

TRANSMISSION OF ISLAMIC KNOWLEDGE:  
AN ANALYSIS OF MEDIATION IN THE PRACTICES OF LEARNING  
WITHIN THE ISLAMIC HERITAGE OF TURKEY

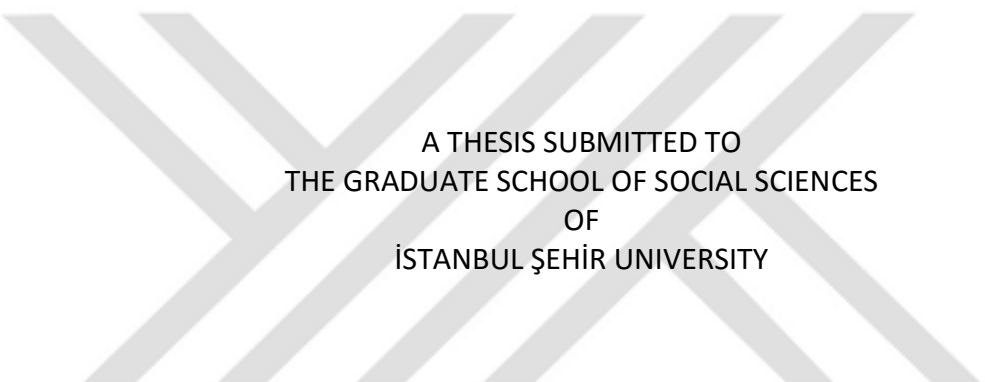


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İSTANBUL ŞEHİR UNIVERSITY

JUNE 2016

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ONUR ÜNVER

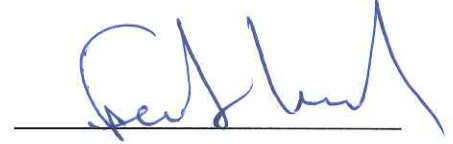
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR  
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This is to certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in Cultural Studies.

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I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

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A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Onur Ünver', written in a cursive style.

# ABSTRACT

TRANSMISSION OF ISLAMIC KNOWLEDGE:  
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MA, Department of Cultural Studies

Supervisor: Prof. Ferhat Kentel

June 2016, 123 pages

This thesis studies the learning practices and mediation forms in the transmission of Islamic knowledge within the cultural heritage of Turkey, with the aim of better understanding how the changes that occurred in these particular learning practices and mediation forms during the foundation of the Republic may have affected the Turkish society and the current approach to religion. For that, first, Islamic knowledge itself is analyzed theoretically, assuming the probability that mediation and practice are intrinsic and presupposed properties of the very knowledge. Second, learning practices and mediation forms are traced back to the traditional institutions within the Ottoman Empire, namely *medrese* and *tekke*, where transmission of Islamic knowledge occurred, and investigated through comparison. Third, the altered practices of knowledge transmission and the changing mediation forms within the current society are discussed in the light of the outcomes from the former investigations within the thesis. Consequently, the thesis claims that even though the tradition of seeking Islamic knowledge from a mediator persists in the society, the process itself has become a normative process instead of a transformative one; and that while previous practices of learning aimed to establish the self as a subject, current ones have been leading people more towards constructed identities.

Keywords: Islamic Knowledge, Knowledge Transmission, Mediation, Identity, Subject

# ÖZ

## İSLAMİ BİLGİNİN AKTARIMI: TÜRKİYE’NİN İSLAMİ GELENEĞİ İÇİNDE ÖĞRENME PRATİKLERİNDEKİ ARACILIĞIN ANALİZİ

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Bu tez, Türkiye’nin kültürel mirasında İslami bilgi aktarımı içerisindeki öğrenme pratikleri ve aracılık formları üzerine eğilmektedir, ve bunu yaparken de Cumhuriyet’in kurulumunda bu öğrenme pratikleri ve aracılık formlarında oluşan değişikliklerin şu anki toplumu ve dine karşı yaklaşımı nasıl etkilemiş olabileceğini daha iyi anlamaya çalışmaktadır. Bunun için de, öncelikle, İslami bilginin kendisi, aracılığın ve pratiğin bu bilgi anlayışının içkin ve önkabul olarak varsayılmış özellikleri olabileceği olasılığını da hesaba katarak, teoritik olarak analiz edilmektedir. Ardından, öğrenme pratikleri ve aracılık formlarının izleri Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nda İslami bilginin aktarımının gerçekleştiği geleneksel kurumlarda, yani medrese ve tekkede, sürülmektedir ve karşılaştırma ile incelenmektedir. Daha sonra da, şu anki toplumun tadil edilmiş bilgi aktarımı pratikleri ve değişen aracılık formları, tezin içerisindeki öncel çıkarımların ışığında tartışılmaktadır. Sonuç olarak, bu tez de iddia edilmektedir ki, İslami bilgiyi bir aracı üzerinden arama geleneği her ne kadar toplumda süregelse de, bu sürecin kendisi dönüştürücü bir süreçten çok düzgüsel bir sürece kaymıştır; ve geçmiş pratikler kişiyi özne haline getirmeyi amaçlarken, şimdikiler daha çok kurulmuş kimliklere yönlendirmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İslami Bilgi, Bilgi Aktarımı, Aracılık, Kimlik, Özne

To my wife, for always being there for me, and  
to my family, for their continuous support.



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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

This thesis aims to understand how the changes, which occurred in the Islamic learning practices during and after the establishment of the Turkish state, might have affected the current approach to religion and the perception of Islamic knowledge within the society. To be able to study these transformations, the changes that occurred within the forms of mediation are traced back through the Turkish-Islamic history. Thus, the focus of the thesis is on Islamic knowledge, the traditional forms of mediation within the transmission of this knowledge, and how these mediation forms are changed through centuries to potentially influence the current religious attitudes and understandings of the people in Turkey.

The interest in the topic of the thesis is triggered with the realization of the increasing popularity of the religious TV programs. Based on observations, it seems like the TV has lately become a tool, a mediation form for the transmission of Islamic knowledge. Hence, the possible causes and effects of this phenomenon becomes very intriguing. While researching on these, it is realized, as it will be analyzed in the next section, that in Turkey, many people do observe the Islamic rituals frequently; they pray, they fast, and they recite the *Kur'an* as a form of worship. However, interestingly they do not read its translation or exegesis; the situation is not much different among high school and college graduates as well. Then, one cannot help but wonder, from a very "modernist" perspective, why people do not study what they practice from the books. Can it be that the religion is not a divine/spiritual reference in Turkey anymore, but a bare element of the culture?

One should be careful dealing with questions like the ones above, because there is a possibility to fall in to a reductionist approach. It should not be overlooked that there may be intrinsic reasons embedded in the cultural codes and heritage that might have caused the phenomenon. As if to attest to the existence of this fallacy, Talal Asad claims: "Discourse involved in practice is not the same as that involved in

speaking about practice. It is a modern idea that a practitioner cannot know how to live religiously without being able to articulate that knowledge” (1993, p. 36). Then, the unsatisfied “modern” mind still raises more questions that if it is not from books and research, how do people know how to live religiously, and how do they gain their religious knowledge?

In the current society, according to statistics discussed in the next section, mediation may be the answer to these questions as a dominant theme in the transmission of Islamic knowledge. However, based on Asad’s warning-like assertion, it again becomes inevitable to further investigate the forms of mediation within the practices that are existent in the transmission of knowledge and the very understanding of knowledge itself within Turkey, in the search of any answers to these kinds of questions. That is why, to study the tendency to practice religion but not to investigate it individually, the reasons behind the abundance and dominance of mediators as the main resources of religious knowledge within current Turkey, and the possible link between practice and mediation, this thesis has to take up mediation and religious practices in three different contexts:

1. Theoretical context to see if mediation and practice is intrinsic to the understanding of knowledge within the cultural heritage of Turkey.
2. Historical context to understand how mediation was put into practice in the medieval times.
3. Current context to discuss the existing phenomenon in the light of previous contexts.

Since these are very general contexts, it becomes really hard to limit the topic into a specific era; however, as it will be discussed, the educational institutions of the past, namely the *medreses* and *tekkes*, comes to be quite useful as a framework to be able to study the topic through juxtaposing their outlook on the religion, their understanding of knowledge, and the different practices of knowledge transmission. This dichotomy, also proves very useful to shed some light onto the current society since the overhang of the differences between the two, no matter how intertwined they might have been, still shapes or is used as a tool to shape the perception of religion.

Utilizing this dichotomy, the thesis compares the forms of mediation thus the personal experience while acquiring knowledge between now and the medieval era and determines the transformations on the goals, processes, and results of these practices. It also explores the changes in people's outlook on religious knowledge, religious learning and the religion itself due to the transformations. Moreover, the thesis investigates if through these transformations, the ways people construct their identity and subjectivity is also altered through time. However, to be able to go into these discussions, first of all, it becomes necessary to establish the very existence of the phenomenon of mediation within current Turkey through scientific means, and that is why the statistics gathered to understand the religious life in Turkey by Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK)<sup>1</sup> for the Presidency of Religious Affairs is analyzed in detail within the next section.

### **1.1) Religious Life in Turkey: 2014 TÜİK Survey**

In this section, the underlying claim of this thesis, namely the existence, or more bluntly, the abundance and dominance of mediation and mediation forms within the Islamic education, is studied through the startling statistics published in 2014 about the religious life in Turkey. This study is conducted by the Turkish Statistical Institute, with the request of the Presidency of Religious affairs and it is the largest statistical study done to this day. That is why this thesis focuses on its analysis. Of course there are other various studies about the subject as well but their scopes are not as extensive. For example, Günay's study focuses on Erzurum (1999), Arslan's on Çorum (2004); Çarkoğlu and Toprak's study focuses on political and social issues (2006). KONDA's (2007) and Akşit's (2012) research results are somewhat more related with this thesis but again not as extensive, still they will also be referred shortly in this chapter.

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<sup>1</sup> TÜİK: Turkish Statistical Institute. The statistics are taken from the 2014 survey called "Türkiye'de Dini Hayat Araştırmaları" (Research on Religious Life in Turkey) which was conducted due to the request of the Presidency of Religious Affairs in Turkey (Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı).

According to the statistics published by TÜİK in 2014, Turkey is a dominantly Muslim country in which 99.2% of the people claim to be a Muslim (p. 3).<sup>2</sup> Therefore, it is only natural that the culture is intertwined with religious elements, and the presence of Islamic practices and references is strongly felt in the daily routine of its citizens. Here, life of an infant begins with *ezan* (call to the prayer), in the ears during the naming ceremony, and ends with the same call for the *cenaze namazı* (funeral prayer). This *ezan* continues to be heard every day, five times a day, in a person's life and 42.5% of the people strictly observes this worship (TÜİK, 2014, p. 44).<sup>3</sup> On Fridays, at least 57.4% of the men stop working and crowd the mosques for *cuma namazı* (Friday prayers), usually overflowing to streets (TÜİK, 2014, p. 51).<sup>4</sup> During the whole month of *Ramazan* (Ramadan) 83.4% of the people start *oruç* (fasting), with the morning *ezan*, restaurants close till sundown, and big feasts are prepared for the poor inside municipality tents till another *ezan* announces the break of the fast (TÜİK, 2014, p. 72).<sup>5</sup> *Ezan* also marks the start of both of *bayram* (Eid holidays), and 77.1% of the men joins *bayram namazı* (Eid prayers) in the mornings (TÜİK, 2014, p. 57). These religious practices obviously have quite a role in the society.

Interestingly, in all these traditional practices engraved in the daily lives of Turkish citizens, one element of Islam always comes forth quite apparently and almost as a manifestation of religious affiliation: *Kur'an* in its Arabic form. For example, *ezan* in Turkey is in Arabic, and all the recitations of *Kur'an* during the prayer are also in the original form, Arabic. Thus, it should not be very surprising that 41.9% of the people in Turkey can recite the *Kur'an* in Arabic (TÜİK, 2014, p. 88). However, it is noteworthy that 67.9% of these people actually spends time reciting it every week; 84.2% of these recites it at least once every month (TÜİK, 2014, p. 90).<sup>6</sup> Many Turkish women gather for *mukabele* to recite the *Kur'an* to each other, and many Turkish men gather for *sohbet*, where they listen both to some Islamic preaching and

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<sup>2</sup> According to KONDA's survey, 96.6% of the people are believers, and 62.5% are practicing the religion.

<sup>3</sup> 43.9% in KONDA's survey. In Akşit's study, 31.2% prays regularly, 46.4 prays very often.

<sup>4</sup> 56.1% in KONDA's survey.

<sup>5</sup> 82.5% in KONDA's survey. In Akşit's study, 88.9% fasts, but 73.3% claims to fast very often.

<sup>6</sup> 26.3% in KONDA's survey "reads" it regularly, 31.2% "reads" it once in a while. The statistics does not differentiate the knowledge of Arabic recitation. In Akşit's study, 40,5% reads/recites the Kur'an in Arabic.

recitation of *Kur'an*. Since children are usually at the stage of learning how to recite *Kur'an*, they usually attend courses in mosques during the summer holidays. The recitation is also common as a part of the rituals after people pass away as a commemoration, or when people are sick or in need of some sort of help as an element of invocation. Moreover, since *Sünnet*, the exemplary life of Prophet Muhammed, permeates people's most basic activities like eating, drinking, dressing, and even toilette etiquette, shaping them through reenactment, people inherit and commonly use various Arabic vocabulary in their daily lives. For example, people begin every activity with *besmele* (with the name of Allah), greet each other with *selâmun aleyküm* (peace be upon you), say *inşallah* (Allah willing) when acknowledging wishes, and *mâşallah* (Allah has willed it) when they express praise.

As exemplified, since such religious rituals are embedded into people's daily routine from one's birth till burial, it is natural to assume that some of this religious knowledge is actually learned through observation and hearsay starting from childhood to some extent. However, it is surprising that 51.8% of the people in Turkey actually attain most of their religious knowledge before the age of 10; 81.9% before the age of 13; and 91.3% before the age of 16 (TÜİK, 2014, p. 111). Considering Piaget's cognitive development theory, which states that children start to develop the ability of abstract thinking at the age of 11 or higher, it can be claimed that most people in Turkey gain their religious knowledge without the fully-functioning ability of abstraction (Keklik, 2011, p. 72). These percentages also mean that people do not really add much on to their previous religious knowledge in the following years, when they are considered adults, even though the very religion they believe in advices or even mandates the pursuit of knowledge as it will be discussed in the following chapter of this thesis.

Statistics also show that 91.8% of people in Turkey states their close family and friends as a source of their religious knowledge; 43% also points to religious staff (*imam* and *müezzin*) from the Presidency of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*); and 24.6% includes TV, radio, newspapers, and magazines as a bases of their religious knowledge (TÜİK, 2014, p. 113). Similarly, most people (83.4%) claim their family and close friends as their main and most important source of religious knowledge; then, many (30%) considers the religious staff at the mosques as the

second most important source; and some people (22.2%) accepts TV, radio, newspapers and magazines as their third most important source (TÜİK, 2014, p. 122). In contrast, only 1.9% of the people in Turkey sees books as their main source of religious knowledge; 8.6% sees it as their second most important source and 17.5% of the people only considers it as a third source (TÜİK, 2014, p. 117).<sup>7</sup> These statistics do not change much among people who have graduated from high school or university either.

If over 90% of the people gains their religious knowledge before the age of 16, it seems only natural that they had their family as their main and most important resource of information; then they might met and learned from *imams* at the mosques or *Kur'an* courses, or they had easy access to TV, radio etc. However, what is most striking is that, when people above the age of 18 are asked about their primary choices of resources for learning new things about their religion, they again claimed the staff from the Presidency of Religious Affairs (24.9%), religious programs on the TV and radio (23.3%), and people around them with religious knowledge (20.7%) (TÜİK, 2014, p. 126). Books are again a less preferred option, even among university graduates: only 14.7% of them refers to books from Presidency of Religious Affairs and 14.3% refers to books from other publishers (TÜİK, 2014, p. 126). Moreover, again after the age of 18, 34.3% of the people never reads *meal*, the Turkish translation of *Kur'an*, and 49.1% never reads *tefsir*, exegesis, or in other words, explanations of the verses (*âyet*) in *Kur'an*, even if they know how to read and write in Turkish (TÜİK, 2014, pp. 95-96).<sup>8</sup> Therefore, even though people pass the abstraction and reasoning stage as adults, they do not lean much towards researching the questions that they have on their own, nor towards resources like books, even to the translations of *Kur'an* itself. Instead, when people have a question 65.6% of them asks their close relatives and friends; %58.9 asks the *imam* and *müezzin*; 17.9% asks *müftü* and *vâiz*, 17.2% to *Kur'an* course teachers, 12.6% to religious TV show hosts,

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<sup>7</sup> In KONDA's survey, when people are asked about their preferences about where their children should learn about religious knowledge, 44.2% said their families, 26.1% *Kur'an* courses, 19.7% schools, 5.9% *imam-hatip* schools, and only 3.4% answered as books. In Akşit's study, 47.1% prefers the family as the best source of religious knowledge, 24.1% prefers a *hoca*, and 13.8% books, 6.9% schools.

<sup>8</sup> In Akşit's study, 35.8% never reads the *Kur'an* in any format, 13.1% only reads it from the Arabic version without understanding its meaning.



11.3% to people from their religious groups; and 5.4% of the people calls the *Alo Fetva* (legal opinion or learned interpretation) call center of Presidency to get information about their questions (TÜİK, 2014, p. 139). Only 4.3% of the people, and 6.2% of university graduates do not claim the need to seek advice (these two statistics also include people who do not have any religious questions).

From all the statistics above, it is quite obvious that most people in Turkey acquire their knowledge from a mediated resource in their early childhood or adolescence and they still prefer to have a mediator to reach new religious knowledge and to ask questions about religion, whether the mediator is a family member or a friend, an appointed staff at the mosque, a person they trust with their religious knowledge, even if they are on the TV/radio. This need becomes related with the abundance of mediators in the society as some listed in the paragraph above; only the number of the staff employed under the Presidency of Religious Affairs is close to one hundred and twenty thousand (Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı, 2014).

With such statistics one wonders why people prefer a mediator in the first place. Of course one can easily claim that religion has become a mere tradition that is passed from generation to generation via observation and hearsay, and people would like to continue their habits in learning, but then the question becomes about why religion has become so, especially while this traditional approach contradicts the many verses of *Kur'an* which denounces people who believes in a religion upon which they found their fathers: "When it is said to them: "Follow what Allah hath revealed:" They say: "Nay! We shall follow the ways of our fathers." What! Even though their fathers were void of wisdom and guidance?" (*Kur'an* 2:170)<sup>9</sup>. The answer to why mediation has become so widespread, accepted and sought after, seems to require more than a situation analysis that is an *archeological* (in Foucault's definition) research on the transmission of knowledge in the Turkish-Islamic tradition, in other words within the history of Islamic education. Thus the main goal of this thesis is to create a background and a stepping-stone for such immense endeavor and for that, the methodology and the theoretical framework that is followed is explained in the following section.

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<sup>9</sup> All the *Kur'anic* references are written in the (*Kur'an Sûre/Surah: Âyet/Ayah*) format to make it easier to follow and the translation of the Saheeh International is used for the quotations (2004).

## 1.2) Methodology & Theoretical Framework

This thesis investigates the importance of mediation in the transmission of Islamic knowledge, especially within the Turkish-Islamic tradition, to better understand the possible reasons behind the abundance and dominance of mediators as the main resources of religious education in current Turkey, with an underlying question that if this situation has any effects on the perception of religion, intellectual inquiry, and identity formation in a broader sense. From a different perspective, this thesis is asking if it is possible that the concept of knowledge within the *Sünnî*-Islamic heritage of Turkey is so distant to the “modern” rationalistic perspective that it may become hard for us, the “modern” outsiders, to comprehend and analyze the practices of the transmission of knowledge and the relation of mediation to these practices. In other words, due to the very nature of this knowledge and its perception, is it at all possible that there is more to what meets the “modern” eye about the transmission of Islamic knowledge? Bluntly, the thesis is questioning if there would be a possible and feasible reason within the cultural heritage of learning practices why mediation is so central to the transmission of Islamic knowledge, so much so that knowledge itself needs a unique signification. If that is the case how does this heritage affect the current practices and understanding of religion?

To be able to study the questions above, in the second chapter, the nature and perception of knowledge with its connotations within this very culture is analyzed through theoretical study, almost in a theological sense, and comparison of knowledge within the traditional and inter-cultural contexts. Thus, first the understanding of knowledge is differentiated from the secular, rationalistic, ‘westernized’ or ‘modern’ Turkish understanding as well as from *episteme* and *gnosis*. Then the cultural understanding of knowledge is reconstructed through the analysis of *Kur’an* and *Sünnet*, the canonical texts of Islam to show that practice and mediation are intrinsic to its transmission.<sup>10</sup> Afterwards, the digression from this understanding

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<sup>10</sup> There are discussions about the validity of *Sünnet* and *Hadis* as the canonical texts of Islam and some Muslims refer to *Kur’an* as the only main resource. However, in the *Sünnî*-Turkish culture, the former is also widely accepted, and thus has a dominant effect in the understanding of religion within the public.

as the *Sûfî*'s point of view<sup>11</sup> is studied under the name of *mârifet*, to highlight its absolute, certain and transcendental qualities. All along, the foundation to discuss the necessity of mediation and the required practice to attain it both embedded in the signification of Islamic knowledge is laid out.

In the third chapter, the historical practices of Islamic education in two different institutions, namely the *medrese* and *tekke*, are juxtaposed with the intention of grasping the place of mediation and practice in the transmission of knowledge within the cultural heritage. The comparison between the two is used to study and bring out the manifestations of the theoretical differences within various understandings of knowledge, which are analyzed in the previous chapter. From this perspective, the learning practices in the *medreses* are shortly handled, and the nuances like the authority of the teacher within the transmission of knowledge during the time of Ottoman Empire is explained. Afterwards, the *tekke* culture is deeply investigated, since the difference between their learning practices and today's seemed a lot more significant compared to the ones in *medreses*. To be able to grasp the practices fully, the discussion turned into *Sûfîsm*. Within that discussion, the disciplining processes of the *tekke*, controlling the desires and stripping the attachments of the ego, is studied through Foucault's theory of "technologies of the self" to see how these practices are related to construction of a subject – the *Sûfî* – in contrast to the "technologies of power" exercised in the *medreses*, which only leads to the construction of identities. In this context, power relations between *mürîd* and *mürşîd*, and the individual experiences emerged in relation to religious knowledge are analyzed to understand how *tekkes* affected the understanding of religion in those days. Besides, the self-disciplinary practices are considered as "art of existence" in Foucault's terms, and discussed from the perspective of art history, which helped to bring up the paradoxical ways of thinking within this culture. Next, due to the intrinsic need of mediation in the understanding of Islamic knowledge learning, the role of the *mürşîd*, the guide is discussed and laid out from popular stories and famous *Sûfî* texts. In addition to the metaphysical need of the *mürşîd* in the path of enlightenment, which is explained in this chapter thoroughly, his role in

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<sup>11</sup> There are various *Sûfî* perspectives within the Turkish culture, I prefer to stick to the one close to İbn Arabî's theoretic foundations.

this process of embodying moral dispositions as an authority and role-model is also investigated through Bourdieu's concept of *Habitus*.

In the fourth chapter, the rupture from the traditional ways of learning with the reforms of the founders of Turkish Republic is studied. To be able to do that, initially, the potential influence of the *medreses* and *tekkes* over the public is discussed through historical statistics. Then the new forms of mediation as well as the new ways of transmission of Islamic knowledge are outlined. Hence, the transformations within the institutions of religious education and religious people are stated, and the new sources of authority and their utilization by the state are discussed through Althusser's theory of "ideological state apparatus". The effects of the newly constructed public space through the rupture from the tradition for the "modern" is analyzed and the struggle and resistance of the groups left outside this new space to re-exist is studied through de Certeau's conceptualization of *tactics* and *strategies*. Then, looking into preaching in the mosques and the religious shows on the TV, the formation of new identities is questioned using recent papers and publications, especially from the field of communication studies. Moreover, using Neil Postman's theories, the effects of these newly utilized mediums of religious knowledge transmission are investigated and their entertainment values are debated. In other words, through de Certeau's perspective, how the new ways of consuming religious knowledge produces new forms of religious practice and understanding is discussed.

Having identified the power relations revolving around mediation and knowledge, the thesis finally leads to questions of secularity in the daily practices of the citizens, as well as the extension of the mediation to other fields of power; thus it turns into a question of the citizen's subjectivity in general.

## CHAPTER 2

# UNDERSTANDING OF “KNOWLEDGE” IN THE SÜNNÎ- ISLAMIC HERITAGE OF TURKEY

### 2.1) *‘ilm* as a Unique Signifier of Knowledge

Throughout this thesis, the discussion over “knowledge” and the practices of its transmission revolves around the *Sünnî*-Islamic cultural heritage of Turkey; therefore, I first intended to use the Turkish counterpart of the word “knowledge”, namely *ilim*, to also signify the unique aspects attached to this concept within this background. However, I soon realized that *ilim*, is considered synonymous to *bilim* (science, knowledge of nature) in the Turkish Language Association’s (TDK) dictionary (Türk Dil Kurumu, 2016), and it is ripped from any of its probable religious connotations. This reductionist definition as a manifestation of the *constructionist* approach deliberately taken by the state institutions (*apparatus*) to reform the national identity, is the very reason behind this thesis: to investigate the intrinsic signification of knowledge from the traditional perspective given above and to determine the effects of this understanding on the transmission of it. Therefore, I will use the transliteration of the Arabic term for knowledge, *‘ilm* (علم in Arabic) as a signifier when also referring to all the cultural understanding, connotations and implications attached to it.<sup>12</sup>

Within this framework, I believe that *‘ilm* is a unique and a paradoxical concept, which is critical to understand for the purposes of this study, and cannot be represented easily. Thus, to differentiate this term from the common understanding of knowledge and strip it from any probable *presuppositions*, especially from the

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<sup>12</sup> I chose to use *‘ilm* - the Arabic transliteration of علم in Hans Wehr system- instead of the Turkish word *ilim* to avoid any confusion because in the official TDK dictionary, *ilim* is shown synonymous to *bilim* (science, knowledge of nature), and is ripped from any probable religious connotations, which is against the whole argument in this thesis.

ideological Western ones, I will start with the very basic question of what knowledge is and then step by step re-construct what *'ilm* actually signifies within the context of this thesis.

To a general Western or Western influenced reader, the *signification* of knowledge, so the answer to the question above would be similar to the following definition: "Facts, information and skills acquired through experience or education, the theoretical and practical understanding of a subject" (Oxford University, 2010, p. 976). Similar to this Western perspective, knowledge could also translate into *bilgi* (synonymous to *bilim*) in Turkish, which again according to Turkish Language Association (TDK) means "the collection of facts, realities and principles that a human intellect can achieve... by thinking and through learning, research and observation; the basic ideas the mind grasps at the first intuition (Türk Dil Kurumu, 2016). In philosophical terms, Plato defines it as *episteme*, which is considered "reliably justified true belief" as opposed to general or popular opinion (*doxa*) (Steup, 2015). Many more answers could also be given from the lineage of epistemology, one of which would be "the connection between the subject and the object" (Filiz Ş. , 2014, p. 13). That is to say, when a subject gravitates towards an object (attitude) and the object influences back with its binary state: appearance and reality; hence the knowledge occurs (Filiz Ş. , 2014, p. 14).

Unfortunately, these probable answers to the question of what knowledge is, or any other answer that could be picked from the Western/Westernized perspective, runs into unresolved philosophical debates, whether concerning the duality of the Subject and the Object, which questions the reliability of the influence among these two in terms of appearance, perceptions and reality, or whether actually concerning the possibility of knowledge itself. Actually, these debates are one of the main reasons behind the need to distinguish *'ilm* from *episteme*; therefore, even though I do not at all aim to enter these debates in this thesis, to distinguish *'ilm* from *episteme*, I find it useful to briefly lay out the general course of thought in *epistemology*.

In the dominant Western Philosophical tradition, according to *sensualism*, one knows things by sensing them, smelling, touching, seeing, simply by experiencing things with the five senses. This kind of knowledge gained through sensations is observational, descriptive and personal, dependent on subjective experiences.

*Empiricism* also puts sensations as the source of ideas but, since mankind is capable of dealing with thoughts that cannot be experienced like infinity, it does not reduce knowledge to intellectual productions resulted solely through various experiences. Instead, it tries to understand and categorize sensed experiences to reach conclusions. *Positivism* is not very different from the predecessors either. However, even though sensations are still the basis of knowledge, it takes experience one step further, and tries to remove any personal or social influence on knowledge, isolating it to reach positive facts or more reliable knowledge using logic and mathematical equations etc. However, it limits knowledge within the human mind, within the sphere of intellect as the source of innate knowledge. Similarly *rationalism* regards reason as the chief source of knowledge; *solipsism* even takes it a step further and claims that anything outside of one's own mind cannot be certain. After all, *skepticism* questions the validity of all human knowledge.

The main issue with all these movements in *epistemology* can be summed in the *regress problem (diallelus)*, which points out the problem of providing a logical foundation for human knowledge. According to this argument, any proposition, any reasoning requires a justification and this creates an infinite loop which is impossible to break due to lack of a true base statement (Steup, 2015). Therefore, they all lack certainty. On the other hand, another problem is that the philosophical schools all base knowledge on sensations and experiences, and/or limit the sphere of knowledge within the human intellect and logic. *Idealism* somewhat seems to differ in this issue in which knowledge is based not solely on experiences but on *a priori* or it is *innate*. However, still the *a priori*, or the *innate* knowledge that *episteme* signifies depends purely on reason, mathematical equations, tautologies or logic. Derrida, actually points out the problem here with his question: "Is not the idea of knowledge and of the theory of knowledge in itself metaphysical?" (Derrida, 1973, p. 5). I believe, he basically is referring to the *regress problem*, and stating that when you trace back all the logical statements, at some point you will have to rely on an assertion that is of the metaphysical type like *signifiers*. This is where *'ilm* differentiates from all the previously stated philosophical schools.

First of all, *'ilm*, as it will be discussed in the next part, is unquestionably precise and absolute due to its religious connotations; *'ilm* actually originates from

the knowledge of Allah, or the knowledge handed down from Allah, the ultimate source for the believer. Second, while all the previously stated philosophical schools trust the mind to grasp the tangible as well as the intangible, the Prophet trusts Allah; that is to say, the prophet claims that ideas including the likes of infinity and having no dimensions are all innate attributes of Allah, not just notions peculiar of the mind (Filiz Ş. , 2014). Therefore, within the Islamic perspective, “the root of the concepts that do not have a direct correspondence to the outer world is not the mind (or the world) itself but another “world” which is above and beyond this human mind (Filiz Ş. , 2014, pp. 204, 205). At this point, the *forms (ideas)* of Plato and his *cave allegory*, may give some insight on the understanding of *‘ilm*, especially if one correlates the *forms* to the attributes/names (*esmâ*) of Allah; however it is still distant from complying its signification. In short, we can claim that the main difference between knowledge (*episteme*) and *‘ilm* is that “while all the philosophical schools start and finish the process of knowledge in the same sphere” (Filiz Ş. , 2014, p. 213), Islamic doctrine creates an epistemic and ontic relationship with the metaphysical world” (Filiz Ş. , 2014, p. 212). That is why none of these philosophical approaches towards knowledge could actually satisfy what *‘ilm* signifies.

One can say that *gnosis*, the spiritual or mystical knowledge, is separated from *episteme* in a similar way and claim that even the Western philosophies has left an opening for this kind of probable and metaphysical source of knowledge, suggesting that we can use *gnosis* as an alternative to *‘ilm*. However, it is critical to acknowledge that the theologies, so the real source of knowledge is very different between alternative religions. Especially in the understanding of the creator and on the belief of *tevhid* (unity and oneness of Allah), Islam differentiates from other religions; thus so its mysticism. On top of that, while *gnosis* is generally understood as exclusively spiritual, *‘ilm* is uniquely intertwined with and even is an encapsulating term for all sorts of knowledge. As it will be discussed in the following sections, *‘ilm* not only transgress the intellect and reaches the supreme transcendental divine plans but at the same time comes into this very life with its practicality, through imitation diffuses into the minute details of being; even encapsulates attributes which cannot be easily acquired with what we understand from studying and learning like modesty or love. Hence, it is best to stick to *‘ilm* as a signifier while discussing knowledge during the



course of this paper because the issues I refer to in this study surely have roots and connections to the prominent Islamic culture traditionally carried over and still being actively observed in Turkey as exemplified in the introduction. In addition, stressing the cultural Islamic connotations through the deliberate usage of this term is important since they may actually have underlying effects for the current attitudes of the Turkish people towards knowledge and learning. That is why, to better understand the mediation phenomenon in question, the understanding of *'ilm* in the given cultural frame should be traced back to the canonic Islamic resources, namely *Kur'an*, *Hadis* (recorded verbal statements of the prophet Muhammed) and *Sünnet* (practices and deeds of the prophet)<sup>13</sup>, which intersect with and feed each other, as well as to *Sünnî* and *Sûfî*<sup>14</sup> traditions that dominated the Turkish culture since the medieval times.

## 2.2) *'ilm* in *Kur'an*

In this thesis, while studying mediation within the transmission of Islamic knowledge in Turkey, the underlying question becomes related directly to the perception of knowledge, to be exact, it is about how *'ilm* is perceived and regarded through the lenses inherited from the *Sünnî*-Islamic roots in Turkey and if this understanding has any effect on how mediation comes into play during the transmission of it. Therefore, since it is now clear that *'ilm* has religious connotations, first of all, I need to study the perspective of Holy Scriptures –*Kur'an*, *Hadis* and *Sünnet*– on *'ilm* because they are considered the main canonical resources in Islam. It can be pointed out that some sects in Islam, even those in Turkey, do not believe in or still debate about either the whole or some the parts of the *Hadis* and *Sünnet*, but this claim would not necessarily require me to go into a debate about this. Since *Hadis* and *Sünnet* are mostly accepted and widespread in Turkey's Islamic written and

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<sup>13</sup> The term *Sünnet* can be used interchangeably with *Hadis* in some sources, and in that case includes the latter.

<sup>14</sup> *Sünnî* and *Sûfî* traditions are quite intertwined within the Turkish-Islamic cultural heritage, thus I chose not to exclude the latter from the former when referring to the overarching cultural background as a whole.

oral tradition and they are used as examples and keys to pursue a righteous living, I will include them in this study.

Keeping this context in mind, when we are talking about *'ilm*, the very first thing to notice in *Kur'an* is that Allah declares Himself<sup>15</sup> as the *alîm* (derived from the same root of *'ilm*), the all-knowing. According to *Kur'an*, *alîm* is an attribute or one of the names (*esmâ*) of Allah and its meaning is explained vividly in the following verses:

And with Him are the keys of the unseen; none knows them except Him. And He knows what is on the land and in the sea. Not a leaf falls but that He knows it. And no grain is there within the darknesses of the earth and no moist or dry [thing] but that it is [written] in a clear record (*Kur'an* 6:59). He knows the unseen (aspects) of the heavens and the earth, and what one reveals or have concealed (*Kur'an* 2:33). He knows what is within yourselves (*Kur'an* 2:235).

According to these verses above, His knowledge not only encompasses all but it also goes beyond the limits of the creation. There are things that are only known to Him and this distinction is made very clear in *Kur'an*. During the creation of man, for example, when the angels question Allah if He is going to create someone who will cause corruption and shed blood on earth, He tells them that He knows that which they do not know (*Kur'an* 2:30). Similarly, when people question the Prophet about the soul, *Kur'an* seems to bluntly define the boundaries of human knowledge by stating: "The soul is of the affair of my Lord. And mankind have not been given of knowledge except a little." (*Kur'an* 17:85)<sup>16</sup>. As observed, Allah's *'ilm* not only surpasses the human mind, but it is also goes beyond the limits of any physical or metaphysical being; it is a self-originated attribute.

Besides, Allah is not just all-knowing, He also claims the ownership of all *'ilm*, like everything else, in the famous *Âyetü'l-Kürsî* (the Throne Verse). In this very verse, Allah states that no one can get a hold/grasp of His *'ilm* without His permission (*Kur'an* 2:255). Therefore, it can only be His will and generosity, a favor towards mankind that He decided to hand down some of His *'ilm*, (*Kur'an* 27:15). *Kur'an*, in the story of creation already mentioned above, actually gives a detailed portraiture

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<sup>15</sup> In this thesis He is used while talking about Allah to be more consistent with the general English usage for God. However, it should be noted that this or any other sexual or gendered representation is not really suitable in Islam. It should be noted that due to the *Rahmân* and *Rahîm* attributes of Allah, which at the root of the words are related to "womb". Therefore, the signifier "She" could have also been chosen when referring to Allah.

<sup>16</sup> Another interpretation to this verse, which leaves an opening for people to attain this kind of knowledge will be discussed in the following chapters.

of the moment when Allah decides on sharing some parts of His *'ilm* with a new creation, that is to say Adam – the mankind. He teaches Adam all the *esmâ* –names or attributes of Allah, or names of the things– and asks the angels to prostrate before him. (*Kur'an* 2:31-34). Actually this bestowed quality upon mankind is so great that, not only the Angels prostrate before Adam, but with this *'ilm*, he becomes the *halife* (caliph, the successive authority on Earth) (*Kur'an* 2:30). Therefore, according to *Kur'an*, it is clear that *'ilm* of mankind, or at least some part of it, is *innate*, a gift of the creator – not something studied or gained. Given this information, we can claim that the *regress problem* raised in the previous section does not really exist for the Islamic doctrine since Allah is the unquestionable source and owner of all *'ilm*, and a fundamental part of this self-existent *'ilm* is passed onto mankind. That is to say, in Islam, any true statement can be traced back to Him and the *'ilm* he has bestowed upon mankind as a foundation for new statements.

It is obvious from the verses described above in which angels prostrate to Adam that from the very beginning, Islam has a structure of hierarchy due to the possession of *'ilm* and there is a definite and clear direction that the transmission occurs – from Allah to Adam, hierarchically from top to bottom. As *Kur'an* states: “over every possessor of knowledge is one [more] knowing” (*Kur'an* 12:76) and Allah, as the *alîm*, stands at the top of this hierarchy. Then, as He passes on the *'ilm* to Adam –the first of the Prophets- on behalf of mankind, He also automatically declares Himself as the teacher and Adam as the student, and establishes the up-to-down course of transmission of *'ilm*. Thereafter, like Adam, all the other prophets becomes the addressee of Allah’s teaching in a lineage<sup>17</sup>, Muhammed being the last, and successively they, in return, also teach mankind as their disciples:

[To Joseph:] And when Joseph reached maturity, We gave him judgment and knowledge. And thus We reward the doers of good (*Kur'an* 12:22). [To Abraham:] O my father, indeed there has come to me of knowledge that which has not come to you, so follow me; I will guide you to an even path (*Kur'an* 19:43). [To Moses:] And when he attained his full strength and was [mentally] mature, We bestowed upon him judgment and knowledge. And thus do We reward the doers of good (*Kur'an* 28:14). [To David & Solomon:] And We had certainly given to David and Solomon knowledge, and they said, ‘Praise [is due] to Allah, who has favored us over many of His believing servants’ (*Kur'an* 27:15). [To Lot:] And to Lot We gave judgment and

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<sup>17</sup> It is known that Allah, Himself teaches the prophets, because *Kur'an* itself rejects people who claim: “It is only a human being who teaches the prophet” (*Kur'an* 16:103). Also Joseph (*Yusuf*) clearly states in *Kur'an* that his ability to interpret dreams comes from what Allah has thought him (*Kur'an* 12:37).

knowledge, and We saved him from the city that was committing wicked deeds. Indeed, they were a people of evil, defiantly disobedient (*Kur'an* 21:74).

Similar to other prophets, knowledge was bestowed upon Muhammed as well, as the following verse declares: "Allah has revealed to you the Book and wisdom and has taught you that which you did not know. And ever has the favor of Allah upon you been great" (*Kur'an* 4:113). Interestingly though, even though *'ilm* is a given gift, a revelation to the Prophet, Muhammed's very first *vahiy* (revelation of *Kur'anic* verses) from Allah was a mandate to "Read/Recite!"<sup>18</sup> In other words, when Allah decided to transfer some of His *'ilm* to His prophet Muhammed, He actually ordered him to read/recite, ordered him to undertake the reading/reciting of the Book He revealed. The angel Gabriel (*Cebrâil*), which brings him the mandate, actually repeats this order three times before revealing the rest: "Read/Recite in the name of your Lord who created – created man from a clinging substance. Read/Recite, and your Lord is the most Generous – who thought by the pen – thought man that which he knew not" (*Kur'an* 96:1-5). It should be noted that at the beginning of the teaching process, the very first order Allah gives to His prophet Muhammed is to read, whether it is about reading the *Kur'anic* verses, in other words reciting the very verses (*âyet*) he received, or about reading the universal truths and miracles (*âyet*, the same word that signifies a verse) of Allah. Whichever the interpretation, the emphasis within the first revelation is clearly on personal endeavor or personal application during the transmission of *'ilm*. It should also be noted that Allah explicitly states that He teaches by the pen; and it is the angel Gabriel who brings the revelation to Muhammed. Thus, it would not be wrong to claim that there are various levels of mediators in the transmission of Allah's *'ilm*. In short, with this very first verse, Allah not only declares the source of *'ilm* as Himself from the very beginning, He mandates an endeavor to gain *'ilm* kind of like a requirement, and hints at a mediated path of learning which is transmitted from the top to bottom, both at the same time.

As inferred from the very first revelations above, even though teaching, at least in its initial form, is represented as a grace in Islam, learning *'ilm* is actually a must, a mandate because *'ilm* is not only a bestowed, innate and esteemed human quality, which even causes the angels to prostrate before man, but it is something

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<sup>18</sup> This Arabic word in the *Kur'an* can be translated into both "to read" and "to recite".

that should also be sought after, something that requires some sort of endeavor like reading/reciting. In other words *'ilm* is a quality both granted and acquired at the same time; in a sense *'ilm* is an act of accepting two mutually contradictory beliefs as correct, which is almost like a positive manifestation of George Orwell's *doublethink* in life.<sup>19</sup> To better understand this complexity, it is necessary to look further into *Kur'an* to see how *'ilm* is defined, explained, and treated. For that, first of all, I have searched for vocabulary that are derived from the grammatical root of *'ilm* which is *'alm* in *Kur'an* like *'alleme* and *'aliym*. This, I think, was enough to reveal the general outline of *'ilm* and the attitude towards it.

In the verses, for example, there are many references to people who possess *'ilm* and *Kur'an* clearly glorifies them in many places. As stated before, the verses in *Kur'an* are called *âyet*, which also means signs, examples or miracles shown to mankind. Keeping both of these meanings in mind, *Kur'an* states that to be able to understand Allah's message either through the verses or through the signs in the universe, one needs *'ilm*: "And these examples We present to the people, but none will understand them except those of knowledge [*âlimûn*]" (*Kur'an* 29:43). In this verse, *'ilm* seems like a requirement to understanding God's examples, and through the examples his presence and his message. Similarly the following verse clearly states that the only witnesses that know that there is no deity except Allah are again those of *'ilm*. "Allah witnesses that there is no deity except Him, and [so do] the angels and those of knowledge [*ulul-'ilm*] - [that He is] maintaining [creation] in justice. There is no deity except Him, the Exalted in Might, the Wise." (*Kur'an* 3:18). To put it simply, those who possess *'ilm* knows Allah, His supremacy, and his manifestation as the only deity; that is probably why in *Kur'an* it is clearly stated that people who know and do not are not equal: "Is one who is devoutly obedient during periods of the night, prostrating and standing [in prayer], fearing the Hereafter and hoping for the mercy of his Lord, [like one who does not]? Say, 'Are those who know equal to those who do not know?' Only they will remember [who are] people of

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<sup>19</sup> Doublethink: "The term is widely used to describe a capacity to engage in one line of thought in one situation (at work, in a certain group, in business, etc.) and another line in another situation (at home, in another group, in private life), without necessarily sensing any conflict between the two." (McArthur, 1992, p. 321) See *The Oxford Companion to the English Language* for further information.

understanding [*ulul-elbab*]” (*Kur’an* 39:9). Here it is clear that *‘ilm* is a virtue in *Kur’an*, a merit for men whose intellect is considered the recipient of Allah’s message. Moreover, *‘ilm* brings out respect for Allah. The more one understands about his surroundings the more he respects the creation of Allah. “And among people and moving creatures and grazing livestock are various colors similarly. Only those fear Allah, from among His servants, who have knowledge [*ulemâ*]. Indeed, Allah is Exalted in Might and Forgiving.” (*Kur’an* 35:28). All these verses exemplify the importance of *‘ilm* for people in the eyes of Allah, which makes it clear why it is bestowed to humankind in the first place and seems like a quality that people should aspire for, but interestingly all of the referrals are to the people who already possess *‘ilm*, in a way *Kur’an* mostly exalts the *‘ilm* that is already there as a given, not specifically a knowledge that is gained.

In parallel, the following verses also support that *‘ilm* as a given quality, not only to Muslims, but also to previous societies of belief. “Say, ‘Believe in it or do not believe. Indeed, those who were given knowledge [*utul-‘ilm*] before it - when it is recited to them, they fall upon their faces in prostration, and they say, “Exalted is our Lord! Indeed, the promise of our Lord has been fulfilled” (*Kur’an* 17:107-108). The people who were given knowledge are “the people of the holy books” like Jews and Christians. According to Islam, they knew the true message of Allah and they were expecting a new prophet to reveal it; therefore, when they hear the recitation of *Kur’an* they confirm it as the truth. Since *‘ilm* existed before Islam, we can claim that the *‘ilm* that is praised in *Kur’an* is not only the knowledge of Islam but the *‘ilm* of Allah’s true message and His presence, or his names (*esmâ*) bestowed upon Adam during creation. The following verse clarifies this as well: “And so those who were given knowledge [*utul-‘ilm*] may know that it is the truth from your Lord and [therefore] believe in it, and their hearts humbly submit to it. And indeed is Allah the guide of those who have believed to a straight path.” (*Kur’an* 22:54) Here Allah calls out to people who were given *‘ilm* beforehand, and tells them that they should know that this new text is also genuinely descending from Him and they should submit to it. Since *‘ilm* mostly signifies the message of Allah in these verses above, it is again portrayed as if *‘ilm* is mostly given, like a message and mandate handed down to

people as a favor of Allah and these people who are praised and exalted are one more time referenced as the possessors of *'ilm*.

In contrast to the bestowed quality of *'ilm*, *Kur'an* itself states that the verses are revealed to mankind in Arabic so that people can actually understand them, hinting at an invitation to reasoning (*Kur'an* 12:2): "Indeed, We have made it an Arabic *Kur'an* that you might understand" (*Kur'an* 43:3). In addition, similar to the very first order that the prophet receives during the transmission of Allah's *'ilm*, which encompasses a meaning of endeavor and application, in many places, *Kur'an* gives examples of the might of Allah, His miracles and the wonders on Earth and openly asks people to think about them, asks for an endeavor: "He shows you His signs [miracles] that you might reason (*Kur'an* 2:73); "Thus does Allah make clear to you [His] signs [verses] that you might give thought" (*Kur'an* 2:266). Moreover, Allah also gives the examples of very earthly matters in *Kur'an* and invites people to think and question about them as well: "Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the night and the day are signs for those of understanding. Who remember Allah while standing or sitting or [lying] on their sides and give thought to the creation of the heavens and the earth, [saying], "Our Lord, You did not create this aimlessly; exalted are You [above such a thing]; then protect us from the punishment of the Fire" (*Kur'an* 3:191-192). Here, stating that there is a goal for the creation, Allah promises the gardens of heavens to those who have put the effort into it, claiming that any work of any worker will not be lost (*Kur'an* 3:195). After all, He puts people on the spot and ask: "Do they not reflect upon the *Kur'an*?" (*Kur'an* 4:82) and compares those who does not use reason to deaf people who cannot hear stating that without reasoning His message will not be understood. (*Kur'an* 10:42). Then, Allah takes it a step further and calls these people who does not reason as dumb and the worst living creatures in sight (*Kur'an* 8:22). With all the emphasis on reasoning and contemplation, it would not be surprising if a devotee feels the urge to attain *'ilm*.

As seen from the verses above, *'ilm* is for sure of great importance in Islam according to *Kur'an*. It is an attribute of Allah, which He fully owns and shares with His creation only if He wills; mankind is the recipient of this *'ilm* as a favor since its beginning. This innate quality of mankind raises him over other creations as well as

among themselves since it is stated that only people of *'ilm* are able to know the exaltation of Allah and those are the ones that respect Him the most. However, as seen, even though *Kur'an* states that *'ilm* is handed down to mankind, paradoxically it also constantly reminds people to think and warns them that not using their reason is a dumb act which reduces their value to the bottom of the creation. From all these verses, even though the importance of *'ilm* for mankind is apparent in *Kur'an*, we cannot really find a clear discussion on what exactly *'ilm* is in *Kur'an* except that it is related to His words; at best it can be defined as the knowledge of Allah and His message. Through interpretation, we may also be able to deduce the presence of hierarchy in *'ilm* and the existence of mediation during the transmission of it. However, there are no clear definitions of what it actually represents, or how it can or should be transferred to other people. Moreover, the paradox of *doublethink* does not seem to be resolved as well. Therefore, it is necessary to turn to Prophet Muhammed's *Hadis* and *Sünnet*, which are considered the manifestations of *Kur'anic* verses in real life as explanations, to be able to understand more about Islam's perspective on *'ilm*, what it stands for, how one can attain it in this paradoxical situation and the role of mediation in the acquisition of it.

### 2.3) *'ilm* in *Hadis* and *Sünnet*

When we look up the *Hadis* and *Sünnet* of the Prophet Muhammed, we naturally find parallels with the verses from *Kur'an* on the nature of *'ilm* and how exalted it is. However, we can also find some more details about *'ilm*, which enables us to gain a better understanding of the subject matter and differentiate it from the common understanding of knowledge and *episteme*. First of all, not surprisingly, the Prophet reiterates what *Kur'an* states about the man of knowledge and praises him as well in a similar fashion:

The superiority of the learned man over the devout is like that of the moon, on the night when it is full, over the rest of the stars. The learned are the heirs of the Prophets, and the Prophets leave neither dinar nor dirham, leaving only knowledge, and he who takes it takes an abundant portion (Sunan Abi Dawud, Book 25, *Hadis* 3634).<sup>20</sup> The superiority of the learned over the devout worshipper is like my

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<sup>20</sup> *Hadis* are searched through online archive called Sunnah, and translations are also taken from that website ([www.sunnah.com](http://www.sunnah.com)).



superiority over the most inferior amongst you (in good deeds) (Riyad as- Salihin, Book 13, *Hadis* 1387). One Faqih (knowledgeable man) is more formidable against the Shaitan than one thousand devoted worshippers (Sunan Ibn Majah, Book 1, *Hadis* 227).

However, in contrast to the *Kur'an* which concentrates more on the given quality of knowledge, there is a big emphasis within the *Hadis* to seek for knowledge. The Prophet encourages people to go after knowledge in the following hadiths, and adds that it is a cause for Allah and a compensation for one's previous sins:

If anyone travels on a road in search of knowledge, Allah will cause him to travel on one of the roads of Paradise. The angels will lower their wings in their great pleasure with one who seeks knowledge, the inhabitants of the heavens and the Earth and the fish in the deep waters will ask forgiveness for the learned man (Sunan Abi Dawud, Book 25, *Hadis* 3634).

Similarly he praises this search by saying: "'Whoever goes out seeking knowledge, then he is in Allah's cause until he returns.'" (Jami at-Tirmidhi, Book 39, *Hadis* 2647). Moreover, the prophet states that seeking knowledge is a compensation for one's previous sins: "Whoever seeks knowledge, he is atoning for what has passed (of sins while doing so)" (Jami at-Tirmidhi, Book 39, *Hadis* 2648).

Besides, in various Hadiths, the Prophet even calls seeking knowledge as a duty upon every Muslim (Sunan Ibn Majah, Book 1, *Hadis* 224) and tells his disciple Abu Dharr that learning a matter of knowledge more beneficial than praying for thousands of *rekat* (each unit of prayer): "For you to come out in the morning and learn one Verse from the Book of Allah is better for you than praying one hundred *rekat*, and for you to come out and learn a matter of knowledge, whether it is acted upon or not, is better for you than praying one thousand *rekat*." (Sunan Ibn Majah, Book 1, *Hadis* 219). From all these *Hadis* above, it becomes a lot clearer that undertaking an endeavor to attain 'ilm is actually encouraged in Islam and considered a duty. Therefore, one should not just wait for 'ilm to be miraculously bestowed upon him, thinking that it is only a quality that Allah owns and shares with people he wishes. Even though 'ilm is portrayed as an attribute of Allah in *Kur'an*, and seems at first unattainable by one's work, according to *Hadis* one should still seek it or go into the endeavor of seeking it no matter the nature of this transmission.

Since knowledge and attaining it is so important both in *Kur'an* and *Hadis*, one needs more of an explanation on what 'ilm is. From the famous (but not well-

documented) prayer of the prophet Muhammed, "Show me the reality of objects"<sup>21</sup>, it can be inferred that there is more to what the eye can see or one can normally sense in this world. According to this prayer, in parallel to what *Kur'an* states, it becomes clear that the borders of *'ilm* is actually beyond the sphere of material objects and there is a reality beyond the human intellect or "eye". That is to say, one cannot comprehend the reality through the work of the intellect. Therefore, again with this prayer, the Prophet directly points out to and denounces the basic philosophical problem of reliability/certainty of knowledge when there is the duality of the subject and object, rendering it futile. With this, the Prophet automatically changes the course of knowledge from experience and senses to a metaphysical world (*bâtın*), which is not apparent to the eye at first sight. Therefore, he breaks the sphere of intellect that surrounds knowledge, and trusts Allah to endow him with this knowledge.

While breaking the sphere of knowledge from the limitations of intellect, the prophet also categorizes *'ilm* and sets precedence to the metaphysical ones. For example, according to the Prophet, "Knowledge has three categories; anything else is extra; a precise verse, or an established *Sünnet*, and a firm obligatory duty (or the rulings by which the inheritance is divided fairly according to a different account)."<sup>22</sup> (Sunan Abi Dawud, Book 18, *Hadis* 2879; Sunan İbn Majah, Book 1, *Hadis* 56). Therefore, inferring from this *Hadis*, it can be claimed that *'ilm* is defined in three categories: One of them is the knowledge of the verses in *Kur'an*, which is the basis of all Islamic knowledge; second, the knowledge of *Sünnet*, including *Hadis*, as the living example and explanation of *Kur'an*; and third, though it is a little ambiguous, and there are various accounts, the knowledge about doing a fair job, or a fair endeavor, probably meaning the application and practice of one's knowledge from the first two. From this *Hadis* we can infer that *'ilm* according to Islam is, similar to *Kur'an's* statements, mainly about the knowledge of Allah, His message, and the practice of the doctrine of Islam. However, considering the previous *Hadis* which differentiates between learning a *Kur'anic* verse, which is better than one hundred

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<sup>21</sup> This prayer can not be located in the general *Hadis* books; however, we used it since it is very common knowledge. See Cemal Doğan, "Eşyayı Anlamanın Gerçek Yolu" Yeni Ümit Dergisi, Volume: 12, Year: 3

<sup>22</sup> English translations of the *Hadis* are taken from *Sünnet.com*. However, the references to English translations are given to the actual authors and books to make it easier to follow in the classical sense.

*rekat* of prayer, and learning a matter of knowledge, which is instead better than one thousand *rekat* of prayer, one questions what learning a matter actually is. Since learning a verse is less of a value, to my understanding, the importance or precedence in the hierarchy of knowledge for humans is then more on the practice –the third category, which is keeping the obligatory duties that is understood from *Kur'an* and *Hadis* – the first and second categories. Rest of the knowledge is already out of the question, since it is just mentioned as extra or even superfluous. We know that because the Prophet used to seek refuge (with Allah) from “knowledge that is of no benefit” (Sunan an-Nasa’i, Book 50, *Hadis* 5444), and ask for knowledge that will benefit him, while advising the Muslims to do the same (Bulugh Al-Maram, Book 16, *Hadis* 1565). Therefore, obviously, there is a type of knowledge that he considers useless and unbeneficial to humans. From these *Hadis* above, we can deduce that knowledge that would not benefit a person in the realm of Islam, which is the knowledge outside the religious doctrine or knowledge that would not fulfill its mission of guiding a person to Allah, is extra, not worth obtaining and even something to avoid. In short, the knowledge that is praised and should be sought after in Islam is not only the knowledge of Allah and his commands throughout *Kur'an*; it is also the practice of this knowledge. That is to say, one also seeks the practice of Allah’s orders as a form of knowledge; in other words according to this framework, practice is knowledge.

This kind of practical knowledge, is also referred to as *zikir*, remembrance. This claim is based on a verse in *Kur'an*, which describes a moment in creation when Allah gathers the souls of humans and ask them if He is their *Rab* (God, creator, teacher, discipliner) and they testify Him (*Kur'an* 7:172). Therefore, when humans are sent to Earth, they forget this testimony. That is why Islam starts (initiation ritual to Islam) with the *şehâdet*, a testimony stating that Allah is the only god and Muhammed is his messenger and that is the reason why the *Kur'an* is also called a tool of remembrance. Therefore, what people really find in *Kur'an* is the knowledge that will make them remember Allah and their testimony to Him. All other is cursed in this world anyway, according to the following *Hadis* of the Prophet: "Lo! Indeed the world is cursed. What is in it is cursed, except for remembrance of Allah, what is conducive to that, the knowledgeable person and the learning person." (Jami at-

Tirmidhi, Book 10, *Hadis* 2322). Therefore, we can infer that the knowledge that should be sought after in Islam is that which aims to make one remember Allah.

It should also be noted that, in the *Hadis* above, it is clearly stated that what is conducive of this knowledge, what makes the remembrance of Allah certain or a likely or even a possible outcome, is the knowledgeable person and the learning one. Therefore, while a person is learning, it is implied that he is learning from a learned one. This *Hadis* gives a clue about the existing presuppositions in the transmission of knowledge as well. In parallel, similar to the encouragement and the importance placed upon knowledge and the endeavor to learning it, the Prophet also urges people to teach what they know, exalts those who teach as the superior, and calls their teaching a charity in the following Hadiths:

The most superior among you (Muslims) are those who learn the *Kur'an* and teach it (Sahih al-Bukhari, Book 61, *Hadis* 546). Allah, His angels, the dwellers of the heaven and the earth, and even the ant in its hole and the fish (in water) supplicate in favor of those who teach people knowledge (Riyad as-Salihin, Book 13, *Hadis* 12). The best of charity is when a Muslim man gains knowledge, then he teaches it to his Muslim brother (Sunan Ibn Majah, Book 1, *Hadis* 243).

Even though all the *Kur'anic* verses and Prophet's *Hadis* clearly state the importance of *'ilm*, praising the people who poses *'ilm*, and encouraging people to attain it as well as teaching it, the attitude of the Turkish public does not really seem to be parallel with these advices and warnings, as it was mentioned in the introduction. Many people recite the *Kur'an* frequently, pray, and follow the traditional religious activities firmly. However, knowledge seems to be taken from the people. This situation actually seems to pertain in Prophet's society as well. What I mean is that people follow all these religious practices but do not really pursue the knowledge of their practices. In other words, they do not really know what they believe in and why they really practice the things that they do, but do not attempt to investigate it themselves, as a personal endeavor. Instead, most of them seek some sort of mediation, a quick answer mostly to make sure they observe these practices right. The following *Hadis* from Jubair bin Nufair will clarify my point:

From Abu Ad-Darda who said: "We were with the Prophet when he raised his sight to the sky, then he said: 'This is the time when knowledge is to be taken from the people, until what remains of it shall not amount to anything.'" So Ziyad bin Labid Al-Ansari said: 'How will it be taken from us while we recite the *Kur'an*. By Allah we recite it, and our women and children recite it?' He said: 'May you be bereaved of your mother O Ziyad! I used to consider you among the Fuqaha of the people of Al-

Madinah. The Tawrah and Injil are with the Jews and Christians, but what do they avail of them?" Jubair said: "So I met 'Ubadah bin As-Samit and said to him: 'Have you not heard what your brother Abu Ad-Darda said?' Then I informed him of what Abu Ad-Darda said. He said: 'Abu Ad-Darda spoke the truth. If you wish, we shall narrated to you about the first knowledge (*'ilm*) to be removed from the people: It is *Khushu'*, soon you will enter the congregational Masjid, but not see any man in it with *Khushu'* [modesty, bashfulness from a positive perspective, refers to a bad and uneasy feeling accompanied by embarrassment, caused by one's fear of being exposed or censured for some unworthy or indecent conduct.]"(Jami at-Tirmidhi, Book 39, *Hadis* 2653).

According to this *Hadis* it is clear that just the practice, the reciting/reading of the *Kur'an* is not enough to keep the *'ilm* on earth. The disciples recite the *Kur'an* all the time, they even teach it to their families and children. However, that is not so different from what Christians or Jewish people did in the past according to the *Hadis*, and still they have lost the *'ilm*. It does not benefit them right now (in the sense that they do not truly remember Allah and their testimony to them). That is why Prophet Muhammed re-revealed the Truth of the Lord. Moreover, another *Hadis* found in Rumi references supports this claim that many people read the *Kur'an* but *Kur'an* curses on them (Rumi, 2009, p. 121). Thus, we can justify that just reading and reciting the *Kur'an* even though it is practiced rigorously is not the way to attain knowledge, even though it is also the common practice among the Turkish Muslims as hinted at in the previous chapter. Thus, when we refer back to the three categories of knowledge, this kind of reading/reciting and learning of the Turkish people may be considered within the first two categories, the ones about the knowledge of the verse and the *Sunnat*; however, the simple knowledge of these does not account to practicing it, the third kind, which is also the superior one.

Also a very key addition to the perspective of Islam on knowledge, according to the *Hadis* above and a similar one from Ubadah bin As-Samit, *Khushu* is considered a type of knowledge. *Khushu* refers to the modesty, humility, humbleness, bashfulness out of love as well as fear due to the consciousness of Allah's greatness and presence, and the embarrassment that is due to doing a bad thing or leaving good habits (Çağrı M. , 1997b). Thus, in this *Hadis*, a feeling, an attribute, or a quality is called an *'ilm*. Here we see a clear evidence that *'ilm* is not just an intellectual entity that can be reasoned; there is more to it. *'ilm* does not only belong to the intellect but to the body as the practice and soul as the morals as well. It is inscribed into daily

rituals, and embodied in flesh. Like the basic instincts that we have, a thing that is not totally under control, a feeling as well as its consequent behaviors are also considered intrinsic to *'ilm*. People thus cannot attain this kind of knowledge simply by reciting, reading, researching or reasoning, but one has to somehow live it, experience it, and internalize it.

These unique (to a Westernized “modern” Turkish perspective) attributes of *'ilm* identified from the Hadiths above, added to the paradoxical entity of it being both given and gained, supports the idea that *'ilm* and thus any practice to attain it may not be clear to an outsider to the culture and may need to be uncovered first for us to be able to grasp it. If it is the case that *'ilm* can be identified as such, then it leads to questioning how the previous generations native to *Sünnî*-Islam actually understood it, interpreted these revelations, and tried to acquire and transmit it to younger ones so that it does not disappear from earth. Is it at all possible that there is again more than what meets the eye when it comes to the transmission of *'ilm* as well? Bluntly, would there be a possible and feasible reason within the Islamic cultural heritage of learning traditions why mediation is so central to the transmission of the knowledge, so called *'ilm*, due to its unique signification and if so, how does it affect the current practices? To get an insight about these questions, then, the need to study *'ilm* in various historical contexts in Islam arises; and thus in the following sections I first turn to the traditional explanations and interpretations of *'ilm* offered in the *Sünnî*-Islamic and *Sûfî* traditions, which have been quite dominant in the inherited Turkish culture.

#### **2.4) *'ilm* in *Sünnî* Tradition**

In the Encyclopedia of Islam, *'ilm*<sup>23</sup> is described, loyal to its original signification, generally as comprehending the reality and the essence of a thing or certain belief that coincides with the reality (Kutluer, 2000). The essence is an important keyword here. According to this definition *'ilm* is not just a description of

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<sup>23</sup> The actual word that is used in the encyclopedia is *ilim*, and used true to its original meaning. *'ilm* is used in the text for the purpose of consistency.

a relation between the object and the subject since the object (or even the subject) has an essence which also needs to be perceived – an essence which is not a bare *a priori* of the intellect but a fundament originated from Allah. This is why the Prophet prays Allah to show him the reality behind the objects as stated in the previous section. Thus, the perception of *'ilm* in the general *Sünnî*-Islamic understanding naturally follows the descriptions in *Kur'an* and *Hadis*, and it is actually accepted as an attribute of Allah, who is the *Alîm*. Within this description it is referred to as the knowledge of Allah that encompasses everything, including all the objects and events within the senses and beyond, hidden or apparent, not limited to any time or place (Yavuz Y. Ş., 2000a) and this understanding is also supported with various Hadiths as well. (Sahih al-Bukhari Vol. 2, Book 17, *Hadis* 149; Sahih Muslim, Book 1, *Hadis* 4). At first, as an attribute of Allah, *'ilm* seems like a quality that is not attainable by any endeavor. However, while it is still advised for people to pray for Allah to bestow them with *'ilm* relying on His graciousness, at the same time, it is encouraged by the Prophet to seek and attain *'ilm*, to work for, and to think about the creation and Allah's message to remember Him – to apply *doublethink*.

While the general nature of *'ilm* is encapsulated with the outlines given above, it does not hinder the refinements of the *Sünnî* tradition about this description due to various interpretations. According to Islamic scholars, the meanings which *'ilm* may refer to in *Kur'an* and in the Arabic language varies; and there are other words (like *zikir*, as stated before) which also represents knowledge with slightly different meanings. For example, when *Kur'an* talks about people who have transgressed concerning the Sabbath, the word which is derived from the root of *'ilm* has a connotation of a social memory and transmission of knowledge (*Kur'an* 2:65); when *Kur'an* warns people not to approach prayer while intoxicated, the word represents self-consciousness (*Kur'an* 4:43); and where it is stated that the night and day are given as two signs for people to keep account of time, *'ilm* solely refers to the intellectual knowledge (*Kur'an* 17:12) (Kutluer, 2000). As seen, what *'ilm*, as an all-encapsulating umbrella term, signifies may vary according to the context as well as to the interpreter of *Kur'an*.

On the other hand, there are not just different connotations of *'ilm*, but there are also various levels of knowledge and certainty of knowledge that we can talk

about in Islam, which can be represented by some of the following originally Arabic terms: *mârifet/irfan*, *fikh/tefakkuh*, *hibre*, *şuûr*, *hikmet* and *itkân* (Kutluer, 2000). Among these examples, *itkân* for instance, means “doing something tenaciously or steadfast” (Aşikkutlu, 2006), or *hikmet* means “making a judgment” and “knowing the most valuable beings with the most superior knowledge” (Kutluer, 1998). From these examples, the different levels of knowledge and different degrees of certainty within the understanding of *‘ilm* becomes apparent. When studied carefully, this differentiation is also clear in the *Kur’an* when it talks about the knowledge bestowed upon the prophets, in the verses given in the section 2.2. There, the prophets are usually given *‘ilm*, in addition to *hikmet* (judgment) (*Kur’an* 21:74; 12:22; 28:14), which is also related to the meaning of “to prevent, to hinder, to avert, in other words it is related with to guide a person for the good, and averting from the bad”. Here, İbn Manzûr draws attention to the relation between *hikmet* and the experience, claiming that the ancient Arabs used the word “*muhakkam*” to represent “a person with *hikmet*, one who is experienced and mature” (Kutluer, 1998). Consequently, since there is a *Hadis* which claims the scholars [ulemâ] as the heirs of the Prophets (Jami` at-Tirmidhi, Vol.5, Book 39, *Hadis* 2682), it is believed that they should also inherit the *hikmet*, and they should be able to give judgments. That by itself justifies the appointment of *Kadis* (judges) from the Islamic scholars.

Within these various possible boundaries and stretches of its meaning, *‘ilm* is very much debated in *Kelâm* (*‘ilm al-kalam*, Islamic scholastic theology) as in the Western philosophy. According to the Encyclopedia of Islam, *mutakallim* (scholars of *Kelâm*) of Mu’tezile says that “*‘ilm* is the belief that erases any doubts in the mind”; İbn Hazm, a scholar of Zâhirî, claims that it is “knowledge that has acquired certainty”; Eş’arî scholars thought that these definitions are not enough, claiming that belief is more of a psychological phenomenon instead of concepts and they claimed that it is “knowing an object that can be known as it is”; then Cürçânî brings back the idea that “it is an absolute belief that is consistent with reality” etc. (Kutluer, 2000). On the other hand, Şâfiî approaches it from a different perspective and divides *‘ilm* into two: “First, the religious knowledge which is clear in *Kur’an* and *Sünnet*, quoted by the majority of Muslims that does not require any further explanation or debate; and second, the knowledge which may need interpretation obtained through comparison



and syllogism, or which the scholars/wise gathers through private resources and methods” (Kutluer, 2000, p. 112). The former kind of *‘ilm* given in this definition seems like a common knowledge and it should be easy to reach and grasp for people. Learning how to read the *Kur’an*, how to fast, or how to determine the age of a sacrificial calf by counting its teeth are all common or at least readily available knowledge in the books for mankind. Since this kind of knowledge is so accessible, it should not cause a problematic discussion in the society and we cannot easily talk about the loss of this kind of *‘ilm* in the society as stated in the *Hadis* via Jubair bin Nufair before. Therefore, the latter kind of *‘ilm* becomes more of an interest of discussion to the scholars.

According to Bloomsbury Companion to Islamic Studies, “even though seeking knowledge in Islam is considered a religious obligation, the studying of *‘ilm al-Kalam* is considered by Muslim scholars to fall under the category of necessity and only permitted to qualified scholars, but not for the masses or common people” (Bennett, 2015, p. 119). Thus according to this perspective, the scholars were differentiating themselves from the masses, and claiming a higher position to discuss these issues, may be referencing the previous *Hadis* about being the heirs of the prophets, and nominating themselves as qualified to dive into comparison, syllogism or even some private resources. However, again according to the hadiths, even though these *ulemâ* (scholars) may have the judgment (*hikmet*), they still could not reach an absolute decision about *‘ilm*. The certainty in their arguments was apparently lacking.

According to Kutluer, Ebü'l-Usr el-Pezdevî, who is a Hanefî scholar lived 250 years after Şâfiî, also divided *‘ilm* into two in a similar manner: “*‘ilmü't-tevhîd ve's-sıfât*” and “*‘ilmü's-şerâi' ve'l-ahkâm*”; and he claimed that for the first kind of *‘ilm*, one should reference Ebû Hanîfe’s (founder of the Hanefî school) works; and for the latter kind of *‘ilm* which he has called “*fürû ilmi*” or “*fıkıh*”, one should join knowledge and practice (*amel*) together in one’s self (Kutluer, 2000, p. 112). Therefore, the importance of practice, endeavor, in attaining knowledge comes up as an important part of the discussion one more time, may be hinting at its role in attaining certainty in *‘ilm*. For example the latter kind of *‘ilm* may include not only the discussion of the *‘ilm* itself, but also the *Kur’anic* verses that only consists of *hurûf-ı mukattaa* like “Elif

Lâm Mîm” (*Kur’an* 2:1). While some scholars refrain from giving an interpretation for these characters claiming that these cannot be known, some others, especially from the *Sûfî* tradition, associate some meanings in their writings. These people also interpret many verses of the *Kur’an* from a *bâtînî* (inner, secret) point of view. This division, makes one question about the special, the latter kind of knowledge that can be gained through not only logic but also some private resources and methods, as well as practice. If there is actually a higher, more valued kind of knowledge in Islam, who can attain it and what are those special resources and methods to attain it? Are these privileged people actually the ones, who are referred to in the *Kur’an* as the ones that are deepened in *‘ilm*, “those of understanding” (*ulul-albab*) (*Kur’an*: 3:7)? Since the *Sûfî* people have been claiming that they hold a special kind of knowledge, I will investigate the answers to these questions from their perspective.

### **2.5) *‘ilm* in *Tasavvuf*: *Mârifet***

From a broad historical perspective, knowledge is used to mean two different things: First, in parallel to Plato’s perspective, it is considered as self-improvement and intrinsic-development; second it is seen by the likes of F. Bacon and A. Comte, as a progress for mankind to rule over the Earthly matters; it is a matter of which is more important: Subject behind the viewfinder, or the Object in front of it (Filiz Ş. , 2014, p. 22). The latter is already discussed throughout the history and science has taken over it. This kind of knowledge is not really in the focus of the previously stated “people who are deepened in *‘ilm*” or “those of knowledge” since *‘ilm* itself has the intrinsic religious connotation discussed previously. Instead they gravitates towards the first kind of knowledge, which Emile Brehier defines as something that does not crawl over the surface of things but is inside and in the deeps of things, which unites with the existence to raise us up to the truth and perfection (Filiz Ş. , 2014, p. 22). This kind of “real” and “deep” knowledge is tied inseparably to knowing one’s self according to Spinoza and Bergson, and as especially Bergson stresses, knowing and doing are one and the same (Filiz Ş. , 2014, p. 23). These ideas of self-improvement,

attaining perfection, knowledge of one's self and the union of practice and knowledge very much resemble *Sûfî*'s perspective on knowledge.

According to one theory, the name *Sûfî*, follower of *tasavvuf*, is believed to originate from the disciples of Muhammed who were called the *Ashâb-ı Suffe* – an “elite” group of intellectuals so to say, or as *Kur'an* states those who have deepened in knowledge, or at least those who dedicated their lives to studying *Kur'an*<sup>24</sup> (Schimmel, 1975, p. 14). They used to live in the *mescid* (prayer hall) of the time to focus on *Kur'an* and were taught by the Prophet himself privately. No matter how the naming occurred, afterwards *Sûfî* became a *signifier* given to people who dedicate themselves to the path of learning, to *'ilm*, self-realization and enlightenment within Islamic societies.

These *Sûfîs*, since the very beginning, have been claiming that there is a special kind of knowledge they seek after and have reached – a knowledge that cannot be questioned, the truth which is absolute and certain (*yakîn*). According to them, there are different levels of certainty. For example, they claim that *ilme'l yakîn* refers to the knowledge that is at the first level of certainty. Even though it is still considered as a knowledge, which is based on indubitable rational and transmitted evidences, the *Sûfîs* believe that there are even higher levels of certainty, namely *ayne'l yakîn* which depends on outer experiences and *hakka'l yakîn* which is attained through inner experiences; thus they believe that these latter two are more apt to dispel the hesitations that comes to the mind (Yavuz Y. Ş., 2000b). In other words, *ilme'l yakîn* can be identified as an intellectual knowledge, *ayne'l yakîn* is an observational knowledge but in the metaphysical realm and *hakka'l yakîn*, the most certain of all, is the knowledge attained through personal experience, through living it. This differentiation is referenced from *Kur'an* through the examples of the knowledge of the death and the afterwards. One's understanding that Allah is capable of taking one's life and giving life back to dead as he visits the graveyards is considered *ilme'l yakîn* (*Kur'an* 102:2-5); Abraham's witnessing that the bird, which he cut into pieces and left on four different mountains comes back flying to him is

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<sup>24</sup> For other theories and broader explanation of the beginnings of *tasavvuf*, please see Annemarie Schimmel's *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1975. Chapters 1 & 2.

considered *ayne'l yakîn* (*Kur'an* 2:260); and the experience of the one, who had wondered about how Allah gives life to dead and Allah took his life for hundred years and brought back to life is considered *hakka'l yakîn* (*Kur'an* 2:259) (Yavuz Y. Ş., 1997). *Sûfîs* believe that the *âlims* (*ulemâ*, scholars) can reach the first level of certainty called *ilme'l yakîn*, but the latter two can only be attained by the prophets and *velîs* (saints) – the best among themselves – who also has private metaphysical ways to attain knowledge directly from Allah. Therefore, within this distinction of certainty among various *'ilm*, the special knowledge that the *Sûfîs* claim to have acquired is in the realm of *ayne'l yakîn* and *hakka'l yakîn*. More specifically, this special and absolute knowledge which is at the utmost level of certainty, the goal of the *Sûfî* way of life and “philosophy”, is *hakka'l yakîn*.

Aside from these terminologies that represent the level of certainty of *'ilm*, to completely differentiate this private knowledge from the general understanding of *'ilm* that other scholars can also attain, *Sûfîs* have intentionally referred to it with other *signifiers* like *mârifet* (معرفة in Arabic), *irfan*, and *yakîn* (Uludağ, 2003). There are also similar words that have been in place like *ledün ilmi*, *bâtın ilmi* (hidden knowledge), and *hal ilmi* according to the Encyclopedia of Islam. Among these *signifiers*, in this thesis, I prefer to refer to this special knowledge of *Sûfîs* using the term *mârifet*, which means “the knowledge of Allah (*zât*), His attributes (*sıfat*), acts (*fiil*), names (*isim*, *esmâ*), and manifestations (*tecelli*) directly gained through spiritual experiences”, which is thus pure and distant from impression, suspicion, or reasoning (Uludağ, 2003). *Mârifet* is believed to originate from Allah’s own gratuity, directly descending from Him (*Rabbâni*) through divine inspiration; hence, it is absolutely certain, *hakka'l yakîn*. It is considered beyond the senses and the intellect – the very kind of *'ilm* that is similar to which Allah owns as the *Alîm*; therefore, due to its metaphysical nature, it is a spiritual kind of knowledge.

Due to this very nature, and the direct, special and metaphysical link that is believed to exist between the source of knowledge (Allah), and the receiver (*Sûfî* who became *insan-ı kâmil*), this kind of knowledge is thus considered pure among the *Sûfîs*: uncontaminated by the intellect, imagination or any other delusions. Therefore,

*Sûfîs* place *mârifet* at the top of the hierarchy<sup>25</sup> of *'ilms* as the truth and the absolute, and finds it more reliable than any other *'ilm* in the sphere of human reasoning; Cüneyd-i Bağdâdî even bluntly claims: “If there would be any other *'ilm* that is more honorable than theirs (*Sûfîs*), he would go ahead and learn it” (Uludağ, 2003). However, this declaration which esteems *mârifet* as a more valuable quality does not mean that *Sûfîs* disregard what they think of as the rest of *'ilm*. According to them, *mârifet* should not contradict the *Kur'an* or the *Hadis* since they are the true guidance of Allah, keeping *Sûfîs* assertions within the boundaries of *Sünnî*-Islam. In concordance, Zünnûn el-Misrî states that the *nûr* (light) of *mârifet* should not extinguish the *nûr* of *takvâ* (piety), and there should not be talk of *bâtini* (secret) *'ilm* that contradicts *zâhirî* (visible) *'ilm*; Ebû Saîd el-Harrâz, denounces all *bâtinî* *'ilm* that contradicts *zâhirî* ones; Ebû Süleyman ed-Dârânî requires that *Kur'an* and *Hadis* should attest to the *mârifet*; and Cüneyd-i Bağdâdî emphasizes that only the *mârifet* within the framework of *Kur'an*, *Hadis* and *Sünnet* is valid (Uludağ, 2003). As a result, *Sûfîs* consider *şeriat* (Islamic law and framework) as the first step in attaining *'ilm*, only then comes the *hakikat*<sup>26</sup>, and finally *mârifet* rests at the top of the hierarchy of knowledge.

Since *mârifet* is believed to include the spiritual aspects stated above, the possibility of attaining it becomes questionable, especially from our “modern” and “uninitiated” perspective, which mostly consider knowledge within rational boundaries. However, *Sûfîs* argue against it based on the following *kudsî Hadis* (sayings of the Prophet referencing Allah, but not a part of *Kur'an*) that can also be found on the much debated book of Aclûnî, *Keşfü'z-Hafâ*: “I [Allah] was a hidden treasure; I loved to be known. Hence I created the world so that I would be known” (Uludağ, 2003). Thus according to this *Hadis*, *Sûfîs* assert that since it is the goal of the whole creation to know Allah, it has to be intrinsically possible to know him, to attain the knowledge of Him as well.

On the other hand, another evidence of the possibility of the attaining this kind of spiritual knowledge can be found in *Kur'an*, in the verses that are related to

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<sup>25</sup> Eventhough this is a very common theme, in some *tarikats* like the *Bektaşî*, switches the order of *mârifet* and *hakikat*, considering the *hakikat* as the final destination of reality. For more information see Hikmet Özdemir's article published in *Horasan'dan Anadolu'ya Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli* (2010).

<sup>26</sup> More information will be given on this in section 3.3.

the transmission of knowledge between Allah and the apparently chosen people, namely the prophets, who are thought by Allah, through His speech, *pen*, and *vahiy*, which is the divine revelation. They are special and selected beings; therefore, it is natural to assume that they may have private ways of acquiring *'ilm*, even directly from Allah. Due to the involvement of some special channels, it can be inferred that it is actually *mârifet* that is passed on to the prophets – that is to say *'ilm* and *hikmet* together as seen in the previous sections. These miraculous situations are commonly exemplified in *Kur'an*. For example, in Surah Al-Qasas, Allah talks directly with Moses: "...he was called from the right side of the valley in a blessed spot - from the tree, "O Moses, indeed I am Allah, Lord of the worlds" (*Kur'an* 28:30). On another account in surah al-Maryam, Allah sends angel Gabriel (*Cebrâil*) as a well-proportioned man to give the news of her pregnancy to Jesus (*İsa*) and he says: "I am only the messenger of your Lord to give you [news of] a pure boy." (*Kur'an* 19:19). Similarly, Abraham sees that he should sacrifice his son in his dream, and takes this as a sign from Allah; right before he accomplishes what he was ordered, Allah calls to him: "...O Abraham, you have full-filled the vision." (*Kur'an* 37:102-105). From these verses, it can be understood that Allah has various ways of communicating with His prophets, some of which through talking, via sending a messenger like Gabriel or through showing visions in their dreams. All of these special ways of communication seems beyond the capacity of a normal human being. However, considering the *Hadis*, which is already stated before, if *ulemâ* (those of knowledge) are like the heirs of the prophets, there is a chance that they may also have a way of directly being in contact with Allah and gathering knowledge as such. It should be noted here though, as *Sûffis* differentiate *'ilm* according to its certainty, they also differentiate between the *ulemâ*. Dekkak, calls the people in the stage of *ilme'l yakîn* as *avam* (public, ordinary), the people in the stage of *ayne'l yakîn* as *havas* (the elite), and call the ones that has attained the highest level of knowledge, *hakka'l yakîn*, as *hâss-ül havas* (elite of the elite), or *ehl-i mârifet* (people of *mârifet*) [*insan-ı kâmil*] (Ceyhan, 2012). *Sûffis* believe that the latter, especially the *insan-ı kâmil*, are the true heirs of the prophets who have these kind of special connections with Allah.

Besides the infamous "hidden treasure" *Hadis*, and the evidence gathered from *Kur'an* that explains the possibility of the transmission of *mârifet* in the previous

paragraph, *Sûfîs* believe that there is one more proof that *mârifet* can be acquired by them, and that goes all the way back to the relation between Allah, Muhammed, and Ali (Muhammed's son in law and nephew). Among all the prophets, Muhammed is considered the crown-jewel of the lineage by the Muslims; he is the *Habib Allah* (beloved of Allah); he is the peak of prophethood, and thus he is believed to have reached the highest level of *mârifet*. That is why he is considered to be the actual reason, the fruit of creation – as he is the one who has attained the highest level of knowledge about Allah, he is the one who realized the goal of creation stated previously. Supporting this, Kastalani records that when Adam was created, he saw a name above him written with *nûr* (light): Ahmed (which is another name of the prophet Muhammed); then, Allah explains to Adam that it is a light of a prophet from his own descendants, which is also the first of all creations, and adds that if it was not for him, He would not have created Adam (Yılmaz, 2002). It is believed that this *nûr* (light) of Muhammed was passed on to Adam, and then to all the prophets successively until it reached back to Muhammed, the last of the prophets. This *nûr* seems like an entity that can be transferred from Allah to the Prophet and then on to other prophets; this is critical to acknowledge, because, this *nûr* seems to have a big impact on the transmission of *mârifet* as well, which will be discussed later on.

As the reason behind the creation, Muhammed is highly praised and exalted as explained previously. His *nûr* is the first of the creation and he is the one that has attained the highest level of *mârifet*. Therefore, according to the popular account of Tirmidhi, he also declares himself as the “house” of *hikmet*, meaning he is the source or embodiment of the highest degree of decisive knowledge, which to my understanding also signifies *mârifet* (Jami` at-Tirmidhi, Vol. 1, Book 46, *Hadis* 3723). While this is all somewhat expected information, in the same *Hadis*, Muhammed himself adds that Ali is the “door” of this “house”. Therefore, in a sense, the Prophet is kind of inviting people who wants to attain this kind of knowledge to use this “door”. According to *Sûfîs* this is a clear indication that it is possible for people to pass the realm of *‘ilm*, and combine it in the realm of *hikmet* and thus to the grounds of *mârifet*. That is to say, it is actually possible to attain *mârifet*, through passing this “door” of Ali, who symbolizes the source for many of the orders in *tasavvuf*. Ali (similar to Ebu Bekir) is considered to have received the special teachings of the

Prophet about *mârifet*, and having acquired that knowledge, he in return passed it on to the Muslims through a *silsile* (lineage) of *mürşids* (guides, teachers).

Even though the evidences of the possibility of attaining *mârifet* are stated above according to the *Sûfî* belief, and the gateway to *mârifet* is hinted as Ali above, how one can actually attain *mârifet* still needs more elaboration. The clarification for this can be found out through other definitions of *mârifet* in *Sûfîs* tradition. For example, to further distinguish *mârifet* from the other understandings of knowledge and stress its authenticity, *Sûfîs* use the word *hal ilmi* for the prior and *kâl ilmi* for the latter. This distinction emphasizes the importance of practice (*hal*) in *tasavvuf*, which is observing the Islamic orders, over the intellectual discussion which is about the verses, *Hadis* and words (*kâl*) of Allah. This is not to say that *tasavvuf* denies the *Şer'î* (theological) knowledge and not deal with it; however, this kind of knowledge and the methods to attain it are not the main focus of a *Sûfî*. Hence, the knowledge of *Sûfîs* does not depend on studying, memorizing, discussing, analyzing, and any other methods that come to a Western influenced "modern" mind. In other words, it can be stated that the five senses and the rational mind do not really help in the process of reaching this kind of knowledge called *mârifet*. According to *Sûfîs*, this is why Muhammed leaves Gabriel, the symbol of intellect, behind in the night of *mi'rac* (physical/spiritual ascend, encounter with Allah, processes of abstraction) (Schimmel, 1975, p. 219). Symbolically and hermeneutically, Muhammed transcends the intellect, leaves it behind to reach the absolute knowledge, or to have the experience of direct and unmediated communication with Allah. Or from a different perspective, in the presence of Allah, or in the realm of *mârifet*, reasoning just do not function as we understand it. Therefore, at this point, *Sûfî* seems to ignore the rational mind, rejecting most of the Western philosophical approaches to knowledge and rely heavily on the practice instead.

Rumi refers to this transcendental quality of *mârifet* by comparing the intellect to a donkey which gets stuck in the mire, in its attempt to explain love (Schimmel, 1993, p. 103). In other words, Rumi states that it is an inexpressible form of knowledge, a feeling, and a state of enlightenment. *Mârifet* is not only inexpressible, it is also paradoxically not possible to know what *mârifet* is within the realm of our intellect and rationality. In this framework, according to Zünnûn el-Misrî



and other *Sûfîs* it is not possible to perfectly “know” Allah; thus Ebû Saîd el-A’râbî and Sehl b. Abdullah et-Tüsterî has claimed that *mârifet* is actually the confession of one’s lack of knowledge on this issue; and Cüneyd-i Bağdâdî has supported this by stating that there is no one that knows Allah, except Allah (Uludağ, 2003). While Allah cannot be known fully by the intellect and cannot be contemplated upon, paradoxically, *mârifet* can still be attained through methods called *keşf*, which means to raise the curtain in the dictionaries but mostly means to receive direct knowledge about things when the intellect and the senses fail, or to know the *bâtın* (hidden); it also has the meaning of witnessing the manifestations of Allah (Uludağ, 2003). Since the receiver of this kind of direct knowledge, which becomes available through *keşf*, cannot be the mind, it is attributed to the heart (*kalp*); that is to say, according to *Sûfîs*, a *nûr* (light) gets thrown into the heart, and with this *nûr* one reaches the state of internal enlightenment and sees the divine realities with *kalp gözü* (eye of the heart) (Uludağ, 2003). The *nûr* which is the prerequisite of *keşf* in one’s heart is a given, a gift of Allah; one cannot acquire it directly through his own endeavor. However, it is believed by the *Sûfîs* that at least a person can make his heart suitable to receive this *nûr* through cleansing it from the earthly matters and indecencies and opening it to Allah to fill in. Therefore, the person who wants to have a chance to attain *mârifet* has to purify the heart (soul) to receive this *nûr* first. Therefore, the path to attain knowledge seems to be related to personal purification more than a thought process.

If we were to analyze this further Gazâlî calls the five senses as *zâhirî nûr* (visible/known light), which helps us gather data from our surroundings; however, this data only constitutes the external forms (*lafız*) of those things and thus Muhâsibî categorizes this kind of knowledge as *zâhirî bilgi* (visible, sensual knowledge) (Filiz Ş. , 2014, pp. 196-197). This kind of knowledge is within the sphere of logic and intellect – in other words within the realm of *akl-ı me’âş*, which serves humans to understand, organize and categorize the objects and the representations of these objects in their minds (Özemre & Şahinler, 2011, p. 111). The ability called *akl-ı me’âş*, which is considered a *kesbî* quality – one that can be attained through work – can only function in *Şehâdet Alemi* (the realm of senses/ the visible) and it belongs to *nefs* (*ego*), that is why it can lead people easily into mistakes and deviance. Özemre compares it to a wild horse: “One cannot direct it to the direction he wishes; on the

contrary, this horse takes him to wherever it wishes; moreover, throws him off and runs him over” (Özemre & Şahinler, 2011, p. 110). When *Kur’an* asks people to contemplate the signs of creation, it is probably referring to this kind of knowledge. However, according to *Sûfîs*, this does not constitute the reality (*hakikat*). In parallel to the perspective above, things that are sensed may differ from one person to another. For example our vision is limited by some wavelengths of light, and we cannot see beyond those limits, but dogs can. It is like that, if we base our knowledge purely on our senses, we would not understand the microwaves. Even now in sciences mostly we try to materially observe the realities in our world, trying to bring things to our spheres with representations to make sense of the universe.

According to İbnü’l-Arabî, this kind of knowledge gathered from our senses, *zâhirî bilgi*, is nothing but an imagination. Instead he proposes that the outer world consists of various forms that appears and disappears in succession; however, our senses and brain are not capable of understanding this phenomenon, and he adds that one needs *keşf* to realize this. (Filiz Ş. , 2014, p. 347). That is how he explains the gap between the brain and the heart, which is more like the place that gives meanings to these sensual data according to Muhâsibî, and that is why a *Sûfî* “has to look at (turn to) everything with the (with an open) heart” to reach enlightenment (Filiz Ş. , 2014, pp. 198-199). In other words, *Sûfîs* believe that the sensed data is processed within the brain, but it is given meaning (*mâna*) in the heart, which reflects these meanings from the actual source, Allah. This may sound a little different and new from a “modern” scientific perspective but this difference attributed to the mind and heart would also be an accurate description of the difference in the sphere between philosophy and *tasavvuf* that of episteme and *mârifet*.

After the purification of the heart (soul), if Allah puts his *nûr* into one’s heart, it is like attaining a different metaphysical sense for him (*kalp gözü*). According to İbnü’l-Arabî, *akıl* (intellect) reaches a different level when it is bestowed with the *nûr* that he calls *idrak* (awareness) and becomes the *rational nefis* (*ego, soul*) (Filiz Ş. , 2014, p. 203). Similarly, Özemre calls this *akl-ı me’ad*, a *vehbî* quality that cannot be attained but only bestowed upon by Allah, which helps to understand the *Bâtın Alemi* (the realm of the hidden/secret/metaphysical) (Özemre & Şahinler, 2011, p. 110). The difference is that while the intellect can fall into fallacies, this *rational nefis* or *akl-ı*

*me'ad* does not. The reason is that if the intellect doubts its own production, the only thing that can assure it is again the intellect itself from the same sphere, but in *tasavvuf*, the direct knowledge from Allah can transcend this sphere and become a source that satisfies the doubts with certainty (*yakîn*) (Filiz L. , 2009, p. 259). In other words, *rational nefis* is free from the limitations of the intellect. Thus, this knowledge that is directly transferred to him is an *a priori* (but from Allah) (Filiz Ş. , 2014, p. 259). In this situation, *Sûfî* has mostly discarded his ties with the world and he is directly perceiving; he has attained the *müstefad akıl* in Kindî's terms; and thus he is not after the partial and epistemic knowledge but he is aiming for the absolute knowledge with all its variety and oppositions, discovering the archetypes; he starts to see Allah in everything. (Filiz Ş. , 2014, pp. 203-204) Therefore, from this perspective, the state which is called *mârifet* "aims for a unity more than a relationship; it aims for the unity of knowledge, that is to say the unity of the one who knows and the thing that is known" (Filiz Ş. , 2014, p. 213).

In short, we can deduct from all the discussions in this chapter that both *'ilm* and *mârifet* (*'ilm* in the certainty of *hakka'l yakîn*), differentiates vastly from the general and current understanding of both knowledge and *episteme*. While *'ilm* encapsulates the knowledge of Allah and his orders, *mârifet* specifically refers to a kind of knowledge that includes moral dispositions, good judgment and correct practices. Therefore, theoretically, knowing in the *Sünnî*-Islamic heritage of Turkey is intertwined with morality and practice; thus it is expected that the learning practices will also be quite detached from the modern methods like reading, studying, and research. Primarily, we are talking about a paradoxical "knowledge", which cannot even be attained by one's endeavor, but still requires one's hard work especially to cleanse his heart and soul in the hopes of attaining it. Even so, the transmission of it still requires some sort of mediation, due to the intrinsic God-given hierarchical transmission of it. This theoretical framework, thus understanding the importance of morality, practice and mediation for what is considered the absolute knowledge in the Islamic traditions, will help in the investigation of the learning practices that were dominantly used in the medieval times (in Chapter 3) and the ones that are still in place (in Chapter 4).

## CHAPTER 3

# AUTHORITY AND MEDIATION WITHIN THE TRANSMISSION OF ISLAMIC KNOWLEDGE

### 3.1) Authority of *Müderri*s in *Medrese*

The beginning of the educational tradition in Islam can be traced back to Prophet's time. At first education was in a sense the transmission of the *Kur'an* from the Prophet to his disciples. Then after the Prophet passed away, the disciples started to transmit his acts and sayings to the younger generations as well. However, the systematization of the Islamic education starts with the establishment of *medreses*, around the eleventh century (Berkey, 2007, p. 42). With the spread of these institutions over time throughout the region, their understanding of *'ilm* and education is accepted throughout the *Sünnî*-Islamic world; that means, most of the *ulemâ* (learned men, sing. *âlim*) educated in this tradition, including the Ottoman ones, passed through the same educational system, and learned from the same resources (Unan, 1999, p. 150). That means, in these institutions, the students called the *talebe* (*danişmend* or *sohta* in other contexts) would mostly study Islamic knowledge like *fıkıh* (Islamic law), *tefsir* (exegesis), *Hadis* (*Hadis*, Prophet's sayings), *akâ'id* (issues related to belief), *kelâm* (Islamic philosophy), *mantık* (logic), as well as the base for all these studies, the Arabic language. At the end of the studies, this education would enable a commoner to reach the administrative duties in the Ottoman Empire in a similar way to today's upward mobility (Unan, 1999, p. 154).

In the Ottoman educational system there would be only one teacher called *âlim*, *hoca*, or *müderri*s in a *medrese*, and the "classes" were based on famous books, or it can be said that the "classes" were actually the books. All the students would gather in a big room in a semi-circular pattern around the teacher (Grunebaum & Abel, 1947, p. 16), according to the hierarchy among the students – seniors in the center closer to the teacher and the younger and the less experienced ones on the

periphery (Berkey, 2007, p. 46). Even though in the earlier times the students would be able to ask questions and discuss the topics they study, later on, in general, the teacher would analyze a text word by word and explain the meanings to the students; instead of saying something new, the aim of the education was to be able to use the language delicately, and to comprehend the texts fully (Kazıcı, 1999, p. 174).

The learning of this typical Muslim [*fakih*] is authoritarian. Revelation and tradition are its foundation, the commentary the principal vehicle of advance. Salvation of the soul, not control of nature and society is the end. Preservation and systematization of knowledge, rather than expansion is aimed at (Grunebaum & Abel, 1947, p. 16).

“When [the student] understood his material, [he] was then told to learn it so he could later recall the subject of the study”. At this point the technique of repetition was to be brought into play” (Grunebaum & Abel, 1947). Thus the texts would be read over and over again and be memorized by the students, then the process would be checked by the teacher one by one (Çelebi, 1999, p. 214).

Zarnūjī in his infamous book on instructions to students, talks extensively on repetition quoting from variety of resources (Zarnūjī, 1947). He even gives specific directions for helping memory and for preventing forgetfulness. According to his advice, “using a toothpick”, “drinking honey” and “eating incense plant” strengthens the memory; but, “eating fresh coriander and acid apples”, “passing through a camel train”, bring about forgetfulness. The importance of repetition and memorization should be clear from these specific advices. However, according to Berkey, this “memorization was a tool, not an end in itself”, which, through this close supervision of the teacher, actually “did reinforce the hierarchical character of instructional relationships.” (2007, p. 46). It is clear both from the sitting pattern in the classroom setting and emphasis on the practice of memorization under the teacher’s supervision that hierarchy is more of an important part of the *medrese* education. Zarnūjī even “goes so far as to say that the persistence of the aspiring scholar alone won’t insure his education; it will be achieved only if his teacher ... persists with him in his learning endeavors” (Grunebaum & Abel, 1947, p. 11). Since the need or importance of the teacher is clear in *medreses*, one cannot help but to raise the question: “What purpose would the teacher or this authority serve?”

There can be many speculations about the need for the authority in *medreses*, like the possibility that it helped disciplining the students to study harder due to

respect or more like fear. Even though it is not easy to know this for sure, there is one function of this authority that is certain. As Berkey notes, this authority would guarantee the credibility of the “graduates”, in other words, if a student would study with a teacher, and successfully completed his studies under his supervision, he would get a certificate called *icâzet*, which would testify the student’s “authority over texts and over a body of learning” (1992, p. 23). There were no examinations, no tests, neither a systematized assessment nor an institutional diploma at the time. It was the authority of the teacher, whose authority was also based on his own teacher, which attested to the student’s qualification on the specific knowledge, mainly a text. Therefore, we can claim that since the very beginning, the center of this educational system was not the institution but the teacher; “a center of learning... represented by scholars to whom students flocked from different parts of the Islamic world” (Grunebaum & Abel, 1947). Berkey adds to that: “Indeed, medieval Muslims themselves seem to have been remarkably uninterested in where an individual studied. The only thing that mattered was with whom one had studied” (2007, p. 43).

In this tradition, thus, it was really important and more prestigious to study with a well-known and well-established teacher. This was due to the firm belief among the scholars, one of which is Ibn Jama’a that “true knowledge derives only from a learned person, and not from books... Learning requires... not to proceed independently, [relying on] one’s self and one’s intelligence” (Berkey, 1992, p. 26). Hence, according to Zarnūjī,

A snap judgment on a teacher would be inadvisable since the student might find it later that he did not care for the rationale of teaching of the professor to whom he had gone in haste. Rather the student was to settle down for a couple of months of patient mediation and counseling for the choice of a teacher (Grunebaum & Abel, 1947).

In this careful and intensive search of a teacher, the qualities that should be sought after in so called a proper teacher were also noted in Zarnūjī’s texts, like “the most learned”, “the most pious”, and “the most advanced in years” (1947, p. 29); in addition, the teacher was also expected to be a good example for the students and be responsible for their moral behavior as well (Berkey, 1992, p. 37).

From the qualities expected in the teachers, the ones that pertains to the instructional part are easy to understand, but how they actually make sure of the

morality of the students is not very clear. In many studies about *medreses*, intellectual growth, transmission of “correct” knowledge and continuity of the authority are presented to be of dominant discussion topics. For example, Zakariya al-Anṣari says: “Taking knowledge from books [alone] leads to spelling errors [*tashîf*] and mistakes [*galat*] and mispronunciation [*tahrif*]. Whoever does not take his learning [*‘ilm*] from the mouths of men is like he who learns courage without ever facing a battle (Berkey, 1992, p. 26). The emphasis in this statement for the need of a teacher is clearly on the importance of correct transmission, and this kind of details became the focus of the discussions revolving in *medreses*.

While there are many other examples of the care for the transmission of the texts in writings, there are not many accounts about the ways how moral education is handled in *medreses*. There are various accounts of beating the students as a tool of discipline in the *sıbyan mektebi* (primary education institutions during Ottoman Empire), but that should not really be transferrable to the higher education levels of the *medrese* system (Hızlı, 1999, p. 215). For example, Al-Kâbisi’s text on teacher student relationships in Islam, it is advised to be just among students, to balance kindness and strictness towards students, and to scold or beat (how to beat a student is explained in detail in this text) when necessary; however, except these kind of advices, the details of moral education are not very clear in this text either (1966). There are also claims that the teacher should be a role-model for the students in his behaviors and in his meticulousness of observing the Islamic rituals as a way of sustaining moral dispositions in students, but it is not really discussed or analyzed again (Berkey, 1992, p. 37). Zarnūjī tells the following story, which kind of hints at the education of morality in *medreses*, but the expectation from this education seems to be more of an authoritative imposition:

It is reported that the Caliph Harun ar-Rashid, sent his son to al-Asma’i to take up the study of science [i.e., in this context, grammar] and ‘adab’ [morality]. One day [the Caliph] saw [al-Asma’i] purifying himself and washing his feet, while the son of the Caliph poured water over his feet. So [the Caliph] reprimanded al-Asma’i in this manner saying: “Indeed, I sent him [my son] to you to learn grammar and be instructed in ‘adab’, so why is it that you don’t ask him to pour water with one hand and wash your foot with the other?” (Zarnūjī, 1947, p. 34).

Again from Zarnūjī’s writings, it is understood that in *medrese* education, the protection from attributes like against avarice, cowardice, arrogance, and achieving

morals like generosity, courage, and humility comes with the knowledge of these opposites, in other words from being able to differentiate between the good and bad (Zarnūjī, 1947, p. 22). However, again, there is not a discussion in this famous educational text on how one should embody the good qualities within a *medrese*. Moreover, it is claimed that “[t]he [*medrese*], the house of learning, differed little from the mosque: devotional exercises as well as studying were performed in both places; but instruction was the [*medrese*]'s prime purpose” (Grunebaum & Abel, 1947, p. 17).

Still, even though the ways of teaching moral dispositions are not explicitly stated in texts, similar to the advices given about the qualities of the teachers, there are also advices to students who would like to attain knowledge on how to interact with their teachers. “A student was expected to behave toward his [teacher] as a dutiful son to his father His responsibilities extended to: physically shielding his [teacher] from pressing crowds of people; approaching him only with clean clothing, clipped nails, and trimmed hair, and without unpleasant bodily odors.” (Berkey, 1992, p. 36). The student should not sit near the teacher during the lecture (Zarnūjī, 1947, p. 37), judge his teacher critically, treat him with the highest respect, never walk in front of him, sit in his place, speak without permission, eat with him; but he should prepare his food and wash his feet (Grunebaum & Abel, 1947, p. 6). From these accounts, the existence of a discipline and an order grounded in the authority of the teacher in the *medrese* is clear; however, the ways of helping students embody moral qualities still are not clear. Besides, it should be noted that in this system, students do not take care of themselves due to intrinsic dispositions, but it is portrayed more like that the student should be aware of his being and his actions, how he looks, where he sits, and how he interacts in the presence of the teacher. Zarnūjī, who was a collector and synthesizer of the ideas of scholars and sages proceeded him, discusses the problems of education and learning during medieval times in his famous book *Ta’lim al-muta’allim ʿarīq al-ta’allum*. However, even his discussions do not really extent to the details of constructing moral dispositions, which is seen as a part of *’ilm*.

No matter how the moral dispositions were constructed in the *medreses*, it is clear that the teachers were central to Islamic learning. As stated at the beginning of



the section, with the spread of the *medreses* all over the Islamic territories, their understanding of *'ilm* and their practices of transmitting it became the norm of education in Islam. Therefore, at least, it can be claimed that “the preference for personal instruction as opposed to private reading and study, and the belief that only oral transmission is truly legitimate, [became] deeply embedded in the Islamic educational system” (Berkey, 1992, p. 24). This value given to mediation is important to acknowledge to understand the practices of the current day. However, since, the ways of embodying moral dispositions not very clear from the traditions in the *medreses*, but given utmost priority in *tasavvuf*, this thesis concentrates more on the analysis of the learning practices in the *Sûfî* culture.

## **3.2) *Sûfî Technologies of the Self & Mediation of Mürşid***

### **3.2.1) *Tarikat: A Path which Leads to Knowledge of Self***

In the second chapter, the understanding of “knowledge” in the tradition of *Sûfîsm* or *tasavvuf* is already discussed in detail and the differences between the perception of *'ilm* and *mârifet* is clarified. It was a theoretical overview of the topic to reveal the intrinsic association of mediation within the transmission of knowledge. However, the distinction given above, not only distinguishes the knowledge that the *Sûfîs* are after theoretically, but it also radically changes their practices to attain it from the endeavors of the *ulemâ*. Then, since this thesis starts with questioning the practices of current Muslims in Turkey, it becomes important to study the practices of *Sûfîs* as well, given that these cultural habits might have also inherited through generations or at least might have some persisting effects. Therefore, still keeping base with the previously explained theoretical framework, to better understand how this tradition might have affected the understanding the knowledge and its transmission within the society, the educational practices of *Sûfî* culture will be investigated in this chapter.

Within the *Sûfî* life, the transmission of knowledge mostly occurred in convents or lodges called *tekke* (*zawiyah* in Arabic, *khanqah* in Persian). Even though *tekke* could mean a small corner of a mosque at the early stages of *Sûfîsm*, with the

spread of this culture through Muslim societies they turned into bigger and dedicated complex structures where *Sûffîs* gathered, studied, prayed and even lived together and their number also increased. They have become the vibrant centers of *Sûffî* education and life. In these structures, there were many parallels with the classical educational institutions, namely the *medreses* covered in the previous section, since these two institutions were blended in together in many cases in history (Berkey, 1992). However, there were also some very distinct differences in the way they were utilized as a center and a tool of discipline.

First of all, a *tekke* is not barely a structure and an institution where people mainly gather to study *'ilm*, but rather a gateway of a path on which one (*Sûffî*) seeks *mârifet*, the true wisdom, tries to reach enlightenment and become an *insan-ı kâmil* – the person who has reached perfection as the short definition of Ahmet Albayrak suggests (Albayrak, 2006, p. 302). While students learn about *Şeriat* (religious law and information) in *medreses* and memorize the *Kur'an*, *Hadis* and jurisprudence books as shown previously, *Sûffîs* in *tekke* do not really study in the same way, they instead pursue the path called *tarikât*, which at the end is believed to lead to the knowledge of one's own self and to the knowledge of Allah within possibilities He allows.

“Savm-u Salat-u Hac ile sanma biter zahid için / İnsan-ı kâmil olmaya lazım olan irfan imiş” (Altuntaş, 2011). In these famous verses, which is also converted into a very popular hymn in Turkey, Niyâzî-i Mîsrî announces that it is not enough for a *Sûffî* to know the practices of Islam like *Savm* (oruç), *Salat* (prayer), *Hac* (pilgrimage) and observing them; to reach the state of *insan-ı kamil*, the perfect human, the wise, one needs a different and transcendental kind of knowledge intertwined with practice, which is *irfan / mârifet* as explained in the previous chapter. That is the aspiration for *Sûffîs*, who thinks that Allah wanted to be known and has created humans.

### **The Path to Know One's Self is The Path to *Mârifet***

The *tariqa* [*tarikât*], the "path" on which the mystics walk, has been defined as "the path which comes out of the *sharî'a* [*şeriat*], for the main road is called *shar'*, the path, *tariq*." This derivation shows that the *Sûffîs* considered the path of mystical education a branch of that highway that consists of the God-given law, on which

every Muslim is supposed to walk. No path can exist without a main road from which it branches out; no mystical experience can be realized if the binding injunctions of the shari'a [*shariat*] are not followed faithfully first. The path, *tariqa*, however, is narrower and more difficult to walk and leads the adept—called *salik*, "wayfarer"—in his *suluk*, "wandering," through different stations (*maqam* [*makam*]) until he perhaps reaches, more or less slowly, his goal, the perfect *tauhid* [*tevhid*], the existential confession that God is One (Schimmel, 1975, pp. 98-99).

This idea of perfect *tevhid*, is intertwined with the idea of *mârifet*, which is already defined as to know about Allah with his being (*zât*), attributes (*sifat*), acts (*efâl*) and names (*esmâ*). However, as discussed previously, we know that there is no clear way of attaining this knowledge in the holy texts, thus in *shariat*; instead this kind of knowledge seems impossible to be learned on one's own. Still *Sûfîs* claim to have devised or found a deviated path, one that may lead to this kind of knowledge called *mârifet* and they base their claim on the following very well spread but also debated *Hadis* of Prophet Muhammed: "The one who knows his *nefs* (self) knows his *Rab* (Allah, one of Allah's names meaning the discipliner)" (Uludağ, 2013, p. 57). Using this *Hadis* as their basis, *Sûfîs* twist their perspective on attaining knowledge: since one cannot directly know Allah, they concentrate on knowing themselves, claiming that it is in fact possible. Therefore, according to *Sûfîs*, *mârifet* is considered to be dependent on one's knowledge of his self. This very statement is what leads to the main difference in *tasavvuf*: the need to know one's self. With this statement, the knowledge that the *Sûfî* seeks differ from a *medrese* student; the focus changes from the mastery of the *shariat* of Allah and becomes about one's own being, soul and reality (*hakikat*). The famous *Sûfî*, Rûmî (Mevlânâ) points out this difference by saying: "The *âlim* of our time are splitting the hair and knows very well about things that not related to them. However, they do not know what is more important and closest to them, meaning themselves (their *nefs*)." (Rumi, 2009, p. 62) At first, this new path the *Sûfîs* seem to have devised, knowing oneself to attain divine knowledge may look like a solution to the dilemma of attaining absolute knowledge. However, the need to know oneself leads to another complicated issue, to one of the biggest philosophical questions in history: "What is the self, and how does one know the self?"

## The Self: Foucault's Perspective on Constructed Being

"Self is a reflexive pronoun," according to Foucault, "and it has two meanings. *Auto* means 'the same,' but it also conveys the notion of identity. The latter meaning shifts the question from 'What is this self?' to 'What is the plateau on which I shall find my identity?'" (Foucault, 1988, p. 5). Diverging the question from the essence to existence Foucault has suggested us that "man" is a historically constructed being. According to him, there are various ways that humans develop knowledge about themselves. For example, students in *medrese* dedicate their efforts to learning and memorizing under the strict hierarchy of the system as discussed previously. They are always under the control of their *şeyh* to be kept in the pre-determined boundaries of the transmitted Islamic knowledge. Hence, they are prone to what Foucault calls the *technologies of power*, "which determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination, an objectivizing of the subject." (Foucault, 1988). The students clean themselves as suggested, wear the clothes that their social network of scholars wear, memorize the texts in the order that is given to them and read/recite in front of the teacher just as they have instructed by him. At the end of their studies, they become identified as a *şeyh*, a *kadı*, a teacher, or a *hatip* (preacher), exposed to *subjection*. However, what they learn about themselves are not more than what is written in books, or what is told by the *şeyhs*, a reproduction of a reproduction. They become mere "objects" that hold knowledge imposed upon them. Entangled in the web of power relations, they keep reproducing the same technologies of power over and over again. As such, they cannot establish a real subject as Foucault argues, they become *objectivized*, in other words, they are identified through "a precise set of beliefs, values and practices which are assumed to constitute a normative," in this case, "scholar" or a "learned man" (Berkey, 2007).

Obviously, the answer to the abstract philosophical question of how to *know* the self is not a simple one, and it is not explicitly found in the holy texts of Islam. Therefore, even though the scholars in *medrese* could study the definitions of the *nefs* (self), the *ruh* (soul), they cannot know what these actually are, considering that this question transcends to the metaphysical dimensions, especially when there is a verse which is traditionally interpreted as not much from the knowledge of *ruh* is

given to people (*Kur'an* 17:85). Even while within the realm of senses, one cannot know the taste of a food or smell of a flower no matter how detailed it is described to the person unless he actually experiences it, how can one be sure about metaphysical issues? As the definition suggests, the information given can only be a description and not the actual experience; thus hearsay information is not equal to actual experienced knowledge.

Once upon a time a Sultan leaves his son with a talented bunch and they have thought him about the knowledge of stars, *remil* (fortune telling from sand), and many others. Sultan's son, even though he does not have the capacity, became a master after learning all these knowledge. One day, the Sultan hid a ring in his fist, and asked his son and asked him what is in his hand. The son replied that it is a circular, yellow and empty thing. The father confirmed that the attributes are all correct, but he also wanted the son to tell him what that thing actually is. Then the son replied that it is a sieve, not being able to comprehend the reality that it cannot fit into his fist. (Rumi, 2009, p. 62).

With this story, Rumi exemplifies the difference between the *'ilm* of *ulemâ* and the *mârifet* of *Sûfis* that is to say the students in the *medreses* "study" the texts through memorization, imitation, logic, comparison, analogies, juxtaposition, and linguistic analysis, they even know how to reach to some conclusions and judgment through synthesis. If we further pursue the previous example, the student being instructed that a strawberry is a fruit, and fruits contains fructose sugar which is sweet, he can infer that a strawberry is sweet. However, this student will not actually grasp what that conclusion really means, that is to say he will not know the taste of the strawberry till he experienced it through eating. Thus Rumi is trying to say that the *ulemâ* lack the practice to bring their knowledge into life, to indulge in experiences. From Foucauldian perspective, they are exposed to the dogmas in *medreses* to be later identified as *ulemâ* or scholars in the normative sense, but they do not really practice anything, go into an endeavor of constructing themselves as a subject.

### 3.2.2) Practices in *Tekke*: Foucault's *Taking Care of the Self & Arts of Existence*

#### Initiation Rituals in *Tarikat*: Conscious Acceptance of the Path

While it seems impossible to comprehend the metaphysical concepts like *ruh* (soul), *nûr* (the light of Allah), and the *zât* of Allah, *tasavvuf* has come forth as a path, the *plateau* that Foucault is talking about on which one shall find his identity. It offers a basic premise to lead to the answers of these ontological questions and more. That is why people who wanted to learn the realities in the world and beyond, those who wanted to attain the knowledge of one's self and the knowledge of Allah has been drawn to this path. Thus there are many stories in the *Sûfî* culture about why and how people are drawn to this diverted path. Noticeably, many of the famous ones are about men who were well educated in *medreses* but at some point realized that there are things that they did not learn yet or cannot learn as they have been studying, usually things that belongs to the *bâtın* (hidden, immanent) or metaphysical world, solidifying the necessity of the deviation of *tasavvuf*. For example, as the story goes, the famous Aziz Mahmud Hüdâyî is drawn to *tarikât* due to the following miraculous event according to the leader of Hüdâyî Foundation:

When Aziz Mahmud Hüdâyî was a *kadı* (a judge who presides over matters in Ottoman court according to Islamic law) in Bursa, a woman came to him with the intention of divorce claiming that her husband is a liar, who was absent for five-six days during the *Eid al-Adha* (*Kurban Bayramı*) claiming that he went to *Hac* (pilgrimage) which is not possible of course at the time. The man then argued that because he wanted to go to pilgrimage for a long time, Eskici Mehmed Dede held his hand, made him close his eyes, and when he opened them again, he was in *Mecca*; besides, he claimed that he met other people from Bursa there as well, and he cried: "The enemy of Allah, the devil goes around the world in a moment, why could not his beloved servant go to the *Kâbe* (*al- Kab'ah*)" Thus *kadı* decided to wait for the people to return from *Mecca*. After hearing from the returning pilgrims that they had actually met the man there, he wanted to figure out about this miraculous event and went to meet Eskici Mehmed Dede, who then referred him to *Murşid-i Kamil* (the perfect *murşid*) of the time Muhammed Üftade. When Aziz Mahmud Hüdâyî found Muhammed Üftade he asked him to become his *mürîd*. However, Muhammed Üftade rejected him at first saying that *Kadı* is rich, has a good life, and status but his door is the door of austerity. When *Kadı* insisted that he would like to become his disciple, Üftade made him quit his job, sell all his belongings and distribute to the poor. Then asked the *Kadı* to sell liver from door to door wearing his "kaftan" (luxury garment) to break his ego... *Kadı* was also assigned the duties of cleaning the *tekke*. One day, while he was cleaning the toilets, he hears someone outside announcing

that the new *Kadı* will be arriving to town and feels a little movement in his heart towards the compelling call. Realizing the game of the devil, he intends to clean the toilets with his beard, as a punishment to discipline himself, to cleanse his ego as well. Right before he acts, his *mürşid* Üftade stops him saying that the beard is a holy *Sünnet* of the Muhammed, adding: “In this path of *Seyr-i Sülük*, the aim of all the “*hizmet*” (service) given to you was for you to be able to conquer this *meretebe* (level, station of *nefs*). From now on you will prepare the water for my *abdest* (ablution). (Topbaş, n.d.)

Similarly according to the popular story, Akşemseddin is also a learned man, however, clearly, he is in search of a *mürşid* and again drawn to the path of *tasavvuf* after a miraculous dream:

Akşemseddin... after memorizing the *Kur'an* and getting a solid Islamic education, he became the *müderri*s of Osmancık *Medrese*. During this time it is understood that he also had a medical education as well. According to Enîsî's *Menâkıbn'ame*, in which we can find the most and accurate information about him, since he could not stop thinking about the '*ilm-i batın*' [*bâtın ilmi*] he went to Fars and *Mâverâünnehir* to find a *mürşid* at the age of twenty five. However, he could not accomplish his aim and returned back. Due to some advice, he considered subjugating to Hacı Bayrâm-ı Velî but decided against it. Then he went to Halep to subjugate to Zeynüddin el-Hâfî. However, one night in his dream, he saw that he had a chain on his neck and Hacı Bayrâm was holding the other end, thus he returned to [his door]... in short time he was appointed as the caliph of Hacı Bayrâm” (Köprülü & Uzun, 1989).

Like Aziz Mahmud Hüdâyî and Akşemseddin, to enter this path, first of all, one needs to arrive at the door of a *mürşid* (teacher, guide), or a *tekke*. İbnü'l-Arabî bases the cause of this diversion into the path of *tasavvuf* to one's endeavors for Allah, through his interpretation of a verse in *Kur'an* (29:69); therefore, it should not be surprising that the learned men like these two are also drawn frequently to this path (İbnü'l-Arabî, 2009, p. 18). However, it should also be noted that there is no open invitation to this path, as Ahmed Yüksel Özemre states; it is the duty of Prophets to openly call people to Islam since it relates to everyone, but *mürşid* should not because it is a very personal thing and not everybody can walk this path, neither should they (Özemre & Şahinler, 2011, p. 38). This is parallel to the general belief that people who are drawn to *tasavvuf* are already destined to arrive at this door; they are selected by Allah but they have to act on their urges and consciously find a *tarikât*, and be fully-determined to enter it.

In any case, once arrived at this door of *tarikât*, one should declare his own wish to join among the *mürids* (disciples) with an intentional decision. This conscious decision is very important since it suggests that what comes afterwards is also the choice of the *tâlib* (the one who wants to enter the path of *tasavvuf*, seeker of

*mârifet*) as a subject. It is made clear for him, who wishes to enter a *tarikât* that diverging from the main path of *şeriat* and entering this path of *tarikât* is a very big commitment and a lifelong dedication to struggle with himself. Therefore, as Schimmel states in her book, “The master who had to teach the method and the exercises had first to test the adept to determine whether he was willing and able to undergo the hardships that awaited him on the Path. The newcomer was sometimes made to wait for days at the sheikh's door, and sometimes as a first test was treated very rudely. Usually three years of service were required before the adept could be formally accepted in a master's group—one year in the service of the people, one in the service of God, and one year in watching over his own heart.” (Schimmel, 1975, p. 101) That is why Aziz Mahmud Hüdâyî is asked to leave all his wealth and status to enter into the *tekke*, and the popular story is that Akşemseddin eats his first meal with the dogs asking for forgiveness. İbn-ül Arabî confirms this tradition clearly stating that a *mürşid* should not accept a *mürid* without first testing him (İbnü'l-Arabî, 2009, p. 18).

Obviously these test of will are harsh, but necessary to make sure that one is completely serious about entering this path and it is his own conscious, intentional decision, as a proof of his subjective self-act. This is made clear by Rumi when scolding the *mürids* of his time for being loose in their will with a shocking accentuation: “Your [*mürşid*] is not commanding you as the previous ones did, and tells you to leave your wife, child, wealth and status. Old [*mürşid*] used to tell people: Divorce your wife, I will marry her.” and the *mürids* used to obey.” (Rumi, 2009, p. 133). These kind of rituals are not only testing the determination of the *talib* as a tool of self-reflection and self-realization to single out his act as his own subjective one, but at the same time they aim to break the ego of the *mürid* from the very beginning and lay the foundation of the total submission to the *mürşid*. Only after the *talib* willingly accepts any hardships associated with the path, proves himself after passing these tests, and subjugates to the *mürşid* with all his life, then the path of enlightenment which is called the *seyr-i sülük* (wandering of the path of *Tarikat*) starts for him.



## Path of Discipline: Foucault's *Technologies of the Self* in *Tarikat*

When a *tâlib* enters the path of *tasavvuf*, it does not mean at all that the tests will cease; on the contrary, he will be continuously tested against his ego, his desires, and the embodied habits and *presuppositions* residual of the power relations from his life prior to entering the *tarikât*, by doing humbling activities like in Aziz Mahmud Hudâyî's story, cleaning the toilets, selling liver in the streets, begging etc. so that he would be rebuked by the society. Annemarie Schimmel quotes another story about Majduddin Baghdadi in the twelfth century, which illustrates this attitude very well: "When he entered the service of a sheikh, he was made to serve "at the place of ablution," i.e., to clean the latrines. His mother, a well-to-do lady physician, asked the master to exempt the tender boy from this work, and sent him twelve Turkish slaves to do the cleaning. But he replied: "You are a physician—if your son had an inflammation of the gall bladder, should I give the medicine to a Turkish slave instead of giving it to him?" (Schimmel, 1975, p. 101). It should be noted that according to the *mürşid*, these humbling disciplinary practices are like medicine for the *mürîd*. If we think about it, when someone is sick, naturally he goes to a doctor, and when one wants to attain *mârifet*, he goes to a *tekke*. Therefore, we can say that these disciplining acts are what awaits him in the *tekkes* as the way to attain *mârifet*. With this very statement, the *mürşid* hints at one of the main tools of *Sûfî* education: discipline. To help overcome the desires of ego, to strip from the previous identities and to humble the *mürşid* within the system of the *tarikât*, he is constantly put to practices of discipline.

Even though the decision of entering a *tarikât* and passing the tests on its own is already an act of self-disciplining, as the time passes and the *mürîd* starts to advance in this path, he gets used to the imposed discipline upon himself, learns to live under an authority. Moreover, he also starts acting on his own to discipline himself, just like Aziz Mahmud Hudâyî tries to clean the toilets with his beard when he tries to overcome his desire for status or the devils call to his previous status as a *Kadı*.

These consciously agreed and self-imposed practices of discipline do not seem to really fit into Foucault's *technologies of power*; rather they resemble what Foucault

calls the *technologies of the self*. McNay claims in her work, *Foucault, A critical Introduction* published in 1994, his perspective on the topic of *subjectification* changes towards the end of his career. “Although Foucault had insisted on the weakness of the subject who is manipulated and oppressed by different forms of power as a ‘docile body’ in his early studies, he started to consider the subject as an agent who has the capacity of autonomous action toward the end of his life. In other words, Foucault, initially, was concerned with the social construction of an individual by different patterns of power, but later he came to a position to emphasize the autonomous aspects of the subject who can re-create himself through everyday practices” (Gözel, 2012, p. 154).

In parallel to Foucault’s late emphasis, *tasavvuf* can be seen as a discipline acted upon oneself as well. Instead of the general symbol of a path, we can even say that *tasavvuf* is a combination of tools, or technologies to turn the common “man” into *insani-kamil* who has reached enlightenment. Similarly, R.A Nicholson even claims that “*Sûfism* is wholly self-discipline” (Gözel, 2012, p. 158). Even though this path of self-disciplining is embedded within power relationships like any other relationship, and the traditional practices of the *Sûfis* seems to be quite prone to the exercise of *power-knowledge*, the self-acceptance of intentional submission, and conscious acceptance of practices of attenuating the self, and stripping the *nefs* through all its embodied attachments (*put*) may still be able to create an opening to allow the subject be. Thus, if entering the path of *tasavvuf* becomes a conscious and “subjective” act of completely giving up on one’s self and subjectivity, to reconstruct the real “self” – the subject, would it be possible for the *Sûfi* to make a resistance against the *subjection* of the power relations?

According to Foucault’s later works, *technologies of the self* is another technique of humans to develop knowledge about themselves, “which permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality.” (Foucault, 1988). Through Foucault’s lenses, we can claim that *tasavvuf* is a structured pack of techniques as such, thus it can be called among the *technologies of the self*, consisting of various disciplining tools and

practices executed on one's body and soul to reach the *insan-ı kamil*, the perfect, content, pure and wise subject which is the ultimate aspiration of the *tâlib*. Therefore, by accepting this path, we can assert that the *mürîd* covertly tries to constitute himself as a subject even though he is still surrounded with the web of power relations.

This new "technology" in Islam, which is believed to lead to the *knowledge of the self*, namely the act of disciplining one's self within a *tarikât* originates from the Hadiths of the Prophet. The following *Hadis*, for example, comes up often as a reference point and is quite popular among especially the *Sûfîs*: When the prophet was returning from a *cihad* (war) he says that they have returned from the small *cihad* (war) to the big *cihad* and when asked what is the big *cihad*, he stated that it is *mücahede* (struggle) with the *nefs* (Sorularla İslamiyet, 2010). However, it should be noted that this *Hadis* is much debated among the scholars and is considered false by some scholars; still, based on another similar *Hadis* quoted from Tirmidhi, "*mücahid* (one who participates in *cihad*) is who enters a *cihad* with his *nefs*" the idea behind it is widely accepted by the *Sûfîs* and became spread among many others as well (Özel, 1993, p. 528). Anyhow, through the centuries *cihad* has come to signify the struggle with one's self, and even valued more than the war that one join for the name of Allah, which is already very highly valued in Islam.

Compared to the abstract and metaphysical notion of knowing one's self, the struggle with the self is an easier concept to understand. In a reductionist way, it simply means, when one wants to drink wine against the Islamic rules, he can just decide against it, when one falls into devils tricks and finds himself/herself in front of a lusting body, he/she can abstain from that, when one starts to get angry he can concentrate to calm down etc. In short one can discipline himself not to listen to the temptations of his own self called the *nefs* or as the Prophet stated in a different way, he can try to convert his devil to a Muslim.

These disciplining practices, since we have compared to Foucault's *technologies of the self*, should help people understand more about themselves and construct themselves as subjects through certain practices. However, if the *technology of self*, which Foucault elaborates and the whole tradition of *tasavvuf* pursues for centuries can be summed up (or reduced) as the one above, it leads to

many questions about the simplistic approach. For example, what does it really mean when a person struggles with his desire to eat chocolate and overcomes it, in the sense of disciplining his *nefs*? How does this kind of daily practice of self-enforced discipline makes one learn more about himself? Frankly, what is the relation between struggle and knowing?

### **Cleaning the Soul: The Relation between Struggle and Knowing**

According to Foucault, in the Ancient Greeks, the possibility of the occurrence of knowing oneself was believed to be related, moreover, depended on the realization of the taking care of the self; in other words, “one had to occupy oneself with oneself before the Delphic principle [*gnothi sauton* / know yourself] was brought into action (Foucault, 1988, p. 3). Similar to what Foucault points out, the path of *tarikāt* is not about knowing oneself first, that is surely a part of it but it only follows after the *care of oneself* (*epimelesthai sautou*), which in the ancient times was often understood to involve a cultivation of the soul, a matter of self-mastery, but over the course of history it became a matter of learning to shape one's own inner character (Gözel, 2012). This clarifies a really important topic in *tasavvuf* because as it is explained in the second chapter, paradoxically one cannot attain absolute knowledge by his efforts and studying; therefore, at first it seems like there is no way of attaining absolute knowledge. However, *Sûfîs* think otherwise basing their claim on the following verse in *Kur'an*: “Worship your *Rab* [Allah] till *yakiyn* is given to you” (*Kur'an* Hicr 99). Since worshipping cleanses or purifies the soul, the basic premise in this verse becomes that one should worship and constantly discipline himself to clean his soul until he is bestowed with *yakiyn*, which is considered the absolute certainty in knowledge in the *Sûfî* tradition. In other words, *Sûfîs* believe that if they purify their hearts from the sins and the attachments to desires imposed upon them from within the society and their very “identity”, the knowledge of the self, thus the *'ilm* of Allah can reflect through their pure souls. This is usually represented with a mirror metaphor in the *Sûfî* tradition: The heart (used interchangeably with soul) is a “mirror” which has the ability to reflect Allah's reflections (manifestations). However,

it has to be kept clean, not to obstruct the reflection. The following story is told by Rumi to explain this as well:

Rumi and Chinese painters argued about who is the best. They both got a room facing each other's. The Chinese asked for hundreds of paints from the *padişah* (ruler). Instead the Rumi said: "No paint or picture works except luster and started glossing the wall, made it clear like the skies. Being colorless is better than being painted over with two hundred colors. Color is like a cloud, colorless is like the moon; if you see a brightness on a cloud you should know that it is from the moon. The Chinese finished their paintings, delighted about the beauty of the images. When the *padişah* came in he also loved the paintings; then went onto the Rumi's room. One of the Rumi painters removed the curtain that obstructed the view of the other room and all the paintings that the Chinese made reflected on to the glossed over wall of the Rumi and looked better there. So, the Rumi painters are the *Sûfîs*, they do not have study books to be memorized, but they have glossed over their hearts, cleansing it from desires, greed, stinginess and grudge. The pureness and clearness becomes the attribute of their heart like a mirror, and innumerable images may reflect on it... Here the mind either hushes or baffles because: 'Is the heart God, or is God the heart?' (Rumi, 2015, pp. 3467-3500).

Since, as explained in the previous chapter, one can attain *'ilm* only if Allah wills, the care of oneself aims to purify and cleanse the self to make the body worthy of the *'ilm*, thinking that Allah would only want to put His precious "treasure" only in a suitable holder/ cup. However, "the self is not clothing, tools, or possessions." Plato argues in *Alcibiades*: "It is to be found in the principle which uses these tools, a principle not of the body but of the soul. You have to worry about your soul—that is the principal activity of caring for yourself. The care of the self is the care of the activity and not the care of the soul-as-substance" (Foucault, 1988, p. 5). Thus, similar to the ancient Greeks, the Rumi painters' glossing over the wall symbolizes this effort to take care of themselves, to discipline the self and purify their souls. However, the *Sûfî* differs from the ancient Greeks in the intention of their practices: while Alcibiades aspires to become a good politician, the *Sûfî* only asks to be accepted by Allah as a *kul* (slave), a good devotee. Actually this is part of the paradoxical thinking introduced in the previous chapter, while the *Sûfî* seriously asks to be welcomed as a *kul*, he also knows that when he is accepted and esteemed worthy by Allah, he might be bestowed with *mârifet*. Isn't it the Prophet Muhammed himself, and all the other prophets who are called out many times in the *Kur'an* as the *kuls* of Allah? (*Kur'an* 21:25).

On the other hand, Rumi says: “For the Friend to show his face, you have to become tired of this world and of yourself; you have to be the enemy of your own.” meaning that one should clean his heart from all the desires except Allah, so that he can completely fill it in (Rumi, 2009, p. 150). The assertion from the previous story of Rumi is that while the Rum painters do not concentrate on the painting at all, the Chinese paints with hundreds of colors, which represent the adornments of the body, whether it is the outlook, the wealth, the status or even the knowledge; but still the work of Rum painters is clearer and more valued. Thus, *Sûfî’s* taking care of himself in the hopes of constructing a subject, as exemplified through this story, is not about embellishing the self with the things that are esteemed in the society, even with the moral dispositions that were imposed upon him before he started his *seyr-i sülûk*. On the contrary, it is about eliminating the unwanted sides of the previous *subjected* self, and to understand that he is actually not a *subject*. Therefore, according to *Sûfîsm*, one should mainly exercise the religious practices, and go into an endeavor to discipline himself within the path of *tasavvuf* to be able to cleanse his soul. From a different perspective, he is to avoid the arrogant endeavors to establish himself as a “subject” by identifying himself in accordance to the impositions of the power relations which ends up in *subjection*, in the Foucauldian sense anyway. That is different than what we, as the “modern” people and the scholars in the *medreses* understood as “studying”, which is nothing more than being subjected to the doctrines of the era’s power/knowledge.

This is a strange and counter-intuitive way of acquiring knowledge to the “uninitiated observers” – those who do not have knowledge of or experience with this paradigm, like us. In this system, the actual focus in learning is not on the studies. Moreover, one tries to get rid of the books and his pre-established knowledge. The endeavor is not focused on learning even though knowledge is the final goal. One gets into the practices of this discipline through an act of *doublethink*, like one continues to observe the Islamic religious rituals and rules even though it is already known before birth if one will end up in the heaven or hell. “According to *Hadis*, Allah while creating the human, sends an angel to the womb of the mother, and makes him write the sex, life span, gains, and deeds of the child, as well as if it is going to become a *said* (saved) or *şaki* (doomed); then the pens dry, and the books are closed... when

some of the *sahabes* (Prophet's friends) question if they should stop their endeavors, the Prophet tells them to continue in their endeavors because the deeds are made easier to them based on the nature of their creations" (Akçay, 2008, p. 543). This paradoxical way of doublethink also comes into play when we are talking about constructing a subject through the path of *tarikât*. Just like when the *Kur'an* is being revealed to the Prophet Muhammed, he was ordered to recite thus to take up an endeavor even though it is a revelation to him, when one intends to enter a path (*tasavvuf*) to establish himself as a subject, that is in the *insan-ı kamil*, he has to forsake his desires, his aspirations, his ego, his will and his *nefs* – his subjectivity.

### **Allah's Color: Foucault's *Art of Existence* and *Tarikât* as Suprematist Art**

Irvin Cemil Schick states that for the last twenty thirty years, "as text came to represent any object that is given a meaning, writing also came to represent any act that includes giving meaning to an object" and quoting Elizabeth Grosz, he adds that "thus, social norms as fashion, etiquette, or laws, so to say; altering techniques like scarification, tattoo, make-up or piercing; bodily norms like heterosexuality, chastity, the cult of virginity are written on the human body (Schick, 2011, p. 10). From this perspective, since almost all the daily even activities are governed by the *Sünnet*, that is to say, it is already determined how people should dress, clean themselves, cut their fingernails, leave their beards, clean their hairs, enter the toilet, have sex etc., and by doing these they intentionally try to differentiate from the disbelievers, we can say that practicing Islam, in a way, is a writing written on the Muslim body. Similarly it is true that the clothing and symbols in *Sûfî* traditions also do have a big importance, which differentiate the *tarikats* from one other and from the *avam* (the public); moreover, it is believed that even the name *Sûfî* itself is may be originated from the wool (Arabic *suf*) *hırka* (a type of garment, *murakka'*) that they wear (Schimmel, 1975, p. 14). Therefore, the body of a "Muslim" or a "*Sûfî*" can be seen as a text.

However, for the human body which becomes decorated with writing as the examples above, a body which is converted into a text like a "Muslim" or a "*Sûfî*", Shick claims that it loses its neutral singular entity, but finds its place within the

cultural system (Schick, 2011, pp. 10-11). He then uses the quote of Desiderius Erasmus Roterodamus who said: “It is not the cloak that makes the monk” to further his argument. This brings to mind the famous Turkish *Sûfî* poet Yunus Emre, who made a very similar statement in his poem that it is not the *hırka* (garment) that makes a *derviş* (*Sûfî*): “Dervişlik dedikleri / Hırka ile taç değil / Gönlün derviş eyleyen / Hırkaya muhtaç değil” (Sarı, 2016).

With this example, Schick argues the other way around; he claims that it is actually the cloak or the *hırka* that makes the monk or the *Sûfî*, those garments are the ones that differentiates between them, and constitutes their identity. “For example”, Schick says, “if a person with shabby clothing is not accepted to an elegant restaurant, it is not due to the clothing itself, but because of the things that are thought to be revealed about his character by him wearing it” (Schick, 2011, pp. 10-11). Therefore, in a similar fashion, as the *Sûfî* wears his *hırka* he also takes his place in the social and cultural construct.

However, Plato declares in *Alcibiades* that “when you take care of the body, you don’t take care of the self. The self is not clothing, tools, or possessions. It is to be found in the principle which uses these tools, a principle not of the body but of the soul. You have to worry about your soul—that is the principal activity of caring for yourself” (Foucault, 1988). Thus, if we were to consider Plato’s perspective similar to the practices of *tarikât*, and then apply it with Schick’s ideas, we can say that the disciplining practices in *seyr-i sülûk* are like writing on one’s soul as a form of text. In a way, what Erasmus and Yunus claim still holds true, but in a different context. The *Sûfî* actually cares about disciplining his soul, and writing his text in a different realm, actually in various metaphysical realms. Even though he is identified on the outside as a part of the social construct, and that surely is the case, he is also actively trying to break out of this construct. The *Sûfî* actually believes that the cleanliness of the *nefs* is what actually defines who a *Sûfî* really is. The clothing and symbols become a veil that hides the self that is under construction and the final text he is trying to create from the *avam* (*public*), those who would not be able to understand the value of his *mârifet* – a veil like an encryption, or even a *for-edge painting*.

These disciplining practices of the *Sûfîs*, their endeavor to create a new text, constitutes what Foucault calls *the art of existence*, which he defines as “those



intentional and voluntary actions by which men not only set themselves rules of conduct, but also seek to transform themselves, to change themselves in their singular being, and to make their life in to an oeuvre, that carries certain aesthetic values and meets certain stylistic criteria” (Foucault, 1990, p. 10). Therefore, this *care of one’s self* in the *Sûfi* tradition is not only a form of life, but it is a form of art and thus *Sûfis* should be considered artists whose whole lives and beings are turned into art. They are painting or writing over themselves, over their own souls, and at the end becoming a subject who will be signing under it.

However, their art is also quite unique. The final text, or the final painting at the end of all these practices looks nothing like them at the beginning; it becomes a manifestation or a reflection of Allah. This is because, so to say, they do not use colors to paint their own canvases, which is their own souls like the Rum painters of Mevlânâ. They try to create their art through *şibġah-Allah* (the color/dye of Allah), the color that is pointed at in the following *Kur’anic* verse: “(We take our) color from Allah, and who is better than Allah at coloring. We are His worshippers.”<sup>27</sup> (*Kur’an* 2:138). Foucault is shocked that art has become something related only to objects and not to individuals or to life and wonders if everyone’s life could not become a work of art (Gözel, 2012). *Sûfi’s* answer to this question would be positive, in fact, they have been doing that for a very long time. However, if Foucault calls *the care of one’s self* as an art in a classical sense, the disciplining practices in *tarikât* would be more like a *Suprematist* art with its paradoxical and metaphysical underlying elements.

If studied closely, a painting of one’s self painted with the color of Allah, has similarities to Kazimir Malevich’s (originator of the *Suprematist* art) *Black Square* for which he claimed that it is not just an “empty square” he exhibited, but rather the feeling of *non-objectivity* [representing or intended to represent no natural or actual object, figure, or scene]” (Malevich, 2003, p. 68). That means aside from the consisting of only one color, just like the only color *Sûfis* use which is of Allah’s, this painting tries to reach and convey a feeling of not being related to anything in this

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<sup>27</sup> For this *Kur’anic* verse, Marmaduke William Pickthall’s literal translation is preferred because in the *Sahih International* the literal meaning of color is interpreted as religion, thus *şibġah-Allah* is given as Allah’s religion (Pickthall, 1997).

materialistic world. Similarly, a *Sûfî* in *seyr-i sülûk* does not care about the visible (*zâhiri*) world, like the clothes, attractions, wealth, status, and how he looks either, but he deeply cares about the inner (*bâtîni*) experience.

The very aim of Malevich in the creating of this piece can be traced back to his Manifesto of *Suprematism* in which he says:

Under *Suprematism* I understand the primacy of pure feeling in creative art. To the Suprematist, the visual phenomena of the objective world are, in themselves, meaningless; the significant thing is feeling, as such, quite apart from the environment in which it is called forth. The so-called 'materialization' of a feeling in the conscious mind really means a materialization of the *reflection* of that feeling through the medium of some realistic conception. Such a realistic conception is without value in suprematist art (Malevich, 2003, p. 67).

Instead, according to him, "color and texture are of the greatest value in painterly creation—they are the essence of a painting; however, he also believes that "this essence has always been killed by the subject" (Kazimir, 1916, p. 123). In a sense, from a *Sûfîs* perspective, all the attachments to the visible world, all the outer forms, power relations, dominance of the ego and all the attributes that are dumped on a person that turns him into a "subject" kills the essence of a human being – the soul, which should primarily be in the color of Allah. That is why Malevich does not intend to represent any object, figure, or scene in his paintings; he is not interested in the forms of the outer world and depicting objects, instead he cares about the pure artistic feeling and values. In parallel to Malevich's ideas, the *Sûfî* is interested in a different path, a different realm as well, in which the experiences can neither be perceived with the conscious nor can they be later represented back to the outside world through a realistic conception. Thus as the *Sûfîs* reach *mârifet*, Malevich liberates the color, which he thought was beyond the boundaries of artistic creativity of the time, and color becomes "the fundamental principle of painting for the Suprematists" (Gurianova, 2003, p. 53).

Therefore, we can claim that this *non-objective* form of Malevich's art, which is about getting rid of the material world, getting rid of shapes, forms, perceptions and constructions and instead emerging into color, is quite familiar in the art of the *Sûfî*, which is also about getting rid of the *nefs* that tightly connects with the earthly desires so that the soul can emerge into a new realm, the color of Allah. Malevich himself gives out the formula of how he came up with this new form of art, "a new

religion of the spirit” or “a religion of the pure act” in his own words (Marcade, 2003, pp. 40-41). He says: "I transformed myself in the zero of form and emerged from nothing to creation, that is, to *Suprematism*, to the new realism in painting - to non-objective creation" (Kazimir, 1916, p. 133). Thus he claims: “It is from zero, in zero, that the true movement of being begins” (Marcade, 2003, pp. 40-41). His claim resonates with the whole struggle of the *Sûffîs*, who try to strip themselves from all the desires of the *nefs* almost to a degree of killing the *nefs* through disciplinary practices and through writing on their bodies and souls with the commands of Allah, the *Sünnet* of the Prophet Muhammed, and the way of the *Tarikat*, so that at the end they can emerge as an *insan-ı kâmil*. When a person reaches this ultimate new form of being, it means, as it will be presented in the next section, that the *Sûffî* has gone through the utilitarian practices first, then started to get inspirations from Allah, and finally by balancing practice and inspirations, has arrived at his goal, *mârifet*, just as the new art forms of Malevich “announce that man has attained his equilibrium; he has left the level of single reason [utilitarian] and reached one of double reason (utilitarian and intuitive) (Malevich, 1916, p. 133). In other words, in the end, *Sûffî*, going through a creative *art of existence*, with all its similarities to *Suprematism*, has created a *non-objective* masterpiece, a true subject, which is beyond any representation, form or norm of the visible (*zâhiri*) world – that is being united with Allah.

### **Paradoxical Subject: *Deconstruction of the Self & Resubjectification***

While it is believed that the *insan-ı kâmil* is a real subject, as stated previously, one can easily claim that a Muslim, or even a learned scholar of Islam, who has completed a *medrese* education is exposed to *subjectification* through memorizing the canonical texts, analyzing the acknowledged books of jurisprudence, and studying the exegeses of the holy book. Basically he is crushed under the domination of *power/knowledge*, *objectified*. At best, he is trying to resist back by exerting some power through the acts of argumentation, within the web of power relations. However, when a *tâlib* consciously and intentionally decides to enter the paradoxical path of *tasavvuf*, he steps into a journey in which he will *deconstruct* his

subjectivity, the pre-written text of his being within power relations, and break the boundaries of his *subjection* with all the attributes it attaches onto his identity. How he does this is quite paradoxical. Like the Party slogans expressing the *doublethink* in the novel *1984* – “War is Peace, Freedom is Slavery, and Ignorance is Strength” – the *Sûfi* also subjugates to become free; he decides not to decide; he accepts to perish to exist (McArthur, 1992, p. 321). To give birth to the soul, one kills the self; to become free, one subjugates the will, for the sake of *self-subjectification*, one accepts *objectification*.

To explain this paradoxical form, we can try to use an analogy. If we, the subject, put our hands on to an object, depending on the force that we apply, the object moves, thus we either push or pull it, or it just stays on the same location, like a wall. However, if we were to lean on water, that would not be possible, even less so if we try to push the air. When we wave our hand in air, most of it just moves and brushes over our hand and through our fingers. That is to say, as an object leaves behind its strict, outlined state like the whole *subjection* it has already endured, and becomes more flexible, adept into new forms of existence, and learns not to resist, which means that it does not try to exert any reactive force back and just move with the flow, like tossing out ones ego and will, it cannot be pushed around, dominated and lead as easily, somewhat escaping the domination of the power relations.

Similarly, normally one can see anything he sets his eyes on as long as it is not somehow obscured. However, one cannot exactly see a frameless mirror. All the light beams just reflect back from the mirror as they hit it without changing the magnitude of the angle. The cleaner and shiner the mirror, the better the reflection, so as the mirror gets more and more polished, the more it becomes invisible to the eye. Even though the mirror is there, all that can be seen in the mirror exactly becomes the reflection thus the person looking at it and his surroundings. Consequently, it is like the mirror disguises within the environment. As such, when a person cleanses his soul, get rids of his desires, taboos, ambitions, suppositions, even *pre-suppositions*, he also kind of vanishes within the web of power relations and liberates himself. Sacrificing himself, the ego overcomes the exertions of power, breaks the never-ending-cycle of *subjection* and actually becomes a subject.

### 3.2.3) Necessity of *Mürşid*: Consciously Utilizing Bourdieu's *Habitus*

#### ***Makams in Tarikat: Step-by-Step Subjectification***

Mainly, what *tarikât* does is to alter *mürids'* habits, soften their ego, break their prejudices, break their attachments to things they cannot detach from, and bring them into a malleable form, until the *mürid* manages to submit himself fully against the will of all-powerful Allah. In fact, it creates the suitable environment in which the *mürid* manages to control his *nefs* and discipline himself into total submission. Then it is hoped that Allah will mercy up on the *tâlib* and grant his intrinsic wish, and bestow upon him the *mârifet*. However, actually the path to *mârifet* is not that simple. *Tarikât*, as its name suggests means only the path, but there is more to it when it comes to reaching *mârifet*. One cannot jump directly into the *mârifet* from *tarikât*. According to the popular belief among Turkish *Sûfis*, especially originating from the Bektâşi traditions, the path of *tasavvuf* is consisted of *şeriat*, *tarikât*, *hakikat* and *mârifet*. The current leader of the Cerrâhî *Tarikât*, Ömer Tuğrul İnançer confirms this belief, but clarifies it as well: "This quadruplet is a bare slogan. It does not only consist of these four. After *Mârifet*, there is *Kudbiyyet*, then *Kurbiyyet* after that is the kulluk (vassalage) which is the *makâm-ı hass-ı Muhammed* (*makam* specific of the Prophet), *Abdiyyet* (Çetinoğlu, 2013). Therefore, the *makams* lines up more like the following: *Şeriat*, *Tarikât*, *Hakikat*, *Mârifet*, *Kudbiyyet*, *Kurbiyyet* and finally *Abdiyyet*. However, in this thesis there is no need to investigate the last three *makams* since we believe that it is superfluous to go into the details of these very *makams* for the sake of this thesis, especially when these last three *makams* are believed not really be expected from a devotee, or a *mürid* since all that he acquires after *seyr-i sülûk* is *mârifet* and the rest three is like extra stages that could be reached on top of *mârifet* with Allah's blessing. They describe more like the hierarchy among the *velîs* (sages) and prophet.

As it is shown above, there is one more step between the *tarikât* and *mârifet*: *hakikat*, which literally means the reality, being true and certain. In *tasavvuf*, the term *hakikat* means "the veiled or hidden *mâna* (meaning, soul, interior) beyond the *zâhir* (the seen, sensed); getting accustomed to the divine secrets through observing the

religious life at an utmost level; and contemplating the reflections of *Hakk* (name of Allah, the same root with *hakikat*) with pleasure. Since it is believed that it cannot be explained with words, *Sûfis* usually use this term without describing it.” (Çağrı M. , 1997a, p. 178). Therefore, through all the struggle and discipline, the knowledge that one can start to observe as reflections of Allah is actually *hakikat*, not really *mârifet* yet<sup>28</sup>, which rather means according to Ömer Tuğrul İnançer, “reaching the *hakikat*, but not deserting the *şeriat* and *tarikât*” and compared to the descend of the Prophet back to earth for completing his duty after the *Mi’rac* (the unmediated encounter of the Prophet with Allah). (Çetinoğlu, 2013) Since the issue gets complicated, the differences between the first four *makam* are usually exemplified with the very popular story among the *Sûfis*:

A *mürîd* asks his *mürşîd* about the four *makams* in *tasavvuf*. *Mürşîd* says: ‘Go to the *mescit*. There next to the *vâiz*, you will see four people sitting. Slap each one of them and come back and tell me about what you see.’ *Mürîd* goes there and does as he is told. First man slaps him back with the same force. The second, turns his head and gives an angry look. The third did not reach at all. The fourth though, turned to the *mürîd* and asked for forgiveness... *Mürşîd* later explains this as such: ‘the first man who slaps you back symbolizes *şeriat*. The general principle in *şeriat* is eye-to-eye. The second one symbolizing *tarikât* sees you as the source of the slap and looked at you with a hurt feeling, because *tarikât* is the beginning of the path, not the end. However, *hakikat* is to know that everything originates from the same source. The third man from symbolizing this *makam* knew that the slap was from *Hak* (Allah) and did not relate it to your action. On the other hand, the last one symbolizing *mârifet*, knew that *Hakk* made you (the *mürîd*) the intermediary for this action, and asked for forgiveness because of tiring you. The real aim is to reach this knowledge. Whoever reaches this knowledge is in the *makam* (state) of gratitude and acceptance. This is the final *makam* expected from the vassal. (Konca, 2007).

Another popular *Sûfi* in current Turkey, Cemal Nûr Sargut, explains it further: “In *şeriat*, there is *kıyas* (retribution). *Tarikât* knows that the deed belongs to *Hak* (Allah) but is still interested in the intermediary. *Hakikat* does not care about the intermediary, and only occupied with Allah. *Mârifet* is to reach the level to see the *Hakk* (Allah) at *Halk* (public)” (Sargut, n.d.).

As I have mentioned before, *seyr-i sülûk* is the journey of the *mürîd* from one *makam* (stage/step/position) to another till he reaches *mârifet* and become an *insan-ı kâmil*. However, understanding these *makam* is difficult, especially since the

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<sup>28</sup> It should be these *mârifet* and *hakikat* can be used interchangeably in different *Sûfi* texts and paths or may even be considered the same, but the one used in the thesis seems to be the most common way of describing the stages.

experience of these stages cannot really be explained, and learning the information does not help the *Sûfî* to acquire the experienced real knowledge. Thus again instead of trying to understand the various *makams*, which also reflect the properties of the knowledge that one can acquire, the *Sûfî* turns into himself, following the Prophet's *Hadis* ("one who knows his *nefs*, knows his *Rab*"), to his ego and try advance on the path of *tasavvuf* by disciplining it.

When a *mürîd* enters a *tekke* and enters the path of *tasavvuf*, he most probably has the most primitive *nefs* (ego) called the *nefs-i emmare*, the ego that commands the person, drives him into sins with desires. It as an inferior motive that leads to sins which blocks the person from reaching his full potential. That is why discipline comes in handy as one of the technologies of the self to bridle this "wild horse" (*nefs*). As the *mürîd* advances on the path of *tasavvuf*, he passes onto the next stage called the *nefsi levvame*. Then, if he can keep advancing, then he goes through all the seven stages of the *nefs* in order and completes the cycle of the path. Studying the explanations of Ahmed Yüksel Özemre, Nazim Adil al-Haqqani (the Turkish Cypriot *mürşid* of the *Nakşibendi Tarikat*), Mahmud Erol Kiliç's article in Routledge History of World Philosophies: History of Islamic Philosophy, and Süleyman Uludağ's article on the Encyclopedia of Islam, the descriptions of the stages (*makam*) of the *nefs* can be compiled as the following:

- 1- *Nefs-i Emmare* (Ordering/Inciting *Nefs*): The *nefs* that orders/incites evil things. This is considered the most primitive, untamed *nefs*. The ego is in full-power and incites all the bad habits. The lower self always prompts one to disobey Allah and to do evil, bad actions and the gratification of the animal lust. One is pleased with oneself and full of bad actions. The (*zikir*) invocation is: "*La ilahe illallah / There is no god but Allah*" and the direction of travelling is "progress towards Allah" (Allah'a / *seyr ila'llah*). The *hal* (state) is that of alternating spiritual optimism and pessimism. The realm is sense of perception.
- 2- *Nefs-i Levvame* (Self-Accusing *Nefs*): The *nefs* that accuses oneself. The conscience is awakened, and the self accuses one for listening to one's ego. One repents and asks for forgiveness, but falls back into bad behavior. The *zikir* is "Allah", the esoteric meaning of which is "There is no aim but Allah." The direction is "progress to Allah" (*Allah için / seyr li'llâh*) and the *hal* is "contraction and expansion" (*kabz ve bast*). The

realm is the Isthmus (*berzah alemi*). In this stage love for this world begins to disappear. The degree of knowledge is certainty by knowledge (*ilme'l yakîn*).

- 3- *Nefs-i Mülhime* (Inspired *Nefs*): The *nefs* that receives inspirations. These inspirations can be from Allah or the devil as well. One becomes more firm in listening to one's conscience, but it is not surrendered. *Zikir* is "Hu" the esoteric meaning of this is: "there is none to be loved but Allah." The direction is "progress within Allah (*Allah üzere / seyr ala'llah*). The state is that of giving up everything. The realm is the realm of Majesty (*heybet alemi*). At this stage the *sâlik* (traveller) seeks only the love of Allah. He or she hears the *zikir* of everything and every creature, knows what's inside the heart, and has many secrets here. He or she becomes the manifestation of Allah's Action and Attributes. The degree of knowledge is composed of certainty by vision (*ayne'l yakîn*).
- 4- *Nefs-i Mutmainne* (The *Nefs* at Peace): The *nefs* that has reached content. One is firm in faith and leaves bad manners. The soul becomes tranquil and at peace. The *zikir* is *Hakk*, the esoteric meaning of which is "There is none but Allah." The journey (*seyir*) is the journey with Allah (*Allah ile birlikte, seyr maa'llah*). The *hal* alternates between spiritual drunkenness and soberness. The realm is that of omnipotence (*ceberrut alemi*). The love for Allah is increased. *Sâlik* witnesses Allah everywhere in everything, and undergoes the second unveiling (*feth el-mubin*; however, the veil over things is not yet completely raised).
- 5- *Nefs-i Radiyye* (The Pleased *Nefs*): The *nefs* that is pleased with Allah. One is pleased with whatever comes from Allah and does not live in the past or future, but in the moment. *Zikir* is "Hayy", the esoteric meaning of which is "There is none but Allah." The *hal* is full absorption (*fena*) of the human qualities in the Qualities of Allah and His Attributes. The journey is the "journey in Allah" (*Allah'ta / seyr fi'llâh*) and the realm is the realm of Divinity (*Lahut Alemi*). *Sâlik* is located in the Secret of Secrets (*sır el-esrar*). In this *hal* he or she knows by direct tasting rather than inspiration.
- 6- *Nefs-i Mardiyye* (The Pleasing *Nefs*): The *nefs* that which Allah is pleased with. The two *ruhs* have made peace. The person is soft and tolerant with people and has good conduct. *Zikir* is "Kayyum". The *hal* is establishing (*temkin*) and astonishment (*hayret*). The journey is the journey from Allah (*Allah'tan / seyr ani'llâh*). The realm is the realm of the Visible (*şehadet alemi*). In this stage the manifestations of Names of Allah begin to replace the manifestations of the actions of Allah. Although the *sâlik* lives among the creatures, he or she is always with Allah. This stage is also called "The Grand Vicegerent": one who returns from unity to multiplicity in order to awaken the



people. The *sâlik* can attain to this stage through his or her own effort and conduct, but they do not suffice to pass beyond it. Only Divine Grace can attract the traveler from the sixth to seventh stage.

- 7- *Nefs-i Kâmile / Nefs-i Safiyye* (The Perfect / Pure *nefs*): The *nefs* that has reached perfection and that is pure. One is dressed in the attributes of *insan-ı kâmil*, the perfect human, who is in a state of complete surrender and inspired by Allah, in full agreement with the Will of Allah. *Zikir* is *Kahhar*. The journey is the Journey for Allah (*Allah'la / seyr bi'llâh*). The state is subsistence (*beka*). The realm is the realm of "unity in multiplicity and multiplicity in unity". The degree of certainty is certainty by truth (*hake'l yakîn*). This stage is also called *ahadiyyet*, *cem el-cem*, *yakîn* etc. This is the beginning of the inner kingdom where all actions as well as inactions are worship. The breathing is power, and favor, the face is ease, the words and actions are wisdom. *Sâlik* is reached sainthood has become a sage at the end of the stages of annihilation, essence and manifestation are one in the seeker after Truth and Reality. (Özemre & Şahinler, 2011, pp. 67-68) (Al-Haqqani, 2004, p. 103) (Kiliç, 1996, pp. 954-955) (Uludağ, 2010, p. 128).

### **The Need of Guidance in the Metaphysical Realm**

In the first three stages of the purification of the soul, *mürids* are clearly struggling with their *nefs*, egos. Those in the first two stages are called the *avam*, "the public, ordinary people whose belief and worship generally consists of imitation, those who cannot go beyond the contour and rituals of the religion" (Şener, 1991, p. 105). In these two stages, people can struggle with their own selves, their egos. They can probably discipline their *nefs* in these two *makams* according to the commands of Allah, which are clear in *Şeriat*, the forbidden sins and the advised good deeds. One can learn these from the *Kur'an*, *Hadis* and the books of *Sünnî* tradition. Then he can try to judge his own actions and desires to see if they fit into one or the other. If they can succeed, they are promised the heavens. However, when we start talking about the third *makam* and after, we are talking about another metaphysical sphere in which the *mürid* starts getting inspirations from the divine. Then the question becomes that since it is the first time one becomes exposed to metaphysical things, how can he be sure about what these inspirations are, or that these inspirations are

from Allah himself, especially considering the belief that the devil can also inspire these kind of ideas and visions at this stage. That is why Özemre warns the people: “*Nefs-i mulhime* is a very dangerous *makam*, and one can only dodge these threats if one’s *râbıta* (connection) with his master, his *mürşid*, is very strong.” (Özemre & Şahinler, 2011, p. 44)

On the other hand, even though the *sâlik* reaches *ayne’l yakîn* at this third stage, and starts to conceive the *hakikat* slowly with this vision, he has not completed his *sülûk* yet, and thus has not reached *mârifet*, the perfect knowledge with *hakka’l yakîn*. Moreover, he has not even won the battle against his *nefs* at this stage to become stable, content and peaceful. Even in the fourth stage, *nefs-i mutmaîne*, in which the *sâlik* becomes firm in his faith and leaves bad manners, it is believed that the veil over the things is not removed completely. Therefore, at this stage, *Sûfîs* claim that, one cannot know for certain what is right or wrong only by himself since he is not able to reach the correct information from the absolute truth within the metaphysical realm. Therefore, a *mürşid*, who has already walked the path to the end, has to assume the role of guidance and pass his *mürids* from these stages and onwards. Since *mürşid* is one who already possesses *mârifet*, it is best to ask his hand (help) to continue walking through the path, and decide to obey this guide, since he is the only one who can inform the *mürid* about the path, control if he is on the track and warn him against the obstacles on it if need be. This is where *technologies of the self* gets a twist, because in *tasavvuf*, to be able to reach the absolute knowledge and establish oneself as a true subject (*insan-ı kâmil*), one cannot simply discipline himself in a healthy manner further than the second stage, *nefs-i levvame*, and reach beyond *ilm-el yakîn* certainty of knowledge. Niyazi Mısri states this fact in the continuation of his famous poem converted into the famous hymn that people need a *mürşid* to let them know *Hakk* (Allah) in the form and certainty of *hakka’l yakîn*; and things that people without a *mürşid* know is nothing more than assumptions: “Mürşid gerektir sana bildire Hakk’ı hakkal yakîn / Mürşidi olmayanların bildikleri güman imiş” (Altuntaş, 2011, p. 90).

As Niyazi Mısri claims, a *mürşid* who is in the *mertebe* (stage) of *hakka’l yakîyn*, who is aware of Allah’s will in this earth, is needed to teach one about the reality (*hak*). To explain it with an example, we can say that as one needs to eat a fruit to

know its taste, only the ones who know how to swim can teach others swimming. Most people (*avam*) are not really in the realm of a true human being, they only look like it within their skin but they are in the realm of perceptions. However, when one gets to know himself, then he starts to move up on the path to become a true human being, the *halife* (caliph) on earth, and for this, to climb up to stages to *insan-ı kâmil*, one has to hold the hand of another true human – that is a *mürşid*. *Mürşid* is believed to inherit or manifest the “*Rab*” name of Allah which disciplines and teaches. However, he is different than an *âlim* who is a man of study, reading and writes books, and appeal to the intellect of his students; *mürşid* aims at the hearts of his disciples, guides and develops their soul with his *mârifet* (*ledün ilmi*). Thus, Özemre claims that *mürşid* is actually able to directly get into contact with the Creative Force and open *mürîd*'s eyes to the plans beyond the material World which he calls *Veladet-i Maneviyye*, spiritual birth; thus, both the father and the mother of this *Veled-i Kalb* (child of heart) is the *Mürşid-i Kâmil* (Özemre & Şahinler, 2011, p. 9). That is why he claims only an *insan-ı kâmil* can give raise to another *insan-ı kâmil*, that is to say: ilm cannot be attained by oneself, but it must be thought by a teacher, in this case a *mürşid* (Özemre & Şahinler, 2011, p. 38). It is believed that Bayezid El Bistami also supports this belief with the following claim that is ascribed to him: “In this path, whoever does not have a *mürşid*, his *mürşid* is the devil” (İbnü'l-Arabî, 2009, p. 13). Mevlânâ also has a similar opinion that a seeker cannot reach his goal without a *mürşid* and, to be able to enter the circle of selected vassals of Allah one has to seek for a *mürşid* (Rumi, 2009, p. 20). The famous Turkish *Sûfî* Yunus's following poem (again a hymn) also resonates with the former statements: “Doğruya varmayınca mürşide ermeyince / Hak nasib etmeyince sen derviş olamazsın” (Toprak, 2006, p. 105), which translated into “You cannot become a dervish, if you do not reach the truth, find the *mürşid*, and if Allah does not grant you that.”

### **Absolute Authority of *Mürşid* & Total Submission to the Guide**

As seen above *Sûfîs* claim that everyone who wants to attain *mârifet* needs a *mürşid*, and behind this claim is the recognition of the need for a mature, wise guide, kind of like a coach to train and discipline the self for a different league of

metaphysical realm. According to Lütfi Filiz, *mürşids*, as manifestations of the *Rab* name of Allah, is addressed with the following *Kur'anic* verse: "And they ask you, [O Muhammad], about the soul. Say, "The soul is of the affair [command/order] of my Lord [*Rab*]. And mankind have not been given of knowledge except a little." (*Kur'an* 17-85). Therefore, Lütfi Filiz claims that *mürşid's* words are orders, and similar to Özemre's claims above, these words affect the soul, thus changes the behaviors of his *mürids*. (Filiz L. , 2009, p. 64). Instead of interpreting this verse as the soul cannot be known as the general apparent (*zâhirî*) interpretation of *Şeriat*, *Sûfîs* believe that a *mürşid* who is an embodiment of Allah's name *Rab*, the teacher, discipliner, can know about the soul. Lütfi Filiz claims that life (can) is present in every creation though named differently, but *ruh* (spirit) is an improved version of this; when the previous verse is taken into account, there is the situation of one teacher (*mürebbi /mürşid*) warning someone with an order, and this warning turns one's life (can) into soul (*ruh*) (Filiz L. , 2009, pp. 64-65). That is how one should understand the *mürşid* because the real *Mürşid* is Allah and the following verse according to *Sûfîs* testifies it: "Indeed, those who pledge allegiance to you, [O Muhammad] - they are actually pledging allegiance to Allah. The hand of Allah is over their hands. So he who breaks his word only breaks it to the detriment of himself. And he who fulfills that which he has promised Allah - He will give him a great reward." (*Kur'an* 48:10). Allah who is distant from all descriptions, does not have a hand, but the meaning is that Allah acts through the owner of that hand, appears from him" (Filiz L. , 2009, p. 66).

In parallel, the famous Turkish *Sûfî* saying which is believed to originate from the *Bektaşî Tarikat*, "El ele el *Hakk'a*" means you hold the hand of a *mürşid* seeking his help, who has already hold the hand of his *mürşid*, who also has had hold the hand of his own *mürşid*, which goes up to the Prophet Muhammed himself and from there to *Hakk*, Allah. This is where the *icâzet* (permission to teach from one's *mürşid*) and *silsile* (the list of successive *mürşids* reaching to Prophet) comes into play and becomes important for the credibility of a true *mürşid* in the *Sûfî* tradition as well.

Therefore, when a *mürşid* orders you, it is like the prophet Muhammed, or the *Hakk*, Allah is ordering you, because the chain of helping hands which has the authority to order reaches Him in the end. The order is certain, it cannot be questioned. One has to obey that order. This authoritative culture is very similar to

what Foucault describes for the monastic life, differing from the Greco-Roman type of relation to the master:

Obedience isn't based just upon a need for self-improvement but must bear on all aspects of a monk's life. There is no element in the life of the monk which may escape from this fundamental and permanent relation of total obedience to the master. Here obedience is complete control of behavior by the master, not a final autonomous state. It is a sacrifice of the self, of the subject's own will. This is the new technology of the self. The monk must have the permission of his director to do anything, even die (Foucault, 1988).

With this understanding, the disciple, *mürîd* consciously and willingly surrenders his will to his *mürşîd*, who mediates his path of learning and helps him develop his soul. From then on, he has to obey his *mürşîd* at all costs. The general belief is that even if the *mürşîd* tells you to go jump off that roof you should, not that he would tell anything like that. The common example to this kind of surrendering of the will is the Prophet Abraham's trial to sacrifice his beloved son after a revelation in his dream. Just like Abraham obeyed Allah, one has to surrender his will to his *Mürşîd*. Similarly there are many *Sûfî* stories about this surrendering of the will, one of which is the following about Rumi, as his son is reporting it:

One day, to test Rumi, Şems asks for a beautiful lover from him. Rumi brings him his wife Kira Hatun, the most beautiful and mature woman of the time. Şems says that she is like his sister and instead asks for a beautiful boy that would serve him. Rumi then brings his son as beautiful as the Prophet Yusuf, and hoping that he would be worthy of serving him. Şems says that he is like his son and asks for wine instead. Rumi gets up and goes to the Jewish part of the town, bringing back a jug of wine. Then Sultan Veled, Rumi's son sees Şems crying out loud, tearing his clothes, and praising Rumi amazed by his obedience to his *pir (mürşîd)* (Eflaki, 2011, p. 474).

İbn'ül-Arabî states that it is a duty upon the *mürîd* to be without any will, like exemplified above, because when one has a will he has his own way and he is with his *nefs* instead of with his *mürşîd* (İbnü'l-Arabî, 2009, p. 30). That means he has to obey all the orders of the *mürşîd* without questioning. İbn'ül-Arabî tells another story to exemplify this, basing it also to a *Hadis* of the Prophet:

A *Mürşîd* asks his *mürîd*: 'If your *mürşîd* gives you an order, and while you are on your way to accomplish this task, you see people gathering at a *mescid* to pray, what would you do?' *Mürîd* answered: 'I would continue on my way, and would not pray till I complete the task and return by my *mürşîd*. *Mürşîd* said: 'Well-done' (İbnü'l-Arabî, 2009, p. 34).

İbn'ül-Arabî even adds to this story that if the *mürîd* would go out to both complete the task and pray in one go, he would not reach *tevhîd*. According to him

*mürîd* should not hide any of the ideas that comes to his heart from his *mürşîd* and he should not object to anything when he is with him. Besides, again according to İbn'ül-Arabî, if a *mürşîd* lets his *mürîds* bring forth *şerî* and intellectual arguments against his explanations, and if the *mürşîd* does not force them to quit this behavior, that means he is in betrayal to his *mürîds* discipline." (İbnü'l-Arabî, 2009, p. 19). When entering the path of *tarikât*, the *mürîd* has to leave behind his desires, his lust, his love for wealth and status when entering this path as we have seen from Hüdâyî and Mevlânâ's stories. İbn'ül-Arabî even compares *mürîds* to dead people: As the dead cannot question what is done on their bodies during the burial ceremonies after their death, *mürîds* cannot question *mürşîd's* orders as well because when they have intentionally left their will, there is no difference between them and dead bodies (İbnü'l-Arabî, 2009, p. 35).

### **Manifestation of *Rab*: Roles and Properties of *Mürşîd***

Since one will surrender all his will when entering this path, it should be pretty important to be with a *mürşîd* who is aware of his responsibilities toward his *mürîds*, and actually capable of guiding them. The *icâzet* and *silsile* of a *mürşîd* may seem to authenticate him. However, there are also many texts written about *mürşîds* and their attributes in the *Sûfî* tradition, not to let people misuse this authority or others to go astray. However, defining the duties of *mürşîds* specifically and openly, starting a *discourse* of their capabilities also produces and strengthens the need for them. According to İbn'ül-Arabî, a *mürşîd* should be capable of the knowing the following:

Inspirations from the *nefs*, devil, angels and Allah, the root of these inspirations, actions of the *mürîd*, the illnesses and faults that are present in the *mürîd* which holds him back from the origin of the realities, the medicine to these illnesses, the duration and dose of these medicine, his character, *mürîds* hindering outside ties with his mother, mother, kids, wife, friends and his status, how to handle these, and how to save the *mürîd* from these ties (İbnü'l-Arabî, 2009, pp. 16-17).

Clearly, *mürşîd* has to have some metaphysical insights and abilities beyond the natural human capacity, to be able to understand what is going on inside his *mürîd's* mind and heart; moreover, he should also know how to guide his *mürîd* to

overcome the issues with his ego. A *mürşid* should be able to do all these because he should have already passed these steps in his own *sülük*, and cleansed himself from all the earthly desires and sins, and became a mirror on which the images freely reflect. As Foucault quotes Alciabides: “How must we take care of this principle of activity, the soul? Of what does this care consist? One must know of what the soul consists. The soul cannot know itself except by looking at itself in a similar element, a mirror.” (Foucault, 1988) Mevlâna states this through an exemplary story:

Muhammed Sererzi was sitting with his *mürids* and one of the *mürids* were craving for *Kelle Kebab*. Pointing at him, he told his disciples to bring his *mürid* *Kelle Kebab*. When he was asked how he knew that, he said that he had cleansed himself of all desires for thirty years, and he does not need anything anymore – like a mirror clean and shiny. And then, suddenly he desired *Kelle Kebab*, at that point he knew that his *mürid* wanted that because the mirror is clear and does not have an image. If an image appears on it, it is the shape of another (Rumi, 2009, p. 83).

Knowing the mind and heart of his *mürid* allows the *mürşid* to have full control over his *sülük*. “The master watches every moment of the disciple's spiritual growth; he watches him particularly during the forty-day period of meditation (*arba'in [erbain]*, *chilla [çile]*) that became, very early, a regular institution in the *Sûfî* path (derived, as Hujwiri says, from the forty-day fast of Moses, when he hoped for a vision from God, as related in Sura 7:138)” (Schimmel, 1975, p. 103). It is the duty of the *mürşid* to determine when the *mürid's* soul and will is ready to enter this *çile*-seclusion. Moreover, he should guide him in this stage very carefully for the *mürid* to focus on the target and not get lost within the mystical experiences. For this, when the *mürşid* decides to put his *mürid* into seclusion (*çile*), he first enters the room (*çilehane*) to pray to gather the necessary energy in that cell (İbnü'l-Arabî, 2009, p. 23).

On the other hand, “to the talented *mürids*, that means to the ones that are already tested, and made sure that they have the capacity to be able to do *zikir*, the *mürşid* gives some of the names (*esmâ*) of Allah” (Özemre & Şahinler, 2011, p. 43). Some of the examples of *zikir* (invocation) was given while explaining the stages of *sülük* in section 3.2.9. As seen over there, each *makam* (stage) has a different invocation, depending on the spiritual situation of that level. To be able to practice invocation, one should be aware of which stage he is at, and that is not possible for a disciple to comprehend by himself, his *mürşid* has to know his *makam* and arrange

the invocation accordingly, the count and combinations. Moreover, the path is not the same for every *mürîd*; thus, the invocation also changes depending on the character and capacity of the *mürîd*. With the necessity of personalized attention and guidance for the *mürîd*, *mürşîd*'s role become even more amplified, and critical.

To be able to curate a personalized path for the *mürîd*, "The sheikh interprets the *mürîd*'s dreams and visions, reads his thoughts, and thus follows every movement of his conscious and subconscious life" (Schimmel, 1975, p. 103). It is believed that when somebody sleeps he enters into the *misal alemi* (world of representations), and in this realm watches some events or inspirations. Some of these representations are believed to originate from the Divine, but they can also be inspirations from the devil, rest of it is just manifestations from one's subconscious.

[No matter which kind of image one witnesses,] He filters [the image] through his intellect and deforms it as well. Changes the colors, changes what they really are. However, a person who knows this realm of representations can immediately notice all these deformations; a *mürşîd* can tell the real meaning of dreams to his *mürîds* through interpretation... This also gives an opportunity for the *mürşîd* to determine the changes in *mürîd*'s *nefs*. According to this information, *mürşîd* adjusts the course, count of the *zikir* if that needs to be increased or decreased, with the accuracy of a jeweler (Özemre & Şahinler, 2011, pp. 43-44).

Even though some of the interpretations of the dreams can be told to the *mürîd*, the signs like the ones that signifies the (*makam*) stage of the *mürîd* cannot be told to anyone; it is forbidden to disclose this information because if the *nefs* of the *mürîd* would be aware of these signs, it is believed that it would do anything to hinder the improvement of *mürîd* in their *seyr-i sülûk* (Özemre & Şahinler, 2011, p. 78). All of these disciplining rituals and the practices of the *Sûfî* path like the struggle, *çile*, and *zikir*, in addition to the need of personalized attention to *mürîds*' growth strengthens the belief that a *mürşîd* is a must in *tarikât* for the search of the perfect knowledge, *mârifet*.

### ***Sobhet, Presence, and Sûfî Etiquette: Habitus of Subjectification***

Aside from being a guide in the *seyr-i sülûk* of the *mürîd*, another role of the *mürşîd* is to be an example and a role model for the *mürîds*, similar to the *ulemâ* in the madrasas. However, as an *insan-ı kâmil*, who's *icâzet* is believed to originate from



the Prophet Muhammed himself, a *mürşid* should strictly follow the *Sünnet* of the Prophet and reflect similar manners and style of contact, while setting up a good example to be followed and copied. The common saying is that imitated belief creates real belief: “Taklidi iman tahkiki imanı dogurur”. Since in *tarikât* the ego is being consciously destroyed, the forms of living for the *mürîd* is altered, and the *nefs* is tried to be eliminated from power, *mürîd’s* life, identity and interactions should be restructured with new forms of behavior and new values. That is why *mürşid* becomes critical again with his presence in *tarikât*. To fill out the gap that his conscious surrender of will opens, *mürîd* should start to imitate the *mürşid*, do exactly as he does, like following the manifestation of the *Sünnet* of the Prophet in real-time, in every moment. Thus the *mürîd* can restructure a new visible identity based on the aspired one. Paradoxically, while he is walking on the path to reach the true subject, *insan-ı kâmil*, he is opening himself to the *subjectivation* of the *tarikât* again, intentionally and consciously accepting the form – the *hırka* of a *derviş* (devotee).

The key to understand this practice of imitation is again from the *Hadis* of Prophet Muhammed, which is already stated in the previous chapter. According to the *Hadis*, *hayâ* (modesty) is considered a part of *‘ilm*, thus one should attain it in the path of perfect knowledge as well. However, how can one really study and learn modesty? How can one learn about how to truly act modest? Commonly it is believed that people (even animals) in general learns about how to speak by imitation, they learn how to do mimics, how to interact with people etc. all through imitation. They see how people get married in the movies, and their belief and understanding of marriage is shaped as such. If people see others kneel before asking their wives hands, they do the same when they propose as well. They learn how to become macho, or gentlemen as such. Therefore, the stories that are told in the *tekkes* by the *mürşids* then become very important as well, that is how people learn about how to act.

Beside the traditional discipline technologies to dispute the ego’s longings, one of the main tools of education in the *tekke* then becomes the *sohbet* since these exemplary stories are usually told in this format. This is a little different than the techniques in the madrasah. Still studying and the memorization is really important in *tasavvuf*, especially for the *zikir* that *mürîds* practice, or the canonic books of the

*tekke*. On top of that, *Kur'an* and *Hadis* is still in the center of any practice, but the face-to-face time with the *mürşid* is not about reciting the memorizations or getting corrections, it is about the moving, touching, and motivating stories he tells, the hadiths that he explains, the *Kur'an* he interprets (*tevil*); and more importantly it is about the presence of the *mürşid*, the way he talks, the way he acts, the way he simply is and the way interactions happen between the disciples and *mürşid*.

We already understand that “education”, the discipline in *tekke* is not a study like we understand today or like the one in *medrese* because there is not really a discussion or much of a verbal interaction. “In general, *mârifet* is not something that is explained and thought verbally but rather understood and learned silently. That is why Zünnûn el-Misrî advises people who would like to enter the *seyr-i sülûk* to be quiet next to *ehl-i mârifet [insan-ı kâmil]*... The important thing is not only the silence of the tongue but also the silence of the *nefs* and the mind, and not to be involved with anything except *Hak*. As long as silence gives way to contemplation, it is a tool of attaining *mârifet* (Uludağ, 2003). Moreover, İbnü'l Arabî states that “Silence is *vâcib* (a must) and verbalizing an opinion is Haram (a sin)” (İbnü'l-Arabî, 2009, p. 19) when meeting with the *mürşid*. With this kind of silent submission, the aim of *sohbet* clearly cannot be a discussion about the teachings of Islam; it is more about a transmission of *'ilm* through the hierarchy from top to bottom, as if Allah hands has handed down his *'ilm* to the prophets and successively to the mankind. Besides as explained before, this *'ilm* includes moral dispositions as well, thus the *sohbet* is also about *hemhal olmak*, to share the same state (*hal*) with the *mürşid* and other *mürids* in each other's presence. Brian Silverstein's following fieldwork in the late 1990s with the Gümüşhânevî branch of the Nakşibendi order and his revisit to his own paper in 2008, gives excellent insight to the actual practice of *sohbet* and how it constitutes moral dispositions:

*Sohbet*...is structured around the reading and discussion (*izah; şerh*) of *Hadis*...There is very little coming and going during the *sohbet*, no talking among listeners, and almost no note taking, and there questions are rarely asked... I realized that practically no one had ever been discussing the classic themes of *Sûfîsm* emphasized in Western literature on the topic, such as 'intimate experience of God' and 'self-effacement [in the Reality of God]'... It became quite obvious that the members of the order simply were not particularly concerned with these themes on a daily basis...What members clearly were very concerned with, however, and what was a constant topic of lessons and informal discussion were the good (*iyilik*) and morality

(*ahlak*) and how one can become predisposed to ethical practice and avoidance of sin... What this means is the focus is not on something called 'mystical experience' but, rather, on disciplinary practice, 'programs for forming or reforming moral dispositions (that is, organizing the physical and verbal practices that constitute the virtuous ... self)' (2008, pp. 123-124).

As explained in detail above, the aim of the *sohbets* are not to give information, instead, it reinforces one's care for the self in the presence of others; one sees the interactions among the *Sûfîs*, and their relationships with the *mürşid*, and through imitation, and repetition, the *mürîd* incorporates the attitudes of his companions into his own personality. As one of the members of the given *tarikât* (*cemaat*), his informant states to Silverstein: "Humans are such amazing beings, one is morally / spiritually [*ma'nen*] influenced by the people one stands next to. If one's friend is good, one will be influenced by this goodness. If the friend is bad, one will easily acquire bad habits" (2008, p. 130). Silverstein sees this companionship as a disciplinary program and a conscious one and refers to Alasdair MacIntyre to explain *sohbet* as a practice which involves "standards of excellence and obedience to rules as well as the achievement of goods. To enter into a practice is to accept the authority of those standards and the inadequacy of my own performance as judged by them. It is to subject my own attitudes, choices, preferences and tastes to the standards which currently and partially define the practice" (2008, p. 127). Hence referencing Saba Mahmood, Burnyeat and Foucault, he argues that this disciplinary practice of *sohbet* is explicitly and self-consciously pursued, repeated over and over again to constitute dispositions, thus it differs somewhat from Pierre Bourdieu's theories on practice - the *Habitus* which hints at the unconscious reproductions. Moreover, he openly claims: "a habitus-based notion of disposition formation such as Bourdieu's...cannot account for the kinds of disciplinary programs outlined here" (Silverstein, 2008, p. 128).

Even though I agree with Silverstein on his remarks, and see these practices within the Foucauldian "technologies of the self", which are autonomous and conscious efforts to construct a subject, I also believe that Bourdieu's conceptualization of the practices and the term habitus is still applicable for the disciplinary practices in the *tekkes*, we cannot just ignore it. It should be noted that

the informant of Silverstein also states in the same passage: “When one sees Hoja [*hoca*] Efendi, there is a real spiritual influence [*manevi etkileşim*]. When I see Hoja Efendi, for instance, when I go to ‘his side’ and listen to his lessons [*ders*], the effect... believe me, it's so powerful. One feels a certain atmosphere [*bir hava hissediyor*], it's really something felt, something lived, one really can't explain it.” (2008, p. 130). I think this resembles Bourdieu’s “the feel for the game” habitus a lot. Even though one is aware of the technologies he is getting himself into, thus even if he knows the rules of the game, he is still “learning bodily” within the presence of the *mürşid* and his companions (Pilaro, 2005). Silverstein himself uses the words of a deputy he met in his fieldwork to exemplify the “contagion” aspect: “This is real stuff [*bu gerçek bir şey*]. For instance, the hand holds a pomegranate, the mouth starts to water” (2008, p. 130). Therefore, even though I believe that these practices in the *tekkes* like *sohbet*, companionship and “disciplines of presence”, as Silverstein puts it, are consciously undertaken “technologies of the self”, when they are in effect, it is not in the realm of consciousness anymore at least all the time, dispositions just gets embodied.

Coming back to the question of how *hayâ* (modesty) can be learned, in theory, though in a very reductionist way, one should consider his *mürşid* so highly that he should feel modest in the presence of him. This is easier done in an environment where everybody (the companions) acts the same toward the *mürşid*. That is the general way of behavior in *tekke*. When everybody is silent in the *sohbet*, it is hard to talk, when no one is asking questions to the *mürşid*, one cannot have the courage to ask, and when everybody is bowing their heads down in the presence of a *mürşid*, running after him for *hizmet* (service), opening his doors, bringing him tea or water etc. and also talks very highly of him with a very conscious and careful attitude, one automatically feels the urge to mimic these behaviors and code of contact. It is the same with submission, when everyone is totally submitted to the *mürşid*, and ready to hump off the roof with a sign from him, it is probably easier to go with the flow in a group psychology. Then the *mürid* sees how the *mürşid* behaves towards Allah in his prayers, when he talks about Him, and in general in his relationship with Him, and how modest and submitted he is; therefore, while the *mürid* is rejecting the self, at the same time he has a role-model present to look up to, to restructure the self through imitating the *mürşid* as well. Hence, when this form of acting gets

internalized through repetitive practice, one is hoped to transfer these newly acquired skills into his relationship with Allah. Thus, step by step, through this atmosphere of reinforcing companionship and repetitive practice of code of conduct, moral dispositions slowly becomes the new natural practice of the *mūrid* as well.

To understand the relation between the practice and internalization, the Althusserian theory of *ideology* and *interpellation*, no matter how distant they may seem from the topic – comes in handy. However, they should be detached from the understanding of the state itself. Thus I will use his theories from a slightly different perspective. Althusser asserts that *ideology*, which he claims to represent “the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence” (Althusser, 2001, p. 109), manifests itself through actions, which are “inserted into practices” (Althusser, 2001, p. 114). In other words, to put it simply, Althusser claims that we represent ourselves as subjects by acting out the relations that we have. For example, a mother is *interpellated* (brought into being or given identity) as a caretaker when her child falls down and starts to cry “Mom!” in search of her help, and she responds back and helps the kid. Similarly, when the *mūezzin* (caller of the prayer) calls the prayer (*ezan*), performs this act, he is identified as the *mūezzin*, and a devote Muslim who starts to walk towards the *camī* (*mescid*), answering the call, to pray is pointed at as such as well. While explaining his theory, Althusser also touches on Pascal's formula for belief: “Pascal says more or less: 'Kneel down, move your lips in prayer, and you will believe'” (Althusser, 2001, p. 114). At this point Althusser realizes a connection between performance, a practice, which can be any kind of act, ritual, or conventional behavior, and a feeling, at this occasion belief. Using this connection, gives us a chance to understand how one can learn to be modest as well.

According to Žižek, “when Althusser repeats, after Pascal, ‘Act as if you believe, pray, kneel down, and you shall believe, faith will arrive by itself’, he delineates an intricate reflexive mechanism of retroactive ‘autopoetic’ foundation that far exceeds the reductionist assertion of inner belief’s dependence on external behavior. That is to say, the implicit logic of his argument is: kneel down and *you shall believe that you knelt down because of your belief* – that is, that your following the ritual is an expression/effect of your inner belief. In short, the ‘external’ ritual performatively generates its own ideological foundation. Herein resides the

interconnection of the ritual that pertains to 'Ideological State Apparatuses' and of the act of interpellation: when I believe that I knelt down because of my belief, I simultaneously 'recognize' myself in the call of the Other-God who dictated that I kneel down" (Žižek, 2005, p. 59).

When Allah reveals Himself and His *Kur'an* to Prophet Muhammed via *Cebrâil* (angel Gabriel), He calls out to Muhammed and orders him to read/recite as the first ever revelation, which is basically an act. Instead, if He were to order "Believe in Me", how could he believe, or make sure that he believed. However, because he is ordered to read/recite, when he reads/recites the *Kur'an*, he is reading/reciting it because he believes in Allah. When he reads/recites, he *interpellates* himself as a subject. Similarly in the current Turkish culture, many Muslim people recite the *Kur'an* regularly, pray the *namaz*, and observe the fast etc., and keep constituting themselves as believers, and Muslims. However, how could they humble (fear) themselves in front Allah? Actually *sahabe* also asks this question directly to the Prophet Muhammed.

'Have Haya' for Allah as is His due.' [Prophet said:] We said: 'O Prophet of Allah! We have Haya', and all praise is due to Allah.' He said: 'Not that, but having the Haya' for Allah which He is due is to protect the head and what it contains and to protect the insides and what it includes, and to remember death and the trial, and whoever intends the Hereafter, he leaves the adornments of the world. So whoever does that, then he has indeed fulfilled Haya', meaning the Haya' which Allah is due.' (Jami` at-Tirmidhi, Vol. 4, Book 11, *Hadis* 2458).

As seen in the *Hadis*, it is not enough to say that one fears Allah, he has to act accordingly, preventing himself from any kind of sin, leaving all the flamboyant material attractions of the world. From a different perspective, if one first does all these practices, then he will come to fear Allah. Thus a *Sûfi's* disciplining himself by leaving the earthly desires behind *interpellates* him as a devotee who is a manifestation of *hayâ*. Similar to the *sahabe*, a member of the Nakşibendi *tarikât* (order) in Sivas also raises a similar question, then he tries to explain it to Brian Silverstein:

God loves the one who loves His servant, and we should do things for the love of God. He who does so, they say, will surely taste faith [*iman*]. ... But how should one love? What does one do to the object one loves? For example, I love you for the praise of Allah. Let's say you're my brother. Now, what is the sign [*alamet*] of my loving you? I will do the things you do, won't do things you don't do, don't like, right, Ibrahim *abi*? Or I will enjoy [*hoşuma gitmek*] the things you enjoy etc. You enjoy

being with such people, and without realizing it your conduct starts to resemble theirs, because you want them to approve of you and you respect them. (2008, p. 129)

The question above probably originates from the following *Hadis*: "Whoever possesses the following three qualities will have the sweetness (delight) of faith: The one to whom Allah and His Apostle becomes dearer than anything else. Who loves a person and he loves him only for Allah's sake. Who hates to revert to Atheism (disbelief) as he hates to be thrown into the fire." (Sahih al-Bukhari, Vol. 1, Book 2, *Hadis* 16). These conditions are also stated in other *Hadis* as the criteria to become a *kâmil* (perfect, mature) believer. Therefore, it is only natural that the question would arise within the believers as a common one.

*Kur'an's* answer to this question can be found in the following verse: "Say, [O Muhammad], "If you should love Allah, then follow me, [so] Allah will love you and forgive you your sins. And Allah is Forgiving and Merciful" (*Kur'an* 3:31). According to *Kur'an*, if one loves Allah, he should follow Prophet Muhammed, which means to both walk the path he walks and walk the path as the way he walks it. Interestingly, Allah states this starting with an order: "say!" Thus He commands people the condition of performing their love, while commanding the Prophet (and whoever reads this verse) to say it at the same time as well. When the Prophet tells this verse the first time to his disciples, then, he quotes the verse and starts with "say!" as well, and people obey the command and follow the prophet, not just because Muhammed told them to, but because they believe that Allah told Muhammed to tell them to. Hence as Žižek explains, the believers recognizes themselves in the call of Allah, who told them to obey Muhammed to be able to show their love of Allah. As a result, linguistic constructions create the "reality" through the speech acts we participate in everyday life. In other words the "reality" of Islam and the *ideology* is being created as the *Kur'an* is being actively revealed to the Prophet when he is among the people. Moreover, as the *Kur'an* is read aloud, referenced, and the *Hadis* and *Sünnet* of Prophet are cited, the reality is enacted over and over again.

The love of Allah is, then, like the relationship between a mother and a child again. When a mother tells one of her children: "Tell your brother to clean his room", the child obeys the mother's call to clean his room, not because his sibling has told

her to, but because he wants to show that he cares for her mother, listens to her, does not want to make her sad, or simply because he feels that has to obey her; or simply because he believes that he loves her. As he acts, and cleans the room, he believes that he is cleaning the room because he believes in his love of her mother. This is exactly what the member of the Nakşibendi order in Sivas unintentionally accepts in the quote above that he wants to be like the other members of the order, because he wants approval. However, the act is still, at best, a representation of the child's love, or this member's respect for the other members. It is an *ideological* act, a representation of "the imaginary relationship" between his mother and himself, or the member to the other members of the order itself, to their "real conditions of existence" (Althusser, 2001, p. 109). Therefore, even if it is self-constructed, it is still fictitious.

### ***Nazar & Râbita: Unity with the Mürşid***

Then the question becomes if one can at all make sure that it is not simple imagination, but "The Real"? This is one of the main and critical difference of the understanding of knowledge or *'ilm* in Islam. True modesty (*hayâ*) within the realm of *mârifet* (*hakka'l yakîn*), which is the essence of modesty, is neither a thing that can be learned through books and studying (*ilme'l yakîn*) nor it can be seen and practiced to become internalized and acquired (*ayne'l yakîn*). Instead, one has to become united with the essence of modesty. At this point, since ontological further analysis concerning the essence is necessary, I believe these inquiries go beyond the scope of this thesis. According to Mark G. E. Kelly, Foucault associates subjectivity with "a reality ontologically distinct from the body", which, however, "is a form, rather than a substance...constituted through practices" (Kelly, 2013, p. 513). This thesis is solely interested in subjectivity in a Foucauldian sense, in parallel to this former definition. However, I will still attempt to discuss the ontological subject for the sake of further studies and to suggest that *tasavvuf* may have the potential to add a different perspective to this kind of philosophical discussion.

Similar to other dispositions that are discussed already, love, the great epiphany within *Sûfî* tradition, cannot really be learned. How can one study love? It



just happens. You can make one believe that he loves someone, or one can show and represent that he loves someone. However, you cannot make one simply fall in love; you cannot teach one from the books or in any other means to love. It is a feeling, it is just what it is. If we were to talk about the essence of it, the true reality of love under all these constructed *ideologies* is more than an act; it is an intuitive inclination that comes from the same source of Malevich's "creative force". It cannot be truly explained as the informant of Silverstein cannot explain his feelings towards his *mürşid*, but it may be experienced. It is described commonly like a "burning fire in the heart", "butterflies in one's stomach", it is a sensation. Love is a strong feeling of affection; affection is a gentle feeling of liking; liking is to find something enjoyable; enjoying is taking delight or pleasure in activity or occasion; and pleasure is a feeling of happy satisfaction. According to biology, happiness is, on the other hand, is a very scientific thing that is triggered by the "happiness hormones" which are generally refer to endorphins, serotonin, dopamine, and oxytocin. Therefore, love can be understood as very bodily thing at the end of it, depended on the secretion of some hormones. The experience of love, therefore, comes from birth, even if the situations that makes one experience may be shaped according to *ideologies*.

In *tasavvuf* this genuine, real feeling of love (*hakiki aşk*) is exemplified with many love stories, one of the most famous being the Leyla and Mecnun, also told by the famous poet of love Rumi:

During Mecnun's time, there were many beautiful women and they were more beautiful than Leyla. However, Mecnun did not take a liking to them saying that he does not love Leyla due to her outer beauty and appearances. She is not only her looks. She is like a goblet in his hand. He is drinking wine from that goblet and he is in love with that wine. Other people only see the goblet, but they do not know about the wine in it. The image of these people is like the goblets and these knowledge, 'ilms, are like the pictures and embellishments on that goblet. When the goblet is broken, all these pictures and embellishments disappear. Thus, value is in the wine inside the goblet; and for those people who sees [*ayne'l yakîn*] and drinks [*hakka'l yakîn*] this wine, it is stated "everlasting [*beka*] good deeds (Rumi, 2009).

Wine here is a thing that makes one drunk, and high. It is a thing that gives one a sensation, like love. Therefore, love in *tasavvuf* is more than what meets the eye, it is not "the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence", manifested in Leyla, the beloved, but it is a deeper sensational thing within. It should also be noted that Rumi says that whoever finds this wine and drinks

it, he has done an act (*amel*) which will end up in *beka*, which is, referencing from the previous sections, the state of the seventh *makam* (stage) in *tarikât*. The steps when one falls in love with Leyla is like the following. First, Mecnun (a *Sûfî*) hears about Leyla (the divine beloved), people say good things about her, that she is beautiful, the lover knows the beloved *ilme'l yakîn*, as an *ideological* manifestation and performs rituals to show her love within that realm. However, when he actually sees her, *ayne'l yakîn* as in the third stage in *tarikât*, then he starts to feel sensations in his body, his soul starts to get inspirations, he goes into an unstable state of mind and heart. He goes drunk as the veil of Leyla raises. There is none to be loved but Leyla at that point. However, this is not the absolute reality behind love as well. When finally, Mecnun actually unites (reunites) with Leyla, he reaches the realm of “unity in multiplicity and multiplicity in unity”, and the essence and manifestation becomes one in Mecnun, the seeker after Truth and Reality, *mârifet*. Therefore, from this analogy, it can be concluded that a *mürîd* has to find a *mürşîd* who will help him reach *mârifet*, and unity from *ayne'l yakîn*.

Ömer Tuğrul İnançer, in one of his radio shows in Burç FM, states, in parallel to the discussion above, that love is performed as to be like the beloved; however, it is not a matter of will, but a matter of the heart; it has to originate from within. However, he adds that there are things to be done to attract love, knowing being the primary one. (Ehlibeyt-i Mustafa, 2008) He is saying that loving Allah is dependent on knowing Him because one can only love the things he knows. Thus, knowing, discipline and love all becomes entangled, intertwined in *tasavvuf*.

It is already stated that *Sûfîs* believe that *mürşîd* are the *insan-ı kâmil*, real subjects. They are the successors of the Prophet Muhammed, *habîbullah* (Allah's beloved), within a *silsile*. In the following *Kudsî Hadis* (*Hadis* of the Prophet referencing Allah, but not a part of *Kur'an*) popular among the *Sûfîs*, it is announced that these have become the manifestations of Allah.

Allah says: “I will declare war against him who shows hostility to a pious worshipper of Mine. And the most beloved things with which My slave comes nearer to Me, is what I have enjoined upon him; and My slave keeps on coming closer to Me through performing Nawafil (praying or doing extra deeds besides what is obligatory) till I love him, so I become his sense of hearing with which he hears, and his sense of sight with which he sees, and his hand with which he grips, and his leg with which he walks; and if he asks Me, I will give him, and if he asks My protection (Refuge), I will protect him;

(i.e. give him My Refuge) and I do not hesitate to do anything as I hesitate to take the soul of the believer, for he hates death, and I hate to disappoint him." (Sahih al-Bukhari, Vol. 8, Book 76, *Hadis* 509).

As such, going through the extra discipline and extra care of the *tarikah*, it is believed that *mürşids*, who know Allah *hakka'l yakîn*, and are united with Allah, are also the beloveds of Allah. Within this unity, they are considered the reflections or manifestations of *Hakk*. Therefore, whoever sees a *mürşid* it is like he sees the *Hakk* and in this encounter, with a *nazar* (look) of the *mürşid*, that is also the *nazar* of Allah, the *mürid* falls in love with him, this manifestation of Allah immediately. "Nazar, 'looking,' becomes, then, one of the central topics of mystical love experience. The mystic who is completely absorbed in his love contemplates in the human beloved only the perfect manifestation of divine beauty, which is as distant from him as God Himself" (Schimmel, 1975, p. 290). The almost metaphysical (and in many contexts and stories definitely metaphysical) influences of *mürşid* has a very big part which is very much inscribed in the *Sûfî* tradition through stories and myths. In fact, books like "Ariflerin Menkıbeleri" and "Evliya Menkıbeleri", or "Mesnevi" and "Mantık-ut Tayr" are all full of stories like that, Rumi's love of Şems being probably the most famous.

Here it should be added that Schimmel points out to a more of an individualistic kind of *sohbet* which is "the intimate conversation between master and disciple conducted on a very high spiritual level. The close relation between master and disciple reveals itself in *tawajjuh* [*teveccüh*], the concentration of the two partners upon each other that results in experiences of spiritual unity, faith healing, and many other phenomena" (Schimmel, 1975, p. 366). This very intimate and close relationship is reminiscent of love in which the two parts find delight in looking (*nazar*) at the face (*vech*) of the other and they reach a spiritual unity, which is a desired attribute of *mârifet*. The *teveccüh*, concentration of the two partners upon each other, is an experience of the *Sûfî* that seemingly takes place in a metaphysical reality. In this relationship, when the *mürşid* faces (*teveccüh*) towards his *mürid* with his *nazar*, and the *mürid* gravitates towards his *mürşid*, or contemplates it with *râbita*.

*Râbita*... in *tasavvuf* means for the *sâlik* to connect his heart to his *mürşid*, and contemplating (mediating) both the *mürşid's* face and his morality and his behaviors... According to *Sûfîs*, *râbita* is practiced to clean the heart from the earthly material thoughts, to get *feyz* [some sort of inspiration, *nûr*] and through his

mediation remembering Allah, in his “absence” establishing a spiritual unity and love [*muhabbet*]; the most important of all is the love. (Tosun, 2007).

As stated above, reaching *mârifet* is about some kind of metaphysical unity, which is believed to reveal the true essence of the objects. However, it is dependent on one’s knowing oneself and to be able to reach that stage, one has to first pass the stage of *nefs-i levvâme* and continue his *sülük* in *nefs-i mülhime* and then in *nefs-i mutmaine* and so on. However, when the *mürîd* transcends the intellect and starts to get inspirations, and also see the *tecellis* (manifestations, reflections) of Allah, it is already explained that a *mürşid* is needed. However, the role of the *mürşid* was not exactly stated in that stages except being a guide in the metaphysical realm. Actually, *râbita* is a tool, a flashlight that enlightens the path in the metaphysical realm for the *mürîd*. According to Şehâbeddin es-Sühreverdî, “It is better for a *mürîd* to face (*nazar*) at his *mürşid*, to fully concentrate on him and to watch/contemplate the manifestations that reflects from his *mürşid*, than wandering in the *semâ* (skies) by himself (Tosun, 2007). That is to say, instead of getting lost in the countless manifestations of Allah in the stage of drunkenness, it is better for the *sâlik* to focus on the manifestations that becomes apparent on his *mürşid*. Foucault quoting Alcibiades’ words, which actually are quite similar to many other *Sûfî* sayings, gives the keys to understand this phenomenon as well: “The soul cannot know itself except by looking at itself in a similar element, a mirror. Thus, it must contemplate the divine element” (Foucault, 1988). That is how one finds what he is, how he looks like in the reality: through the mirror called *mürşid*. Through the practice of contemplation, one gets attracted to the manifestation of *Hakk*, which is at the same time the reflection of one’s self. Hence the boundaries between the self and the *Hakk* disappears and the self and the reflection becomes one, which is named in *tasavvuf* as *fenâ fi’ş-şeyh* (to perish in *şeyh* / *mürşid*).

## CHAPTER 4

# MEDIATION IN THE TRANSMISSION OF ISLAMIC KNOWLEDGE IN CURRENT TURKEY

### 4.1) Closing of *Medrese* and *Tekke* & Islamic Education after the Republic

In previous chapters, the understanding of “knowledge” in the *Sünnî*-Islamic tradition, which has become intertwined with *tasavvuf* over the centuries, is discussed in detail and differentiated from both the Western and Westernized current Turkish perceptions and *presuppositions*. Besides, the difference in the understanding of knowledge between the *ulemâ* and the *Sûfîs* is made clear under the significations of *‘ilm* and *mârifet*. Then, the effects of this dichotomy on the practices of the transmission of knowledge, respectively in the *medreses* and the *tekkes* is investigated and the intrinsic relation of mediation to learning practices within these traditional systems is pointed out. Now, in this chapter, I will investigate the changes in the notion of Islamic knowledge as well as the changes in the practices of learning and the forms of *mediation* in current Turkey, after the reform movements of the founders of the new Republic, which constituted a breaking point from the traditional.

Traditionally, the transmission of knowledge in the Islamic societies, mostly occurred in *medreses* and *tekkes* as studied previously; that was also the case in the Ottoman Empire. As the empire prospered through the centuries, these institutions became more established and vastly spread over many of its territories. They have become the vibrant centers of the intellectual and communal life.<sup>29</sup> Before the collapse of the empire, towards the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the count of the

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<sup>29</sup> *Medrese* and *tekke* have also become intertwined in many cases, with the involvement of the *müdderris* in *tarikats* (Berkey, 1992).

*medreses* in Istanbul was about 125 and reached over 500 till 19<sup>th</sup> century (Kazıcı, 1999, p. 162). At the beginning of the 1790s, 2947 students would be living in the *medreses* in Istanbul (Çelebi, 1999, p. 178). Right before the reformation movements in the new Republic, it is known that there were 479 *medreses* and 18.000 students registered in them, even though at that time it is known that about 12.000 of them had enrolled in a *medrese* to escape the military service, and they were not really attending these institutions; in each *medrese*, there was also a teacher (Özkan, 2006, pp. 86-87).

On the other hand, Kreiser notes that “between 1820 and 1920 there were some two thousand to three thousand *tekkes* in the provinces of Anatolia and Rumelia, which together formed the nucleus of the Ottoman Empire; in Istanbul, during this period there were some three hundred *tekkes* (Kreiser, 1992, p. 49). Thus, when one considers the close to 18 million population in the Ottoman Empire before it collapsed, and the population of Istanbul then about 900 thousand including only 560 thousand Muslims, it can be estimated that there was a *tekke* for each 3000 people in Istanbul, and a *tekke* for each 1860 Muslims (Karpas, 1985, p. 190). Kreiser actually states that in 1870, there were 1826 registered residents of the *tekkes* in Istanbul, about 1% of all male population of the city (Kreiser, 1992, p. 49). This does not of course mean at all that people attending the rituals at the *tekkes* were limited to this number. While the residents of a *tekke* might be a few, hundreds would be drawn to the gatherings because *tekke* is not like a monastery where all the disciples live together, instead, people of the community would gather together at the *tekke* during ritualistic occasions. Kreiser’s claim also supports this, according to the estimates he uses, “one in four of the city’s male Muslim inhabitants was associated with a *tekke* (Kreiser, 1992, p. 49).

In comparison, recently, in 2010 there were about 3028 mosques in Istanbul, 2707 primary and high schools, and 29 universities (Karabacak, 2010). Given the 12.5 million official population count at that time, it makes a school for about 4600 people, and a mosque for each 4100, just to put things in perspective (Karabacak, 2010). With this kind of data, it should not be wrong to assume that both the *medreses*, and the *tekkes* had a big potential to influence the social, political and economic life within the Ottoman society, especially towards the end of the empire.

While these institutions were very central in the social life and to the educational practices of the public during especially the last century of the Ottoman Empire, the empire was struggling in itself. There were many wars and uprisings during this period due to the effects of the nationalist movements triggered starting from France. Besides, the empire had not caught up to the technological advancements that bloomed after the renaissance and reformation period in the Western world; the industrial revolution had not taken place either. Consequently, the empire's technologies of war, both technical and logistical, were behind the European counterparts as well (Sander, 2003, p. 291). Therefore, the rulers decided to improve their technological, economic and diplomatic power by establishing a new and Westernized army. This process of course required new military and government officials who are educated in the Western sense, thus the changes automatically triggered the foundation of new educational institutions. Since these academies were established in the hopes of "saving the empire", they became very prestigious. "This set in motion a long, incremental process whereby Islamic knowledge per se came to be differentiated from other knowledge and identified as 'religious,' while the distribution of prestige among knowledge also shifted (e.g., knowledge of Arabic-the language of classical Islamic scholarship-was not a condition of excellence in the new disciplines)" (Silverstein, 2008).

This perspective towards the superiority of the Western education persisted in the academy-graduate, nationalist founders of the Turkish Republic as well and as Silverstein puts it: "eventually glossed as secularism, by both foreign observers and Turks themselves" (2008). Thus, on 3 March 1924, when the law to abolish the caliphate system was passed, there were two other major proposals for social reform that followed it: First was the abolishing of the *Şer'iye ve Evkaf Vekâleti* (Ministry of Shari'a and Charitable Foundations) and establishment of the Presidency of Religious Affairs under the office of the prime minister, and the second was the consolidation of all the educational institutions under the new Ministry of Education. The prior (Law Number 429, Article 5), stipulated, that within the boundaries of the Turkish Republic the management of all *cami* (mosques), *mescid*, *tekke* and *zâviye*, and all appointments and dismissals of imams, *hatips* (people who delivers the sermon), *vâiz* (preachers), *şeyhs* (*mürşids*), *müezzins* (reciter of the call to worship), and other

personnel will be undertaken by the Presidency of Religious Affairs” (Önkal & Bozkurt, p. 54). Therefore, any authority that is left from *Şeyh’ül İslam* was taken under the state control. And the latter (Law Number 430), paved the way of closing down the *medreses* and state’s taking control of the religious education – *medreses* were actually closed down after a decree issued a few months later by the Minister of Education, Hüseyin Vasfi Çınar, stating that having professional subjects in primary schools is contradictory to the very law (Özkan, 2006, p. 86).

Even though the caliphate was abolished, all the religious authority was gathered in the state and the *medreses* were closed right after this law, the founders of the Republic did not close the *tekkes*. It was only after the Şeyh Said rebellion that they have passed a new law (Number 677), which abolished the orders and closed the *tekkes*. This law stated that

The *tekkes* with mosques attached or that were also used as mosques would continue to be used solely as mosques; those not used as mosques would be used as schools, and those unable to be used would be sold, with the proceeds going to the education budget. Titles such as *hoca*, *shakyh* [*şeyh*], *baba*, and *dede*, given to the leaders of religious communities, were banned, as was wearing turban and robes for all but official (i.e. state) functionaries (e.g. *imams* and *müftüs*) while conducting their duties (Silverstein, 2007, p. 47).

Consequently, by the end of 1925, both the *medreses* and the *tekkes* were officially closed at the very beginnings of the new republic.

As all these abolitions taking place, the founders started replacing the institutions with new establishments. Thus, a faculty of theology (*İlahiyat Fakültesi*) is opened instead of *Medrese-i Süleymaniye* (Özkan, 2006, p. 86), and 29 *imam-hatip* schools were established in various places in Turkey to raise students for the prior faculty (Nevzatoğlu, 2006, p. 15). Afterwards, throughout the Republican years, these schools were closed due to lack of students, re-established in different forms as the governments changed, and they have become a very big part of the political and sociological discussions of modern Turkey. However, *tekkes* and *tarikats* have always been closed and thus the *Sûfî* life and their practices were pushed out of the public space into the underground. That means, the state let the Islamic education continue under its control through the *medrese*-like establishments, but never really openly allowed or approved the communal gatherings of the *Sûfîs*. Therefore, the practices



and the traditions of the *Sûfî* life, which used to be very dominant in the Ottoman Empire, were abandoned or at least interrupted with the new state.

#### **4.2) From *Âlim* and *Mürşid* to *Din Görevlisi***

The rupture from the Islamic educational traditions at the beginning of the Turkish republic was a major one. The founders obviously aimed to incorporate the religion in the state system for political reasons, which mainly is to sustain the constructed national identity, and have the strings to this powerful tool of discipline in their hands. For this, first of all, the state has intentionally taken control over the religious practices as well as the religious discourse, by keeping the Presidency of Islamic Affairs under its umbrella even though it conflicts with its own secular foundations; by raising its own modern-religious elite and authority that is harmonious with the state; and by spreading the religious information in a distilled, state approved form in schools. Through this process, both the religious identities and the religious practices are reconstructed, in a more “secular” way; in other words, the traditional understanding of religion and the religious is altered and redefined in a way that it does not constitute a very different entity of its own compared to the state ideologies. Thus religion is not only separated from the state affairs and government but it is also detached from the social lives of the people.

As a result of the reformation movements, with the alteration of the religious “production” models, the traditional religious titles like *âlim*, *şeyh*, *mürşid* mostly disappeared from the culture, and left their places to *hoca*, *imam*, *müezzin*, *hatip*, *vâiz*, *müftü*, or as Behçet Batur also noticed, *din adamı* (religious person) became *din görevlisi* (religious personnel) (Batur, 2015). That is to say, the Presidency of Religious Affairs lost its predecessor’s role of religious leadership and representation and became an organization of religious service which mostly caters to people’s needs in *ibadet* (religious rituals) and moral support (Batur, 2015). This juxtaposition also portrays the difference between the *âlim*, *şeyh*, or *mürşid* and the religious personnel. The difference occurs mainly from the source of authority. While as seen in the previous chapter, the *şeyh* or *mürşid* has total authority on his disciples, a

religious personnel does not have a true authority on people. Especially while the *mürşid* has the power to help alter one's life, character and subjectivity through a disciplining process, religious personnel only leads the prayers, reiterates what the books and his education dictates and at best preach the people on what the Ministry decides for that week's *hutbe* during Friday Prayers. Therefore, while *mürşid's* authority lies in himself, his knowledge and his moral being, reinforced by the *silsile* that leads to the Prophet Muhammed, *din görevlisi* is an appointed person who gets his authority from the government and his formal education. Therefore, he lacks the charisma. The shift of the authority is from the enlightened man not even to a "knowledgeable" man, but to a representative. Therefore, the questions he can answer are limited merely to the rituals, rules and "regulations" as well. In other words, he can give a textbook answer, pre-ordered from the Presidency, about how one can be modest, but he cannot really be a role model for these kind of moral qualities. He can tell but he does not have an outlet to show how he lives; his duty usually is confined between the prayers.

When the authority of the *imam* or *hoca* is referred to his state-approved and certified formal education, the underlying power that he holds originates from his knowledge of the Arabic language, which is almost exclusively taught in the theology faculties as an extension of Althusser's *Ideological State Apparatus*. In other words, the educational institutions like *imam-hatips* and the theology (*ilahiyat*) faculties "teaches 'know-how', but in forms which ensure subjection to the ruling ideology or the mastery of its practice" (Althusser, 2001, p. 133). This way the state can exercise its control over the transmission of Islamic knowledge, and grant the authority to only those who subjugates to the established order. Since the *Kur'an* is revealed in Arabic, a common Turkish person does not have a chance to directly interact with it, he has to either rely on the translations which differ from one other, therefore they are not absolute at all, or read the exegesis, which is also abundant and a lot more lengthy in size. Thus, by learning the Arabic language, the *imam*, *hoca* or a theology professor, constructs himself as a religious authoritative elite.

This power he gains from knowledge, manifests itself best in the *hutbes* "preached" during the Friday prayer: all the *hutbes* start with a verse from the *Kur'an*. Therefore, while the *imam* starts talking in Arabic, with all its guttural sounds, he

elevates to a higher status, gathering his authority from his command on the Arabic language, and in a way tells people that he is the one who can understand *Kur'an*, and mediate that knowledge to them. The *hutbe* preached on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of 2016, similar to all others, which is distributed online from the Presidency of Religious Affairs and preached in the mosques in Turkey is a good example of both this power relationships and the “secularism” of the religious practice.

This *hutbe* starts with the Arabic recitation of a *Hadis* about being truthful (not even a *Kur'anic* verse), then the *imam* addresses the crowd with one of the already written out opening words like “beloved Muslims”, “my brothers”, “my valuable brothers” etc. as if he is not reading the pre-written text, but preaching to them. Only after these, *imam* gives the Turkish translation of the verses. As he continues to talk about honesty, he reads: “In speech, morality is important. Words has a morality, an etiquette. A *mümin* (believer) should reflect his grace and politeness. His words should be gentle and beautiful, that touches the hearts. For this, the words should come from one’s heart as well.” The preaching continues, and usually ends with the *imam* saying: “I want to finish my words with a prayer, or a verse, or a *Hadis* etc. (Din Hizmetleri Genel Müdürlüğü, 2016). As it is clear from the above, *hutbe* is a sole performance. It is a tool to create social stratification and reinforce the authority of the *imam*. Besides, the short performance in this case, like most, is about morality. Ironically, while the *imam* is talking about the etiquette of talking, he is actually not talking, or not preaching at all, he is just reading a pre-written text, he is performing and thus he himself is not true to what he “claims”. This alone shows how detached the *hutbe* is from an actual *sohbet*. This performance start in the middle of the Friday prayer, as the *imam* walks up the *minber* and ends as he descends from it to continue his job as to lead the prayer. Therefore, he is there as a personnel of the Presidency; he is performing his duties, nothing less, nothing more. He is detached from the community at that point as well. He is there not because of his character, his morals, or that he deserve to be there due to his knowledge, but simply because he has to be there as an official who gets paid by the government.

On the other hand, these *hutbes* can also be quite openly as political as it can. The *hutbe* on 18 March 2016 is another great example which is about the Dardanelle Wars. In the text it says: “Today, we are going through tough times in our region.

Those who would like to agitate us against each other and weaken us are trying to throw us into the fire... [They] should know that we are a nation whose colors, tongues, voices, and hearts have blended into each other... Brothers... We should not forget that terrorism and those who uses terror intents to harm our state, our nation, and our sacred” (Din Hizmetleri Genel Müdürlüğü, 2016). It is clear that the “voice” of the state is disseminating from *imam*’s recitation. The authority behind him is clear as the state, which is trying to install its own moral dispositions, its own ideology to the believers that crowd the mosques.

In the *hutbes*, as also seen, usually the *imam* talks about practices about religious rituals, and how to behave like a “good Muslim”. All the *hutbes* are the same in Turkey, which are published online at the website of the Presidency. These *hutbes* are written in a way that when recited, it feels like the *imam* is addressing the people in the mosque directly, written in the first person. However, people are aware of the fact that this is a stage performance. The difference from the *sohbet* is clear, it is not improvised, and it does not come from the *imam* himself, not from his heart, soul or morality. It is the state talking to them. Therefore, it lacks discipline and the power to trigger self-discipline in the listeners and help them internalize moral dispositions. People do not really associate with the *imam*, they cannot see him as a role-model. On the other hand, people are not self-conscious about their behaviors while listening to the *hutbe*, there is not an environment where they would be aspired to behave like the *imam* or the other people, because there is not a real presence of interaction. It is just a performance, a ritual on both sides – the *imam* and the believer. Hence, these gatherings for the *Cuma Prayer* and the *Hutbe* may not be too effective at creating moral dispositions in people.

Currently, a mosque is mostly a place to observe the prayers, and the funerals; it is a place for religious practice. In the law that ordered the *tekkes* to be closed, as already stated, it is legislated that “the *tekkes* with mosques attached or that were also used as mosques would continue to be used solely as mosques”; therefore, it can be stated that the transformation was actually targeting social aspects, namely the education and the discipline systems in the *tekkes*. In other words, the state did not have a problem with the rituals that could be used to reinforce the constructed national identity, thus it is no surprise that *Sema* “shows” were the first to be revived

from the *Sûfî* traditions in the recent years, but it did not want the practices of *subjectification* (in French, *subjectivation*), which according to Foucault is a process that the subject constitutes itself using the techniques available to it historically, and doubtless under the influence of myriad factors outside its control (Kelly, 2013, p. 513), and the close-knit religious communities that help installing moral dispositions to continue on. We can claim that the founders of republic wanted to hold on to the Muslim identity, thus to the rituals of the religion, may be as a unifier of the construct of the “millet” (nation); however, they did not wish the self-disciplinary path of *tasavvuf* which offers people “technologies of the self” to persist. In other words, they intended to keep the tools that would enable the *subjection* of the people within the state system, but forbid the ones that would help people for their *subjectification*, that is to autonomously establishing themselves as subjects. Thus the education in *medreses* were transformed and the legacy of the *tekkes* were forbidden. What that left for the people of the state is, therefore, merely the knowledge and the observance of the rituals.

The importance of the presence and the disciplinary practices in *tekkes* is already explained in the previous chapter. Some people back then, before the Republic, used put utmost care about their religious practices as well, but it was to reform their subjectivity, to discipline themselves to transform their selves. The goal was to purify the soul and to know more about oneself; *tekke* was a place of spiritual development where people gathered, shared, and developed together instead of a bare ritual place. With the authority of the *mürşid* and with his charisma, one would be inclined to internalize the moral dispositions, whether it is due to the effect of acting together as a community, or whether it is due to the love that is generated between the disciple and the *mürşid*, which in turn leads the disciple to aspire to assume the character of his *mürşid* and to imitate him. From the Medieval to Modern, there is a big gap formed between the practices of the *tekke* and today’s mosques, which manifests itself in the announcement in the mosques: “Turn off your cellphones!” “Make room for the people outside!” “Do not step on the rug with wet feet!” Compared to the ethics, etiquette and care for each other that is silently cultured and nurtured within the desired and influential *habitus* found in the *tekkes*, which helped internalizing the moral dispositions, in the mosques, even the good and

common-sense practices that are related to the care of each other needs to be voiced, literally quite loudly. As a matter of fact, in many mosques, we cannot find a true community inside anymore, which works as a catalyzer for self-control and safe-care techniques. Instead now, one prays and leaves, without even meeting the other Muslims he is sitting next to. After the performance is acted, and the imposed identity is reinforced through practice, he goes back to his daily, secularized daily life.

### **4.3) From *Tarikat* to *Cemaat*: De Certeau's *Tactics* in Action**

While the founders of the Turkish state aimed to incorporate the religion into the state system to help construct the national identity, and tried to take control over the religious practices and the religious discourse through creating its own modern-religious elite and educational institutions, they could not simply erase or control the past traditions and everyday practices of religion all at once. The state, as seen in the Şeyh Said uprisings, has seen some resistance to the reformations since the very beginnings of the Republic, and due to the conflicts *tarikats* went underground and found new forms of existence, which Ünver Günay calls “parallel religion” (2012, p. 599).

After the rupture from the old traditions with the closing of the *medreses* and *tekkes*, the social dynamics revolving around the transmission of Islamic knowledge, the intrinsic mediation forms and construction of a religious subject within the Republic can be seen through the influential perspective Michel de Certeau offers in his book “The Practice of Everyday Life” (1984). There, de Certeau separates practice into two different forms: *strategy* and *tactic*. According to him,

A ‘strategy’ the calculus of force-relationships which becomes possible when a subject of will and power (a proprietor, an enterprise, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated from an ‘environment.’ A strategy assumes a place that can be circumscribed as *proper* (*propre*) and thus serve as the basis for generating relations with an exterior distinct from it (competitors, adversaries, ‘clienteles,’ ‘targets,’ or ‘objects’ of research). Political, economic, and scientific rationality has been constructed on this strategic model (1984, p. XIX).

With this definition, we can identify the reformations of the Republic as *strategic*. The new state, “subject of will and power”, isolated the Presidency of Religious affairs from other religious institutions, singling it out as the official

authority on religion. Thus, the state *strategically* dictated the understanding of religion and religious of the Presidency, which is in concordance with the desired national identity, as the “proper”. This circumscription left out the disciplinary practices of *tarikats* from the accepted boundary of *Sünnî* and nationalistic religion.

On the other hand, de Certeau differentiates a *tactic* from the *strategy* as “a calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus.” (1984, p. 37). According to him, tactic is “a calculus which cannot count on a ‘proper’ (a spatial or institutional localization), nor thus on a border-line distinguishing the other as a visible totality” (de Certeau, 1984, p. XIX). Instead, he claims, “The place of a tactic belongs to the other. A tactic insinuates itself into the other's place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety, without being able to keep it at a distance.” (de Certeau, 1984, p. XIX). After *tekkes* were closed down, or converted into state controlled mosques, “absence of a proper locus” is exactly how the *Sûfîs* were left with. They did not have a place or a locus to continue their traditional practices. Therefore, as de Certeau asserts, the *Sûfîs* had to “play on and with a terrain imposed on [them] and organized by the law of a foreign power” (1984, p. 37), which was the new state. They had to manipulate the situation at hand and seize any opportunities of existence. According to de Certeau, a *tactic* “must vigilantly make use of the cracks that particular conjunctions open in the surveillance of the proprietary powers. It poaches in them. It creates surprises in them. It can be where it is least expected. It is a guileful ruse.” (1984, p. 37). Hence, the *tarikats*, excluded from the public space, came to existence again, where it is least expected, in the mosques, and in the educational institutions.

According to Hakan Yavuz, the people from the *tarikat* of Nakşibendî, took official government posts at the Presidency of Religious Affairs, in the mosques as a form of *Sûfî* activism (2005, p. 190). In other words, this new formation of *Sûfîs* started to exercise their practices within the domain of the state, within the rules they have set, legally. Thus the *Sûfî* communities in the *tekkes* called *tarikats* have started to be identified as *cemaats* of mosques, which turned into new *public spheres*. According to Bayram Sevinç, it was actually Mehmed Zahit Kotku, the leader of the *tarikat*, who had been preaching as an *imam-hatip* in various mosques, transformed the *cemaat* of the İskenderpaşa mosque into a new form of *tarikat*, and the mosque

itself into a new form of *tekke* (2012). He further claims that using his official title, and duty, Kotku was able to continue/revive the tradition of *sohbet* in a new form as he prolonged his official *vaazs* (preaching) into the garden of the mosque or to its annex – which was his home – reading and explaining *Hadis* from Gümüşhânevî's book called *Râmûz* (2012). It is true that *tekkes* and mosques had been mostly intertwined in the Ottoman Empire, and it was hard to separate the two institutions. However, the Republic tore them apart sharply and abandoned the *tekkes* as a symbol of backwardness. Therefore, re-utilization of the mosques in these new forms to serve the *Sûfî* aspirations, was a very deceitful *tactic* indeed. Moreover, his *tactic* seems to hold very effective. Ünver Günay, referencing Thierry Zarcone's work in 1993, "Nakşibendiler ve Türkiye Cumhuriyeti", claims that *tarikats* in Turkey like Nakşibendîlik, Kadîrîlik, Rufaîlik continued their existence through the mosques, but others like Bektaşîlik and Mevlevîlik could not keep their traditions as much (2012, p. 600).

It should be noted that the transformation of the *tarikats* into *cemaats*, or in other words the relocation of the *tekke* culture in the *mosque* brought along changes within the *Sûfî* practices and forms as well. As seen in the third chapter, *tarikats* used to be a form of mediation to reach *mârifet*, to establish one's subjectivity through disciplining practices. In other words, it was dominantly an individual effort for self-establishment and personal perfection. With the exclusion of these practices from the public space in the new state, the efforts within these mosques shifted from transforming one's existence to actually existing within the general public space. The main problem for these new forms of *tarikats* was more of an identity issue. Thus, it turned into a resistance against the state, it became politicized. "Kotku converted the mosque-centered *cemaat* structure into a semi-political movement. İskenderpaşa *Camii* became not a place where the old sit and prayed; but a center that directs the young (Yavuz H. , 2005, p. 192). The idea of the political Milli Selamet Party is also originated from this movement, and from Kotku himself (Yavuz H. , 2005, p. 279). In a broader sense, the *tarikats*, or in its new form *cemaat*, slowly became an organization that aims for the political and economic freedom of the pious Muslims.

The course of the transformation is very similar in the Gülen movement as well. Even though, Fettullah Gülen, the leader of this movement, has not been a



disciple of any specific *Sûfî* order but he is well-versed in their books (Topal, 2012, p. 194). When he is offered an official duty in Edirne as an *imam*, he starts to utilize *vaaz* outside the formal norms, similar to Korkut. He gathers about thirty people from the *cemaat* in the mosque that joins him in the *sohbets* (Sevinç, 2012, p. 137). Then when he is appointed as the central *vâiz* in İzmir, he attains a change to address big crowds; there, he also volunteers at the Kestanepazarı Derneği *Kur'an* course, where he educates the future key players of his movement (Sevinç, 2012, p. 138).

Topal claims that the practices of the Gülen movement is similar to the movements Saba Mahmood describes in her work “The Politics of Piety” published in 2005, and as such, “are provoked by a specific problem, namely, the concern for learning to organize one’s daily life according to Islamic standards of virtuous conduct in a world increasingly ordered by a logic of secular rationality that is inimical to the sustenance of these virtues.” (2005, p. 56). Therefore, in contrast to the direct political goals of the *cemaat* of İskenderpaşa, the Gülen movement focuses more on the cultural aspects of Islam and try to make them visible in the public space. They have *tactically* opened up *dersanes* (cram schools), private schools, dorms, student housing, camps etc. all acting through secular educational institutions but catering for their own agenda. Then they also took part in the economy, media and public service and with the power they have gained, they started to organize national and international conferences and cultural events. Moreover, they became established as NGOs as a manifestation of their motto: *hizmet*, altruistic service, which helped spreading the movement even to greater crowds.

The concept of *hizmet* comes out as the essence of Gülen’s ethic, urging the believer to take up a role, a “vocation” in the public space, and do it as best as he/she can in order to show others that one can be a good Muslim and a good teacher, engineer, businessman, etc. at the same time. (Sevinç, 2012, p. 195).

This ethical and altruistic participation in the public space was the presented essence of the movement. Gülen was trying to cultivate a “Golden Generation” based on the characteristics of the *sahabe* (Sevinç, 2012, p. 140), and the goal of the system he created was the construction of a new Muslim identity who has earned his/her space in the public space, which had been used by the nation-state to create its own generation (Sevinç, 2012, p. 195).

Almost in every society and in every period of the history, rapid changes in the society, whether it is due to wars, immigration, globalization, changes in educational and communication systems and transition from the traditional to modern hasten the process of seeking religious based identities and the tendency to join religious and mystic communities (Günay, 2012, p. 421). When the modernization and secularization process of Turkey is taken into account from this general perspective as a very sudden transformation, with the alteration in the educational institutions and practices, it can be claimed that the emergent religious communities of the Republic with the name of *cemaat*, became a new destination for people who have been seeking a religious identity.

With the driving force, which the seek for an religious identity created, as seen from the discussions above, both İskenderpaşa and Gülen *cemaats* were able to exert various *tactics*, which de Certeau considers “an art of the weak” (1984, p. 37), through taking advantage of opportunities that present themselves within the normative system of the state. They were trying to take part in the public space with their identities; they were trying to exist and be visible again within the system where the traditional no longer belonged. Hence, with this process, the traditional overarching disciplining *strategies* found in the *tekkes* to transform the individual into *insan-i kâmil*, and to give a disciple the chance of attaining subjectivity, had to give way to the new *tactics*, and diminished slowly from people’s daily practices.

#### **4.4) New Forms of Mediation: Example of Religious TV Programs**

As discussed in the previous sections, the authority gap within the transmission of Islamic knowledge, which occurred after the closing of the *medreses* and the *tekkes* is not only filled intentionally by the state with new educational and religious institutions to create a Islamic-national identity, but due to these alterations new forms of knowledge transmission have also emerged as a form of resistance. As the state continued to impose the constructed national identity, Muslims, especially the *Sûfîs*, tried many *tactics* to exist within the state with their own identities. Some of the *tarikats* that were present before the republic went underground, and kept

their practices in a secret fashion; but continued to reach out to the public through utilizing and taking advantage of the modern mediums accepted as legal by the state, like mosques and *vaaz*, or like the educational institutions like schools, universities, dorms, *dersanes*, seminars, and conferences, or even the media, TVs, newspapers and magazines. However, with the transformation of the medium, the practices like *sohbet* in which people come together and form moral dispositions have also changed.

For example, Gülen himself remarks that he has realized that there is a difference between the *cemaat* who comes and listens to him regularly, and the people who attended his *vaaz* on an *eid* holiday (Sevinç, 2012, p. 138). Thus it makes a difference that in the mosques, since they are considered public space, there may be other people who do not have any connection to the community which is tried to be built. Gülen states in an interview that he cannot know what kind of a *cemaat* that is when thousands of people are listening to him; “the *vaaz* is open to the state officials, to military personnel, to the governor, to the judge.” (Açan, 1999). It is the same for the conferences, TV programs, and any other events that utilizes the pre-existing public space. Thus the space that they try to exist limits the connection among the participants with the inclusion of outsiders. The autonomy of the subculture is lost, and thus the intimate, personalized, and authoritative interaction has become deteriorated. As a result, the transformative effect of the practices becomes questionable. Gülen himself states that “while he was delivering *vaaz* in mosques, there were people who do not observe the prayers but still listening to the *sohbet* without *abdest* [ablution]” (Açan, 1999).

Studying the practice of *vaaz* in the İskenderpaşa and Gülen *cemaats* within the same framework, Sevinç argues that this practice is a tool of transmitting the collective memory onto the new generations (2012). Besides, he adds that the texts that are converted from this oral practice and cassettes created a new system in which people at their homes and students in the houses owned by the Gülen movement would learn about the collective memory, created it, and recreate it again. (Sevinç, 2012, p. 140). While creating a “chain of memory”, as Sevinç calls it, through the given forms may be important in the construction of identity, it should be noted that the new forms of knowledge transmission may not automatically lead to the

embodiment of moral dispositions or to the establishment of subjectivity. The aim of both the *vaaz* and the *cemaats* seems to be more about forming religious identities than offering a platform for the people as, *tarikats* do, to discipline and transform themselves into a real subject. It is not a self-reflective effort, but mostly an endeavor to change the society.

In a similar manner, Silverstein compares two different forms of *sohbet* during the transmission of Islamic knowledge in his field study, one with the presence of the *mürşid*, and the other through the radio. He observed that while the listeners of Esad *Hoca*, the [*mürşid*] of the *Nakşibendi* order following Mehmed Zahid Kotku, used to “sat on the floor, upright, careful not to let their bodies go limp or display lack of attention,” during his *sohbets* on the TV, the listeners “did not display the same care, tea was often served, and one might even scan the headlines of a newspaper while listening” (Silverstein, 2008). Even though the difference between the two may seem subtle, it actually represents a big gap between the religious understandings between the two forms. In addition to the problems discussed about *vaaz*, with the transformations that occurred with the invention of new mediums like radio and TV, the authority of the presenter is undermined since it is not a direct presence, and secondly, this lack of presence obstruct the wish of changing one’s self to a higher moral being. Like the *imam* in an ordinary mosque, there is neither a consistent and observable morality nor a group of people that act to foster each other’s personal development. Subject is detached and distanced from the reflection of his ideal self, the *mürşid*, the guide, role model and the absolute authority over one’s life.

According to Fore, religions role of informing is replaced by the TV. While preaching used to be delivered both from the pulpit and the media, today the monopoly of religious institution over the knowledge has been slowly seized by the mass media, especially the TV. The challenge is solid: TV through various means is taking over the rituals and customs that are perceived as “religious” (Gülerarslan, 2010, p. 225).

In parallel, the “*sohbet*” programs on the TV, as a form of transmission of Islamic knowledge, in which mostly some infamous professors of theology take part in have actually become very popular. According to a survey, 77.1% of the people who joined the research in Turkey accepted to take interest in religious programs; from those 62.6% stated that they improved their common ideas about religion, and 48.3% stated that these programs strengthened their beliefs; however, interestingly,

only 11.95% of the people claimed to have changed their attitudes with the influence of these TV programs (Biçer, 2011). From these statistics, it can be deduced that the rise in the interest of people towards religion in the form of religious programs does not amount to a more “religious” life; that is to say, because people are taking interest in the religious TV programs, they will not necessarily undergo a self-transformation a formative process.

Neil Postman, who states that not everything can be shown on the TV, also claims that the TV and the medium that it creates has characteristics that would make it impossible for a true religious experience. According to Postman, first of all, it is not possible to sanctify the location, in which the screenings of religious content is experienced. In all religious rituals, there is a need to decorate the space with sanctity, and rules that are harmonious with the transcendental like not to eat, not to talk, to be quiet etc. However, since the individuals can continue their daily activities while watching the TV, they cannot reach the spiritual realm necessary for the true religious experience (Gülerarlan, 2010).

Hence, the environment that the TVs, Radios, seminars in the form of *sohbet* create, or even the atmosphere in the mosques to a certain extent when compared to the *tekkes*, does not allow a true religious experience. They lack the sacred, the presence, and the interaction between the parties like it was in between the *mürşid* and *mürid*.

The transmission of religious knowledge differs, as it can be inferred from the examples above, between a local environment surrounded with interconnected personalities and a TV show as an example. The face-to-face value of the communication, the *discipline of presence*, and its authority and persuasiveness, which can lead to the embodiment of moral dispositions, is different than the remote interaction via the TV. Thus the *hocas* on TV, compelled to utilize mimics, gestures and words to “make people believe”, as de Certeau puts it, in their spectacular staged acts. Right before their act, just like the *imams* in the mosques, they start their talk with an Arabic sentence, whether it is a *Kur’anic* verse or a *Hadis*, even though most of the mass that listens to them has no clue what they are saying, present it as a testament, as evidence and then explains its meaning in Turkish, having already established the authority. De Certeau’s outlook on this issue, “making people believe”, is striking:

‘Be quite’ says the TV anchorman or the political representative, ‘these are the facts, here are the data, the circumstances, etc...Therefore you must.....’ Narrated reality constantly tells us what must be believed and what must be done. What can you

oppose to the facts? You can only give in, and obey what they 'signify,' like an oracle, like the oracle of Delphi. The fabrication of simulacra thus provides the means of producing believers and hence people practicing their faiths. This establishment of the real is the most visible form of our contemporary dogmas (de Certeau, 1984, p. 186).

The current situation in any form of Islamic knowledge transmission is at best a theoretical lesson, where the listeners use their intellect to conceptualize the given information, or basically believe in the "real" that is presented to them. The educational forms have lost their appeal to form any "technology of the self." Even if the lesson is about action, it does not really offer a place to practice that action. The *imam* in the mosque, or the *hoca* on the TV, with their lives and practices detached from the audience, and distanced from an observational, imitative education process, cannot catalyze the internalization of moral dispositions. That is why most people learn most of their religious knowledge till the age of sixteen as observed from the TÜİK statistics given previously in this thesis. Since as Berkey puts it, Islam is "something more than a 'religion' in the Western sense, but rather an 'all-embracing way of life'" (Berkey, 2003, p. 143), the daily practices, gestures, and attitudes needs to be inherited by the youth through the power of influence. Thus, children and teenagers can only internalize the moral dispositions that are in place in their households and those that are embodied by their parents.

On the other hand, Postman states: "TV has made entertainment the 'natural format for the representation of all experience' and 'the supra-ideology of all discourse on television" (Gannaway, 1994). Thus, Gülerarslan claims that it is no different for the "religion" and religious discourse on TV based on Postman's assertion; then she adds: "Religious content is often becomes a topic of debate programs, but due to the entertainment ideology of the medium, the religious issues are stuck in between hedonic presentations that would rivet the viewer to the screen." (Gülerarslan, 2010). "Teke Tek Özel" program in Habertürk on August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2009, which hosted Cübbeli Ahmet Hoca, the leader of the İsmailağa *cemaat* (religious group), quite a few times that he actually became a regular now, can be shown as an example to these discussion programs with his sensational humor. He says in that program:

A normal person breathes 24000 times a day... nobody gets tired of... nobody says I'm dead tired breathing, but it is not like that in the *zikir*, we tell him to repeat 'Allah'

300 times he starts to get sleepy... that is my advice to people who cannot sleep: they should repeat 'Allah' 1000 times and they will surely sleep!.. Because the devil sees that it is worse for the person to stay awake, so it puts him to sleep... I say hell is too expensive, heaven is free but nobody is coming along! Alcohol costs, gambling costs, adultery costs, this costs, that costs. How much does a prayer cost? (Cübbeli Ahmet Hoca, 2015).

The satirical tone of the Hoca is so overwhelming that the hosts cannot stop laughing throughout the "show".

The entertainment value in the *sohbet* programs are also apparent, but in different ways. For example, there are touching recitations of poems, naturally beautiful scenery at the background appealing to people's aesthetic senses, and surely moving stories of the Prophet and the *sahabe* (Ergeç, 2006). The voice of the speakers take an almost crying tone while telling these stories or reciting the poems, with a stirring music in the background. Nihat Hatipoğlu is probably the most famous of these type of religious personalities, who is also a famous theology professor and an opinion leader. He has crucial impact in terms of religious learning via media tools and great potential to reach out to masses. Especially in Ramadan days, his TV programs staged in Sultanahmet are followed by many. In a research about religious life conducted in Turkey, an interviewee is asked the following question: "Who do you seek advice from for religious issues?" and his reply was: "I listen Nihat Hatipoğlu on TV. The other *hocas* on TV, I mean I do not consult any *hoca* but I wish to ask if something is sin or not..." (Akşit, Şentürk, Küçükural, & Cengiz, 2012, p. 418). It is obvious that watching religious TV programs provide the spectators with religious knowledge but not really in an intellectual or spiritual sense; instead, in between the entertaining presentations, it gives some quick 'recipes' for the believers the do's and don'ts of Islam.

Once the images broadcast by television and the time spent in front of the TV set have been analyzed, it remains to be asked what the consumer makes of these images and during these hours. The thousands of people who buy a health magazine, the customers in a supermarket, the practitioners of urban space, the consumers of newspaper stories and legends —what do they make of what they "absorb," receive, and pay for? (de Certeau, 1984, p. 31).

While de Certeau asking these questions, he means that consuming the given knowledge or images by dominant structure, such as media, state or simply power source, is not just a consuming activity. He asserts that "the way of using "or

“consuming” a product can be different from the imposed one; thus he defines consumption as a way of “production” (de Certeau, 1984, p. 11). For the very reason, similar to religious TV programs, Esad Coşan’s *sohbet’s* on the radio, and Gülen’s cassettes – the new forms of mediation in the transmission of Islamic knowledge – which basically tries to impose a certain kind of knowledge and form certain kind of identities, are subject to consumption of the believers. Thus as they consume these products (religious knowledge, images and forms) in different, unexpected ways, their consumption actually becomes a new ‘production’. As a result, believers create their own and altered forms of religion and religious identities, while “consuming” religious knowledge from the new forms of mediations.

These new forms of knowledge transmission and mediation has been deeply altering the religious practices of the Turkish people, their understanding of Islam and the ways they construct their subjectivity.

The mass media is attacking the individual... [They] present constructed simulacrum and this, above all, is the loss of the subject. The shattered display of knowledge and the hard-to-understand manipulation of fiction obstruct the true and real communication, creating a ‘biased reality’. This is the craftiest way of mental restraint and a significant amount of people have been deprived of their faculty of communication; they are just imitating (Gülerarslan, 2010, p. 224).

This imitation is far from emulating the readily present role-models of the past. Today, believers keep consuming the dogmas that are created either by the state dominated agencies, or the *cemaats* that tries to find their place in the public space. However, just as the books, rules and political ideologies are operationalized in different ways as they are interpreted by people (Göle, 2011, p. 119), religion is also put to practice in different forms. Thus people in Turkey mostly discuss only the ritualistic parts of Islam, and collectively reproduce a “biased”, question-answer based, utilitarian religion, which may cater to nobodies interest, except their own.



## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

According to research mediation has a quite substantial effect in the transmission of Islamic knowledge in current Turkey as inferred from the TÜİK statistics in the first chapter. There are various traditional reasons behind this abundance and dominance of mediators as the main resources of religious education.

First, the nature and perception of knowledge within this cultural background suggests that mediation and the necessity of an endeavor to attain it are intrinsic to the concept itself since the beginning of the religion with the very first revelations. From that time on, it became obvious that the understanding of knowledge is differentiated from the Westernized and “modern” understanding in Turkey, and thus from *episteme* and *gnosis* both. Islamic knowledge is a knowledge beyond the sphere of the intellect, which encapsulates moral dispositions and aims for a unity of the knowledge and the knower. Besides, there are different understandings of knowledge within the Islamic culture as well, one being *‘ilm*, the other being *mârifet*, a transcendental and absolute form of knowledge, which the *Sûffîs* put forth. The investigation of both these understandings shows that mediation is necessary in the transmission of knowledge no matter what. However, the latter kind of knowledge, *mârifet* also makes it obvious that there is an intertwined relation between knowledge, mediation and practice, since it can only be attained through the acts of self-purification.

The historical practices of Islamic education occurred mainly in two different institutions, namely the *medrese* and *tekke*. In the *medreses*, students mostly concentrated on studying and memorizing under the close supervision and authority of a *müdürris*. Here we saw that authority is a way of ensuring the continuity of the correct knowledge as well as the continuity of the authority itself. This is useful to understand some of the current practices which are very similar to today, like the constant recitation of the *Kur’an*, without understanding what it means. However,

the learning practices in *tekkes* are quite different, heavily invested in practice and discipline. In *tekkes*, the aim, as discussed, is to reach a form of enlightenment and absolute knowledge, and to be able to do that *Sûffîs* in the *tekkes*, believed that they should purify the soul with disciplining practices. By doing these activities, which is basically stripping the ego from its desires, and all its attachments, the person rejects his subjectivity. In other words, a *Sûffî*, consciously enters this path of purification, and uses various “technologies of the self” to break out his identity constructed through Foucauldian “technologies of power”. Therefore, he wishes to become a subject. This form of life actually holds for an “art of existence” that Foucault hoped for the humanity. *Sûffîs* had been turning their lives and bodies into texts, into an art form that resembles the beauty and attributes of Allah. Throughout these disciplining processes, due to the intrinsic need of mediation in the understanding of Islamic knowledge learning, role of the *mürşid*, becomes both a guide for the metaphysical realm in the path of enlightenment, and an authority and a role-model to reinforce the *subjectivation* process of the *mürîd*.

While the two forms of learning, one in *medreses* and the other in *tekkes*, were very dominant and influential in the Ottoman Empire, with the establishment of the Turkish Republic, and the new reforms that took place around that time, which abolished all these traditional practices, the transmission of knowledge and the mediation with it went through serious change. The government preferred to keep the *medrese* type of education to control the public and to use it as a tool to strengthen the national identity. Thus they have turned these institutions to theology faculties and *imam-hatîps*. With this change, the mediators also changed within the system. It can be claimed that even though the tradition of seeking knowledge from a mediator persisted in the society, the mediators became a part of the state *ideology*. In other words, the religious leaders became religious personnel of the government, thus the source of authority also changed within Islamic knowledge. Hence, the lack of the disciplinary practices that are dependent on the authority of the *mürşid*, found predominantly in *tasavvuf*, which includes subjugating, discarding desires, imitating role-models, and being in the presence of companions etc., within current Turkish society, reduced Islamic knowledge into the bare knowledge of the religious forms. Therefore, while Islamic knowledge used to encapsulate moral

dispositions, and the endeavor to attain it was a transformational experience for the believer, after the Republican reformations, it started to emanate from state ideologies, became mostly focused on the details of religious rituals, and the acquisition of it has become a normative process instead of a transformative one for the believer and practitioner.

Due to the rupture from the tradition for the “modern”, the public space is altered, excluding many Muslim and *Sûfî* identities. Therefore, the groups left outside this new public space started to struggle and resist the state to be able to re-exist and become visible. They have started using *tactics* within the state controlled systems, to assert their existence. Thus, they have formed *cemaats* around the mosques and new religious leaders, and utilized the secular educational, economic, cultural and political institutions as a legal tools to exert their *tactics*. However, the struggle was mostly about identity. Thus, religious practices became politicized. Consequently, the subjectivity of the citizen became surrendered either to the state or to the *cemaats* as the citizens kept going after mediation while trying to identify himself/herself as an individual. That is to say, while previous practices of learning aimed to establish the self as a subject, current ones have been leading people more towards a constructed identity. It can also be suggested that due to this turn from *subjectification* to *subjection*, the scope of mediation is extended to any form of act, personal or politic, that an individual could try to identify his/her place in the broader public space.

After the formation of the republic, new forms of mediation, new mediums and new ways of transmission of Islamic knowledge came to place in Turkey. Preaching in the mosques was one of the older ones, and then the discussion programs on radios and talks on the TV came forth. Slowly, Islamic learning habits and the mediation within that started to change radically in the current society. The knowledge was separated from practice and thus the daily lives of the citizens became secularized, not just the governmental institutions. Due to the alteration of mediation forms, the embodiment of Islamic knowledge became harder, and mostly detached from current religious practices. Hence, religious knowledge has been turned into practical information. The believers started to reproduce what they consume from these mediums as new forms and understandings of religion. The

knowledge about religion turned into a question-answer practice, mostly about the minute details of the practices since performing them well to present one's identity. Moreover, religion became a spectacle, originating from the TV and extended into the daily practices through ostentatious acts to show oneself to be more visible in the public spaces.



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