



RATIONAL RELIGION: GÜLEN'S MIDDLE WAY

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Abstract

This paper explores “the middle way.” Talk of a middle way harkens back to Aristotle’s Golden Mean, and in my own Jewish tradition to Maimonides. I explore the synthesis, if that is the right word, between the extremes that the middle way represents. I delineate two models of integration, the first, theoretical compromise. The second way, which I prefer, leaves the extremes and the truths they emphasize in place. Consider the alleged conflict between science, in the broadest sense, and religion. The problem with religious fundamentalism and also what we may call “scientism” is the claim to the exclusive possession of the truth. My approach is to leave in place what seems plain, that both sides possess truth, and to see the middle-way as a practical-reason project, one that emphasizes context. A parallel example is the apparent conflict between ethical universalism and particularism. Rather than decide between these, or produce a theoretical third position, we should give great weight to universalism — seeing all people as of equal value and ethical significance — and particularism — with its attention to our families and ethnic and religious communities. The idea is to give appropriate weight to each of these depending upon context, and allowing each to call a halt to the dominance of the other. Finally, I apply my approach to the middle way to basic theology, to the discordant scriptural anthropomorphic characterizations of God. I propose that we use these diverse images in a practical way, to nurture religious development, to stimulate growth in our relationship to God. What the religious traditions give us, or so I argue, is not so much a theory of God, as a route to holiness.

*...just as God wove the universe like a lace on the loom of love, the most magical and charming music in the bosom of existence is always love.*⁷⁵

Fethullah Gülen has made a major contribution to “Islamic Modernism.” My project here is to generalize to a view one might call religious modernism, or even better, rational religion. I have been stimulated by Gülen’s thought to reflect in some of the ways indicated in this paper. Needless to say, Gülen is not responsible for the directions my own reflections take me. But I am grateful for the stimulation, and for all the good that the Gülen movement has stimulated during these dark times.

My own orientation is traditional or even Orthodox Judaism. But “orthodoxy” is the wrong expression for the sort of wonderful constellation of backward *and* forward looking thinking that Gülen

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⁷⁵ Fethullah Gülen, *Toward a Global Civilization of Love and Tolerance*, p. 8.



advocates and with which I feel great sympathy. The idea of a middle way of course brings to mind Aristotle's talk of the golden mean, and in the context of Jewish thought brings to mind the great medieval Aristotelean, Maimonides, who would feel much sympathy I think for Gülen's middle way.

It is striking that both religious fundamentalists and anti-religious "scientific" thinkers agree on so much: for example, that science and religion are fundamentally opposed, that enlightened reason is dramatically at odds with traditional revelation (no matter which religious tradition is in question). Each of these schools discerns the truth found in his favored domain; but each ignores the important truth in his opponents' domain. The middle way refuses to sacrifice either truth.

The middle way — as Professor Kuru helpfully points out — is not a marriage of convenience, a sort of compromise. It is a principled outlook, one that acknowledges multiple truths. I would suggest that complete truth is an ideal, one beyond the human ken. There is no way to escape our human limitations — which is not to sneeze at the substantial progress we can make. It is sometimes suggested that with Divine help, for example, revelation, we can sidestep our limitations. There is surely an element of truth in this. At the same time, who but us, with our limitations, is to decide between the various versions of Divine help that are proffered?

A fundamental question about any such middle-way position is the nature of the synthesis we wish to achieve. How exactly are scientific truth and religious values to be integrated — if "integrated" is the right word? I want to suggest two different models and to advocate one of them. But first, I want to generalize the problem of radical oppositions. Let's add a few such oppositions to our list, as there is something general I want to say about such apparently polar contrasts.

Closely related to the oppositions already mentioned are materialism/spiritualism, and rationalism/mysticism. To move to a dimension closer to ethical, we can mention worldliness/asceticism. Even more centrally ethical is the opposition universalism/particularism, the question of our ethical attitudes towards human beings as such as opposed to our more immediate brethren, say in the Islamic community, or in the Jewish or Christian communities. I would even add — going out a bit on a limb perhaps — reverence/irreverence, although these matters get more complicated.

The first model — not my favored one — is one of integration. The idea is that there is some sort of blending, a finding of harmony, a unification of the extremes. I'm reminded here of a Rabbinic *Midrash*, a discussion of another opposition: that between God's lovingkindness and his demand for justice. The *Midrash* suggests that the unification of these, their harmony, is not to be found on earth, but in the world to come. Interestingly, there is a related discussion in the Talmud in which it is said that God prays. The Talmudic interlocutor inquires — incredulously we may imagine: What does God pray? The answer is this: God prays that his demand for justice is overwhelmed by his loving kindness. This, I take it, is a distinctively Jewish sort of reflection; I'm not sure that there is anything parallel in Islam (or Christianity) — I'm eager to discuss this. But it puts in bold relief the hopelessness of the quest for a perfect worldly resolution of these oppositions.

Here's another suggestive example. There is a Hasidic adage that a person should carry in his pocket two pieces of paper: "I am but dust and ashes," and "The world was created for me." I used to think that the really difficult trick is to get both of these highly dissonant messages on the same piece of paper; to live a life that is not so compartmentalized, that integrates the superficially incompatible messages.



Maurice Friedman suggested to me that it would be better to leave them on separate sheets, maybe even in different pockets. The imagery of a single piece of paper suggested to Friedman what he took to be a bad idea: that the philosophic job is to render these insights coherent, to articulate an inclusive principle. What one needs is rather a kind of practical skill, the ability to negotiate experience respecting both truths — that is, both images, each of which illuminates human experience.

Universalism/particularism: When one considers the very different demands of an ethical universalism as opposed the stance of various particularistic views that give ethical weight to one's own people or religious community, it may be tempting to seek a principled way to decide various questions that arise, that is a theoretical way to work one's way between the competing demands. This would be a form of what I called integration, a theoretical integration of the two poles. My alternative is that we focus instead on the truth to be found at the extremes. We need not "average them out" or find a theoretical treatment that states the one comprehensive truth. Rather, once noting the multiple truths, we can focus our attention on the practical ability to carry on in light of those truths.

To begin with the power of power of universalism, all people — and not only "my group" — are created in and reflections of God's image, and a violation of another person is a violation of God's image and thus (at the very least symbolically) of God. To violate a person is to profane God's name. Such a view has something important in common with modern liberal individualism, namely, the irreducible value of the individual. But for the modern individualist, such value is the sole locus of ethical significance. Accordingly, the ethical significance of being a member of a people, or of a religious community is problematic; one needs to work hard, too hard, within such a liberal framework to give significance to one's people, even perhaps to members of one's family. My child, after all, is no more a person than anyone else.

While there is much in contemporary liberal individualism that I respect, it is for me ethically significant in the first instance that I am a member of a family/people/religious community. I care, and I'm right to care, about the latter in a way that's more immediate than my care for humanity. At the same time, while there may be a time and a place for focus, even exclusive focus, on one's own family and ethnic or religious community, one can never forget that such particularism constitutes only as aspect of one's ethical being. What we have seen in recent times among fundamentalists across the religions is a runaway particularism, an insensitivity to the other that should strike us an ethically unacceptable, sometimes quite horrible.

What seems to me important, in reflecting on the multiple truths, universalist and particularist, is the thought that this is no real polar opposition; there is the potential here for a coherent approach. However, the sort of coherence we are after is not necessarily theoretical coherence in the form of an inclusive principle. More important is the ability to negotiate experience, appealing to one idea or the other when fitting, allowing each to call a halt when we are nearing excessive attention to the other.⁷⁶

Of course, I have not shown — nor could I, nor would I wish to — the impossibility of producing a kind of super-principle, one that delineates the experiences in which one or the other of the opposing ideas is applicable. However, we don't even know the shape, so to speak, of such a principle. Do we, or ought we, have any confidence that the cases fall under some illuminating formula? Think about the cases in which one's universalistic scruples might usefully be brought into play. Ought we to be

⁷⁶ The matter seems related to the Aristotelian outlook on ethics that gives pride of place to practical skill over articulated principle.



confident that all share some common feature or features, other than, of course, being cases in which particularism should not be getting undue weight? Even if one identified a plausible candidate principle, isn't it likely that it would have to be gerrymandered repeatedly to meet the needs of novel cases? While there remains the possibility of an inclusive principle, there is reason to be skeptical.⁷⁷

I turn to the application of this sort of thinking — my own take on the middle way—to our original opposition: science and religion. Science in the broadest sense — and as Gülen emphasizes, this includes the social sciences as well — are the key to unlocking the nature of nature, including human nature. Of course we do find in Scripture some claims about matters of fact, historical events and the like. But such claims, as I see it, are, as we say in philosophy, “defeasible.” This attitude expresses itself dramatically in Maimonides radical — too radical for many — attitude to creation *ex nihilo*. Maimonides roundly criticizes the Aristotelian proofs for the eternity of matter and espouses a belief in the religious tradition's conception of creation *ex nihilo*. But he adds the thought — this is the radical part — that if the Aristotelian proofs had really been good, he Maimonides would have immediately accepted them and would have proceeded to reinterpret scripture. The scriptural characterization of creation would have remained crucially important for Maimonides — there would be much to learn from it about the universe and our place in it — but we would no longer read it as an account of the actual process of creation.

So what we know by human reason is what we know, and religion does not come to tell us otherwise. Again this is not because religion loses some battle with science but rather because the world — and not only Scripture — is God's book, and we have been given the (of course fallible) gift of reading the book of nature. But values are another matter. Of course there are some values immediately implicated in science's reading of God's book of nature, values like intellectual honesty and integrity, openness to new ideas, and the like. But broader ethical, moral, and personal values are another matter. The modern world — I gratefully live in a liberal democracy — emphasizes values like (as in the American constitution) life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Not for a moment to belittle these, what about the values that are focal in the religious tradition, like awe, love, and gratitude? Those of us who have tasted God's love and who live with a sense of awe as a background condition of our lives, who attain with God's help a sense of centeredness, who feel God's providence — we know what religion provides. This is no replacement for something science provides, not at all. It is perhaps a replacement or, better, a supplement to what modern culture provides. But we need not feel any sense of bifurcation between the religious sides of our lives and our interest in science and more broadly our interest in the gifts of modern culture. These too — including music and the arts — are God's gifts.

If there is any sense of priority here between science (and we might include the other products of modern culture) and religion, I would distribute it. With respect to facts on the ground, including the nature of the natural world, priority goes of course to science in the broadest sense. Not because it ever achieves the final word, but because it is our God-given guide to nature. With respect to values in the broadest sense, with respect to providing a framework for life, priority goes to religion.

What I'm advocating — and without being a Gülen scholar, I hope that what I say is at least broadly in his spirit — is unfortunately far removed from what is perhaps the dominant trend, certainly in

⁷⁷ This brings to mind Ludwig Wittgenstein's discussion of family resemblance in *Philosophical Investigations*. As with Wittgenstein's example's, there may well be some more or less trivial common features that constitute necessary conditions. All games are human activities, but that is beside the point.



Orthodox Judaism, and other forms of emphatically traditional religion. What I find is a gap: those who share the sort of attitude towards western culture I've been espousing tend to either reject religious tradition outright or else exhibit weakness in their religious practice and knowledge of traditional religious texts. Those who are steeped in the traditional texts — and in Judaism that means (at the highest level) Talmud — tend to a fundamentalist outlook, a lack of appreciation of the value, even the religious value, of western culture; it also often means a parochial attitude with respect to “the other.”

I conclude this aspect of my discussion with a related reflection on the middle way, one suggested by Professor Kuru's discussion of *taqwa*, what in Hebrew we call *hashgacha*, divine providence, what Kuru refers to as being in God's safe-keeping. To quote Kuru:

Derived from *wiqaya*, meaning protection, *taqwa* means to be in safe-keeping or protection of God. This has two aspects. The first is that a man fears God and obeys Him by performing His commands and refraining from his prohibitions. The second aspect of *taqwa* is that, by studying nature and life and discovering God's laws controlling them, people find scientific knowledge and order their lives. The establishment of sciences depends upon the discovery of these laws. In order to be under the safe-keeping of God, the true religion and sciences should be combined, for they are two faces or two expressions of a single truth.

Kuru's last point is one I have already expressed some skepticism about: Whether or not science and religion are expressions of a single truth seems to me complicated, for reasons discussed above. We certainly do not have language to express any such single truth. We have multiple languages, scientific and religious. But his central point seems to me both deep and important. Let me begin with a remark about Maimonides, on the topic of divine providence, divine protection.

Maimonides writes that divine protection at the individual level depends upon one's knowledge of philosophy, including for Maimonides one's knowledge of “natural philosophy,” that is, scientific knowledge. I always thought that Maimonides here, indeed as elsewhere, overemphasizes intellect. He argues, for another example, that the intellect constitutes the bridge between man and God; this always seems to me an overemphasis on the purely cognitive. But Kuru's quote helped me to see the truth in Maimonides position on providence.

Consider the contrast between one who has advanced knowledge of the laws of nature and one whose knowledge is quite primitive. Or think of the difference between our culture—with respect for example to medicine—and that of the medievals. Our knowledge quite simply provides quite a measure of protection for our well-being. And if one is thinking about science as “our reading of God's book of nature,” then our being diligent readers of this book means that we are extended considerable protection. My daughter recently gave birth (excitingly to her first child and my first grandchild). But she became ill with an infection that used to be (and still is in many parts of the world) a leading killer of women, post-delivery. Medical science made her recovery almost trivial, an example of God's lovingkindness and protection.

But the scientific side is only one side of the matter, as Kuru emphasizes. From the point of view of traditional religion, the sort of divine protection just discussed is only a part of the story of providence. A deep engagement with God's ways provides a centering of one's life, protection from, or at least divine fellowship with respect to, the inevitable dark aspects of life, as well as a powerful and heightened sense of life as meaningful, rich, significant. Without such a religious sensibility, one can



attain some protection from scientific knowledge, as discussed above. But one is not yet brought under God's wings, as it were.

As I say, one does not need to see these aspects as expressions of a single truth. God can be One without reducing the multiplicity of his teachings and commandments to anything so unitary.

So far I have been discussing the middle way, and two models for the nature of the synthesis. My idea has been that instead of seeking a theoretical resolution, a single conceptual truth that resolves the apparent conflict, we remain at the conceptual level with different sorts of truths. There is no incoherence, but the coherence is not to be found in a conceptual resolution, but rather in practical know-how, the ability to work with two different perspectives, relying on the appropriate one in a given context.

I now want to extend my analysis to a basic area of theology. Here I am out on a limb, perhaps alone. I do not suppose that I am elaborating Gülen's thought or indeed Islamic thought, although I will be quite interested in the reactions of scholars of Islam. What I say derives somewhat from my Jewish perspective, although my view is by no means the usual outlook even in that context.⁷⁸

It is I will explore another and very different sort of opposition, actually a series of them, the variety of discordant images of God found in traditional sources, like the Bible, Qur'an, etc. I am no expert in the Qur'an, and so I'll restrict my discussion to the Bible. But I am most interested in reactions from Islamic practitioners and scholars.

Let's consider some of the great variety of anthropomorphic images of God in biblical literature, as well as in the elaboration of that literature in Rabbinic sources like the Talmud: God is a loving and nurturing, even if demanding, parent; a benevolent judge/ruler who does not forget acts of loving kindness and generously and lovingly passes on the rewards to one's progeny; a righteous judge who has access to our deepest secrets and who rewards and punishes accordingly; king of the universe, to be treated with lordly deference; bridegroom; husband; woman in labor; angry, regretful, even vengeful, remembering the sins of the parents and visiting them upon even distant generations.

It is tempting — subsequent to the philosophical/theological discussions beginning in the medieval period — to dismiss such characterizations as simply figurative; the Bible, we are told by the medievals, speaks figuratively; it speaks in the language of men. However, it's quite striking to a student of the Talmud that such anthropomorphic characterization does not decline even in Talmudic times (0-600 C.E.), a period characterized by the most rigorous and analytical development of Jewish law. The same figures who think almost hyper-analytically about law talk about God in these picturesque ways, ways that proved almost an embarrassment to the later philosopher/theologians of medieval times.

My idea — somewhat contrary to the philosophical tradition — is not to dismiss, but rather to give great significance to, such anthropomorphic characterizations. Indeed, they play a crucial role in living a religious life. The great power of religion to affect life seems crucially related to seeing God as loving, caring, sometimes disappointed in us, sometimes even angry. People's religious lives revolve around these traits of God; the focus of the religious practitioner is hardly the austere God of the

⁷⁸ I have been much helped in my revolt against the usual mode of Jewish theology by the seminal work of Abraham Joshua Heschel. iSee his *Moral Grandeur and Spiritual Audacity*, Abraham Joshua Heschel, ed. Susannah Heschel (New York, 1996).



philosophers — beyond all such anthropomorphic characterization — no matter how much the latter may appeal to certain philosophical instincts.

The philosopher/theologians I mentioned — Maimonides is probably the most highly regarded among Jewish thinkers — were of course exercised by a fundamental problem: Even given the practical, pastoral importance of the anthropomorphic imagery, still what is God really like? Can He be truly characterized in such human terms? Biblical poetry (and poetic prose) is one thing, but the theoretical characterization of God is quite another thing.

My work in the philosophy of religion — including a book I'm currently writing — has much to do with this contrast between styles of theology: Biblical/Rabbinic anthropomorphic characterization vs. the purification project of the medievals. I mention the topic here because it's another context for the sort of issue I've been discussing in this paper. The Biblical rendition of God issues in many, divergent, characterizations of God, in addition to the somewhat discordant hint that He is somehow beyond all of this. But neither the Bible nor Rabbinic literature is much exercised with how to put these different pictures together; how to theorize away the apparent diversity. That's worth more than a moment's notice.

So again we have a domain in which there are conflicting ideas, each of which possesses a kind of truth or validity. And I will argue here as I have earlier in this paper that these tensions are to be resolved not by discovering a higher order principle, but by the acquisition of a practical ability or skill, a kind of "knowing how." The agent develops a sense of balance, the ability to call upon the idea appropriate to the situation at hand. Let me explain.

Think of the diverse, sometimes conflicting, images of God as profiles, each a view from a perspective. Each profile, each perspective, is crucial for the religious life. Each has validity. Each illuminates in its own way. There are situations in which the image of God as nurturing parent is salient. In other situations other imagery may be salient, perhaps God as an impartial judge, or as a friend, or as creator of heaven and earth, or as one you have wronged, or as the parent of one you have wronged.

There are still other situations in which two or more profiles of God are all somehow salient. Some of these may be very pleasant; as if one were taking in several varieties of beauty at once, or through several sensory modalities. Some of these situations, though, may be troubling, confusing. Such situations are analogous to one who works for his father-in-law, who also happens to be his teacher, landlord, and plays unnamed other roles in his life.⁷⁹ One can readily imagine situations that become quite complicated and confusing. One doesn't quite know where one stands.

It is striking to me that until the medieval period — and with it the influence of philosophy on the religious tradition — the resolution of the tension between the conflicting images and ideas gets little to no theoretical attention, at least within the Jewish context. For theoretical resolution — at least a leading candidate for such a resolution — would involve an account of the entity that lies behind the profiles, an account of how these could possibly be perspectives on the same being. Rabbinic tradition seems focused not on what we might call "the theory of God," but rather on the plane of action. The images of God are indeed images of One God; their discordance is superficial. Their coherence, however, reflects itself in a life informed by all of these images.

⁷⁹ I have been helped in thinking about the diversity of images of God in the Bible, and the implications thereof by the work of M. Halbertal and A. Margalit in their book, *Idolotry* (Cambridge, Mass. and London, 1996).



The religious life involves a combination of practical abilities or skills that are grounded in understanding, intuitive if not articulate. The religious life also involves habits, behavioral and affective. All of this requires education, training, and practice. As is our way with such things, some are more given to it, more gifted at it, some will take to it more easily than others, others may come along more slowly, but may attain greater heights in the end.

One stage in religious development is understanding the many different human relationships in terms of which these very different profiles of God are formulated: developing a sense of what it is to relate to another as child to parent, as subject to monarch, as defendant to judge, as creature to creator, as lover, as friend, and so on. Developing a sense of these with their directions reversed is also of great utility: parent to child, monarch to subject, and so on. The more vivid one's grasp, the more deeply one sees into these relationships, the farther along one is in this stage of the training. Some of this understanding requires the accumulation — sometimes years — of experience. This education is a lifelong affair.

The next step — not that these need to be separated in time — is the application of this growing understanding to the relationships between people and God. One needs to think about and practice seeing oneself in relation to God as child to parent, with the variety of complications that entails; and to think about it from both sides of the relationship. And as lover to lover, friend to friend, judged to judge, and all the rest.

The payoff of one's work — the propriety and caring for others, the comfort and solace, the elevation and dignity that are the concomitants of developed religious character — depend upon one's ability to negotiate the world feeling and acting in ways appropriate to just such relationships. One needs to feel and act as if one has a Godly parent, a Godly lover or friend, a Godly judge who sees all, a creator of inexorable laws of nature that proceed as if we didn't exist, even — I suspect — an angry, even vengeful Godly ruler — this last being more complicated and controversial.

Of course, one doesn't feel and act in these ways all the time, or all at the same time. Part of the skill — what takes training, practice, and experience — is to call upon, or be called upon by, the appropriate image at the appropriate time, sometimes a single image, sometimes multiple ones. The latter can be confusing, disconcerting, and it can be wonderful, sometimes both. At the death of a parent, for example, many of these images may strike: God as creator of inexorable laws of nature; God as friend and comforter; (and since belonging and community becomes so important at such times) God as focal point — glue, as it were — of the religious community, a community that extends horizontally — the present community — and vertically — the community over time; and perhaps others.

Ritualized prayer—something that also takes training and practice if it is to be more than mechanical (and even if it is merely mechanical)—provides another example of the sometimes confusing but wonderful multiplicity. In prayer, when it works, many of the magnificent images are summoned. One is provided with the opportunity of experiencing these relationships and of reflecting upon them, seeing more deeply into them, seeing new aspects all the time.

That there are multiple images, that they seem discordant — properties that make theory seem very far away — are thus rationalized. We don't do so by finding a theoretical account of God that puts the images in their right place. Rather the miscellany, the mixed multitude of robustly anthropomorphic ideas and images, facilitate the religious life.



I will close with some personal experiences, ones that illustrate for me something of the middle way. These do not reflect all of the issues discussed above; the middle way touches so many domains. But they do reflect especially my discussion of universalism and particularism. I will mention two experiences, both related to my life as a university professor.

I read this year an astounding account of the Palestinian experience, *Once Upon a Country*, by Sari Nusseibeh. It was a transforming experience, but one even exceeding by a related experience I will mention below. I went to Jerusalem this past June, to study Talmud, my practice for the past decade, and to engage in philosophical/theological/political discussions with Jerusalemites, again as I have for a decade every summer. Upon arriving I sent Dr. Nusseibeh an e-mail asking to see him, and we were able to set up a meeting at his office. He is President of Al Quds University in East Jerusalem.

My talk with Nusseibeh was astounding. As a Jew and an American, I am not privy to first-hand versions of Palestinian experience. I hear of that experience only through various filters. Dr. Nusseibeh and I talked philosophy for a while, and then we discussed the political situation. I very much appreciated his great insight, and his ability — rare in the Jewish community and the Palestinian community — to cut through the mythologies and show a genuine concern primarily for his own people but also for the other side.

At one point I asked, “What can I do to help?” His answer was astounding: “Palestinians need more philosophy. Come and give a lecture to our students.” I spent July back in the United States but my daughter who lives in Israel gave birth, as I mentioned before, in August and so my wife and I returned to Jerusalem. And my lecture at Al Quds materialized. It was a day I and my wife will never forget, the incredible beauty of East Jerusalem, a sense, even if only preliminary, for the people, the responses—some friendly, some wary, some a bit hostile, but all respectful—to my lecture. My wife and I made friends with several students who invited us to their homes, and a Professor of Islamic Studies invited me back to speak with his department. I don’t know what anyone can do about the deep divisions, social, political, religious, in the region. But human contact seems like a crucial step.

A second sort of experience concerns my teaching at the University of California, Riverside, my home campus. I teach, usually every year, a Introduction to Philosophy course that focuses on philosophy of religion. The population by university serves is very mixed, socially and religiously. My students are Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, Confucian, Hindu, etc. And I work hard in a very large class of some 300 students (as well as in the discussion sections) to get them to speak up, and to talk to one another. There was an ugly incident on campus a few years ago that concerned the verbal attack of one religious group on another, and there was great alienation across campus. At that very time, students in my classroom were speaking with great respect across these very lines. I commented to them about how our class is very much not like “the real world,” and how precious was what we were creating together.

I am the Director of the University Honors Program at UCR, and I and other faculty members occasionally give small seminars on special topics. My dream, and I’ve made some, but only some, progress in implementing it, is to conduct a seminar on peace in the middle east, and to take a number of students to Israel/Palestine to meet the respective communities and to experience the respective universities.

I very much look forward to the educational and social experience of engaging with people who are steeped in the thought of Fethullah Gülen.