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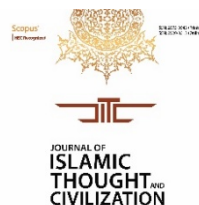
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Bediuzzaman Said Nursi and the Nature of Human Creation in his Major Works: Considering a New Breakthrough in Islamic Philosophy

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Abstract

This paper aimed to analyse Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's ideas regarding the nature of human creation in his major works. In order to achieve such goal, this paper utilized a 'conceptual analysis' method to reveal Nursi's elaboration on the concept. The research found that humans, according to Nursi, arise from the mother's womb with God's fondness -Rahīm- governed with the eternal pact in the metaphysical realm to be 'abid in the physical world, who are expected to fulfil their responsibility as God's servant by worshipping Him and Him alone in the form of honest submission. Furthermore, worship is only possible via the perfect actualization of intellect, and recognizing the essence of worship is the Amānah to be the vicegerent of God -Khalīfatullāh- as humans will discover a comprehensive understanding of God -Ma'rifātullah- through their worldly journey. This work finally ended with a reflection pertaining to the possibility of the philosophical thoughts of Nursi as a breakthrough in advancing Islamic philosophy in the present age.

Keywords: Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Human Creation, Islamic Philosophy, *Khalīfatullah*, Risale-i Nur

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Introduction

Human beings are unique since they are honoured with a distinguished capacity to grasp their surrounding environment¹ including talents in the form of physical senses and intellect which become their basis to determine what is good and bad for them.² The privilege of humans, moreover, comes in their adequacy to establish a harmonious relationship between living things as through their exclusive competency utilizing their sense and intellect, mankind possibly dominates an equalized appositeness on earth.³ In Islam, the integrity of intellect is the acclaim given by God. The mandate is not given either to the most obedient creature -Angel/*Malā'ikah*- or ones who have been created from fire -Devil/*Jinn*- but to humans only. In the scripture, the creation of mankind has been told in the way of dignity and prestige which has not occurred earlier.⁴ As human creation is exceptional, they will also realize the need for obedience and worshipping God only. Such understanding is only achievable in virtue of an ideal control of the intellect.⁵ As the consequence of intelligence, mankind will comprehend the true nature of God.⁶ Besides, God has created mankind only to be His vicegerent or deputy -*Khalīfah*. Realizing intellect as their potential to dissent something is

¹Ibrahim 'Ati, *Al-Insān Fi al-Falsafah al-Islāmiyyah* (Cairo: General Egyptian Book Organization, 1993), 7.

²Amru Syarif, *Rihlatu 'Aqlin: Wa Hakadzā Yaqūdu-al- 'Ilm Asyrasu al-Mulahadah Ilā al-Īmān*, (Cairo: Shorouk International Bookshop, 2010), 139.

³James Luke Meagher., *Man, the Mirror of the Universe; or the Agreement of Science and Religion, Explained for the People* (New York: Russel Brothers, 1887), 272.

⁴Aisyah Abdur Rahman bint Al-Syati., *Maqāl Fi Al-Insān: Dirāsah Qur'āniyyah* (Cairo: Dar El Maaref, 1969), 26; Murat Sofuoğlu, *The Manifest Destiny of Human Being*, ed. Trevor Guazos (New York: University Press of America, 2004), 30.

⁵M. G. El-Fandy, *Islam and Science* (Cairo: The Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs, 1993), 31.

⁶Benaouda Bensaid, Salah Machouche, and Fadila Grine, "A Qur'ānic Framework for Spiritual Intelligence," *Religions* Vol. 5, no. 1 (February 26, 2014), 179-98, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel5010179>; Ali Muhammad Bhat, "Human Psychology (Fitrah) from Islamic Perspective," *International Journal of Nusantara IslamB* Vol. 4, no. 2 (August 21, 2016), 61-74, <https://doi.org/10.15575/ijni.v4i2.1187>; Yousuf Ali, "Human Nature and His Potentialities Attributes Towards Virtue and Morality," *Journal of Education and Social Sciences*, Vol. 5, no. 1, (October 2016), 118-27.

sufficient or deficient, excellent or terrible, useful or harmful, and virtuous or immoral, mankind is also conceivably misguided to do more evil.⁷

According to Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, mankind has committed such serious crime that they have to be banished from heaven, and it is only by virtue of good deeds in the world that they will ‘return’ to their ‘hometown’. Moreover, mankind is also demanded to socialize with other human beings as the whole common living things possess a concrete connection among one another. Their relationships later will emerge as physical and spiritual needs of humans derived from their surrounding atmosphere.⁸ This paper will enquire about the nature of the creation of mankind in accordance with the idea of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi (d.1960) with an apprehension of his philosophical idea based on his major works ended with a short reflection regarding the possible advancement of the study of Islamic philosophy in the current age. Thus, the research question that is going to be answered in this paper is: “What is the nature of human creation according to Nursi and how will it possibly be seen as a breakthrough in Islamic Philosophy?”

2. Research Methods

This study will employ the conceptual analysis method to investigate the nature of human creation in Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's philosophy. The strategy is seen to be a good method to grasp the intricate concepts found in Nursi's works. This technique focuses on “...*the logical and epistemic statues of statements of beliefs...*”⁹ The approach will show more deeply the distinguished contribution of Nursi's notion of human nature above other disciplines, explaining carefully the existing concepts prior to their application to reality as the motion will be intimately tied to the subject of Islamic philosophy and a number of key issues.¹⁰ The method can also be used to examine the nature of philosophy per se. Philosophy is able to investigate reality, defend claims, and, most significantly, examine a variety of discourses and concepts that are central to our way of thinking.¹¹ As a result, the character of human nature in accordance with Nursi's

⁷Muhammad Abduh, and Rasyid Ridha, *Tafsīr Al-Qur’ān al-Hakīm al-Musytahār Bi Ism Tafsīr al-Mannār*, vol. 1, (Cairo: Dar El Manar, 1947), 258.

⁸Bediuzzaman Said Nursi., *The Immortality of Man’s Spirit* (Istanbul: Sozler Publications, 2013), 9.

⁹Hans-Johann Clock., “Impure Conceptual Analysis,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Philosophical Methodology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 81.

¹⁰Clock, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 81.

¹¹John Hospers, *An Introduction to Philosophical Analysis*, 4th ed. (Oxfordshire: Routledge, 1997), 5.

concept will be elucidated in a highly appropriate manner, using his writings as the primary source of information.

3. The Biography of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi

Bediuzzaman Said Nursi is a Turkish Muslim scholar who lived between two great periods, exactly at the end of the Ottoman Caliphate and at the start of the Secular Republic of Turkey.¹² His *fiqh* (law) school was Syafi'i¹³ while he also followed *Naqsabandiyya* school of Sufism.¹⁴ His childhood environment was full of attention to education which appeared in many *medrese* -Learning Center- for gathering sheikh, students, and teachers as he attended them regularly.¹⁵

It is affirmed by Sukran Vahide that through his *magnum opus -Risale-i Nūr-*, Nursi attempted to prove the prodigy of the Qur'ānic civilization to confront the ideological predicaments of Muslim society at the time being -secularism, materialism, etc.¹⁶ On the other hand, *Risale-i Nūr* was also considered as Nursi's reflection with regards to the symptoms suffered by Muslim society. Nursi affirmed that the rejuvenation of Qur'ānic values is the primary solution for the dilemma, thus employing *Risale-i-Nūr* as his movement to revive Qur'ānic messages to its readers to be able to confront their threats.¹⁷

There are some advantages of *Risale-i Nuūr* compared with other references of Qur'ānic Studies. *Risale-i Nūr* reveals that the Qur'ān includes a variety of subjects where knowledge is represented as light (*Nūr*), emphasizing faith in

¹²Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabi,' (Ed.), *Islam at the Crossroads: On the Life and Thought of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2003), ix; Şükran Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey: An Intellectual Biography of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*, ed. Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabi' (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 349.

¹³Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 349.

¹⁴Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *Sīrah Dzātīyyah* (Cairo: Sozler Publications, 2013), 45.

¹⁵Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 4.

¹⁶Vahide, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 193.

¹⁷Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabi,' ed., *Theodicy and Justice in Modern Islamic Thought: The Case of Said Nursi* (Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2010), xi.

God.¹⁸ *Risale-i Nūr* is exceptionally one-of-a-kind, and it is far different from other Qur'ānic commentaries as the discussion of faith is adapted to the current conditions of Muslims who are in the process of dealing with complicated obstacles. In addition, *Risale-i Nūr* also employs the Qur'ānic *ma'nawi* (meaning) as therapy for diseases. The healing measure, following the procedure taught within the text of *Risale-i Nūr*, is built upon a strong faith in the heart of Muslims advancing the curing operation.¹⁹

Since he was young, Nursi has had the ambition to restore the glory of Islamic civilization. *Damascus Sermon*, indeed, has become a notable event in the history of Nursi. The *Sermon* is an exhortation delivered by Nursi, telling about diseases suffered by Muslims and how they should overcome this issue -reflecting the social life that took place during the transition from the Ottoman to the Secular Republic of Turkey-. The Euphoria at that time contained a lot of Western interference and thoughts that pervaded the youth at the same time, managing the *Sermon* to be one of Nursi's most crucial appearances.²⁰

In terms of education, Nursi was obsessed with *Medresetuz Zehra*, a sort of Islamic college that he imagined would become the centre of excellence owning the whole proficiency needed to guide the society to solving their dilemmas. This idea turned out to be a result of his observation on Al-Azhar University. In order to implement this plan, Nursi went to Damascus with some al-Azhar alumni. From Damascus, he went to Beirut, then Izmir, and finally Istanbul. The trip was finally ended with the approval of Sultan Resad to build the college. Sultan Resad willingly donated 1000 gold lira to Nursi as his support to commence the construction of the college. This beautiful agenda, however, was desperately affected by the World War I which resulted in the termination of the school development. *Medresetuz Zehra*, in the end, has yet to be realized.²¹

¹⁸Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *The Staff of Moses*, ed. Şükran Vahide (Istanbul: Sözlere Publisher, 2011), 245.

¹⁹Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *Al-Malahiq: Fi Fiqhi Da'wah al-Nūr*, trans. Ihsan Kasim al-Salihi (Cairo: Sozler Publications, 1999), 98.

²⁰Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *The Damascus Sermon* (Istanbul: Sözlere Publications, 1996), 27; Zubair Hamid, "Muslim Response to the West: A Comparative Study of Muhammad 'Abduh and Said Nursi," *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization* 04, no. 02 (October 2014): 01-08, <https://doi.org/10.32350/jitc.42.01>; Kamil Fadel, and Eren Tatari, "A Political Analysis of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's Damascus Sermon," *Humanities and Social Sciences Review* Vol. 5, no. 3 (December 2016): 302-22.

²¹Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 102.

Nursi spent his childhood studying with his eldest brother, Molla Abdullah. Every weekend, his brother returned from school to home to teach his seven-year-old sibling the Qur'ān during the leisure time. After a year, Nursi started to study science. It is recorded that, as a result of his outstanding ability and learning, he studied not only all traditional religious sciences but also modern science.²² As time passed, Nursi was known to dominate leading brainpower, owning the outstanding ability to memorize and deliver his ideas altogether. Compared with other adolescents, Nursi's perception was far beyond their levels. Growing up as a boy with extraordinary desire and ability above common children, Nursi was often challenged not only by his friends but also by adults. The confrontation was varied as sometimes it approached him in the form of physical fight or he even had to accept an invitation to scientific debate. Later, his special brilliance became the forerunner for his nickname, *al-Nursi al-Masyhūr* or 'The Famous Nursi.' The alias was inevitable given his outstanding intelligence.²³

Nursi's life a whole was divided into three phases, 'Old Nursi', 'New Nursi,' and 'Third Nursi.'²⁴ These three divisions seem to be able to deliver an appropriate understanding of the development of Nursi's school of thoughts. The 'Old Nursi' ranged from 1877 to 1926, encompassing a large number of movements he carried out during the period. These activities included *Darul Hikmatil Islamiyah*, World War I, Opposition to the British Colonialization, the Union of Muhammad, and so on.²⁵ Besides involving himself in various combats, Nursi was also interested in politics. He was later, however, disappointed with the development of political parties in Turkey.²⁶ He observed that the World War I not only affected the Westernization of Islamic Politics but also inflicted an ideological dispute between

²²Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *Belief and Man* (USA: Phoenix, 2010), 7.

²³Husayn Utsman, Khalil Jadu, and Muhammad Abu al-Khayr al-Sayyid, (trans.), *Sirāh Bedi'uzzaman Said Nursi Bi Lisānihi Wa Aqlāmihi Wa Talāmīdzihi* (Istanbul: Envar Neşriyat, 2016), 53.

²⁴Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), xiii–xvi; Kamaruzaman Yusoff, Omer Yilmaz, and Mansoureh Ebrahimi, "Transition in Turkey: An Overview of Bedi'uzzaman Said Nursi, His Life and Works for Medresetü'z-Zehra," *International Journal of West Asian Studies* 5, no. 2 (n.d.): 67-77, <https://doi.org/10.5895/ijwas.2013.11>; Sujiat Zubaidi Saleh, *The Epistemology of Contemporary Tafsir With Reference To Risale-I Nur Bediuzzaman Said Nursi* (Yogyakarta: Kurnia Kalam Semesta, 2019), 33.

²⁵Nursi, *Sirah Dzātiyyah* (Cairo: Sozler Publications, 2013), 164.

²⁶Ian S. and Suencam Birinci Pirim Markham, *An Introduction to Said Nursi: Life, Thought, and Writings, An Introduction to Said Nursi* (Ashgate, 2016), 14, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315566917>.

belief and infidelity.²⁷ For Nursi, it was impossible for Muslims to revive and come back to confront the dilemmas except by standing on appropriate Islamic views of Politics. This angle then triggered the next phase of Nursi, the ‘New Nursi.’²⁸

The stage of ‘New Nursi’ occurred in around 1926-1950 as a stage that was full of social activities aside from the political sphere. As he believed that every political movement was evil, it was unavoidably on account of the political movements he found had polluted the truths from the Qur’ān. Nursi often said: “*I take refuge in God from Satan and from politics.*”²⁹ The passage shows us how dangerous the ‘secular’ politics was before him. Accordingly, in this stage of ‘New Nursi,’ he had witnessed the signs of political evil during the Turkish Reformation -with the victims being his own students as well-³⁰ leading him to the ambitious goal to find a way to guide the majority of the Turkish to the Qur’an. He moved far away from politicians and turned to more ‘religious’ conditions, expressed by his identical dark clothes, building a treehouse, and secluding in quiet mountains for praying and worship. He also focused more on explaining and teaching fundamental faith, *tauhīd*, and what kind of life would be hereafter.³¹ The New Nursi, furthermore, always adhered to the revelation of God and agreed that *I’jaz al-Qur’ān* -the miracles of the Qur’ān- is the Moslem salvation to face the flow of fallacy of belief among people.³²

The ‘Third Nursi’ period finally took place between 1950 and 1960 as the last ten years of his life journey. At that time, his concern was mostly about the consolidation of the Nur Movement and *Jihād* of words in the way of *Risale-i Nūr*, devoting himself to the Qur’ān which was continued solidly by the *Thullāb al-Nūr* and the composition *Risale-i Nūr*.³³ It was noticed that during this ‘Third Nursi’ he began to put aside worldly affairs, emphasizing his peak spiritual journey.³⁴ By avoiding politics more, he advised *Thullāb al-Nūr* a lot not to engage in any

²⁷Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey*, 278.

²⁸Nursi, *Sīrah Dzātiyyah* (Cairo: Sozler Publications, 2013), 180.

²⁹Colin Turner, and Dale Eickelman, *Qur’ān Revealed: A Critical Analysis of Said Nursi’s Epistles of Light* (London: Gerlach Press, 2013), 537.

³⁰Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey*, 211.

³¹Ibid, 177.

³²Ihsan Kasim al-Shalihi, *Sīrah Dzātiyyah Mukhtasarah Li Badiūzzamān Sa’id al-Nursi* (Cairo: Sozler Publications, 2010), 45; Ihsan Kasim al-Shalihi, *Nazhrah ‘Āmmah ‘an Hayāti Badi’Uzzamān Said Nursi* (Cairo: Sozler Publications, 2010), 45.

³³Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey*, 305.

³⁴Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *The Rays Collection*, trans. Şükran Vahide (Istanbul: Sözlere Neşriyat A.Ş., 2007), 523.

political movements in the name of *Thullāb al-Nūr*. If they were somehow compelled to participate, they should join on their personal behalf and initiate positive actions identified by ceremonial belief and good performance based on the Qur'an.³⁵

4. General Discussion of Human Creation in Islamic Philosophy and its Relation to the Ideas of Nursi

As Nursi commonly implemented his views in Arabic, we should see what 'creation' in Arabic is. Etymologically, 'creation' is generally understood as '*khalāqa*'. The word occupies two meanings, first, bringing about something yet formerly existing, and second, *khalāqa* or 'measure' or *al-taqdīr*. In the Qur'an, *khalāqa* is mentioned to signify the dimensions given by the Creator -*Khāliq* 'referring to both earthly life and hereafter. The word later has also developed into *khalīqah* or *khuluq* with *Khālīq* as its plural form and related closely to the conception of behaviour precept on the self-consciousness to act morally and virtuously. Consequently, the conception of human creation also involves the standard guideline for a contact between humankind and God, realizing their mere existence as only a creature -*makhlūq* created by God *Khāliq*³⁶.

Nursi believed that *khalāqa* distributes a comparable definition with *ibdā'*, *ikhtirā'*, *insyā'*, and *shan'āt* with two particular variables. First, *ibdā'* and *ikhtirā'* imply that God invents, with His work from nothing to a 'thing' and yet exist to an existence. From the meaning, in Nursi's view, there are no living things in the cosmos other than His Jurisdiction.³⁷ Second, *Insyā'* and *San'āt* deal with a composition of elements in the universe supporting the continuity of life which describes the superiority of the creation process manifested by Him.³⁸ The concept of *Insyā'* and *San'āt* plays a role more in terms of sustainability of the environment guaranteed only by God.

³⁵Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey*, 307.

³⁶Abu Manshur Muhammad Ibn Ahmad al-Azhari, *Tahdzīb Al-Lughah*, vol. 2 (Beirut: Dar Ehia al-Tourath al-Arabi, 2001), 16-18; Arthur Jeffery, *The Foreign Vocabulary of The Qur'an*, Texts and Studies on the Qur'an, v. 3 (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2007), 124; Hans Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, ed. J. Milton Cowan, 3rd ed. (New York: Spoken Language Services, 1976), 258.

³⁷Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *The Flashes Collection*, trans. Şükran Vahide (Istanbul: Sözlür Neşriyat A.Ş., 2009), 253.

³⁸Ibid, 253.

A further contrast regarding an understanding of creation is also found amid *insyā* and *ibdā'*. As *Insyā* is related to the general concept of creation, Nursi criticized the dimension of *ibdā'* as it is ordinarily associated with 'creatio ex nihilo'.³⁹ As it was accentuated in *Risale-i Nur*, 'the act of bringing something into existence from nothing' is far different from 'creatio ex nihilo.' Nursi demonstrated *Insyā* as an 'invisible ink' in the creation process that would be possibly detected only with God's Sovereignty. The ink is used to plan a blueprint of the building before the construction starts as it is done by an architect. If the property has been completely established, it does mean that the plan or blueprint does not exist anymore, but indeed the preparation beforehand is unobservable by common people. In this context, Nursi asserted that the origin of human creation is inaugurated from the 'invisible world' prior to the current 'real world'. The creation does not emerge from anything but it does emerge from the level of dimension that is incomprehensible in human capacity.⁴⁰

5. Phase of Human Creation According to Nursi

In Islam, the phases of human creation begin from the foetus to become a person. A human is not born like a calf as a calf will be able to stand on its feet, walk, and run once it comes out from the mother, while human needs years to develop the body. In interpreting such concept, the mother's womb in the thought of Nursi is a symbol of *al-Rahīm* as one of Allah Almighty's names. Again, the existence of the uterus inside the Mom's belly and the creation of mankind according to Nursi signify their likeness as both conform to the specific faculty owned by themselves that they are 'intellect' and 'mind's eye'.⁴¹ 'Intellect' or ratio performs a task by comprehending a reality to be derived as knowledge, while 'mind's eye' is in charge of reflecting the truth behind a reality.⁴² In other words, Nursi emphasised an inevitable interrelation between both physical and spiritual features of mankind as their spiritual aspects -spirit, consciousness, understanding-

³⁹Robert Audi, *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, *Choice Reviews Online*, Vol. 33 (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 192, <https://doi.org/10.5860/choice.33-3059>.

⁴⁰Turner and Eickelman, *Qur'an Revealed: A Critical Analysis of Said Nursi's Epistles of Light*, 33.

⁴¹Alparslan Acikgenc, "Classification of Science in Islam and Its Relevance Concerning the Rasā'il" (10th International Graduate Conference on Risale-i Nur Studies, Istanbul: Istanbul Foundation for Science and Culture, 2019).

⁴²Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islam: An Exposition of the Fundamental Aspect of the Worldview of Islam* (Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC), 1995), chap. 1.

are crucially required to sustain and cultivate mankind's bodily existence. Spiritual advantages, in addition, may help humanity to safeguard the system of their society including language, religion, culture, and so on.⁴³ To sum up, Nursi's conception of human creation is not merely seen as the material reality but the metaphysical phenomenon as well since 'bodily eye' may not be able to enquire the essence of the mother's womb associated with the divine aspect of *Rahim* while the 'mind's eye' may.

Nursi initiated an explanation regarding the nature of human creation by interpreting Chapter al-Mu'minin (Believers) Verse 12-14 of the Qur'an:

We created man from an essence of clay; then We placed him as a drop of fluid in a safe place, 14 then We made that drop into a clinging form, and We made that form into a lump of flesh, and We made that lump into bones, and We clothed those bones with flesh, and later We made him into other forms — glory be to God, the best of creators! —⁴⁴

Through these verses, Nursi expressed the beauty of God's creation, emphasizing His Divine Right while manifesting the creation process at the same time. While mankind is considered as a 'text,' His Name is a 'meaning', and the divine attributes are always possible to be bound to them since realizing their existence is consistently related to God. Further consequences also emerge in that human is appraised more as an 'essence' of the whole creatures comparatively.⁴⁵ As they are considered as the fundamental nature of creation, it is also affirmed that they will consciously understand the demand to serve and benefit another being rather than selfishly suffice their own needs. The ultimate aim of human creation according to Nursi is an act of community service indeed.⁴⁶

6. Nursi and his Interpretation Regarding the Nature and Implications of Human Creation

Nursi's kind of 'self-consciousness' embedded in the concept of human creation in the previous part of the discussion is also related to how he

⁴³Kamaruzaman Yusoff et al., "Philosophy and Functional Structure of Medresetü'z-Zehra: A Study on Bediüzzaman Said Nursi," *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* 7, no. 1 (January 5, 2016): 36-43, <https://doi.org/10.5901/mjss.2016.v7n1s1p36>.

⁴⁴M. A. S Abdel Haleem, trans., *The Qur'an: A New Translation by M. A. S. Abdel Haleem* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 215.

⁴⁵Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *The Words on the Nature and Purposes of Man, Life, and All Things*, trans. Şükran Vahide (Istanbul: Sözlere Publications A. S., 2008), 432.

⁴⁶Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *Man and the Universe* (Istanbul: Sözlere Publications, 1993), 29.

conceptualized the existence of God. Accordingly, human creation is closely related to God in a divine way; as such, human realization of God's existence has occurred even prior to their existence on earth. The realization ran in the form of *Mithāq* with God, thus enabling them to know their Creator.⁴⁷

As Nursi has asserted, the *hikmah* (wisdom) behind the creation of humans is that they are intended to remember, recognize, and revere God in the form of worship.⁴⁸ For some, an order to worship God is nothing but for carrying out the rites and chanting prayers. For Nursi, rather, the ritual is carried out merely as *mantras*, and worship should be done on some spiritual basis encompassing knowledge, love, and freedom altogether.⁴⁹ Nursi classified two forms of human worshipping God as *khadim* and '*abid*. *Khadim* applies to someone who prays based on their personal intention without any coercion, while '*abid* implies a servant who is bound to his Master. In Islam, as it was defined by Nursi, mankind is '*ābid* whose every single worship is always 'bound' to God as an offer known as '*ibādah*.⁵⁰ Here, the concrete relationship between God and man is asserted once more.

In his *Signs of Miraculousness*, Nursi asserted 5 values of worship, first, as a reminder for humans and, second, to refresh memory and focus on worshipping Allah only. Third, mankind is demanded to obey that principle to not violate Divine Law through an act of worship. Fourth, worship is obedience done by a servant to his Master, and fifth, worship is the identity of every Muslim.⁵¹

Where mankind is classified as '*abid*, they should not expect a reward from God as an appreciation for what they have done from pleading. Worship, again, is carried out in conformity of obedience and submissiveness resulted from the faith in themselves.⁵² In other words, rather than mankind's devotion to God not culminating in the form of captivity, mankind favours to worship God by virtue of their own awareness under the guidance of faith. As previously described that intellect is the most sophisticated uniqueness of mankind, it is only through precise

⁴⁷Ibid, 111.

⁴⁸Nursi, *The Rays Collection* (Istanbul: Sözlere Neşriyat A.Ş., 2007), 16.

⁴⁹Turner and Eickelman, *Qur'an Revealed: A Critical Analysis of Said Nursi's Epistles of Light* (London: Gerlach Press, 2013), 172.

⁵⁰Al-Attas, *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islam: An Exposition of the Fundamental Aspect of the Worldview of Islam* (Kuala Lumpur: IBFIM, 2015), 68-69.

⁵¹Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *Signs of Miraculousness* (Istanbul: Nur Publishers, 2006), 21-22.

⁵²__, *Al-Matsnā al-'Arabīy al-Nawarīy*, ed. Ihsan Kasim al-Shalihi (Cairo: Sozler Publications, 2004), 337.

employment of ratio that humans will worship God with full obedience and submissiveness.

Nursi expanded this illustration further with an image of this worldly life as the lavish banquet, providing human's soul and faith as the main dish in the feast. The human soul subsumes a lot of appetizing menus, while their soul is full of God's love and affection.⁵³ As such, *'Ibadah* becomes the fundamental solemnity occupied by mankind to execute their responsibility as *khalīfatullāh* -the vicegerent of Allah.⁵⁴ The mandate, affirmed by Nursi, is proof of validating the higher position of mankind compared to other creatures.⁵⁵ It is on account of their capability to consciously act freely in deciding what is good and bad, and the competence they possess, again, has existed within themselves far since their worldly presence commences on earth. It starts when they have the agreement (*mithāq*) with God in the invisible world, witnessing His Absolute Existence in the 'womb dimension' prior to their birth to the world. As it has been mentioned in Chapter al-A'rāf (The Heights) Verse 172 of the Qur'ān:

[Prophet], when your Lord took out the offspring from the loins of the Children of Adam and made them bear witness about themselves, He said, 'Am I not your Lord?' and they replied, 'Yes, we bear witness.' So, you cannot say on the Day of Resurrection, 'We were not aware of this,'⁵⁶

In addition to this formulation, mankind, while accomplishing their occupation as *'ābid* and *khalīfatullāh*, is determined with *Amānah* as a barometer of their activities regarding the responsibility they have to carry out on earth. According to Nursi, *Amānah* is a trust contributed by God swathed with the noble tasks. In order to implement such kind of responsibility to be *'ābid* and *khālifatullāh* altogether, mankind should devout themselves to Him with *imān*, so the nuance while doing worship will be different with another worldly task.⁵⁷ *Amānah* itself is founded on *Imān* -faith in God, resulting in *ma'rifatullāh*- realization of God with full sincerity and honesty. Conversely, *amānah* will safeguard mankind from any

⁵³ ___, *The Immortality of Man's Spirit* (Istanbul: Sozler Publications, 2013), 71-72.

⁵⁴ Abbas Mahmoud Alakkad, *Al-Qarn al-'Isyrun* (Cairo: Hindawi Foundation for Education and Culture, 2013), 79.

⁵⁵ Markham, *An Introduction to Said Nursi: Life, Thought, and Writings* (London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2016), 30.

⁵⁶ Haleem, *The Qur'ān: A New Translation by M.A.S. Abdel Haleem* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 106.

⁵⁷ Nursi, *The Words on the Nature and Purposes of Man, Life, and All Things* (Istanbul: Sozler Publications A. S., 2008), 138.

feeling of arrogance or aloofness as they realize accurately the supremacy of their God.⁵⁸

If mankind is able to do their task as *khalīfatullāh* and *‘abīd* with a decent *amānah* until the end of their lives, they will finally return to their household -a paradise- which is an original place of human being.⁵⁹ A paradise is referred to as *‘Firdaus,*’ the highest rank of the paradise per se.⁶⁰ Considering the importance of *amānah* in the discussion of human creation, the elaboration by Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas regarding *amānah* also seems to suit Nursi’s conception:

...The term *amānah* is derived from the root *amn* meaning security. The security that is meant, when *amānah* refers to affairs of the community in relation to the state, is freedom from oppression. *Amn* as security in this sense refers to peace and protection under just rule wherein law and order prevails bringing about a condition described as *amān*. Security brings about a condition of tranquility (*tuma’nīnah*) of the soul released from fear (*khawf*) and grief (*huzn*) and the uneasiness of doubt about ultimate destiny. This condition is called *īmān*. *īmān* is a trust that God has confined in the individual soul...⁶¹

Based on the above explanation, *amānah* is possibly understood as a form of trust in the whole thing under God’s protection. *Amānah*, moreover, safeguards the self from nuisances inflicting their *īmān* -faith. *Amānah* and *īmān* connect altogether as a nature of the worship of man -as *‘abīd* and *khalīfatullāh* to God in order to reach the noblest rank of Paradise.⁶² People’s ability to perceive their surroundings based on the knowledge they possess is one of the values underlying their election as His *khalīfah* rather than other creatures on the planet. On the other hand, God desires to be identified by His servant, thus He surrounds them with other creatures manifested with His Names in order for them to be known and acknowledged.⁶³ The importance of mankind is based on their role as *khalīfatullah*,

⁵⁸Ibid, 268.

⁵⁹Ibid, 89, 100.

⁶⁰Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *The Letters: 1928-1932*, trans. Şükran Vahide (Istanbul: Sözlere Neşriyat A.Ş., 2007), 58.

⁶¹Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *On Justice and the Nature of Man: A Commentary on Sūrah al-Nisā’ (4): 58 and Sūrah al-Mu’minūn (23): 12-14* (Kuala Lumpur: IBFIM, 2015), 7.

⁶²Abdullah Muslich Rizal Maulana, “Semantic Reinterpretation of The Prophet Muhammad’s Obligatory Properties for Da’wah Advancement in The Interreligious Context,” *Jurnal Manajemen Dakwah* Vol. 4, no. 1 (2018): 1-22, <https://doi.org/10.14421/jmd.2018.41-01>.

⁶³Nursi, *The Rays Collection*, (Istanbul: Sözlere Neşriyat A.Ş., 2007), 47.

who carry out their duties by committing whatever they have to God alone. In other words, humanity is the ultimate creation, representing a miniature of the entire universe -The Microcosm within the Macrocosm.⁶⁴

7. Human-God Interrelationship in Nursi's Thoughts: A Breakthrough for an Advanced System of Islamic Philosophy

Last but not least, it is crucial to reflect further on the nature of human creation in accordance with Nursi's philosophical ideas. It has been understood that humans, in Nursi's view, emerge in the mother's womb under God's affection - *Rahīm*. The initial process of human creation in the physical world does not follow anything other than the eternal treaty in the metaphysical realm -known as *mithāq*-. The procedure has clearly signified the concrete interrelationship between God and man, indicating '*ābid*' as a further concept in the context of worship. As '*Abid*, *human*' is required to fulfill their duty as the servant of God by worshipping Him and Him only in the form of sincere submissiveness. The worship, moreover, is only achievable in virtue of correct actualization of *intellect*, and comprehending the crux of worship is the nature of human's *Amānah* to be the vicegerent of God -*Khalīfatullāh*- as through their worldly journey humans will find a complete understanding of God -*Ma'rīfatullah*. The question that should be reflected later is whether Nursi's theory related to the God-human interrelationship manifests further the comprehension with regard to philosophical ideas of Islam.

There is a number of appropriate studies which have a connection with Nursi's ideas, and most of them approve that Nursi has initiated a broader yet detail discernment respecting the development of recent Islamic thoughts. In terms of environmental conservation, we have found that Nursi has brilliantly explored in his works an 'Islamic eco-theological system' confirming the message of sustainable atmosphere based on *Tawhīd*.⁶⁵ Nursi's ideas are also suitable to

⁶⁴ __, *The Words on the Nature and Purposes of Man, Life, and All Things* (Istanbul: Sözleryayınları A. S., 2008), 442.

⁶⁵Nur Hadi Ihsan, and Moh. Isom Mudin, "Paradigma Kalam Dalam Konservasi Lingkungan Menurut Said Nursi," *Tasfiyah* 4, no. 1 (February 1, 2020): 27, <https://doi.org/10.21111/tasfiyah.v4i1.4052>; Moh Isom Mudin, Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi, and Abdul Kadir Riyadi, "Prinsip Ekologis untuk Kehidupan Berkelanjutan Perspektif Teologi Islam: Kajian atas Kitab Rasail al-Nur Sa'id Nursi" 9 (2021): 18, <http://dx.doi.org/10.21043/fikrah.v9i1.9018>.

comprehend a reformation in education,⁶⁶ gender emancipation,⁶⁷ politics,⁶⁸ *Tasawwuf* (Sufism),⁶⁹ *Tafseer*, Qur'anic Science,⁷⁰ etc. It indicates that Nursi's works have become a concrete foundation for further systematic enquiry in massive subjects. The thoughts of Nursi are conceivably advanced not only limited to the discussion of Islamic Studies *an sich* but also covering foreign issues related to Islamic fundamental conception, constituting a more inter-disciplinary

⁶⁶Mohammad Dawood Sofi, "Knowledge—Toward Bridging Religious and Modern Sciences: Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's Approach," *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization* 03, no. 02 (October 2013): 13-20, <https://doi.org/10.32350/jitc.32.02>; Kharis - Ma'ruf, "Humanisme Pendidikan Islam Perspektif Bediuzzaman Said Nursi," *Analisis: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 17, no. 2 (August 7, 2019): 51-68, <https://doi.org/10.24042/ajsk.v17i2.2590>; Muhammad Sophy Abdul Aziz, Hudzaifah Achmad Qotadah, and Darmawan Achmad, "Badiuzzaman Said Nursi and KH Ahmad Dahlan's Thoughts on Education Reform: A Comparative Study," Vol. 11, no. 1 (2021): 52-60, <https://doi.org/10.15575/ijik.v11i1.9986>.

⁶⁷Mohamad Zaidin Mohamad et al., "The Identity of Women According to the Thinking of Said Nursi," *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences* 9, no. 3 (March 3, 2019): 555-564, <https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARBS/v9-i3/5716>.

⁶⁸Fadel and Tatari, "A Political Analysis of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's Damascus Sermon"; Adibah Abdul Rahim and Elmira Akhmetova, "Nationalism in the Light of Said Nursi Badiuzzaman and His Framework for Social Solidarity," *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization* 09, no. 01 (March 2019): 37-51, <https://doi.org/10.32350/jitc.91.03>.

⁶⁹Ahmed S. A. Al-Qodsi and Sharifah Norshah Bani Syed Bidin, "The Elements of Sufism in the Da'Wah of Bediuzzaman Sa'id Nursi," *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences* 7, no. 4 (April 17, 2017): 142-150, <https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARBS/v7-i4/2794>; Siswoyo Aris Munandar et al., "Nursi's Sufism Without Sufi Order: A Contemporary Debate Among The Ulama," *Jurnal Ushuluddin* Vol. 28, no. 2 (December 31, 2020): 155, <https://doi.org/10.24014/jush.v28i2.9643>; Muhammad Faiz, "Konsep Tasawuf Said Nursi: Implementasi Nilai-Nilai Moderasi Islam," *Millah* 19, no. 2 (February 14, 2020): 199-224, <https://doi.org/10.20885/millah.vol19.iss2.art2>.

⁷⁰Shumaila Majeed, "An Analytical Study of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's Intellectual Development and Composition of Risale-i Nūr (a Thematic Qur'anic Exegesis)," *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization* Vol. 10, no. 02 (2020): 170-89, <https://doi.org/10.32350/jitc.102.10>; Peter G Riddell, "Exegeting Sūra al Fātiḥa for the Masses: Bediuzzaman Said Nursi and Haji Muḥammad Sa'īd Bin 'Umar," *مجلة كلية الشريعة الإسلامية* 38, no. 2 (January 2021): 213-31, <https://doi.org/10.29117/jesis.2021.0274>; Ummu Salamah, "Maqāshid al-Qurān Perspektif Badi'uzzaman Sa'id Nursi," *Studia Quranika* 4, no. 1 (August 17, 2019), <https://doi.org/10.21111/studiquran.v4i1.3246>.

comprehension. As such, it is not exaggerating to say that Nursi has commenced an improved way of research in the 21st-century study of Islam.

In the context of Islamic Philosophy, Nursi is also affirmed to have given an extremely valuable contribution. It can be seen in the history of Islamic intellectual tradition, where philosophy posits an extremely crucial position in conceptualizing a reality based on *Intellect* as the central apparatus. The philosophical tradition of Islam, moreover, as it has emerged since the age of revelation is supported by the theological foundation embedded within. In other words, philosophical activities in Islamic Civilization stand on the fundamental teachings existing in the Qur'ān and Prophetic tradition.⁷¹ Agreeing with this fact, Oliver Leaman expresses: "... But the rapid expansion of Islam and its rule over highly sophisticated civilizations made necessary the assimilation of a great number of foreign legal elements, which initially were often subjected to a process of Islamization and identification as Koranic."⁷²

That is, in order for Islam to progress as a civilization, it must assimilate a vast number of foreign elements, which are filtered via an Islamization project based on the Qur'an. Revelations imply that they play a crucial role in constructing a Muslim worldview in response to reality in the form of scientific activity or the entirety of existence from an Islamic perspective.⁷³ It is fascinating to discover that, which is so prevalent among Muslim philosophers, with various styles and procedures and especially for what those various approaches may be thought to conceal, Muslim philosophers emphasize the significance of concealing harmful notions and presenting their thoughts in such a way that they do not jeopardize people's faith or theologians' suspicion.⁷⁴ As we have observed, Islamic philosophy should be regarded as a valuable asset which has emerged over the course of the history of Islamic Intellectual Tradition considering its benefits in uniting the

⁷¹Abdullah Muslich Rizal Maulana, "Filsafat Islam; Sebuah Identifikasi Pandangan Hidup," *Kalimah* Vol. 15, no. 1 (March 31, 2017): 37, <https://doi.org/10.21111/klm.v15i1.834>.

⁷²Leaman Oliver, *An Introduction to Medieval Islamic Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 6.

⁷³Alparslan Acikgenc, *Islamic Science: Toward a Definition* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1996), 29; al-Attas, *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islam: An Exposition of the Fundamental Aspect of the Worldview of Islam*, (Istanbul: Istanbul Foundation for Science and Culture, 2019), 2.

⁷⁴Oliver, *An Introduction to Medieval Islamic Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 190.

system of reason, demonstrating the nature of the world, and negating the bias comprehension of foreign ideas.⁷⁵

Such complex process has also been done by Nursi. Through his works, we can arrive at an advanced formulation of philosophical thoughts based on the worldview of Islam. As the earliest process of Islamization of Greek philosophy intended mainly to assimilate and clarify foreign ideas, Nursi, in his major works, has beautifully countered the up-to-date Muslim dilemmas at that time, proposing solutions based on his reflection upon the Qur'ān.

Related to our findings regarding the nature of man according to Nursi, it is affirmed that Nursi has successfully disclosed a scientific process that simultaneously involves both intellectual and spiritual dimensions as well as the connecting procedure of pursuing knowledge based on the fundamental covenant between man and God. As such, the link between rational and spiritual preparation throughout the process is completely demonstrated.⁷⁶ Finally, a further observation concerning Nursi's thoughts is necessary to be an advancement basis for the breakthrough development of Islamic philosophical ideas in the current century.

8. Conclusion

Nursi has conceptualized mankind as a sign of God's Divine Right, chosen to be His vicegerent -*Khalīfah* as they are mandated with a higher capacity compared with other creatures to recognize a reality around them. A proper comprehension of human to reality, as Nursi accentuated, leads to a favourable understanding of God as the Creator of the Universe or *Ma'rifatullāh*. Human-God relation in Islam is inevitably related and cannot separate, realizing that the existence of mankind is originally traced back to their occupation as God's servant only. Nursi's thoughts, moreover, have initiated potential evidence for further development of Islamic philosophy.

The study yet leaves us several questions considered important to improve the discussion further concerning the possibility of the discussion in the context of Islamization of Contemporary Knowledge as the basis of Inter-Religious and Inter-

⁷⁵Abdullah Muslich Rizal Maulana et al., "Reconsidering Position of Philosophy in Islamic Intellectual Tradition: The Unity and Relation," *Aqlania: Jurnal Filsafat Dan Teologi Islam*; Vol. 1 no. 12 (2021): June DOI- 10.32678/Aqlania.V1i12.3633, June 30, 2021, <http://jurnal.uinbanten.ac.id/index.php/aqlania/article/view/3633>.

⁷⁶Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi, "Knowledge and Knowing in Islam: A Comparative Study between Nursi and al-Attas," *GJAT* 8, no. 1 (June 2018): 31-41.

Cultural encounters in current demand, and last but not least, as an initial stage of further enquiry in Islamic Philosophy.

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