in the human ability to make this world better. This paper looks at the lives of some members of the community to show how this pattern of conduct has affected them. They say that teaching and learning 'secular' scientific subjects, combined with total dedication to the project of the movement, constitute, for them, ways to accomplish Islamic deeds and come closer to God. This leads to a consideration of how such a rethinking of Islamic activism has influenced political and sociological transition in Turkey, and a discussion of the potential contribution of the movement towards the development of a more human society in contemporary Europe.

Panel:
Ethics, Universal Values
and Pluralism in Gülen's
Thought

Venue:
Old Theatre,
LSE

27.10.07 Panels	Parellel Session 1	Parellel Session 2
9:30-11:30		
13:00-15:00	Presentation: 06	
15:10-17:00		

Fabio Vicini (MA in anthropology, University of Milano-Bicocca, Milan, 2006 on the Gülen movement; BA in social sciences, University of Modena e Reggio Emilia, Modena, 2003): On the editorial board of *ACHAB, Rivista Italiana di Antropologia*. Research interests: anthropology of Islam, with a focus on human agency, ethics and emotions; and, secondarily, anthropology of secularism in Ottoman and Turkish history.

**Fabio
Vicini**

f.vicini@gulenconference.org.uk